University Classroom Communication: Self-Perceptions of International ESL Students and the Development of L2 Communicative Competence

By

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ABSTRACT

Purpose of the Study: International students studying at Intensive English Programs (IEPs) in the US have many opportunities to gain knowledge and skills through their language courses, although they may have limited exposure to academic university classes. The purpose of this study was to see how a college classroom observation assignment helps students develop communicative competence with respect to the use of English in an American college classroom, and how it affects their self-perceptions as L2 English speakers.

Procedure: This study was qualitative; students were interviewed before and after they observed a university class. The interviews were transcribed and data was analyzed using Grounded Theory Method (Bryant, A. & Charmaz, K., 2007). Analysis and findings were organized using the analytic frame of Canale’s (1983) framework of Communicative Competence.

Findings: The analysis revealed that most of the knowledge gained from the observation was related to sociolinguistic competence. This included sociolinguistic knowledge about teachers and teaching style, the classroom environment and student behavior. In addition, students developed a better understanding of potential communication challenges they may encounter when taking US university classes.

Conclusions: The findings of this study show that a classroom observation and reflection assignment can help international ESL students develop sociolinguistic communicative competence of a US classroom environment. This can then help them to develop increased awareness of potential challenges, and communication strategies to aid them in similar communicative situations.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

*I never teach my pupils, I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn.*

― Albert Einstein

With the influx of international students comes an increased need for well developed ESL pedagogy, curriculum and well trained English teachers. As an English language educator, a main goal is to prepare students for the transition from English language classes to other environments, such as US college classes. The problem at hand is this: some students may not be aware of the challenges they may face once they matriculate into college classes, and may not be adequately prepared. Language and communication skills, sociolinguistic knowledge as well as learning strategies are an area which can potentially be developed at an Intensive English Program (IEP) to better prepare students for entering a college in the US.

This study investigates International English as a Second Language (IESL) students’ self-perceptions of their developing communicative competence in a second language (L2); in this case English. The term “communicative competence” was developed by Dell Hymes (1967) and describes the L2 learner’s acquisition of the “comprehensive knowledge and ability to use a language appropriately within a cultural context” (p.16). The focus of my research was to examine IESL students’ perceptions of communication they observe in a US college classroom, as well as self-perceptions of communicative competence (CC) in this type of environment. This study was done using
a qualitative approach to data collection (pre- and post-assignment interviews and classroom observations), to gain a better understanding of how IESL students develop communicative abilities associated with particular social-cultural settings, such as the college classroom. My goal is to use my findings to develop and refine IESL classroom pedagogy to support students’ development of fluency in English with respect to achieving their goal of attending and graduating from an American university.

Teachers have monumental responsibilities. We are responsible for teaching and guiding our students in a way that promotes understanding and learning. At this point in time people take education very seriously; it is the stepping stone to a career and future livelihood. Because of this, teachers should do as much as possible to provide the best conditions for student learning. This is not always easy; every student may have unique needs and challenges, and as a teacher, it is vital to recognize these individual characteristics. By understanding the diverse needs of students, teachers will be better equipped to support them and prepare them for the next steps. No matter who the students are; young or old, rich or poor, from near or far— if they decide to attend school and put forth the effort, they should receive a good education. Teaching and learning involves both the student and teacher, which is why educational research is strongest when looking at the learning process from both points of view.

One venue for learning is in schools of higher education in the United States. The United States is home to an abundance of excellent colleges; we are fortunate to have 2-year colleges, 4-year public and private universities, as well as exceptional graduate and doctoral programs. Because of this, the US has become a highly desired destination for
many International and English as a Second Language students. The Institute of
International Education reported that the 2013-2014 school year had a record 886,052
international students attending universities in the United States. As the world becomes
more globalized and interconnected, global education is in high demand (Alsaidi, 2015).
Because of the vast array of schools and degree programs available, attending an
American university may provide students with access to educational opportunities they
may not have in their home country.

For people who have grown up in the United States, going to school is something
we do from a young age, and we learn how to interact and relate to teachers and
classmates. We are enculturated into the school system by the time we reach college, and
prepared to deal with the rigors of higher education.

This is not the case for all college students though. Imagine coming to study in the
US from a different country, where the teaching style is very different. In some cultures
classes are teacher dominated and reticence is valued (Maftoon & Ziafar, 2013). Some
focus on the knowledge of facts and figures, so sharing ones’ thoughts or opinion is not
common practice (Hallinger & Lu, 2011)—whereas many classes in the US are student
centered and want students to share original ideas and opinions. These differences in
education and culture do exist, so for international students arriving in the US to study, it
may take some time to adjust to their new classes and assignments.

How does one acclimate to this new educational environment? There are many
things that may help: students may receive orientation or advising from the school, they
will learn through attending classes, or other students can give them support. Even
though they will have some introduction, many of the cultural differences in education are things that may not be explicitly explained, and may vary from class to class or teacher to teacher. For this reason, one method of introducing students to the college class environment is to have international study at an IEP to improve their English and introduce the local culture.

Colleges in the US draw people from all over the world, and although the US has a diverse cultural community, English is the language used for instruction. English has been growing in popularity over the past several decades; it is seen as a link between countries and cultures, and treated as a lingua franca (a common language) in many places (Sauvignon & Wang, 2003). Having a language that is commonly known throughout the world provides a tool for intercultural communication, making people more connected to one another and able to share ideas easily. With the internet making communication between nations easier, our world continues to become smaller and more interconnected. In addition, English is used in science, economy as well as education and business (Liu & Park, 2012). Because of this, pursuing higher education in an English speaking country can be of great instrumental value.

For many IESL learners and international students, their college experience in the US begins by studying in an Intensive English Program (IEP) or at a community college. The present study was conducted at an IEP hosted by a four year university located in Northern California. They are frequently found on University campuses, and the instruction is focused on language learning, not on degree course work. The curriculum is
designed to help students develop their English proficiency. The goals of one such IEP is explained through their program description:

Since 1979, this school has been providing intensive instruction to students, professionals, and others who need to learn English quickly to meet academic, job-related, and social needs. (School website, 2015)

Core classes at an IEP typically include reading, composition, grammar, and communication. Students also take elective classes to incorporate a variety of other topics and skills.

Many IESL students want to transition to college, while other may be studying English for career purposes. Language schools are a popular way for students to learn English through the combination of classes and immersion in an English speaking culture. Language is multifaceted; to become fluent in a second language requires the learning and acquisition of many components.

Language learning is the focus at IEPs, so the curriculum is developed to be conducive to language acquisition and practice. The school where the study was done describes the curriculum on the website, noting that, “Interactive, communicative, and task-based learning strategies are utilized.” (School website, IEP page). From this description, one can deduct that the classes are most likely student focused. The teacher is not the only person speaking in class, as Swain (1985) asserted, students need to be pushed to speak and produce language in order to acquire language. Other IEPs have described methods of teaching that aspire to provide students with a variety of experiences where they can use language in authentic contexts and receive support from
instructors (Hillyard, 2007). These methods are thought to be good for learning and language development, and also a way for students to interact within the cultural sphere of the target language environment. Students learn through various student centered classes and activities: conversation and communication practice, group projects, presentations, service learning, video production, grammar games as well as many other lessons.

Because this style of teaching may be new or different from a student’s previous schooling, investigating the transition and adjustment students go through can provide valuable information for teachers and future students who may want to study English at an IEP. The focus of this study was to look deeper at the student experiences and perceptions of once such IEP class. The qualitative approach to data collection was based in the assumption that students who have participated in the interviews would be able to convey their thoughts and feelings about their observational learning experience at the IEP in relation to their development of fluency in the target language (English).

Although many international students have studied English in their home country prior to their arrival in the US, they may not be at the desired level of proficiency for attending college. At most US colleges, there is a requirement for international students to have certain score in the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS). The required score varies depending on the university, and some tests may be waived in place of completion of an IEP at the college. Whether a student is attending an IEP just to increase their language proficiency, attain a higher score on the IELTS or TOEFL, or gain conditional admission
to that same college, the IEP plays a key role in the educational path of many international students.

Once students complete their courses at an IEP, many will matriculate into community colleges, undergraduate, or graduate programs. These college classes are English language environments where many skills and fluencies are needed. Students must be able to read and write to meet the literacy expectations of the instructors. In addition to being literate in English, students must have fluency in communication. Communication includes many elements: speaking, listening, asking and answering questions, taking notes, communicating through body language and gestures, non-verbal communication, emailing and calling, as well as so many more—many of which may be encountered in the classroom. Although these may seem like common skills that most young adults possess, the difference in language and culture may make communication in this environment different and thus more challenging.

Teaching is undoubtably an art and not a science, which is why inquiry into the minds of students can serve as a stepping stone to developing appropriate, supportive and effective methods of teaching. Before we can help our students overcome challenges, we must find out what their self perceived challenges are. Being a student in the Masters of Education program, one thing I have learned is that research can develop understanding about students and their learning processes. This can then help raise awareness and advance educational pedagogy. Over the past fifty years there has been extensive research in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) which has provided a foundation for practices relating to language teaching and learning. By looking at past research and
conducting qualitative research in the current scene, I hope to discover more about the experiences, challenges and strategies of language learning students. The environment of an IEP, where the students come from all over the world and a variety of cultural backgrounds may provide notable insight on student motivations, academic demands, and communication styles.

From experience as a language learner, language teacher, traveler and Masters student, I agree with the notion that language is embedded in society and culture (Kramsch, 1998). Preparing students for this complex communicative setting is a goal for many teachers including myself, which is why IESL students’ perceptions of communication in the college classroom is an area that has captured my attention. This study examines international IESL students’ perceptions of communication in a US college class and was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does a college classroom observation assignment affect the self-perceptions by International English as a Second Language students of their communicative competence with respect to the use of English in an American college classroom?
   
   a. How does the college classroom observation experience affect their attitudes and ideas about potential challenges and communication skills needed when attending an American university?

   b. What strategies do IESL students use to overcome these perceived challenges?

These research questions were investigated using qualitative research methods, the main one being interviews with the students themselves.
Throughout the Masters of Education program, I have explored various language acquisition theories, as well as educational research and pedagogy. Now, I have the opportunity to conduct research to learn more about current students and their experiences, in turn, advancing the body of knowledge relating to English teaching and learning. Teaching communication skills to English language learners is increasingly important in the US and other countries as we continue to see an influx of international students, as well as international workers and immigrants. By doing research on communication in an authentic educational context I aspire to help future teachers and students become aware of the social, cultural, pedagogical and communicative elements that greatly affect student learning. When new information emerges from the knowledge of student perceptions, we will be better able to address the areas in which we may need to change or improve second language pedagogy.
Chapter 2: Review of Literature

There is a continual shuttling back and forth between words and past experience and newly crystallized understanding.

—Louise Rosenblatt

Introduction

This study examines international ESL students’ perceptions of communication in a US college class and was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does a college classroom observation assignment affect the self-perceptions by International English Learner students of their communicative competence with respect to the use of English in an American college classroom?
   a. How does the college classroom observation experience affect their attitudes and ideas about potential challenges and communication skills needed when attending an American university?
   b. What strategies do IESL students use to overcome these perceived challenges?

These research questions stem from the assumption that a classroom observation assignment for international ESL students can potentially help develop students' awareness of what constitute appropriate forms of communication between professors and students and among students in college classes. I also wish to explore whether or not this type of assignment can be used to inform English language instructors of the varying perceptions and experiences that may affect IEL student learning. The classroom setting
and international participants contribute to the social, communicative and cultural factors affecting the study, which is why literature on these topics will be reviewed. When international students join classes in a new sociolinguistic and cultural environment it requires them to look at their previous knowledge of a context, and also look at the new context. Just as Louise Rosenblatt described, this shuttling between past and present experiences creates understanding, and the ability to adapt to the new environment.

**Theoretical and Historical Background**

Migration and traveling to new countries for living, study or work has been common for thousands of years. This often spawns the necessity to learn another language. Since the mid 20th century, empirical research has been done to explore the process of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Within SLA research there are various areas of focus; in this study the focus is communication in a second language (L2). When looking at second language communication, several theoretical foundations help to explain the process of developing L2 communication skills. The setting of this study was in a language immersion context, so student perceptions of this learning environment will be reviewed. In addition, the notion of “Communicative Competence” (Hymes, 1967; Canale & Swain, 1980) provides an explanation of possible areas of competence needed for successful communication in a second language. Social learning theories aim to explain the importance that interaction, context and culture play on language acquisition (Vygotsky, 1935; Kramsch, 1987). Looking at these factors potentially affecting IESL students’ second language acquisition shows the significance of this study and position within SLA and TESOL theory and research.
Student Perceptions of Communication

Language learners’ perceptions of communication in the classroom is a topic that has been studied in various educational institutions (Mori, 2014; Haneda, 2009; Morita, 2009). Likewise, students’ self perceptions have been noted to play a role in the process of language acquisition and further development of their L2 identity (Llanes, 2012; Niranji, 2014; Zacharakis, 2011). In each classroom setting different aspects of culture and ideology arise and affect language learners and teachers.

Self-perceptions refer to the idea or perception one may have of herself. In the case of this study and similar studies, it refers to the way language learners feel about themselves as L2 English speakers. These self-perceptions can shed light on the effects of the language learning experience. Examining ESL students’ self-perceptions helps researchers understand changes people go through while learning a language, as well as the effectiveness of the English program. Learning a second language can be life changing in many ways, so the learning environment can potentially help and motivate students, or possibly discourage them. Because of this, surveying students on a regular basis can be helpful for educators and should be done on a regular basis (Niranji, 2014).

Several studies have shown positive changes in language learning students’ self-perceptions after participating in English classes. One example is a study which looked at the experiences of Spanish study abroad students who went to study in England. Llanes’ (2012) study showed that students gained sociolinguistic and pragmatic language skills, they reported that they were able to speak in a more “native like” manner after studying in an English immersion context. In addition, most students noted an overall
improvement in their English. Other studies have revealed different changes in students’ self-perceptions. Niranji (2014) surveyed international students studying at a US university to learn whether an ESL course was helpful to them. Many (about 85%) said that they felt their communication in English had improved, and 77% said they felt more confident speaking English, and gained a more positive attitude after participating in the class (Naranji, p.30).

Self-perceptions about communicative ability is not the only area which showed change. Zacharakis (2011) analyzed a group of adult ESL students in the US and found other areas which were deeply affected by the language learning experience. The study utilized a focus group to gain insight into students’ experiences and self-perceptions. Students described feelings that they “believe they have the power to make positive changes through education” as well as “a sense of empowerment from participating in class” (p.93). These comments came from students who have previously struggled in life, due to challenges of not knowing how to speak English. The new social experiences they had in class were able to reconstruct previous self-perceptions of worth and ability. By speaking directly with students, we can learn firsthand how classroom experiences affect students’ self-perceptions.

Studies of ESL student learning not only explain changes in self-perceptions, but also the students’ perceptions of the culture, ideology and communication in the environment where they are studying. Mori (2014) did a case study of students in an adult ESL class at an adult school in the US. Her focus was to see how students reacted to the teacher’s implementation of an English-only classroom environment. The United States
has long been an ideologically monolingual society with English as the dominant language (McWhorter, 1998). The US is also a “melting pot” with residents from many cultural and linguistic backgrounds, and communities are typically multilingual. Nonetheless, throughout the years immigrants have been discouraged from using their mother tongue, and encouraged to adopt English to function in society. In this way, Mori found that the use of the English only rule in the classroom was a reflection of the monolingual ideology of the US. The class she observed had mostly Spanish speaking students (but some Farsi speakers), who sometimes felt the need to communicate in their L1. The teacher’s insistence in using English only was not always warmly received, and some students, “seemed to struggle with these language socialization efforts and how they fit with her [the teacher’s] own ideologies of language” (Mori, 2014, p.165). A study by Haneda (2009) also found that certain ideologies affected the performance and socialization of international students. This study describes an East Asian student studying in a MA program in the US, and having trouble adjusting to the constructivist and critical thinking style of teaching. Back home, the ideology asserts that what the teacher or author says is true, and there is no reason to question their ideas, “Given this, she initially found the need to express her own views on novels challenging” (Haneda, 2009, p.74). This exhibits the way that different ideological and social beliefs play a role in language socialization in the classroom. Knowing that this mismatch of values may exist, as a language educator it is important to be aware of possible conflicts and issues within the multilingual or multicultural classroom.
Participation is another area where students need to acquire new skills and socialize into the classroom Discourse (Morita, 2009; Haneda, 2009). The case studies of several students demonstrated that they had difficulty participating in class discussions and group projects for several reasons. Students who were not L1 English speakers found that classmates spoke very fast, which made comprehension very difficult (Morita, 2009; Haneda, 2009). This left international students with a feeling of stress, confusion and lack of membership in the class. Another thing that affected participation was the lack of cultural knowledge. Haneda (2009) reported that a student in her study expressed frustration when certain topics related to popular literature and pop culture were brought up in class discussions. She did not share this background knowledge and experience, which left her unable to participate in discussions. Although this is an academic environment, history and culture often make its way into the classroom, which makes understanding difficult for people from different countries. This can in turn affect the confidence, participation, academic and linguistic socialization of many students.

Participation is key to success in some US classrooms, so feeling an intellectual connection to the class and therefore increasing their ability to participate will affect their success as students.

By studying the self-perceptions and perceptions of ESL students studying in an immersion context, educators can develop a better understanding of what kinds of changes students may go through during the language acquisition process. This can also inform teachers of how instruction, communication and the classroom environment affect students.
Communicative Competence

When looking at the nature of communication, Hymes (1967) asserts that words alone do not carry a language. Social meaning within a culture also contributes to the language, as well as the ability to ‘perform’, or use the language in a communicative interaction. This poses a challenge for learners because they are not just learning the language in the sense of vocabulary and grammar, they also need to learn the social application of the language. This is why studying as an international student or in an Intensive English Program (IEP) can be the perfect avenue for people to learn a language. Hymes’ (1967) research was influential in the field of SLA because he drew attention to “communicative competence”—the ability of an interlocutor to know when to speak and what to say in a particular context. Within each culture there are even smaller speech communities, or “Discourses” (Gee, 1990) with variations in the language and ways of being, where communication can vary depending on the culture, person, context, etc. which creates even more need for language teaching and learning. In everyday life various speech situations occur, where specific contextual language is used. The way one speaks with close friends will be very different from how they speak with a supervisor or older relative. Speech registers change with people of different social status, as well as different language or cultural groups. This has been a notion constant in language learning research; there are many components that characterize communication and knowledge that language learners may need when communicating. Clennel (1999) explains that, “From a pedagogic point of view, strategies are needed for coping with such cross-cultural misconceptions at a range of levels, from the socio-cultural and
pragmatic to the purely linguistic” (p.84). Good language teaching aims to help students understand and traverse these various situations.

Canale and Swain (1980) later developed a framework for Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), to develop communicative competence in language learning students. Communicative competence was defined as the knowledge and ability to use appropriate language for communication in social situations (Canale & Swain, 1980). This explains why language register, word choice or even communication style may shift depending on the participants or setting. This distinction came at a time when much of language teaching was based on grammar knowledge and translation. By creating a framework for CLT, they hoped that language teaching would educate students in a way that would teach the use of language in an appropriate and applicable way (Canale & Swain, 1980). The framework also indicated that communicative competence was not the same as communicative performance, which is the actual use and production of the language. Performance could be compared to linguistic fluency, the ability of a speaker to produce appropriate utterances in a smooth, uninterrupted way (Gatbanton & Seagalowitz, 1988). Over the years, many other linguists and applied linguists have expanded and developed the idea of communicative competence and communicative language teaching. Detailed frameworks for these concepts were created (Canale, 1983; Celce-Murcia & Dornyei, 1995) consisting of various elements that could be included in a comprehensive communicative pedagogy. Some common elements include competence in areas such as grammatical/lexical knowledge (structural, vocabulary and phonology), sociolinguistic/pragmatic knowledge (relating to culture and social use), strategic and
functional (using language in conversation and communication) as well as many other components (Celce-Murcia & Dornyei, 1995). When looking at the knowledge and perceptions of language learning students, these concepts of communicative competence can serve as a frame of reference to analyze areas of language abilities.

In this study, specific areas of the CC framework were used as an analytic frame for analyzing raw data from student interviews. In Canale’s (1983) framework of CC he outlined four basic areas of CC as grammatical competence, sociocultural competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. Of these, the latter three areas will be used as a guide to explain student learning experiences. The CC pedagogical model in Canale’s framework also mentions that communicative competence refers to language “knowledge and skills” and does not always explain language use in “actual communication” (p. 17). A key element to encourage development of CC for actual communication is opportunities for students to have authentic, contextual, comprehensible input of the L2. The observation assignment is once such avenue for students to receive such exposure to a specific L2 environment, in turn preparing them for future communicative situations.

Not everyone agrees that a curriculum based on the concept of Communicative Competence is appropriate for the foreign language classroom. In the area of English for Academic Purposes (EAP), the perception of CC might vary considerably compared to the perceived communicative competence of somebody using a language for basic interpersonal communication (BICS). Because of this, it may be useful to look at the more specific areas of competence that are regarded as essential in a given
communicative situation. This change of context can potentially alter the idea as expressed by Hymes in his original theory. Kramsch (2006) explains how the academic environment affects the concept of Communicative Competence, “Foreign language education, under pressure to show evidence of efficiency and accountability, has thus diverged from the original pursuit of social justice through communicative competence, as envisaged by Hymes, Breen and Candlin, and others in the 1970s, and is being put to the service of instrumental goals. But communication in a global age “requires competencies other than mere efficiency” (Kramsch, 2006 p.250). This suggests that one must look closely at the role of communicative competence in the academic world, and recognize that the motives for competence may mean it is diverging from the original framework and pedagogical ideals. It was also brought to attention that ESL instruction which is related to a certain set of guidelines and principles (such as CC) may be ignoring the differences and context of its learners (Schultz, 2006). Because of this, it is crucial to not only look at a learner’s CC in regards to a fixed set of principles, but as one element of communication within the context interwoven with other elements. The study focuses on the communicative competence of international students who are attending and observing an academic college class. By examining the specific areas of competence which are relevant and affected in this situation, we can better understand the needs of these students and what this specific linguistic environment demands of them. The framework of Communicative Competence (Canale & Swain, 1980) encompasses such a broad spectrum of communication, this study will narrow the focus and pinpoint student competencies and areas which need to be developed further.
Strategy Use

Looking at the concept of communicative competence, one element of the pedagogical framework is “strategic competence”. This component represents competence in the use of strategies when in interlocutor either has a breakdown in communication or they want to further support another area of communication (Canale, 1981). Strategic competence can include strategies for verbal, non-verbal, linguistic, sociolinguistic and pragmatic areas of communication. This is an area that was of particular interest to me because as a language teacher and learner, strategy use seems like a common and useful form of support for moments that may be challenging in the process of second language acquisition and communication. One of the goals of the observation assignment is to get students to use strategies, and reflect on their strategy use. There are extensive strategies to use, and each learner differs in their strategy use. Strategy use will be covered further in this review, to give more background about what possible types of strategies students may use when doing the observation, and building up their strategic competence.

Several studies have asserted that using language learning strategies are helpful to students, and also widely used with successful students (Oxford & Green, 1995; Bialystok, 1990; Hong-Nam & Leavell, 2006). These studies on strategy use found that there is a positive linear relationship between strategy use and English proficiency in ESL students (Green & Oxford, 1995; Alhaisoni, 2012). Because of the high incidence of strategy use in communicative and language learning situations, we can see that even when students encounter challenges in communicating in a second language, they have
tools to help them overcome obstacles. Some strategies used by students have been to do thorough preparation before class (Haneda, 2009; Morita, 2009), partnering with fellow L1 classmates (Mori, 2014; Morita, 2009) and adopting constructivist perspectives used in class (Haneda, 2009). In this study, it is important to not only look at where students are competent or lacking in skills, but also how they traverse their L2 communicative situations.

Using “Communicative Competence” as a basis for investigating ESL communication will help explain the journey of learning IESL students go through as they are integrating into new academic and linguistic environments. Most students face challenges and adapt to new situations when attending college classes. The study of student perceptions of doing a classroom observation will show how communication factors into this transition for International English learner students.

The Acquisition of Semantic, Pragmatic and Culturally Appropriate Language

As mentioned in Chapter one, the goal of an Intensive English Program is not only to teach students how to speak a language, but also how to use the language in appropriate ways. Language is bound to culture, so much of the learning depends on the environment in which the students use English. The IESL students who participated in this study are learning English in an immersion program; they are living in an English speaking country and studying at a university which teaches classes in English. This environment not only requires that they communicate in English all the time, but also that they learn the local cultural application of the language. Language acquisition in this context is affected by many things, so areas reviewed will cover research and theory
relating to learning semantic, pragmatic and cultural language, as well as the environments which affect these processes of acquisition.

**Learning Through Social Interaction**

The students participating in the study were learning English communication in the classroom at the IEP, then went to another class to observe the interactions and communication in an academic class at the university. Many educational theories attest to the power of learning through social interactions and environments (Vygotsky, 1935; Kramsch, 1987; Firth & Wagner, 1997). Through interaction, students can learn a language as well as non-verbal language and contextual meaning. An experience such as a classroom observation is something that is social; although the students doing the observation have minimal interaction, they are observing the social interactions of the teacher and members of the class. They are learning from the actions, behaviors and language used by that particular group of people, not reading it from a book. This information may be new, challenging and increase the knowledge and linguistic awareness of the student. Because of the social nature of the classroom observation assignment which was investigated in this study, looking at research on social learning can provide a better understanding of how learning and language acquisition happen through this medium.

An early revelation of the benefits of learning through social situations was described by Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. He attested that people should not observe student’s capabilities as what they have been able to accomplish, but what they are able to accomplish with the help of another person. What a learner is able to
accomplish with the assistance of a more advanced person is called the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1935). This demonstrates that learning does not happen solitarily; a student can gain knowledge through interaction and guidance. In this case, the guidance can push the student’s learning ability to the next level, above what they are already able to achieve. Vygotsky explained the importance of ZPD, “What is important for the school is not what the child has already learned but what he is capable of learning. ZPD defined the child’s ability to master under guidance, with help, direction, or cooperation what he still does not have” (p. 206). Although this research was referring to children, we can adopt the same principle to language learners—whether children or adults. Something as simple as pointing to an object can be a learning experience, and any verbal utterance heard can give knowledge to another person. When learning through interactions with other human beings, verbal as well as non-verbal communication and meaning is exchanged. Language teaching has adopted many strategies that use social, interactive and task based activities. This study looked at one such activity: the classroom observation. IESL students were able to observe interactions between people in the classroom, see how they communicated and interacted with each other, and then reflect on the experience to develop new knowledge about this context for language use.

Other scholars in the field of social psychology have theorized about the importance of social interactions (e.g. teacher to student or student to student interactions) in the process of learning. Also in the early twentieth century, James Mark Baldwin described how imitation is a key process in the internalization of knowledge; he explained that replicating the actions of another is a way to prepare for future
interactions, by reconstructing what they have observed (Baldwin, 1897). This can be clearly seen in the learning process of language students, where the act of listening and observing language used in a social situation can serve as a guide for how to use it themselves. By doing an observation, students can view and analyze the interlocutors’ experiences, reactions and achievements. This can then be internalized and used as a tool for formulating their future language use in a similar environment. For IESL students who are planning to matriculate into a US university, the class observation can provide ideas of how to “imitate” the language and behavior of native speaking students which will help them be successful in their own future US classes.

By sending IESL students out of the language classroom to observe social interactions between students and teachers in a university class, they gain knowledge of how to communicate in the classroom in an appropriate way. Vygotsky’s idea of ZPD explained that people can learn more when interacting with others who are more advanced, so in the case of the observation assignment the native speakers in the class serve as an example of more advanced language use, which IESL students can learn from by watching the interactions between everybody in the classroom. In addition to learning appropriate language in the classroom, they may gain a better understanding of their own English abilities, as well as cultural expectations of students in US classes.

Context and Authentic Language

Watching and observing human behavior is a great way to build background knowledge, directly from the source. In this study, students were instructed to observe communication in a college class, and reflect on the experience. By consciously
watching, listening and being aware of what people say and do, a person can gain linguistic and cultural knowledge. In any social situation, there are many elements which contribute to the context and meaning of language used. This explains why observation can also be a useful tool for language learning pedagogy. As Goodwin and Duranti (1992) explain, “Treating human interaction as a central context for speech provides an expanded view of language, one that ties the production of talk to systematic social organization” (p.22). In any given situation where interaction occurs, the situation could potentially vary depending on the relationship of the people, cultural hierarchies and norms, goal of the interaction, as well as many other factors. Language cannot be fully explained and understood when removed from the context and history of the interlocutors.

Through the observation of a specific communicative environment, such as a college classroom, students can learn spoken language as well as non-verbal language and appropriate contextual meaning. Observations have frequently been used in the field of sociology, because of the “value of participant observation in increasing our understanding of the context of social life” (Darling, 1998). This can be useful when studying human behavior as well as communication and language use. If a student studying English in an IEP wants to learn more about University classes, of course they can read about it or ask a friend or teacher for some information. This information will be the interpretation from the source, and may not provide an accurate account, considering that each class may be different. On the other hand, knowledge gained from a personal observation will be their own perception of the situation. An in-class observation will
allow them to see the professor teach and use various methods to communicate with students, interactions between student and teacher, student and teacher behaviors, and the actual language used in this natural setting. This experience can give students a much deeper and broader sense of what the classroom environment is like, compared to receiving a second hand account. In addition, they will be able to critically analyze the information on their own and build their own linguistic knowledge in a way that is appropriate for them (Renkl, 2014).

Since language is socially situated, one could argue that learning from “authentic language” will be essential in developing communication fluency. Authentic language refers to communicative situations that are not textbook contrived (Canale, 1983). Celce-Murcia & Dornyei (1995) suggest that many language learning classes may not effectively prepare students for the complexity of real life communication, which is why sociocultural knowledge is crucial. Creating opportunities for students to learn through experiences outside of the language classroom could potentially be beneficial in the same way people learn job skills through an internship or apprenticeship. Through class observations, students can develop contextually appropriate language skills through the observation of an authentic linguistic environment (Duranti & Goodwin, 1992).

**Cultural Differences in Education**

At an IEP, there are typically students from all over the world. The awareness of cultural differences is crucial in the practice of teaching a class of students who come from various backgrounds. Likewise, understanding differences is also key when the teacher and students come from different cultural backgrounds. Depending on the
cultural background of the student, he or she may have a range of ideas and perceptions about communicating in the classroom. Observing a college class while still studying in an IEP can be a way of developing pragmatic and cultural knowledge. A language is not only the words we speak, but how we speak them. Communication may vary from one language to the next, therefore this is a main focus in language learning curriculum. In the Communication class where this study was done, students learn communication skills which are applicable for continuing an English-taught education, through the observation of an academic class at the university.

Having pragmatic and cultural awareness benefits students who are studying in an international context. Pragmatics refers to the ‘when’, ‘how’ and ‘why’ of using a language. This is interwoven into our culture. Through the process of growing up in a certain culture, we learn the “rules” of language use. Consequently, people from other countries may not have this background knowledge, so they will need to learn the appropriate pragmatic responses and language. When somebody greets you with “Good morning!”, is the appropriate response, “thank you!” or “I agree?” No, most Americans would reply with the same phrase, “good morning.” This may be an inherent response for native speakers, but may be different for non-native speakers. This applies to many areas of language use, including communication in the classroom. Because educators working in IEPs have students from all over the world, introducing common cultural practices and intercultural knowledge is critical when teaching English.

This is where the concept of “cultural intelligence” (CI) becomes pertinent. CI is defined by Earley and Ang (2003) as “a person’s ability to function and manage
effectively in culturally diverse settings” (as cited in Rafieyan et al., 2015, p. 560). This awareness can demystify communicative situations that may not be commonplace in the native culture. A study by Rafieyan et al. (2015) surveyed Iranian students studying English at IEPs in the United States. They found that individuals with a higher CI, with the ability to understand similarities and differences between cultures, were more successful in understanding implied meanings. In general, the higher the CI the better able he or she is able to function and use pragmatically appropriate verbal and non-verbal modes of communication. The study also cited that having any experience in the target culture will increase a person's CI. This may suggest that studying a language by joining various different social and communicative situations in the linguistic environment you wish to learn about (such as a college class) could serve as a tool for increasing CI.

Another aspect which may affect language acquisition is whether a student comes from a collectivist culture or an individualistic culture. Several studies have cited major classroom differences between collectivist cultures and individualistic cultures. Collectivist cultures, which include many Asian and South American countries, have differing views on intergroup opinions and assessments compared to individualistic cultures (top individualistic countries include US, Australia, UK and Canada). Liu and Park (2012) explain that in collective societies, they are more sensitive to the judgments of others. In a study of EFL students in Korea, it was found that when there were more people involved in a discussion, students were less willing to speak. Li (2012) found similar behaviors, where students in China were afraid of making mistakes in front of their teacher and peers. Asking an inappropriate question or making a mistake in front of
people could result in losing face and cause embarrassment to the speaker. This may affect the amount and type of communication that happens in the classroom in these cultural environments. In the US, teachers typically employ interactive, communicative teaching methods where students are encouraged to ask questions, give their opinion, and generally participate in class discussions. On the contrary, in other cultures this could be uncommon classroom behavior. A student may seem shy, afraid to participate and contribute ideas. By being aware of this, the teacher can acknowledge that the student is not inadequate for not participating as much, they are just acting in a way that is comfortable for them based on their cultural background. The awareness of cultural differences and the necessity to adjust teaching methods can help create a language learning environment which is comfortable and conducive to student learning and communication (Ellis, 1996). The experience of observing a college class is one way to introduce and mediate authentic cultural experiences into a class. Thomas (1983) argues that this type of culturally entrenched sociocultural language experience can not be created from simulated exercises (Clennell, 1999). Real world classroom experiences for students from other cultures will promote learning and discussion on how to identify and adapt to differences in classroom expectations. Once students have time to learn and observe the differences of communication, they may become more adept to communicating in their new cultural environment.

Ellis (1996) drew attention to this issue and proposed a solution for teachers working in a diverse cultural atmosphere. The first it to realize and accept the notion that these differences exist, and then adapt to the environment. Ellis proposes that teachers
take on the role of cultural mediator: “mediation demonstrates awareness of other culture identities whilst still retaining one's own. It is the process of moving from an ethnocentric perception to a non-dualistic, ‘metacultural’ perception” (p.217). This can apply to classrooms in the US which have a multicultural group of students.

Teaching Styles. Teaching styles vary in many ways; different countries and cultures have certain teaching and educational practices, and schools also may differ in how they present information to students. When bringing students from around the world together to a new learning environment, they may need to adapt to new teaching methods, or they may feel comfortable right away. Because this study examines the perceptions of international ELL students observation of a US college class it will be useful to look at the curriculum and teaching style of Intensive English Programs (IEP), traditional university classes, as well as teaching styles from other parts of the world.

Two very different teaching styles are described by Trigwell (1999). The first is Information Transmission/Teacher focused Approach, which focuses on the transmission of facts and skills from the teacher to student. It is assumed that the students don’t have any previous knowledge on the subject, and students do not play an active role in learning (p.62). This teaching style also may include rote memorization of facts, and the attitude that “the teacher knows everything, the student knows nothing” (Freire, 1970, p.73). This teaching style is often associated with lecturing by the teacher, and not much interaction/communication from students. The second teaching style as described by Trigwell (1999) is Conceptual Change/Student Focused Approach. This teaching approach puts the teacher in the position of a facilitator, “helping students construct knowledge through
student focused activities” (p.62). With this style of teaching, students have the opportunity to create meaning for themselves using previous knowledge and experiences. They are able to think critically and interact with the teacher, materials and their classmates. Trigwell’s study revealed that students reported a “deeper” learning from student-centered teaching styles, compared to “surface” learning that happened when teachers were only trying to transmit knowledge.

Although these teaching styles may seem conflicting and incompatible, there may be some overlap and mixing of methods. Universities often have large classes and therefore use lectures which are teacher-centered. On the other hand, they also might have smaller classes which use group work and student-centered interaction. The educational landscape is diverse and complex, in the US and abroad. Culture and history have impacted teaching methods and styles, although it does not mean that it should be seen as uniform or unchanging (Ryan & Louie, 2007). Looking at these teaching styles is not meant to say they are used exclusively and without adjustment to the needs of the class, but just as a way to identify possible different teaching environments students may encounter.

**Language Socialization.** Growing up in a particular culture, we learn the unspoken “rules” of life: language, relationships, values and countless other aspects which we know and follow subconsciously. This lifelong process of enculturation helps us to understand and identify with the cultural environment in which we live. From a young age we are taught to say “please” and “thank you” at the appropriate times, and even as adults we continue to do this because we know that this is what is considered to
be polite. We learn these kinds of lessons throughout our lives, and over time it is
engrained in our typical daily behaviors (Gee, 1990).

People who move to a new place do not have this same acquired knowledge. They
have grown up in another culture, so in many cases they are starting from scratch learning
the routines and ways of the new culture. In many places, saying please and thank you is
seen as a very formal use of language, not something friends commonly say to each other.
In this case, the newcomer lacks the same pragmatic knowledge of how to appropriately
use these words in certain situations. Through the experience of living and using a
language in the new cultural environment, this person will learn many new things, either
implicitly or explicitly. At this point, the learning process of language socialization or
acculturation begins to take place. When students move to a new country and language
environment for educational purposes, language socialization affects them in many ways.

People will gradually learn the behaviors of a new culture when they move to
another country, but there are also differences when interacting with smaller communities
within that culture. The concept of Discourses (Gee, 1990) explains the various linguistic
environments one may encounter and need to adapt to. Gee describes Discourses as:

Distinctive ways of speaking/listening and often, too, writing/reading coupled
with distinctive ways of acting, interacting, valuing, feeling, dressing, thinking,
believing, with other people and with various objects, tools, and Technologies, so
as to enact specific socially recognizable identities engaged in specific socially
recognizable activities.

(Gee, 1990, p.155)

Language socialization happens in many places and within different groups and
Discourses. Gee states that people have their primary Discourse, which is the one they
are raised and enculturated into from a young age, and also secondary Discourses, which are different from their primary Discourse and may require adaptation or code switching. Speaking in one’s L2 would be one type of secondary Discourse, as would a class taught in the L2. This study of international students looks at this specific Discourse: the US college classroom. By focusing on a specific area, it will show the particular language and communication within that sphere. Students acquire appropriate language through the observation, although one class is not enough to truly be acculturated and socialized into that environment. It is the first step to seeing, hearing and learning about a particular linguistic environment and Discourse.

Conclusion

Developing communicative competence is not a simple, linear process for international and language learning students. The acquisition of semantic, pragmatic, and culturally appropriate language happens through many means. Students have different experiences, and in turn, use various strategies to cope with the challenges of socialization in the classroom. The process of socialization includes many of the principles mentioned in this review: language use in social contexts, cultural differences, teaching styles and language learning strategies. This all contributes to an IESL students’ self-perceived developing communicative competence and the acquisition of skills needed for communicating in a US college class environment.
Chapter 3: Methodology

In wisdom gathered over time I have found that every experience is a form of exploration.

— Ansel Adams

Educational research has been described as “an endeavor to generate new knowledge” (p. 2, Issac & Miachel,1995). The purpose of this study was to generate this new knowledge through qualitative research, focusing on the perceptions and experiences of students.

This study examines international ESL students’ perceptions of communication in a US college classroom. The following chapter will address factors of methodology including the setting, data sources, participants, instrumentation, data collection procedures and data analysis procedures.

Setting

This study was conducted with students from an advanced level Communication class, in an Intensive English Program (IEP). The IEP is located on the campus of a mid-size state university in a town one hour north of a major city in California. The IEP welcomes students from all over the world who wish to improve their English. Some students pay tuition, and some have scholarships from their home country. The curriculum is designed to prepare students for the academic and professional use of English, many will eventually matriculate in to a US university to pursue a higher
education degree. The IEP curriculum is designed to be well rounded; incorporating reading, writing, communication, grammar as well as cultural and extracurricular components.

The communication class meets three hours a week and has fourteen students enrolled. The students were from various countries, and have a wide variety of educational and instructional backgrounds. The student interviews were done at lunchtime, in the building where the students typically attend classes and socialize with classmates. In order to create a comfortable and quiet environment for interviewing students, the interviews were done in the lobby/community area of the language school as well as the small meeting room/break room. These areas had couches, tables and chairs. They were in a public place, but were not very noisy. When interviewing participants a goal was to do so in a comfortable, familiar setting so they would be at ease discussing their feelings and experiences. The meetings happened one-on-one and typically took about twenty minutes.

Participants

The participants of this study were students in an Intensive English Program, in the level 500 (advanced) Communication class. Level 500 is the highest level of the English program, so many of these students will be graduating or moving on after this year of study. The time they have spent in the US varies; some have been here one year or more, some have been here less than three months. Either way, they have a high level of comprehension and communicative ability. After the completion of the English program, some will stay in the US to attend college or work, and some will return to their home
country to continue with their higher education or to find a job. The students in the class come from all over the world, although a large percentage are from various Asian countries (China, Japan, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam), and several are from Middle Eastern (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait) and South American (Venezuela) countries.

Initially, all of the students were surveyed to find out general information about their background and perceptions of communication in the college classroom environment. Before having students do the survey, I spoke to them in person about the research purpose and process. This was done for several reasons. First, I wanted to introduce myself and make a personal connection with the class before asking them to help with my research. Although I knew many of the students from previous classes I had taught, this was not my class, so introducing myself seemed like the best way to explain my study and ask for volunteers. The instructor of the class graciously allowed me to do the research with her class, and spend time observing and interacting with the students. Before this happened, I wanted to talk to them and explain the overall process. I explained that I was investigating student perceptions of communication in a US college classroom. I would interview people in conjunction with the observation assignment assigned by their Communication teacher (See Appendix B). After I explained everything, they did an online survey in class. The initial survey gathered information and also offered the opportunity for students to volunteer or decline participation in a further interview (See Appendix C). Of the fourteen students, seven volunteered to be interviewed. After this information was collected, four students were selected to participate in interviews. The students chosen to do the interviews were selected because
of several factors which were included in data collected from the survey. These factors were:

- Home country
- First Language (L1)
- Sex
- Past experience in US classrooms
- Plans after finishing the English program

These criteria were used because I wanted to have a variety of students with different backgrounds and future plans. I chose two male and two female students, two who have observed or attended class in the US, and two who have not. They all have different goals after they finish studying in the English program. By interviewing a diverse group, it would provide information from multiple perspectives and give us a broader view of what students may experience when observing a college class.

I chose the following students to participate in the study. (Their names have been changed).

1. Andrea, a female student from China. Her L1 is Mandarin, and she is currently enrolled in the university as music scholarship student. She plans on continuing her college education in the US, and will matriculate into more classes once she is finished studying at the IEP. Before this, she has taken a music class at a US university, and she also took university classes in Singapore, which were taught in English.
2. Thanai, a female student from Thailand. Her L1 is Thai, and she has a university degree in Pharmacy from a Thai university. She has not observed or attended any college classes in the US, and does not plan to after she finishes the English program. Her goal after studying English at the IEP is to live and work in the US.

3. Marcy, a male student from Japan. His L1 is Japanese, and he is currently attending an International University in Japan. He plans on returning to Japan after one semester of studying English, to finish his degree and become a teacher. He has not observed or attended any academic classes at a US college.

4. Kash, a male student from Saudi Arabia. His L1 is Arabic, and he has observed a US college class before. His plans are to attend a university in the US after he finishes studying at the IEP.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name/Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Native Language</th>
<th>Plans after IEP study</th>
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<td>Thai</td>
<td>Live and work in US</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kash (M)</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
<td>University in US</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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**Data Sources**

In order to triangulate the data, multiple data sources were used. This collection of pieces help to substantiate the conclusions of the study (Eisner, 1998). The sources of data collection were:

- Whole Communication Class (initial survey only)
- Small sample of class, four students (interviews)
- Instructor of Communication class (interview)
**Data Source #1: Class Survey.** The first data source used for analysis was the Communication 500 class. The purpose of surveying the class was to find several students to interview. The whole class participated in the online survey, and when that data was collected and reviewed I was able to choose four students I wanted to interview. By surveying the entire class I could find out basic information, such as sex, home country, previous college experience, and willingness to participate in the study. This initial survey would help me to choose a diverse group of students to participate in the interviews.

**Data Source # 2: Student Interviews.** The second source of data was the four students selected for interviews. Data were collected through conducting one-on-one interviews with the students. This was the main data source; my research goal was to learn about student perceptions of college class communication, so the ideas and words I got directly from students were invaluable. There were two rounds of interviews. First, an interview was done before the student went to observe a college class, to find out what their perceptions of US college classes were and what their self-perceptions were. The second round of interviews were done after the students had observed a class; these interviews were to look at what they had learned, and if any perceptions had changed or developed. During these interviews, I asked the students questions that I had prepared ahead of time (see Appendix D), I took written notes, and I recorded the interview with a small audio recorder.

**Data Source # 3: Instructor Interview.** The third data source was the instructor of the communication class. She was interviewed to find out the history of this
assignment, pedagogical goals, and her perceptions of its purpose and effect on student learning. This interview was very helpful in explaining why it was chosen as an assignment and its importance in the communication class curriculum. I felt that acquiring data from various sources and gathering sufficient background information was beneficial, to see things from multiple perspectives to support my data analysis.

**Data Collection Procedures**

**Online Survey.** The first step of data collection was through the online survey, which was done through the website Survey Monkey. I went to the class to introduce myself, explain my Masters thesis research, and explain the survey I had created. I then passed out a small paper to the students with information about my thesis topic, as well as the web address to the survey. The instructor of the class allowed the students to use their smartphones to complete the survey right then in class. The survey had seven questions, and took less than ten minutes to complete. After the students completed the survey I answered some questions about the study and the requirements of the people who wished to participate. Doing this small presentation and initial survey was a great way to introduce myself, my research, and gather basic information from the class.

After I went to the class and gave the survey, I looked at the information to see who might be the best candidates for the interviews. I was looking for students with different home countries and past college experiences. Once I analyzed the information gathered, I decided on and asked four students to participate in interviews for my research.
**Student Interviews.** The goal of the interviews was to find out student perceptions of college classroom communication, and there were two things I was looking at: perceptions pre-observation and perceptions post-observation. For their class assignment, the students needed to attend a class at the university (not a language class), observe communication and take notes. I interviewed each student once before they went to observe a class, and once after (interview questions, see Appendix D). The first step of this data collection was to do the pre-observation interview. To find out student perceptions I wanted to ask open ended questions, to allow them to share their ideas on what they expected to happen in the class they were going to observe. Once they had explained their expectations, I followed up with other questions, in order to gather similar information from each participant. To make sure I was able to get all the information and be able to analyze it later on, I used a small recorder to make an audio recording the interview. Initially, I was worried that doing an recorded interview would make students feel uncomfortable, and after doing it I found that they felt comfortable speaking with the recorder present.

After doing the first round of interviews, it was time for the students to go do their class observations. Before they went to observe, their instructor gave them instructions on what to look for in the class, and how to take notes on the experience. They used a variety of forms for observation notes (See Appendix E & F). This information they gathered was used by students for the reflection/presentation they needed to present to their class. They also referred to their notes when doing the post-observation interview for the study,
The second step of this data collection was to do the post-observation interviews with the students. To make sure I was able to talk to the students soon after they did their observation, I tried to schedule our post-observation interviews for the same day that they went to observe the class. By doing this I thought I would get them when the ideas were fresh in their mind. Some students were able to meet me the same day as their observation, and some talked to me a few days after. I performed the interview in a similar way to the first time; first asking open ended questions so they would describe the experience in their own words, then following up with more specific questions. Again, I tried to keep the atmosphere comfortable, so the students would open up and be honest about their perceptions and feelings. Creating a rapport and talking for a few minutes before starting the interview questions seemed to help them relax and get comfortable before speaking to me about the experience. After interviewing the student, the audio recording and notes would be used for analysis.

**Instructor Interview.** My final step of the data collection process was to interview the instructor of the class. I went to her office and spend about thirty minutes discussing the observation assignment. I did not record this interview, I only took notes on the key points we discussed. This interview was not to specifically discuss each student’s experience, but to share her insight on the overall process and general accomplishments of the observation assignment. In addition, I wanted to learn about the history and evolution of this assignment, and the overarching goals from the teachers perspective. Hearing this from the instructor was a good way to see the assignment from a different angle and understand the intended purpose on a deeper level.
Instrumentation

The first instrument of data collection was the online survey platform, Survey Monkey. This method was chosen as an easy way to collect basic information. The questions on the interview were multiple choice or short answer. The survey questions were designed to help identify criteria for choosing interview participants. Each student went online and answered questions about themselves, their English learning experience and their future goals. This was then analyzed for the selection of students for interviews.

The next form of instrumentation were semi-structured interviews, in which open ended and follow up questions were asked (Appendix D). This method of data collection has several benefits, such as building a rapport with participants, the ability to get in-depth answers, as well as the ability to ask follow up questions if all information was not originally provided (Issaac & Michael, 1995). Interviews were chosen because the goal was to get a in depth look at student perceptions and feelings. Written surveys would be too time consuming for students to write, and follow up questions would not have been possible.

The interview was recorded on a small audio recorder, which was placed on the table in front of the interviewee. By doing this, I would be able to get all the information from the students, and have the context of when and how they said it. Taking notes alone would not give me as much information to look at during the process of analysis. After the interviews were completed the audio recordings were transcribed for easier analysis. An interview was also done with the instructor of the class. This interview was not
recorded, as the student interviews were. Notes were taken as the interview happened, and observation assignment prompt and note taking outline was also provided.

**Data Analysis Methods**

Data was analyzed using the Grounded Theory Method (GTM) which was established by Glaser and Strauss in 1967 (Brant & Charmaz, 2007). This method of qualitative analysis finds constructs and categories within data and then uses those emergent patterns to form a theory. Data (i.e. interview transcripts, see Appendix G) were read, and for each topic discussed individual answers were observed as well as collective patterns. From this, interpretations were made. The purpose of the study was not to verify a hypothesis or find a specific answer, data was used to generate new information and perspectives on students studying in this type of English program. Student responses were read, and looked at question by question to see what their perceptions were. In chapter four, *Findings and Analysis*, the responses were written up by interview question, a mini-analysis was done for each question. A final analysis of the overall findings is done in chapter five.
Chapter 4: Findings and Analysis

It only takes one voice to give others the chance to see possibilities.

— Aimee Carter

The purpose of this study was to look deeper at international students’ experiences and perceptions of communication in a US college classroom. Four students were interviewed to learn what they noticed and observed through their class observation assignment. The goal was also to learn about their self-perceptions of their own ability to communicate in this environment. Looking at these areas can provide information about challenges international students may face when attending college classes in the US, and how IEP educators can better prepare them for this possible transition.

This study examines international ESL students’ perceptions of communication in a US college class and was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does a college classroom observation assignment affect the self-perceptions by International English Learner students of their communicative competence with respect to the use of English in an American college classroom?
   a. How does the college classroom observation experience affect their attitudes and ideas about potential challenges and communication skills needed when attending an American university?
   b. What strategies do IEL students use to overcome these perceived challenges?
The students who participated in the study are students at an Intensive English Program (IEP) in the US, and are trying to improve their English for academic purposes. Four students of college age were interviewed, each on two occasions. The students came from the following countries: Thailand, Japan, China and Saudi Arabia. Two female students and two male students were interviewed. The participants had varying educational goals; two were planning to attend a university in the US, one would be returning to a university in their home country, and one will be staying in the US to work, possibly study, and live.

Table 1: Participants

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<th>Name/Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Native Language</th>
<th>Plans after IEP study</th>
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<tr>
<td>Thanai (F)</td>
<td>Thailand</td>
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<td>Live and work in US</td>
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<tr>
<td>Andrea (F)</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Mandarin</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marcy (M)</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
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<td>Kash (M)</td>
<td>Saudi Arabia</td>
<td>Arabic</td>
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The main method of data collection was doing face to face interviews with participants. Two interviews were done, one before the class observation and one after. The interviews were semi-structured, with similar questions asked to each person. The questions were open ended, and follow up questions were also asked. Interviews lasted about fifteen to twenty minutes, and were done on the university campus. The interviews were recorded with a small digital recorder, and then transcribed. After transcribing the interviews, analysis was done by reading through student responses, creating a table of the questions and responses, and then looking for patterns and overarching themes that emerged (See Appendix H).
The findings have been organized based on the framework of Communicative Competence (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983). This framework outlines four basic areas of language knowledge and skills: grammatical competence, sociocultural competence, discourse competence and strategic competence. The analysis will look specifically at what students learned and experienced in relation to grammatical, sociocultural, discourse and strategic knowledge. The theoretical concept of CC as a framework focuses on skills and knowledge, and the authors also stress that “actual communication” in an L2 invites many other factors into the equation (Canale & Swain, 1980). The findings of the study will not only explain the areas of CC which were developed, but also elements of “actual communication” which affected students when observing communication in this real-life situation. Participant’s perceptions and their reflection on the class observation explain how this assignment has helped develop new L2 knowledge.

According to Canale (1983), these four competencies required for successful communication are:

- **Grammatical Competence**: The mastery of word and sentence formation. This also includes spelling and vocabulary, use of verb tenses, pronunciation and linguistic semantics.

- **Sociolinguistic Competence**: This area focuses on if “utterances are produced and understood appropriately in different sociolinguistic contexts” (p.7). This is knowing the rules of social use, and being able to use the language appropriate for the social situation.
• Discourse Competence: This is the combination of using grammatical forms, with the appropriate meaning to achieve communication in a particular genre. For example, knowing how to write a business letter, or participate in a conversation in a cohesive and coherent way.

• Strategic Competence: Ability to use communication strategies to assist an interlocutor when a breakdown in communication occurs. Strategies can be verbal or non-verbal, and used in actual communication situations. Language learning strategies used throughout the learning process have also been included in this area because of the educational nature of the study.

• Actual Communication: This refers to language use in an authentic social context, not in a language classroom or contrived from a textbook.

The class observation was part of an assignment that students did in their communication class. The teacher of the class was also interviewed, to learn about the observation assignment from the teachers perspective. The data and findings will be organized in the following way, according to Canale’s 1983 framework of CC, with some additional sections:

1. Instructor Interview
2. Grammatical Competence
3. Sociolinguistic Competence
4. Discourse Competence
5. Strategic Competence
6. Actual Communication
Instructor Interview and Assignment Goals

The classroom observation assignment for the Communication 500 class has been done for over eighteen years. An interview with the instructor of the class was done to gain information about the background, evolution and current goals of the assignment. She also provided the assignment prompt and note taking pages which are given to students (Appendices B & E).

The instructor of this Communication class at the IEP has been teaching for over forty years, and teaching ESL for about twenty. When she started teaching at this school she “inherited” the observation assignment. This assignment has been done for over eighteen years, with some changes and adjustments along the way.

Originally, the assignment was more of a classroom visit. The teacher would make the arrangements for the student to go to watch a university class. At this time, there was not much reflection done by the students after they had the experience of observing a US college class. After following this assignment format from the previous teacher, she realized that there were many opportunities to develop students’ communication skills that were being missed. First of all, instead of arranging the class visits for the students, she started making them arrange their own class visit. By having to contact the professors, talk to secretaries or email people about the class, the students would have to use their L2 communication skills and navigate the process of setting up the observation. It provided more experiences talking with native speakers, and introduced students to some of the staff and faculty of the school. Students needed to use
many communication strategies when setting up the observation. The first step of setting up the observation became part of the overall learning experience.

Additionally, she developed the assignment to be more reflective. This took the assignment from being just a classroom visit, to being an observation. She wanted students to approach the observation as if they were anthropologists. Students needed to take notes on several things relating to the classroom environment, communication, teacher, strategies used, class content, students, etc. The reflection was a way to make the assignment more metacognitive, and make students aware of the development of communication skills, self-perceptions and understanding of the classroom environment.

Compared to the original assignment, it has become a more interactive, metacognitive and reflective. In turn, this helps to solidify the knowledge students gain from the experience. By being in a real US university class, they observe authentic use of English in a specific context, and from a teacher from a different cultural background. They learn through social interaction and the observation of others, and also need to use strategies when doing the observation. The notes they take in the class will be used for their reflection; they need to write about their experience and give a presentation as part of the assignment. The reflection paper and presentation needs to explain what it would be like to be in this class, and also about how they can be successful in this situation. When the students do their presentation in class, they share their experiences with classmates, answer any questions others might have. By doing this, students gain not only knowledge from their own experience, but also learn about other classroom experiences from their classmates. Overall, this assignment incorporates the use of communication in
authentic situations (setting up the observation), input of sociolinguistic and cultural knowledge (observing the class), classroom communication skills and strategies (listening, taking notes), reflection and self-reflection (paper and presentation), and communication and output of knowledge (giving a presentation on the experience). It evolved from a simple class visit arranged by the teacher, to a complex and reflective assignment to garner new communication knowledge and skills.

**Grammatical Competence**

In the CC framework of skills and knowledge, grammatical competence (GC) refers to vocabulary, word formation, sentence formation, pronouns, spelling and semantics. The students who participated in the study were advanced level students and the focus of the assignment was to look at and reflect on classroom communication, therefore grammatical competence was not mentioned in the interviews very much. Of all of the four areas, this one was the least common one to be mentioned by students. Nonetheless, there was some awareness of the need for grammatical skills.

**Grammatical Competence Pre-Observation Findings.** In the Pre-Observation interviews, several students noted the importance of knowing English vocabulary relevant to their classroom experience. Marcy mentioned that to understand what the teacher is talking about, a student should be prepared ahead of time. He explained reading is an effective learning strategy, because it helps with developing several areas, including “learning vocabulary.” In addition, Thanai explained how vocabulary affects her understanding in class. She was going to observe a biology class said she thought there might be some vocabulary she did not know. Although she had taken this class, it had
been a couple years, and originally she took it in Thai. She also referenced learning strategies she used to build up her vocabulary before class, and how to deal with situations when you don’t know a word. This will be explained further in the “Strategic Competence” section.

During the Post-Observation interviews students did not mention any issues with grammatical competence in the classroom. Learning and knowing vocabulary was the only grammatical element students mentioned. From the interview with the instructor, and also the interviews from the students we can see that GC is not a main area of focus or skill development for this observation assignment.

**Sociolinguistic Competence**

The second element of CC in the framework is sociolinguistic competence (SC), which refers to the “rules” of the language and how to use the language appropriately in a specific social context. This was one of the main concepts that Hymes (1967) emphasized; that you can use a language in a grammatically correct way, but this will not create successful communication unless you also understand how to use the language in certain sociolinguistic contexts. SC includes knowledge of how to communicate with people of various status’, for certain purposes or through different registers. All of these factors are closely related to cultural norms and are extremely important to know when using a language with native speakers and immersed in another culture. This is the environment that the international students are in, so gaining sociolinguistic knowledge is crucial for developing successful communication. Questions revealed many factors relating to sociolinguistic knowledge, and several sociolinguistic categories emerged. The
pre- and post- sections have thus been labeled with three categories of SC: a) teacher and teaching style, b) contextual/environmental differences and similarities and c) student behavior and attitudes.

**Sociolinguistic Competence Pre-Observation Findings.** The goal of these interviews was to learn about student assumptions and perceptions relating to communication in the classroom. Many of the students explained these ideas in ways that related to the sociolinguistic nature of communication; specifically the role of the teacher, teaching style and also the educational environment and context of student learning.

**Teacher and Teaching Style.** Some of the first questions asked about the possible communicative situations that students might observe in the classroom. Several answers showed that students anticipated communication that depends on the teacher, which is linked to the native culture of the school. Andrea said that she expects the class to be lecture style, and she will observe “how the teacher gives her knowledge to the students, like they use a Powerpoint or something.” Andrea’s response to the question of “What kind of student are you?” compared her past experience with her current experience studying in the US. She said that she feels like right now she is doing well in school and “everything is fine”. She explained that in her English classes at the IEP she is doing well and she likes the teachers. “I think here the teachers are so patient, if you have any problem or any questions during class, I can just say it.” She explained that this is different from back home in China, where, “we will be a little afraid to say out, if you ask a question, you will have other students who know the answer, they will think like ‘you are so stupid, why do you not know this?’ , or sometimes the teacher like, they are so busy
and have other classes to teach so they will just go.” This response gives some insight into the different experiences she has had and how they affect her attitude about school back home versus school in the US.

Thanai also said that predicted that the teacher might use Powerpoint and ask the students questions. In addition, there might be discussions and group work, but overall “the interaction will depend on the teacher.”

When discussing the communication that will happen in class, Kash also had a prediction about how the teacher will communicate with the students, “They tell a story similar to the topic they are talking about, so this will be more interesting. Yeah, tell a story.” In addition to the teacher telling stories, they could ask students questions, or students could ask the teacher questions. He also mentioned there may be some group work during the class.

Marcy also explained how the teacher will affect communication, he predicted that there would be a conversation between the teacher and students, and also between students. This is different from many classes in Japan, in which it is common for “the teachers just say a lot.” Marcy also explained that he has ideas about the teaching style in Western countries from studying at an International college in Japan. “I went to the international college and I know for the first time, like how foreign teachers teaching. So, I was impressed by this pedagogy, then I’m so interested in how to teach.” Another factor Marcy mentioned relating to SC is the use of implied meanings. “We have to understand what the teacher really want to say, so like teacher imply, like what they really want to say, and we have to understand.” Implied meanings are very much linked to the language
and culture, so more sociolinguistic knowledge of the environment will help people understand these messages.

**Contextual/environmental differences and similarities.** The question “What kind of student are you?” was asked, to find out about students’ existing self-perceptions relating to language learning and communication. Again, many of the answers were sociolinguistic in nature. The students did not see themselves as just students standing alone in the world, but as students in relation to their classroom and social environment.

Thanai explained that she typically feels very “bored and sleepy” in lectures and, and likes interactive and hands on work better. When studying Pharmacy in Thailand she always enjoyed the lab classes compared to the lectures.

When asking Marcy this question, he gave a two part answer. He first explained that when he was young, he was a “terrible” student. He barely graduated high school, and English was one of his worst subjects. I almost need to stay one more year.” Things turned around when he went to college though. “Maybe I cannot fit Japanese pedagogy, so I, like changed my course.” After beginning to study English at the International University, “I have the opportunity to know other countries lecture, how to teach, so I was very impressed, and I like very much. I can become motivated to study hard, so I become to like English and want to improve my English skill.” At this point, he is a more motivated student and feels passionate about what he is studying.

In these pre-observation questions, students had a variety of answers and preconceived ideas about what to expect in class. Their notions of communication in class and teaching style came from different places; college back home, other
observations, or even ideas about what a good class will be like, in their opinion. One interesting finding is that students feel that the teacher plays a crucial role in the type of communication used in class. Several students explained themselves as students in connection to the class and the teacher. The way the class is taught and the way the teacher teaches and interacts with students can have an affect on their performance, motivation and perception of education. From these answers, it could be said that their self-perceptions are not a fixed, unchanging thing, but dependent on the sociolinguistic environment of the classroom.

**Sociolinguistic Competence Post-Observation Findings.** The goals of the post-observation interview questions were to learn about what students noticed in the classroom, their new perceptions and ideas of communication, and how this contributes to their developing communicative competence and self-perceptions as language learner students.

**Teacher and Teaching Style.** All of the participants noticed and observed how the teacher affects the communication and environment of the class. Thanai explained that although the class was a lecture, the teacher had a variety of ways to communicate information to the students, such as video clips and a model to show what she was talking about. “She found the video clips, for easier to understand, to describe more. She also used the model, the DNA model, to describe. I think the biology class is usually quite boring, for every student, but actually in this class, the teacher tried to engage with the students….and all the students paid attention too, no students like check their phone, or sleeping, or anything like that.” This was helpful, and the teacher also had the students do
some exercises together as a class for practice. It was a lecture, but also engaged the students and kept them attentive and interested. Thanai explained that the instructor would ask questions, and the students would just speak up, and they wouldn’t raise their hands. It was more “discussion” style. Also, she mentioned that in her IEP classes, there are many discussions and presentations. As predicted in the pre-observation interviews, the communicative environment often depends on the teacher and how she chooses to lead the class.

Andrea found some things about the teacher and teaching style to be close to what she originally anticipated, but also was surprised by other things. For Andrea, she observed similarities were in line with what Thanai mentioned, relating to the classic lecture style class. “The same is like the teacher in the class is like the leader, she will give some ideas, she will give the topic the students can talk about.” On the other hand, she was surprised by a topic the teacher was discussing with the class. “When the class started, the professor first started talking about something, I don’t think it was the official content.” The teacher started to discuss something about some of the buildings on campus. The teacher discussed the cost, funding and the money owed for these campus buildings. “She said these two buildings spend a lot of money, I don’t know exactly, but it’s a lot of money….they need to have very good musicians come here so people will spend money and buy it.” This discussing of university spending was surprising to her, and it was also not related to the class topic. This has to do with appropriateness of topic. Andrea was very surprised that the professor would discuss the university’s financial issues relating to campus buildings and funding. This action was communication related;
it was the communication of certain information from a professor to a student, although it
was not about content—it was about university affairs. Hearing about this discussion, it
sounds as if the professor was being critical of the actions of the university. This could be
interpreted as being negative and unsupportive, and possibly creating a loss of face for
the university. Knowing that many Asian cultures are sensitive about loss of face and
hierarchies of power, this may have a been shocking thing to have been discussed.

Kash also had a unique experience in his class related to the teacher’s
communication and teaching style. When asked what stood out to him when he joined the
class, he said it was the teacher’s style of questioning students. “The teacher had a very
interesting style….he would say, ‘ok, I’m going to ask you a question’, then he would
count down five seconds, like: one, two, three, four, five….ok, you’re too late, and he
would answer the question.” Kash explained that this made the question process more
interesting, “it was exciting.” When asked if this method gave him enough time to think
of an answer, his answer was no—it was not enough time. Other parts of the lecture were
as expected, but he felt like he still learned new things from watching this teacher interact
with the students. The main things that Kash learned from the experience were
communication related. “The student feedback, and how to ask, and how the professor
give the student and use evidence, and use his experience.”

Marcy observed a class in which the students led the discussion, so the teacher
played a smaller role than in the other classes. In this situation the teacher acted as the
moderator while the students were in charge of the discussion. “the teacher just
organized, and help make their presentation better, and if they say something a little bit
long, they manage it. The teacher didn’t interfere with the students’ lecture too much. So teacher emphasized students opinion.”

From these questions, we can see that all of the participants noticed things in the class that were related to the instructor. Thanai noticed that the teacher used some tools such as video clips and models to communicate and explain ideas. Andrea was surprised by topics that the teacher discussed. Kash experienced a questioning style that was new and exiting, and Marcy saw a student-led class with the teacher only managing the discussion from the sidelines. From this, we can see that by providing students with the chance to observe, they have the opportunity to see that the teacher has a strong impact on the class, and that not all teachers lead class in the same way.

Context and Environmental Differences and Similarities. The participants observed many things that were about the sociolinguistic context of the class; some were similar to classes in their home countries, and some were different. The first couple questions of the post-observation interviews were about what students noticed, and were surprised about.

Talking to Thanai, she said the class was large, around eighty students, and was a classic lecture style class. This was what she predicted the context of the class would be like, based on her first interview. The class she observed was a Biology class, which is something that she has studied before in her home country. She explained that there wasn’t anything really surprising about the class. “It’s not much different from Thailand, or any country, I think.” Because the class was lecture style, and a common subject, nothing was incredibly surprising. “Just from observing the class there isn’t anything
different too much; maybe just the gestures or the video clips.” Besides the class she observed, she also mentioned her language classes in the IEP. She explained what her IEP class was like compared to home. “it is quite different, because they have a lot of activities in the class, we always move, teachers always have us move to the groups and change groups, it just makes me like, ‘oh, I don’t want to sleep’…” The level of interaction and amount of speaking is different from typical college classes. She acknowledged that this is appropriate for language classes, and it helps with language development.

Marcy, who was observing an Teacher Education class, had a very unique experience. When asked what he first noticed about the class, he said that the class was actually held in the teachers office. The class was separated into groups, and he was with eight students, himself and the teacher. His group was designated the teacher’s office to hold their class. “The classroom was different, the teachers office was the classroom.” This was unexpected and surprised him when first going to the class. In addition to the difference in environment, there were differences in the tools students used in class. He was surprised that students were allowed to use laptop computers in the class. “In Japan it is unusual students can use laptop to memorize something….they prohibit that we use them.” Another environmental difference was the way the class broke up into smaller groups, and actually went to separate places to have their group discussions. “We can have group form of lecture, like group discussion, but back home in my class we can have a discussion group, but in one classroom, we don’t separate the group, like this form in the office we can shut down other interruption, so I think it’s very good to like know
Marcy explained that he liked how the groups could go to separate places, because it was more focused in the group.

This was the second time Kash observed a class in a university for one of his IEP assignments, so he has had more experience to reflect on. He said there were a lot of similarities between the lecture style classes, but also some differences. When asked what the differences were compared to classes in Saudi Arabia, he said that in the US there was more opportunities to do group work. “I think here is more common to do the group work.” Another difference he noticed was about the class size, and the duration of classes. “I think here is bigger classes, and student is more. Also the time, usually at home the class is about one hour, but here sometimes it’s more, like business, or I took art history and the duration of the class was four hours. I got there and took notes and just stayed about one hour, and I left.” This was based on his previous observation, but still helpful in understanding a environmental difference. For Saudi students, this could be exhausting and even lead to a loss of interest in classes. From personal experience as an English teacher, it is fairly common for Saudi students to have different principles on time management. This difference in class time explains a little more about contrasts between US culture and Saudi Arabian culture.

**Student Behavior and Attitudes.** The classroom is a dynamic social context, and actors include the teacher and the students of the class. Participants of this study noticed the sociolinguistic behaviors of not only the teachers, but also the students.

Marcy observed a communication experience which was totally new to him. During the class, there was a student (or students) who were the chosen presenters of the
class. They led the discussion on a certain topic that they had researched and planned. After leading the class discussion, the other students had the opportunity to ask questions, and even ask about other things that had not been included in the presentation. This surprised Marcy, “So after the presentation, so maybe just other students, just say the part of the book which they are interested in. Maybe they didn’t consider before class, but they say this part is interesting, so let’s discuss, like something like that. I was surprised by that, in such case they can like promote their discussion.” This chance for students to have an open discussion and bring up other topics in a unconfined way was very new and showed Marcy a unique way of having a class discussion, and how the role of the student is not always a passive one. The class was very student focused and allowed students to be in charge of the discussion and content.

Thanai also noticed the actions and behavior of the students. She saw that there were differences between students in Thailand and students in the US. “In Thailand, when it is a huge class the students who sit in the back of the classroom won’t pay attention, they always like text on the phone, or speak to each other, and do anything except the…so anything outside, they always walk inside, outside, something like that. But the students here are very different.” Towards the end of the interview she was asked overall what she had learned, and again she mentioned the students. “[In the observation] I mean like all students respect to the teacher, like, it’s different in Thailand. Like some students in Thailand, like I told you, will talk to others, and do anything except study.”

Andrea noticed differences that were associated to the communication of students in the classroom. When asked to describe the communication between the teacher and
students, she replied, “I think communication is quite good, because the almost all the students are American, so they like to talk, or share their thinking or thoughts. The teacher would ask some questions and they would raise their hand and talk about their opinions.” This is different from the communication she experienced back home. “The difference is like I think they [students] are very good, the teacher can ask some questions and they can raise their hand, and just talk about that like very loudly, very confidence it feels like. In China, I was like thinking of what would happen if I did that, and I would feel so nervous, maybe go that way. That is a little different.” Hearing this, it relates to something else she had explained about asking questions in class. She had mentioned that in China if you ask questions in class you may be viewed as “stupid”. Another Chinese student once said that asking questions in class is seen as wasting everybody’s time, so it is inappropriate to speak up about a question or idea. Andrea’s reaction to students’ confidence shows a very key difference in educational values in China versus the US. Andrea’s awareness of the differences of what is appropriate for students to say in class, and their confidence to speak up and ask questions provides insight to some cultural differences. This may even explain why some Chinese students may have a tendency towards reticence. Knowing that some students may be hesitant to speak up in class because of cultural values may help teachers rethink their participation expectations and find other ways to engage students.

Another thing Andrea noticed was the amount that each student participated. “I would actually say I was a little bit like, not sad or upset but the teacher did not make them talk much, like every time she asks some questions, there are like one or two
students that answer it. But people in the groups didn’t have a conversation, and I was a little disappointed.” In the class, some students were more outspoken and spoke up much more, while others didn’t say anything. This made the discussion seem unbalanced, not including perspectives from the whole class.

Observations of student behavior and the interactions between student and teacher in the US classroom provides IESL students with sociolinguistic knowledge about what is appropriate and common behavior in the classroom environment. It could potentially help them understand what is expected of them and increase their sociocultural competence for future classes they may take in the US.

**Discourse Competence**

In the CC framework, discourse competence (DC) refers to the ability to communicate in a certain genre. Each communicative situation or setting may have a purpose or goal, and to have discourse competence is to understand this purpose and follow through with appropriate communication. This study focused on the participants observation of a US college classroom, so the DC would be the ability to appropriately function in the classroom.

**Discourse Competence Pre-Observation Findings.** The assumptions on the discourse of the class before the observation was very similar amongst all the participants. When asked what they expected to experience in the classes, most had a very similar response: a lecture. Three of the four participants (Thanai, Kash and Andrea) predicted that their class would be “lecture style.” Because of this, they also expressed the importance of good listening skills. These students also acknowledged that there
would be interaction between the teacher and students, in the form of asking and answering questions. In contrast, Marcy predicted the discourse of the class would be “a conversation between the teacher and the students.” He did not assume that it would be a classic lecture style class. Their notions of communication in class and teaching style came from different places; college back home (which consists of several different countries, as well as previous US class observations. From these participant responses we can see that going into the observation they have some existing perceptions about college classes, and the roles that students and teachers play in this environment.

**Discourse Competence Post-Observation Findings.** In the pre-observation interviews many students predicted that their class would be a lecture style class. One thing that this shows is that all over the world, this is a common type of classroom discourse at the college level. Students had previously experienced this type of class, and felt they might encounter the same thing in the US. In the post-observation interview the findings revealed that they were right in many ways; several classes were lectures, where the teacher led the class, spoke on a certain subject, and also engaged in questions and some discussion with the students.

The responses from Thanai and Kash and Andrea were very similar, saying that the classes they observed were typical lecture style classes. Andrea explained that this is similar to some classes back home. “The same is like the teacher in the class is like the leader, she will give some ideas, she will give the topic the students can talk about.” Thanai said the Biology class was large, around eighty students, and was a classic lecture style class. “It’s not much different from Thailand, or any country, I think.” It was a
lecture, although the teacher also engaged the students and kept them attentive and interested. Kash also said the class was “not very surprising” because it was a lecture style class in the science department.

It is interesting that these classes were science classes, and also the style was the traditional lecture style. It shows that students from all over the world can relate to this kind of class, and find it to be a “typical” class. This is the style of class that most of the students predicted they would experience, so again, it is a common style of teaching in universities all over. The funny thing is that although this is a common style of class, it is the type that most students say that they don’t like, and find somewhat boring. The students also mentioned that the teachers used various forms of communication during the lectures, such as videos, Powerpoint presentations, models and interactive questioning to keep students engaged during the class. This exhibits a lecture class that is not only speaking, but also creates interactive communicative opportunities for students, keeping things familiar but not boring. Seeing that students from other countries can come here and have a somewhat familiar and comfortable experience with few surprises demonstrates that not every students will face confusing or extremely challenging circumstances while studying abroad.

The classroom discourse that ended up being different from the students’ original idea was Marcy’s teacher education class. Although the anticipated that it would be an interactive class instead of a lecture, he did not realize that the class would actually be led by the students, with the teacher only playing a role as mediator. This was a very student-focused class, which put a lot of pressure on the students to engage in discussion, think
critically about the topic and think of appropriate questions. The class was very interactive, and he said the most challenging aspect was thinking of questions and ways to participate in the discussion. “These students were very good at making questions, good topics of discussion, so I think this is challenging for me. They very obvious they can think of this topic.” Looking back on the sociolinguistic competence category of student behaviors, this is similar to Andrea’s observations. She also found that the ability of students to confidently participate in discussions and ask questions was new to her.

The class observations done by the participants showed that the lecture style class environment was much more familiar, traditional and not very surprising to international students. On the other hand, classes that were more interactive and constructive tended to be include new experiences and challenge students in more ways. This could indicate that students may have less discourse competence of non-lecture classes and may need more exposure and preparation to develop competence in this area.

**Strategic Competence**

Strategic competence (SC) is the ability to use communication strategies when there is a problem or breakdown in communication. If a person is having trouble getting their intended message across, she may need to change course to effectively explain herself. Furthermore, if a person cannot understand something that is being communicated, he will need to use communication strategies to help receive the message. Language learning students employ many types of communication strategies, as well as language learning strategies, to help build up knowledge in preparation for future
situations. In these sections, SC mentioned by students will show how they navigate the communicative environment of the classroom and language learning process.

**Strategic Competence Pre-Observation Findings.** Various communication strategies and language learning strategies were mentioned by students in the pre-observation interviews. Thanai thought that there might be some challenges with understanding new vocabulary, so she would bring and use her electronic dictionary as a strategy to help her overcome this issue. Marcy predicted that the teacher may use some implied meanings when communicating. As a language learning strategy, he believes that reading can help with knowing implied meanings, listening and learning vocabulary. Another possible challenge Marcy anticipated was not understanding what the teacher says because they are speaking quickly. Marcy mentioned two strategies that he likes to use to overcome this problem. The first strategy is a social strategy, of asking a speaker to repeat what they have said. “I will ask, ‘Please say one more time’ and ‘Please speak a little more slowly’ and I just guess what they want to say, and I reply to them, sometimes.” He uses the strategy of asking a question for clarification, and he also uses the strategy of guessing. Guessing the meaning and gist of something is a great way to process the information, even if it is not one hundred percent perfect. Kash also said that if there was something he did not understand, he would ask a follow up question for clarification.

From the participants’ ideas on strategy use, we can see that language learning students have used strategies in the classroom before and have specific strategies that
they know will help them. People have different learning styles, and therefore students will find different types communication and learning strategies helpful.

Strategic Competence Post-Observation Findings. Learning about communication strategies used by students was one of the goals of the observation assignment. Because of this, one of the research questions was specifically about challenges in the classroom and strategies that would help. The answers showed that after doing the observation, students had even more ideas about strategies they could possibly use if they were students in a US college class.

Thanai had several great ideas for strategies. First, she said a strategy is to just improve her English overall. “Maybe listen to the Podcast to learn more, and find new vocabulary.” For class, she would use strategies such as preparing before class, by previewing the topic beforehand, and reviewing notes after class. These strategies of planning and reviewing are considered metacognitive strategies.

Andrea found something that helped her in the class observation was reading the Powerpoint provided during the lecture. “I know what they are talking about, and they have the powerpoint to look at, so I can write down.” She said the powerpoint was also helpful because it showed how to write the notes down in a brief, simple way. A social strategy that Andrea thought would be helpful in this class is to join in with a group, and communicate with her classmates. “You can join them and you can talk about the things the teacher wants you to do. So sometimes the group work is very efficient.”

Marcy said a challenge was thinking of questions to ask during the class discussion. To address this type of challenge, he said a strategy would be to prepare
before class, read the book and “make one perspective on the contents.” By observing a class which was very student-centered and interactive, he was able to reflect and develop strategy ideas for this particular class environment.

A main challenge for Kash was following everything the teacher said during the lecture. This had to do with the fast pace, and also vocabulary of the discussion topic. As a possible strategy, he would practice by watching some YouTube videos on the subject. This would help with vocabulary, and would be listening practice too. Another strategy is to ask questions, “I would ask the lecturer about some points if I don’t understand.” He would employ a mix of metacognitive and social strategies to help with communication.

Strategy use by the students fit mostly into two categories; metacognitive strategies (planning, note taking, reviewing) and social strategies (asking questions, speaking/listening to native speakers). This finding aligns with previous studies on strategy use by IEP students (Hong Nam & Leavel, 2006). These strategies can be adapted to fit many learning situations and environments, and are most likely familiar and have been used in L1 learning as well. The student responses show that they are aware of challenges and how to face them, applying strategies that are helpful and practical when attending college classes.

**Actual Communication**

Communicative competence as defined by Hymes (1967) and Canale & Swain (1980) refers to the knowledge and skills needed to communicate in the L2 in an appropriate way. This competence is different from another area of communication; performance, or “actual communication” (Canale, 1983), which is the actual use of the
language in communicative situations. The two are linked though, knowledge and skill of communication underlies the act of real life communicative situations. This link provides an opportunity to see how CC manifests in L2 communication. As explained by Canale & Swain (1980), “Communicative competence, or more precisely it’s interaction with other systems of knowledge, is observable indirectly in actual communicative performance” (p. 29). This study is attempting to do just so: observe communicative competence through the observation of actual communication. Throughout this process, many areas of CC have been revealed. Some effects of actual communication on a learners’ use of an L2 has also been uncovered. This section will explain conditions of actual communication that the participants found challenging or notable in the US classroom environment.

**Pre-Observation Actual Communication Findings.** Before the students went to do their classroom observations, some already predicted some communication challenges that may occur. The question of potential challenges elicited an answer from Marcy that is a common challenge for language learners: not understanding when people speak fast. He pointed out that many teachers will be understandable, but other native speakers in class might speak faster and be hard to understand. “Here, native speakers speak very fast. So even I can hear the teacher’s English, like when a teacher teach us, I can understand. But, sometimes I can’t understand the other native speakers.”

Asking Kash what he thought some challenges in a college class might be, a response similar to Marcy came up. His main concern was people speaking too fast. In particular, the teacher speaking fast can pose a challenge:

Kash: You have to understand what they are talking about.
Jana: Because if you don’t know, you can’t follow.…

Kash: And then it’s too late. So you have to know what they are talking about.

This phrase he used, “then it’s too late”, shows he knows that listening and comprehending what the teacher is talking about is a crucial ability to have in a class.

Two of four students mentioned native speakers speaking quickly, and how listening and comprehending can be hard at times. Knowing this, ESL teachers could try to review possible strategies to use when encountering this problem. The students already seemed to have some strategies that they are prepared to use, but more guidance and acknowledgement of this might help them in future situations.

**Post-Observation Actual Communication Findings.** Discussing classroom communication challenges after the observations revealed that the students had a good idea, pre-observation, of what challenges were to come. When asked about challenges in the classroom, Thanai mentioned several related to communication. One challenge was listening and understanding the teacher. In this class, she said she thought it was not too bad, since she was familiar with the topic, and the teacher spoke clearly, “not too fast, not too slow.” She did acknowledge that this is not always the case though. “Although this teacher speaks quite clearly, other teacher might speak faster, and I could not catch up, or the words, something like that.” In addition, in many places, such as Thailand, teachers use microphones when lecturing in large classes. This is not common practice in the US, which may make listening even harder for students. Another challenge is taking notes during a lecture. “And when I’m taking notes, because my vocabulary is not quite good,
so it takes time to think about the vocabulary, and I can not catch, and follow the

Andrea, who observed a Linguistic Anthropology class, had similar challenges as
Thanai. She said that listening to the teacher and taking notes is difficult. “When they are
talking I actually feel a little bit stressed, because I am trying to take notes, and that
depends on do I really understand what they are talking about.” Listening and following a
second language already uses a lot of focus and mental processing, and to have to take
notes on top of that makes it even harder. In addition, the pace can be difficult to follow.
“they speak really fast, so I was like ‘oh my!’ I wanted to take notes but I didn’t know
what to write.”

Kash was observing a lecture style class, and his biggest challenge was also
following the teacher, listening and taking notes. One reason was that the teacher “spoke
fast” and he felt he only understood about sixty to seventy percent of what he said. He
said that because of the fast pace he was not comfortable taking notes. He felt it was very
difficult, and taking notes is something that takes practice.

From the student responses, the most common challenge appeared to be listening
comprehension, and note taking. Three of four students mentioned this in the post-
observation interview, and also included the fast pace of speech as part of the challenge.
Knowing that note taking is a difficult task for language learning students, language
teachers may consider using more Powerpoint to scaffold the note taking process, or
doing a lesson on how to take notes during a lecture. Although most teachers at
universities will not be aware of this challenge for students, the time that students spend
in an IEP or ESL classes could help prepare them for the challenge of listening and note taking.

**Conclusion**

The pre and post observation interviews provided valuable insight into what students expect when going into a college class, and what knowledge they have gained after observing the class and reflecting on the experience. Of the four areas of communicative competence, this assignment mainly increases sociolinguistic knowledge of the US classroom. This included appropriate use of the language relating to the teacher’s role and behaviors, teaching style, contextual and environmental factors, and student behavior. In addition, students can observe actual communication in the classroom, giving them more knowledge of challenges that they may confront when taking US university classes. This classroom observation assignment can provide students with meaningful communicative experiences to help them develop their communicative competence. An overall summary of findings will be discussed further in Chapter Five.
Chapter 5: Discussion

*Roads were made for journeys, not destinations.*

-Confucius

Educating students from various international backgrounds is a unique situation and can require special considerations and teaching methods. The purpose of this study was to look closer at the perceptions of IESL students who are participating in a US classroom observation to see how this affects their developing communicative competence. This information can be used to inform future TESOL pedagogy and help students overcome challenges throughout their language learning journey.

The research questions for this study were:

1. How does a college classroom observation assignment affect the self-perceptions by International English Learner students of their communicative competence with respect to the use of English in an American college classroom?
   
   a. How does the college classroom observation experience affect their attitudes and ideas about potential challenges and communication skills needed when attending an American university?

   b. What strategies do IEL students use to overcome these perceived challenges?

This study was done using a qualitative approach to data collection (pre- and post-assignment interviews) to gain a better understanding of how IESL students develop communicative abilities associated with particular social-cultural settings, such as the college classroom. My goal is to use my findings to develop and refine IESL classroom
pedagogy to support students’ development of fluency in English with respect to achieving their goals of attending and graduating from an American university.

**Summary of Study**

When looking at second language communication, several theories helped to explain the process of language learning through the act of observation and reflection. Theories of social learning explain the importance that interaction, context and culture played on language acquisition, and the theory of communicative competence provided an in depth look at key components of successful communication in a second language.

Watching and observing human behavior was a great way to build background knowledge, directly from the source. In any social situation, there are many elements which contribute to the context and meaning of language used (Hymes, 1967). This explains why the observation assignment was a useful tool for language learning pedagogy. As Duranti and Goodwin (1992) explain, “Treating human interaction as a central context for speech provides an expanded view of language, one that ties the production of talk to systematic social organization”( p. 22). In any context where interaction occurs, such as a college class, the situation could potentially vary depending on the relationship of the people, cultural hierarchies and norms, goal of the interaction, as well as many other factors. Language cannot be fully explained and understood when removed from the context and history of the interlocutors. This notion has propelled ESL pedagogy to include opportunities, such as the observation, for an out of class experience as a method of language teaching.
Through the observation of a college classroom, students were able to learn spoken language as well as non-verbal language and appropriate contextual meaning. This allowed students to learn through social situations and other people, putting them in the ZPD (Vygotsky, 1935) and increasing their knowledge of meaningful language use. Observations have frequently been used in the field of sociology, because of the “value of participant observation in increasing our understanding of the context of social life.” (Darling, 1998). By doing a class observation, students not only learned about communication in college classes, but they also developed appropriate strategies when they observed possible challenges in this context.

For students living and studying abroad, there are many complexities of communication in a foreign culture, therefore educators need to be aware of various factors that may affect language learning. Social meaning within a culture contributes to the language and communication between interlocutors. This is what Hymes (1967) termed communicative competence (CC)— to have comprehensive knowledge and ability to use a language appropriately within a cultural context (p. 16). Over the years, many other linguists and applied linguists have expanded and developed the idea of communicative competence and communicative language teaching. Detailed frameworks for these concepts were created (Canale and Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; Celce-Murcia & Dornyei, 1995) consisting of various elements that could be included in a comprehensive communicative pedagogy. Looking at the students’ observation experience through the lens of CC illuminated skills and fluencies needed. It revealed that the participants were very aware of sociolinguistic differences between classes in their home country and a US
class, and also revealed areas of actual communication that were challenging among most IESL students.

These various theories gave shape to the data that emerged from my research. By creating an opportunity for students to observe a college class environment, they were able to gain authentic cultural and contextual language through a social experience, increasing their cultural intelligence (Earley & Ang, 2003). To then learn the perceptions of this diverse group of international ESL students provided us with valuable information on their perceived communicative competence, as well as new perspectives on social learning.

**Analytic Frame.** Canale (1983) offers some suggestions to how this pedagogical framework would best work with language learners. The suggestions closely fit the pedagogy of the students’ observation assignment, which is another reason it was chosen as the analytic frame for the study. It suggests that students have “exposure to comprehensible input, and experience reception before production (p. 17).” The class observation was a perfect tool for these first steps in developing CC. In addition, some of the CC guiding principles match the assignment. Canale proposes that the CC approach is “based on the learners CC needs”, which in this case is preparing international students for an English language college environment. It should “employ meaningful and realistic interaction”, which was an authentic class environment of native English speakers. (p. 18). Also, the CC framework recommends using actual communication to inform research on the knowledge and skills being used and developed. These factors made the
Communicative Competence framework (1983) well aligned with the observation assignment, and therefore an appropriate frame to research student learning.

**Methodology.** The research and analysis employed was qualitative in nature, with a mix of interviews and observations. I interviewed four students who are enrolled in an IEP, and have completed the college class observation assignment in their Communication class. The data has been analyzed using a grounded theory, allowing interpretations to emerge from the perceptions of the students through the observation of patterns and broad themes (Qualitative Research Design, 2009). There were several steps in the data collection process. First, I did a pre-observation interview with several students, asking questions about what they are expecting to see in the class, and what kinds of communication skills students in the class used. The interview was designed to generate participant perspectives about ideas, opinions, and experiences. I also investigated their self-perceived strengths, and potential challenges they anticipate, and strategies used to overcome some challenges.

The second step was to find out the post-observation perceptions of the students. I conducted a post-observation interview with the students, to find out their perceptions of communication they experienced in the classroom. My aim was to find out which perceptions have changed in regard to communication in the class. I also explored differences they noticed when comparing US college classes to class experiences in their home country. My aim was to provide some valuable information about cultural differences and how they effect communication in the classroom. After completing their college class observation, students used their notes to write a reflection on their
experience, and present their findings to the class. I used the interviews, information from the student reflections/presentations and also an interview with the instructor, to triangulate my data. The process of data collection happened over the course of about one month.

**Summary of Findings**

Studying IESL student perceptions of communication in a US college class revealed several major findings. The goal was to find out how the class observation affected perceptions of communicative competence (CC), and of the four areas of CC, the area with the most development was Sociolinguistic Competence (SC). The least referenced areas of CC were grammatical competence and discourse competence. The only grammatical thing students were initially concerned with was knowing appropriate vocabulary, but after the observation nobody even mentioned this as an issue. The discourse competence students explained was that more traditional “lecture style” classes were more familiar and didn’t surprise students in many ways. This is what most students predicted the class would be like. The student who had a very interactive, student-led discussion class experienced something that was not as predictable and was more challenging to adapt to. Strategic competence was mentioned, but mostly in reference of existing skills and knowledge.

Student revelations of sociolinguistic competence fit into three main categories: the role of the teacher and teaching style, the class environment, and the behavior of the students of the class. Some perceptions participants expressed about the teachers and their teaching styles included that the teacher is the leader of the class, the
communication depends on the teacher, teachers in the US are patient, they sometimes use an interesting questioning style, and they can play a smaller role by just managing the students. The exposure to new teachers and teaching styles that the observation provided gave students an idea of the variety of teaching styles that may be encountered when attending a US university.

Perceptions related to the classroom environment and dynamics showed that students favored classes that were interactive and communicative, but also struggled with some elements of communication. They explained that more interaction is better and makes class less boring; tools such as PowerPoint, models, photos, etc. also make class more engaging. One student had the experience of the class breaking up into smaller groups and going to different locations, where the students then led the class instead of the teacher. The student found this to be very interesting but also overwhelming because of the amount of discussion and participation that was required. Another finding relating to the class was that the duration of the classes in the US can be much longer than in Saudi Arabia. There, a class is typically one hour, while here in the US classes range anywhere from one hour to four hours. The intercultural nature of the observation assignment made students more aware of differences and similarities between their home country’s educational style and the way classes are held in the US, thus increasing their sociolinguistic knowledge of college classes.

The study also affected their self-perceptions as students. Their answers to “what kind of student are you?” revealed that their student identity is not a fixed, unchanging thing, but dependent on the classroom environment. This shows there is a strong
connection between a person and the social environment they are engaged with. Students were able to put themselves into a new communicative environment, and observing the class of native English speakers helped them gauge their own language abilities.

When looking at challenges and skills needed in actual communicative situations (such as a US college class), student responses uncovered that the biggest challenges were listening and comprehension. This included understanding native speakers who spoke fast, and also taking notes during a lecture. Another challenge was thinking of questions to discuss in class, and feeling confident to participate in group discussions.

The strategies students thought would be most helpful were social and metacognitive strategies. A social strategy mentioned by several students was asking questions, either to the teacher or by talking to classmates. Metacognitive strategies mentioned were to preview material before class, develop questions and a position on the topic ahead of time, watch YouTube videos to help develop listening skills and vocabulary, and use an electronic dictionary for vocabulary and review material after class for better comprehension.

From the start, participants were able to learn something new about American education, teachers and what their future classes might be like if they continue to study in the US. They all learned something new and now are even more prepared for other classroom interactions in the future. IEPs. This learner centered pedagogy and communication assignment provided IESL students with an introduction to common teaching practices in the US.
Discussion

The concept of communicative competence (Hymes, 1967) has been around for nearly half a century; it is a topic that has been discussed, debated, built upon and analyzed by many scholars in the field of linguistics and SLA (Canale & Swain, 1980; Canale, 1983; Swain, 1985; Celce-Murcia, M., Dörnyei, Z.; Thurrell, S., 1995; Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 2006; Schultz, 2006). Many studies have investigated the development of CC in language learners (Kung, 2016; Alami, & Eyad, 2014). The present study contributes to the latter. By using qualitative analysis, IESL students’ self-perceptions and prior assumptions about language use in a college classroom context were examined with respect to their relationship on the development of CC in academic English. This study has explored various factors which affect IESL student learning in a university context, and shown how an observation assignment can build and strengthen language development.

The study revealed that students are affected by several elements in the classroom environment. Their self-perceptions as students are very much connected to the social interactions of the class, such as the teacher and teaching style, the classroom environment and the other students in the class. Therefore, sociolinguistic and intercultural knowledge is crucial in understanding and adapting to this environment. This reveals how the classroom is a holistic, interconnected context which requires background knowledge and cultural understanding. The task of observing a US college class and reflecting on the experience is an effective way for students to have exposure to an authentic language environment and develop CC, particularly sociolinguistic
competence. In addition, they gained considerable knowledge about actual communication and challenges they may potentially face.

The interviews uncovered an interesting finding relating to curriculum and pedagogy. The participants of the study came from several different countries, and all had previous experience with classes that were lecture style classes; classes which were teacher centered, usually large in size and somewhat predictable in discourse. Several of the classes that were observed for the study fit this description and style, and students therefore felt mostly comfortable joining this type of class. What is interesting is that even though most students are familiar with and anticipate lecture classes, it is also the type of class that they consider to be “boring.” Several students mentioned feeling bored, sleepy or just unmotivated in previous teacher-centered lectures. Studies have shown that ESL/EFL classes have become more and more learner-centered over the years (Abu Bakar et al, 2010), but many other college courses still employ more traditional lecture methods. This may be due to the need for larger classes at the university level, but knowing that students may benefit more from learner-centered classes should provoke more educators to increase classroom interaction. When observing the lectures for their assignment, students noticed and appreciated when the teachers were interactive and communicated in a variety of ways during the lecture: powerpoint, videos, showing models, asking questions, and even using hand gestures. This study reenforces the benefits of increased interaction and student centered learning.

When asked about challenges in the classroom, most students said that some of the biggest communication challenges were listening comprehension, note taking, and
participating in discussions with native speakers. These findings could indicate that IESL students may benefit from lessons that focus specifically on strategies that are college class oriented. Language classes offer listening practice and help to indirectly develop better listening comprehension, but a class devoted to college preparation may also be helpful. The communication class observation assignment is a perfect precursor for a lesson on note taking, listening strategies and cultural norms of classroom interaction. With the variety of classes that were observed by the students, they would be able to develop and exchange some great ideas for strategies after reflecting on their experiences. The IESL students already have many learning and communication strategies that they use, and by spending more time to share ideas with one another, they could become even more competent in US classroom communication.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

This study provided valuable insights into the experience and perceptions of IESL students and their understanding of US college classes. This new information can be a stepping stone to further research and development of English as a Second/Foreign Language (ESL/EFL) pedagogy. Knowing the areas of communication that IESL students found to be new and challenging gives us insights into where curriculum at intensive English programs can be directed. For example, the students expressed that note taking and listening comprehension is a huge challenge when attending a college class. Creating lessons to help students increase these skills and competencies could be the next step in this area of study.
The analytic frame for the study was Canale’s (1983) framework for Communicative competence. This included grammatical, sociolinguistic, discourse and strategic competence as areas of skill and knowledge. Seeing that the main area of development was sociolinguistic competence, more focus could be put to investigate these findings. The concept of Intercultural Communicative Competence (Byram, 1997) could be a potentially good frame of reference to look more specifically at the cultural differences and adaptations faced by students in the US classroom environment. A similar study could be conducted, following a student observation, but with questions more specifically focused on cultural aspects observed and challenges due to intercultural communication.

From this study, we can see that the observation assignment promotes development of sociolinguistic knowledge about US college classes, and can be used as tool for preparing IESL students for communication in an English speaking classroom environment. By giving them exposure to an authentic linguistic environment, they become more aware of challenges they may face and strategies they can use. International students wishing to matriculate or apply to US universities can strengthen their self awareness and develop their communicative competence through the act of observation and reflection.
References


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APPENDIX A

Definition of Terms

IEP: Intensive English Program. A school for adults to learn a language quickly, typically full-time and covering many elements of the language.

ESL: English as a Second Language. Refers to situations where English is not the mother tongue of the speaker.

International Student: A person who has come to the US from another country specifically to attend school.

TESOL: Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages. The area of work and study which focuses on the pedagogy and teaching of English to non-native speakers.

Lingua Franca: A common language that is adopted as a means of communication between speakers whose native languages are different.

L1: First Language
L2: Second Language (or any language after first)

SLA: Second Language Acquisition. Theory and academic research field which focuses on the learning and acquisition of languages. May include ideas stemming from social and cognitive psychology, linguistics and linguistic anthropology.
APPENDIX B

Communication 500
Fall 2015
Task #2
Observation of an SSU Class

Your assignment is to visit an SSU class, take notes on the experience, write a one page description from your notes, and present to the class about your experience. The paper and notes are due October 15.

Identify a class you would like to visit. You may not miss a SSALI class for your observation.
Find a course that you are interested in and one that works into your schedule.

You should identify at least 3 possible classes by Monday, October 6.

Step #2
As a class, we will create a template for observation. You will use this template for observing the class.

Step #3
Contact the teacher. Ask permission to attend his/her class. Check to make sure the course is still at the same time and place. (There are some changes to the schedule. You can also check at the Department Office). Each student should make their own arrangements to attend a class. This is an INDIVIDUAL assignment.

Step #4
Visit the class. Take notes and write about your experience. Paper work DUE, October 15, 2014 No late materials will be accepted.

Step #5
Present to the class on October 15 about your visit in a short 2-3 minute presentation. Use notes, do not read your paper.

Points:
All arrangements made by you as an individual. You attend alone: 10pts
Classroom notes: 20pts
Observation notes: 20pts
Paper: 30pts
Presentation to class: 20 pts
TOTAL: 100 pts.
APPENDIX C

Survey Monkey Questions

7. What is your name? (First and last)

8. Are you male or female?

9. Where are you from?

10. What would you like to do after you finish studying at SSALI? (Check all that apply)

   • College in the US
   • College in another country
   • Work in the US
   • Work in another country
   • I don’t know

11. Have you ever taken or observed a college class in the United States before? (Yes or No)

12. How would you rate your comfort when communicating in English in these situations?

   • Speaking one-on-one with a native English speaking friend/classmate?
   • Speaking one-on-one with a English learner friend/classmate?
   • Speaking one-on-one with a native English speaking teacher?
   • Speaking in front of a small group of people?
   • Giving a presentation to a large group of people?

13. Are you willing to participate in two interviews for Jana’s research, to find out more about your perceptions of communication fluencies used in college classrooms? Your identity will remain confidential. (Yes or No)
APPENDIX D

Pre-Observation Questions:

1. What do you think class will be like?
2. What language/communication skills will be used in class?
3. What kind of student are you?
4. Challenges you might face? Strategies you might use?

Post-Observation Questions

1. What did you first notice?
2. What surprised you?
3. Differences/Similarities to home country?
4. What communication did you observe?
5. Challenges faced? Strategies used?
6. What did you learn from this assignment?
APPENDIX E

Communication 500

Form for Observation of four components of a classroom.

What do you observe in this Classroom?

Name of Class:

Instructor:

Environment:

Teacher:

Students:

Content:
## Cornell Notes
Lecture, reading/chapter/novel/article during class, power point, movies (if need to collect info.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic: _______________</th>
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<tr>
<td>_______________________</td>
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</tbody>
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Questions/Main Ideas:

Name: ________________________________

Class: _______________ Period: ________

Date: ________________________________

Notes:
Summary:
APPENDIX G

TRANSCRIPTS OF INTERVIEWS

Pre-Observation Interview.

Student: Thanai
(No recording, just notes)

1. Tell me about this assignment, what is it’s purpose?
   The class is Intro to Biology, we need to take notes and observe
2. What do you think this class will be like?
   It will be a large class, lecture style, I will need to concentrate more and use all forms of communication.
3. What language/communication skills will be used in class?
   The teacher might use PowerPoint, ask questions and the interaction will depend on the teacher. There could be discussions and group work.
4. What kind of student are you?
   I feel bored in lecture classes, and like lab-type classes better because they are more interactive and hands on. The IEP is ok. In Thailand the classes are different, it is lecture style and I would feel sleepy except for the lab.
5. Challenges and Strategies:
   A challenge might be vocabulary, but I can use the electronic dictionary to help.
6. Experience arranging the class observation
   The instructor was slow to respond to email.

Journal: Pre-Observation ?’s with Thanai (Written right after interview)
I met with P today to talk about her observation (going today at 1pm). Some background info: She is from Thailand, and has moved here because she has family living here. They own a Thai restaurant in SR. She has a university degree in Pharmacy. She was sweet and easy to talk to, not nervous, speaks fluently.
• She is going to observe a biology class, the assignment requires her to observe and take some notes about the class and teacher.
• She is thinking the class will be large, lecture style, she will need to concentrate to follow because it is in English. She will need to use all forms of communication: listening, speaking, reading and writing.
• The teacher may use powerpoint. She said the interaction depends on the teacher, they can be really different. Sometimes they might ask questions, lead a discussion or have students do group work.
• When asked, “What kind of student are you?” she explained that she feels bored in lecture classes where the teacher talks the whole time, she prefers lab type classes with
more movement, interaction and hands on work. In lectures she feels sleepy, in undergrad she sometimes wouldn’t go to class. Now, at the IEP she participates a lot and tries very hard. Classes are small and interactive.

- Some English skills needed in class might be to know a lot of vocabulary. If she doesn’t know something she will use an electronic dictionary to look it up.

**Pre-Observation Interview.**

**Student: Andrea**

J: So you’re in Communication class and you’re talking about education and school, so did you go to a university in your home country?
A: No, I am not go to other college in Beijing, but I actually went to Singapore for one year.
J: Ok so you attended college in Singapore for one year, cool. How did you like that?
A: It’s good, but their education system is more like the English, its more like the American, so it’s different between these two.
J: oh, ok. So it’s like…So between education in China, or America or Singapore, what seems different to you?
A: Mmm, I think it’s the attitude of teacher. Um, because like when I come to here, when I start to go to class, then I realize that the teacher over here are really nice, and sometimes when the teacher will have some party, the teacher will call me, so you’re actually like, we could say a friend. But in China, especially in high school and middle school the teacher is always like uh, um, you know, like…
J: Like they are the authority?
A: Like they are higher than you.
J: It’s a very different relationship
A: Like they give lots of orders, like homework that you need to do, so you just finish, you will not have some communication or discussion, or something, so that’s the most different part for me….yeah
J: Yeah….So for this assignment you’re going to have to go observe another class here at the university, so what class will you observe?
A: I will go to the Intro to Linguistic Anthropology.
J: ok, Linguistic Anthropology, that’s interesting.
A: I just sent an email to the teacher, but she hasn’t replied me yet.
J: Oh ok, well, sometimes it takes a while. And so when you go to do the observation, what are you going to be looking for, and what’s the purpose of the observation?
A: I think the class is like a lecture so there have many students sit, and maybe I will observe how the teacher gives her knowledge to the students, like they use a PowerPoint or something and then like how she will make the class fun, because in the lecture it usually is a very long time, like two hours..so if you don’t make it fun, or the things you talk about is not that attractive, the people will think, “hm-that’s boring, I don’t want to stay here”, so I will see that from the teacher. And the students, I would like to see how they take notes, usually use computer, or something or notebook or pen.
J: Yes, so how do the students take notes, get their information.
A: Yeah.
J: Sorry, I’m writing…..ok, so how they take notes, how the teacher makes it fun, how they engage the students, it’s true right? How the teacher is can change the experience. And so a class like this, Linguistic Anthropology, what kind of class do you think will this be? What do you think they will be doing?
A: Well I know it’s anthropology, so they will introduce about humans, so I’m not sure what they will talk about… about humans, about us, but I’m not exactly sure.
J: Right, something about humans. Good. And how about the communication that will be happening in the class, what do you think that will be like? Between the teacher and the students, or between the students and each other, what kind of communication do you think will be happening?
A: Um, I think because this is like an Intro and lecture course, maybe, she will, just maybe, let the students have like a little group, or like, yeah, but I’m not sure (laughs) because it’s a lecture, so the teacher is always talking.
J: Um hm, yeah so in lecture style the teacher traditionally talks.
A: And the students listen. Oh and maybe the teacher will ask some questions… give some questions to students, to make them think, and then they will have a communication between them.
J: So do you think the teacher will ask the students to answer the questions, like some questions so they will like need to raise their hand and answer them?
A: I don’t think she will just pick like one student, I think she will just ask. She will like get everyone thinking, and if someone know they will say it.
J: Yeah you never know what kind of answers they are wanting. Ok, and then when you think about yourself as a student, what kind of student are you?
A: Me?
J: Yeah, when you think about your habits, your behavior, like how are you as a student?
A: Hmm, I think for now, I’m actually doing well, I don’t have like something hard for me because I play the violin so I actually study some music theory and history when I was in Singapore, but now I don’t have any music theory class because I am attending the IEP so maybe I think next semester I will have more, but so far I think everything is fine. and Um, as a student, because in China when we have some problem in class or about what the teacher talk about we will actually not, we will be a little afraid to say out, if you ask a question, you will have other students who know the answer, they will think like ‘you are so stupid, why do you not know this?’ or sometimes the teacher like they are so busy, or they have other classes to teach so like after class, they will just go so you will not found it, but I think here the teachers are like so patient, or something, if you have any problem or any questions during the class, I can just say it.
J: Yeah, here we want our students to ask questions, if they have some trouble or don’t understand. So that’s really interesting, you noticed a difference between how you feel asking questions or asking the teacher for some extra help. Ok, so, so studying music, what are your plans after finishing school? Do you know what you what you want to do? Like do you want to join professional…
A: Yeah, actually the student who learned the music major, after they graduate from college, it’s actually hard to find a job, but I think they have like two main way I can go, like I could go to the professional orchestra, the second one maybe I will be a teacher, teach some young child.

J: Yeah, teach them music. Yeah, that is great. Either way, I’m sure it’s competitive for finding a job.. but.. I heard you had a performance last week, how was that?

[discussing her music performance for a few minutes]

J: Let me ask you, like when you’re going to be in a class how do you feel like raising your hand in class, or talking to other people in English, or talking to a teacher in English, how do you feel about that?

A: When I first come, because I actually just come in August, so it’s just like one month and a half, but actually I just went to Singapore… so…

J: So you’ve had some practice, people there speak English

A: Yeah it have a lot of help. But, now, because in Singapore usually people can speak two languages, like one person can speak English or Chinese, so we actually not have that much chance to speak English to each other, because there had someone who can speak Chinese. So sometimes we will choose to speak Chinese first, rather than English.

J: Oh ok

A: But even in school you have some papers or assignments in the class, you need to speak English.

J: So in the school atmosphere you’ve used English, so now you feel…. somewhat comfortable?

A: Yeah, I feel like a little surprised about myself, because you know when I hear people speak English around me, or when I walk out on the road, I can hear some people talking, I think, hm, that’s normal, I don’t think like, oh, that’s the foreign language. I think its normal. Sometimes I will think questions or problems in my mind, using English. So I think it’s like a very good start for me.

J: Yeah that’s great. It’s probably great, after spending all this time studying and learning another language, to get to use it, to live abroad and to speak it and listen to it all the time.

Ok, so you’ll go observe the class next week?

[brief discussion about when she will observe the class]

Pre Observation Interview

Student: Marcy

J: Ok so you’re in communication class, and you have to do this assignment..

M: Yes

J: So tell me a little bit about what is this assignment for and what are you going to be looking at when you go to the classroom. You know, what’s the purpose of the assignment?

M: Actually in Japan, I took a teacher course, so…
J: Ok, at a University? You took teaching courses at your school.
M: Yes. I want to learn how the teacher make the students to participate. I think in Japan, this is something wrong.
J: Oh…
M: Yeah many time, in Japan I think students are bored, so how to motivate the students, I want to learn. Any ideas to make students participate.
J: Yeah, so you want to look at how teachers motivate students and get them to participate. And so that’s what you’re going to watch for in the class..
M: Yes
J: Ok very good. So what do you think the class will be like? When you think of classes here, what will happen in the classroom?
M: My idea of class?
J: Yes, what do you imagine will happen, what do you think classes are like here? Like do you think it will be the teacher talking a lot, or the students talking to each other, or the students doing a group assignment, what do you think it will be like?
M: My idea of the classroom is there is a conversation between teacher to student, and student to student.
J: Ok
M: Yeah, so actually I’m, I was also bored in high school, in Japan, so my grade is terrible (laughs), yeah so, uh I went to the International college and I know for the first time, like how, foreigner, foreign teachers teaching. So, I was impressed by this pedagogy, then I’m so interested in how to teach, as another country teacher, how to teach. Yeah, so…..
J: That’s great…actually you know what’s interesting…[Jana digresses into a story about something she read and wants to recommend to]
J: So he wrote about what the differences between Japanese and American teaching styles, and what he wanted to change…
M: Yes, yes
J: So I think other people feel that way…
M: Yes, I am not alone (laughs)
J: (laughs) Yeah, but it was really interesting, he did a lot of research about the pedagogy from these different countries…
M: In Japan, teachers just say a lot. The information, so….
J: The teacher just talks a lot
M: Yeah, so I fell asleep (laughs)
J: Yeah, that’s so interesting. Well if you ever want to look at something…it’s in the library…..So that’s what motivated you to study more and become a teacher,
M: Yes
J: And study English…
M: Yes, I want Japanese pedagogy to improve…I want to be a teacher and change Japanese pedagogy.
J: That’s great, I mean if you’re not happy with something, why not try to change it, same here, if people aren’t always happy with education so they try to change it. Ok, so….
When you think about the classroom and English communication skills you might need to use, what do you think are some skills you might need to use?

M: What kind of….

J: Yeah, I mean will you need to do a lot of listening, writing, reading, what do you think, like when you’re observing the class, what’s something students might need to do in the classroom.

M: Listening, so we have to understand what teacher said. And, yes, and writing, and reading, if in this case if teacher don’t use a handout, but we have to understand what teacher really want to say, so like teacher imply, like what they really want to say, and we have to understand, so…

J: Right,

M: And reading skill is also important in the classroom

J: And if it is something that is implied…. 

M: It is said indirectly…

J: Yes, and do you think it is harder to understand those indirect things because it is English?

M: Yeah, but we can practice understanding through implying…through improving reading skills

J: Ok, great.

M: My guess is that. I practice reading, so through practice reading I improve my listening skills

J: Yeah I think reading is a great way to improve, you can learn new vocabulary

M: Yes I think reading can improve all category of the sentence, even if you didn’t use it here,

J: Great so you like to read to improve your English, that’s great. So when you think of yourself as a student, you said when you were younger, you were sort of like, bored in class

M: (laughs) Yes, terrible.

J: (laughs) Not a good student

M: yes, terrible student

J: (laughs) Ok I’m writing the word ‘terrible’ on here

M: I take the second worst, in the high school

J: Oh no! Well if class isn’t interesting, it’s hard to do well. Right? It’s hard to do well if it has no meaning to you. So but how about now? How do you feel you are as a student now?

M: Yeah, um, maybe I cannot fit Japanese pedagogy, so I, like, change my course. Miyazaki International school has teachers from a lot of foreign countries, maybe the US or Australia or England, so I know I have the opportunity to know other countries lecture, how to teach, so I was very impressed, and I like very much.

J: Oh, that’s great.

M: So I can become motivated to study hard, so I become to like English, and want to improve my English skill, yeah, this is my idea..
J: Yeah it feels good to find a foreign language or something in education that really motivates you, and you want to work on it, like when you’re younger, you’re forced to learn, but as you get older you find what you care about. And when you care more you get more motivated.
M: Yes, and when I was in high school, my worst category was English. I was almost need to stay one more year in high school, but now I’m safe.
J: Well, you’re doing good now
M: Yes, so when I told my teacher I wanted to go to the international college, my teacher said, “why? Your English is terrible, so why?”But I went, and I started to like English, so I think it’s good.
J: Yeah your English is great, it’s really good. And so how do you feel communicating in English? Do you feel comfortable, do you ever feel nervous? How do you feel speaking in English? While you’re here
M: Yes, compared to my college in Japan, here, native speakers speak very very fast, so even I can hear the teacher’s English, like when teacher teach us, I can understand. But, sometimes I can’t understand the native speakers.
J: Right, because they’re speaking fast. So what do you usually do, if they’re speaking fast?
M: Umm, I will ask, ‘please say one more time’ and ‘please speak a little bit slowly’, and I just guess what they want to say, and I reply to them, sometimes.
J: Yes, that’s great, that’s perfect, even if you just understand like 50 percent, you can still understand a little bit, so you can still understand the topic and the main idea of what is this conversation about, so that’s good, you have some strategies.
J: So do you organized your class, that you will observe?
[Discuss plans to observe classes-no more interview questions]

Pre-Observation Interview

Student: Kash

J: The observation assignment, ok, so tell me a little bit more about what are you going to be doing? Like, what is the purpose of this project you’re doing?
K: Actually first of all it’s about to go inside a class, for Sonoma, and to be involved in the classes, and take notes, and observation, and to be able to—to have experience when you are going to be start a university.
J: Um hmm, so have you done this before?
K: Yeah
J: So you’ve observed a class before
K: Yes I’ve done this assignment, and actually last semester, last spring, I observed the class which is Art History, it was styles lecture, there was a lot of students, there was a huge, huge room, it was good and the topic was about pyramids and ancient Egypt. It was about the history in the middle East, and they actually used a powerpoint to show the picture, yeah.
J: Oh ok, so what class will you observe this time?
K: Actually I’m not sure, I might do two classes, either the Business, and the other is about Psychology. Psychology or business, I’m not sure, but it will probably be next week, so I will get in the class and take notes.
J: Do you think if you take Business or Psychology it will be similar to the other class, or different….
K: I think it will be different, it will be different..style
J: What do you think would be different, for example….
K: I don’t know, I don’t know if it will be lecture, or…other style
J: Lectures are usually like large classes…
K: Or group work…
J: Yeah
K: I would like to be involved another experience, I have seen a lecture, so I would like to have another experience
J: Ok cool, so you said you have had a lecture so you would like another experience, so in the other class was lecture and there was powerpoint, so this one, maybe group work, I mean, what are other things that could possible happen in the classroom?
K: Um,
J: Think about how the teacher and the students communicate with each other. What kind of communication might happen?
K: Hm, might be ask a question, or they tell a story to, uh, similar for the topic they are talking about, so this will be interesting more. Yeah, tell a story.
J: And do you think the students would be able to ask the teacher questions?
K: Whether the students ask or the teacher asks…I think yeah, both
J: And if they do group work, well, how much time…do you think they will do more group work or the teacher just talks more?
K: I think the teacher, and in the class, they are talking fast
J: Oh, ok
K: So they are talking fast and I can’t catch everything they say, so, it’s not easy
J: Yeah it’s different from classes here at the IEP
K: It’s different in the class, you have to know, you have to understand what they are talking about.
J: Yes because if you don’t know, you can’t follow what they are talking about
K: And then it’s too late…(something I didn’t hear) so you have to know what they are talking about. The most important thing, you should have to know
J: And so if you’re in that situation, if you don’t know something, what would you do?
K: If I am a student in the class? I would just ask. I would ask what the topic is.
J: Ok good…and in general how do you feel about communicating in the classroom, talking to your teachers….um, I guess what I’m asking is what kind of student are you, how would you describe yourself?
K: Um, actually I am the student that sometimes I feel nervous when I talk in front a group of people, students, and it makes me a little bit nervous and confused.
J: Yeah, I think that’s normal to feel nervous talking in a group of people
K: I think I avoid this issue —-(hard to understand rest of sentence)
J:
K: Try not to make a mistake, (hard to understand)
J: Do you have a certain class, or activity or way of learning that you like the most?
K: I like, I believe that exercise is good, maybe exercise, because some student they don’t know what to do, and the teacher should have a different way, different way to reach his point, so some people they understand by talk, by presentation, some people by doing exercises, they understand that, so you have to use other ways, not just one style.
J: So you like it when the teacher does some reading, some writing…
K: Yeah!
J: Some exercise, and maybe..
K: Jump to another thing.
J: Ok good, so basically just not the same thing for the whole class
K: Yeah. You know total is different form where I came from, it is different
J: Oh really..what is the most different part of it?
K: Uh, group work
J: Ok, so here…
K: Here is more common. I think this helps students to advance theirself, yeah. I think it’s a good thing.
J: And so back home, would you…did you go to a college or university back home?
K: Yeah yeah
J: Ok and so what were the classes like there?
K: Teacher would, usually it’s normal kind, teacher would give information to the student
J: Lectures?
K: Yeah! Lecture, and we would use sometimes powerpoint, to show some point, and also I think sometimes powerpoint is easy, to present something
J: It is
K: It helps, a lot
J: So did it help you to read something, and see a picture…
K: Yeah yeah and if you don’t have a powerpoint, it will just be you, and the audience will concentrate on yourself, so if you have powerpoint, it will be like half and half
J: It takes the pressure off
K: Yes and if you miss some information, the powerpoint can help, it’s good for organizing
J: Yeah. It’s true, and if you didn’t hear something, maybe you could read it
K: Yeah
J: Ok so do you think that is common here at Sonoma, using powerpoint?
K: Yeah, because ——
J: Ok, so let’s go back to to using English in the classroom, and what do you think you’re best at? What are you really good at? Talking to people, expressing ideas, writing…
K: I think speaking, I feel more comfortable when I’m speaking
J: ok
K: But writing, it’s a little bit difficult for me.
J: Ok, does that include taking notes in class?
K: Yeah, taking notes. When they are talking to the students and they speak fast, so it’s not easy to get the information.
J: ok so you feel a little better about speaking, how about listening?
K: Listening…uh, so-so, so-so
J: Yeah, ok good. So when you go to the class you’re going to be taking notes and looking for certain things, what are you going to be looking for? What specifically will you take notes about?
K: The topic, and the behavior, the physical, and the environment, the class and how they work together, how they act, how they seems, comfortable or uncomfortable
J: Ok so are you excited to do an observation? Do you like this kind of assignment?
K: Yeah yeah it’s good, but I don’t like to observe the people…I mean in real life, like if the people are talking right now, and I listen, it’s not good, for me it’s not good.
J: It’s not good to listen to other people…
K: Yeah, but here, you should (laughs). Observation is sometimes good, help to learn.
J: Yeah because it’s for a class and to help you learn about this environment.

Post-Observation Interviews

Student: Thanai

J: So what was the first thing you noticed, how was the class?
T: Um, so in this class, a lecture class, biology, I think in every country it’s a lecture, right? An the class is quite large, maybe 80 students in the class. Yeah, really large class, and just lecture. And sometimes she used a video clip, so the topic for this class is photosynthesis, so she found the video clips, for easier to understand, to describe more.
J: So you thought it was helpful?
T: Yeah, and she also used the model, the DNA model, to describe. I think the biology class is usually quite boring, for every student, but actually this class, the teacher tried to engage with students, she give the example, I mean like exercise for students and did it together in the classroom. And all students paid attention, no students like check on the phone, or sleeping, or anything like that.
J: Ok that’s good, so it was a lecture but the teacher was still engaging. So there was some things going on besides just talking.
T: Yeah
J: So was there anything that really surprised you about the class?
T: Not really, because it’s a lecture class, and the same topics, like biology. The teacher gets the students to understand, this is good, the deeply details, so it’s not much different from Thailand, or any country, I think.
J: Ok good, so it was mostly, nothing too surprising. So you said it was not much different from Thailand, so what was similar?
T: First of all the number of students in the class, like the class has 40 to 100 people, and also the teacher stood in front of the class, used the whiteboard, or used the powerpoint,
sometimes using the model, doing some assignment together and also the class, the environment is similar, the slope classroom.

J: Ok so the teacher can see everyone. Ok cool, so what was different from your class in Thailand?

T: Hmm, maybe like the student in the class. In Thailand, when it is a huge class the students who sit in the back of the classroom won’t pay attention, they always like text on the phone, or speak to each other, and do anything except the…so anything outside, they always walk inside-outside something like that. But the students at SSU are very different.

J: Oh ok! And how did the teacher and the students communicate in the classroom? What kind of communication did you see happening? Like, did the teacher ask questions…did the students raise their hands to ask questions?

T: Yeah, like for the teacher she ask the question to the students and like all students wouldn’t raise their hands to answer, they just spoke up. But I didn’t see the students raise their hands to ask a question-maybe just once.

J: So they just said something, so it was like a discussion

T: Yeah

J: So how was listening to the discussion, were you able to understand most of it, or were there some parts that were more difficult or easy?

T: Yeah because this topic I already had it, and I already studied this, so for the technical terms, it was quite easy for me to understand. But not for all, maybe 80 percent…

J: That’s really good

T: Yeah because the teacher, she speak quite clearly, not too fast, not too slow

J: Ok so she spoke clearly

T: Yeah but I was in the back of the classroom, and the teacher didn’t use a microphone…so sometimes I didn’t hear clearly sometimes

J: In Thailand will the teacher use a microphone?

T: Yeah, like in the slope class.

J: Yeah that’s a good tool

T: But sometimes for the slope class in Thailand, teacher will always use a powerpoint in class, she will just sit at the table in front of the class and point to the slide to the class. But this teacher, she always moved around the room, around the stage in front of the class.

J: So did you think that helped the class?

T: Yeah, it’s not boring, and she was moving and always explained by her gestures, so….

J: Yeah that’s true, if somebody is moving around, it could help you be more alert…

T: I think this could be because of the culture, in Thailand we don’t use the gestures too much. It’s different from America.

J: Ok so people here use more gestures,

T: Yes

J: That’s right, I used to teach in Taiwan, and one time when I was there I was talking and moving my hands and using gestures a lot, and my husbands mom was like….whoa, calm down (laughs). I could tell that my gestures were a little too much.
T: (laughs) Yeah
J: Yeah, ok so after observing this class, if you were going to take a class here at Sonoma State, or at a college in the US, are there any challenges you think you might have? Anything that would cause trouble? Or do you feel mostly comfortable?
T: I think the first one is the listening, although this teacher speaks quite clearly, other teacher might speak faster, and I could not catch up, or, the words or something like that.
J: Ok so when the teachers are speaking quickly it could be hard
T: And when I’m taking notes, because my vocabulary is not quite good, so it takes time to think about the vocabulary, and I can not catch, and follow the teacher.
J: Yeah sometimes it’s hard for your brain to work that fast, and do those things
T: Even in Thai, sometimes I cannot …..
J: Exactly! I know, me too, when I was a student and taking notes in class I would be writing notes and then look up and think, ‘oh no, what did the teacher just say?’ . So when thinking about those problems and challenges, are there any strategies you could use?
T: Just improve English. And listen more, to the native speaker and maybe listen to the Podcast to learn more, and find new vocabulary.
J: Yeah that’s the thing, usually with classes there is a book, so if you didn’t get something, the vocabulary could be in there
T: Yeah, and if we have a class and know the next topic, we should prepare before the class, it will be good to follow the teacher.
J: Great, so you could prepare beforehand
T: And after the class too, you could read again, review or read the notes you took.
J: Yes, good. I think if you took that class you would be fine, sounds like you have some good study skills
T: Oh, I don’t think so (laughs)
J: I think you do. So from observing this class, what did you learn, what is something you discovered about the way people communicate here, or the way classes happen here?
T: Just from observing the class there isn’t anything different too much, maybe just the gestures or the video clip, and also the students, the kinds of students, the different types
J: The different types in what way?
T: I mean like all students respect to the teacher, like, it’s different in Thailand. Like some students in Thailand, like I told you, will talk to others, and do anything except study, something like that. It was quite hard for the teacher. But for other class, like IEP classes, it was quite different, because they have a lot of activities in the class, we always move, teachers always have us move to the groups and change groups, it just makes me like, ‘oh, I don’t want to sleep’…
J: It’s true right? If you moving around a lot you won’t fall asleep. It’s easier to stay focused. Ok great, so that’s more different from back home…
T: Yeah, we usually only do that in the laboratory class. Not for the lecture, it’s only discussions…
J: So in a way some of the IEP classes are like an English lab class…doing some activities
T: Yeah, something like that, always have activities to do, movement (laughs)
J: Ok so when it comes to communicating in the classroom, would you say there is more communication and interaction at the IEP compared to a normal college class?
T: Yes, yes, because it’s a language class
J: Yes, the teachers here want the students to practice speaking
T: Yes, we have to do a lot of presentations, a lot of discussions!
J: Do you think it’s helping you with your speaking in English?
T: Yes, it is, but sometimes it’s too much, like presentation, then another presentation…. (laughs)
J: Yeah we like to have students do everything, like speaking, reading, writing and listening…
T: I really like to present, but sometimes I don’t like it because I can’t explain in English, and feel less excited. If I have a presentation again, and I feel I’m nervous or something like that
J: Would you say it’s harder to express yourself in English, explain your ideas…..
T: Yeah, yeah. Sometimes I need to translate in my brain from Thai to English, or English to Thai… it’s very hard
J: Learning a second language is hard. When you think about how to say something, you might know it, but then in the moment when you have to use it, you just can’t say anything, like you’re frozen…
T: Yes (laughs)
J: Ok great, so I think those are all my questions…. [Conversation trails off and is wrapped up]

Post-Obs Interview
Student: Kash

J: Ok, so tell me about what class did you….
K: The class is Science 150, it about science. The class each week has a lecture where they talk about different types of…
J: Ok so they have a new lecture topic every week
K: So today they had a doctor talk about the ankle and feet, and the disease.
J: Whoa, today was ankle and foot disease. Interesting. When you first went in, what was the class like?
K: The class was big class, a huge class, more than 50 students. Also, during the lecture, the teacher asked the students some questions. The teacher had a very interesting style.
J: Interesting in what way?
K: Like how he ask questions, he would say, ‘ok, I’m going to ask you a question’, then he would count down five seconds, like 1, 2, 3, 4, 5…. ok you’re too late, and he would answer the question.
J: So people only have five seconds to think of the answer?
K: Yeah, and some questions were just 3 seconds, and he would just count, they say, ok, you guys’…. 
J: Wow so he counted how long..
K: Yeah it was exciting
J: Ok cool, did you think that was enough time to think of the answer?
K: Uh, no, no, maybe a little too short. The class was about 50 minutes, not too long, so I didn’t get a lot of information and the lecture was use powerpoint to demonstrate, pictures with definitions of some diseases. I saw a lot of pictures, some of were kind of disgusting, some of them were holes in the feet, and some —— out
J: Ok do you think this class is for students who might want to be doctors?
K: Yeah, yeah, yeah, it was medicine, the professor is a doctor and he actually show some statement for his patients how to deal with it, deal with that situation.
J: Was that helpful to understand the topic?
K: so-so…I understand, so…
J: Was there anything in the class that really surprised you? Anything you didn’t expect?
K: No. No big surprises.
J: Ok so no big surprises. And you mentioned the teacher asked some questions, other than that, what kind of communication was happening? Did the teacher ever have the students discuss anything in a group.
K: No, not group.
J: So the teacher just used the powerpoint for the lecture..
K: Yeah the teacher gave the information, and powerpoint, and he has the laser, and he point
J: oh yeah, the laser pointer
K: so if there was certain something he want to talk about, he could point, it was good.
J: When comparing classes, this one to something in Saudi Arabia, was this different?
K: I think some classes back in my home are the same, the majority is the lecture, some group work…
J: Back home? Ok
K: Yeah, some group work, but I think here is more, common to do the group work
J: Ok so group work is more common here, but back home it’s mostly lecture
K: yeah yeah
J: Ok so what else is similar or different from back home?
K: I think here is bigger classes, and student is more. Also the time, usually at home the class is about one hour, but here sometimes it’s more, like business, or I took art history and the duration of the class was four hours
J: Wow
K: I got there and took notes and just stayed about one hour, and I left [this was another observation]
J: Yeah so back home class wouldn’t be that long, it is a long time. So after doing this observation, is there anything you learned about, if you were going to school, would there be some challenges you might face?
K: Yeah
J: What would be challenging?
K: The first one, the lecture was speak fast, as a foreign student I need time to…
J: It can be hard to understand everything…
K: I understood, but not 100 percent…maybe 60-70 percent
J: Ok so they speak fast..
K: Yes I think the language is the most challenging part for me
J: So did that make it harder to take notes? Or did you feel comfortable?
K: It was hard, I wasn’t really comfortable to take notes so they speak fast and not time to…it’s not easy, you need technique and strategy, and practice practice to take notes fast, need time, need practice
J: It can be hard…even me, when I take notes it is hard to listen at the same time…
K: Me too, in my language…it’s sometimes I face problem, and sometimes you find a complex topic, thats hard
J: Ok so what would you do, if this was your class, to help, or what strategies would you use? What else could you do to help understand everything?
K: Actually I would look at some YouTube, for some lecture, and practice listening and listening listening and words, new words, and ask the lecturer about some points if I don’t understand.
J: ok…and anything else, any other challenges and strategies you are doing as a student here?..
K: Actually the student here seems excited, each class has different lecture has different topic, so they are excited. I think if it’s the same topic, it’s boring.
J: Right, so study something you are interested in….so are you planning on studying science or biology?
K: No, computer science
J: So if you were taking a class in that subject it would be a little different…but it’s good to see a class you normally wouldn’t see
K: Maybe I will change my major to political science
J: That would be interesting, would you want to be a lawyer?
K: Yeah, something like that…
J: Interesting. And so, from doing the observation, what do you think you learned most from the experience?
K: The student feedback, and how to ask, and how the professor give the student, and use evidence and use his experience.
J: So the interactions between the teacher and the student…
K: Yeah, the act. And the medicine…I saw a lot about the foot diseases…how different effect, I saw pictures of the foot…
[conversation goes on about foot disease and then concludes]

Post Obs Interview
Student: Andrea

J: Ok so tell me again which class you observed?
A: Introduction to Linguistic Anthropology
J: So when you went to the class, was it a big class or a small class?
A: I think it was big, but not very big
J: About how many people, about 50?
A: I think about 40 or 50.
J: And when you first went and sat down in the class, what did you notice right away? What did you notice about the teacher, about the class?
A: Um, I noticed that the teacher was looking at her computer, and talking about what she will talk about later. And I noticed that some of the students are talking, and look at their phones.
J: Ok so they were talking and looking at their phones, was this during the class?
A: No, just before.
J: Ok, and how about when the class started…..what happened then?
A: When the class started, the professor first started talking about something, I don’t think it was the official content, she said like this Thursday, we will not have a class, she said something that was a notice to the students, and tell them you need to prepare your homework because we will have the test, or something.
J: Ok, so she started the class by introducing some things that will be happening this week. And how about for the rest of the class, how would you describe the teaching style, and the communication between the teacher and student?
A: I think communication is quite good, because the almost all the students are American, so they like to talk, or share their thinking or thoughts. The teacher would ask some questions and they would raise their hand and talk about their opinions.
J: Yeah, ok so a lot of sharing and discussion.
A: But I think it has like two parts, the class, like it can separate to two parts. I think the first part is like forty minutes or thirty minutes, and she actually not use the powerpoint, she just stand in front of the class and say something, and ask some questions, about the building, or the people retire or something, and just talk about something and students will answer it. And then the second part……actually I think the first part is a little bit boring to me, because I am not a part of their class, so I was just a listener, I just looked at them and what they say. I noticed one that that their speed they speak, it’s really fast.
J: Ah ok so they spoke quickly
A: Yes
J: The teacher and the students?
A: Yeah. And then the last part of the class she started to use the powerpoint, she wanted to talk about sex and gender. It’s like there have a, she thinks there have a two different meanings of this word, like usually people think that these words, sex and gender is the same thing, be actually she thinks it not, sex is about the physical, like male or female, but the gender, she talk about the masculine and feminine, like personality things.
J: Yeah! That is interesting
A: Yeah, like there is very many types of the gender, intersex or trans gender, or cis gender, people who just have a single gender, or like a man in Thai will go have the surgery to turn into a woman…kind of that, they call them a ladyboy.
J: Yeah, lady boy it’s popular in Thailand!
A: Yeah, so I write down this example…
J So when you think about it all these different labels and names for things, but it reflects how people live and who they are.
A: Yes.
J: Ok so it sounds like the class was like part lecture, part discussion, like a little bit of both. And was there anything that really surprised you?
A: Hmm…really surprised me, well actually in the first part they talked about the Music center, and Student Center, because she said like these two buildings spent a lot of money. Like many, many money, I don’t know exactly, but it’s very expensive. So they say like because they have some concert in the Music center they actually need to have a very good musicians come here so people will spend money and buy it, so that is the way they run the Music Center.
J: Yeah, interesting. And what would you say about this class…did you go to a university back home in China? I forget…
A: No.
J: Or just between other classes you have taken before, what are some similarities and differences from the class you observed?
A: Um, same is like the teacher in the class is like the leader, she will give some ideas, she will give the topic the students can talk about, um, but the difference is like i think they are very good, the teacher can ask some questions and they can raise their hand, and just talk about that like very loudly, very confidence it feels like. In China, I was like thinking of what would happen if I did that, and I would feel so nervous, maybe go that way. That is a little different.
J: So you are taking some music classes here now, and will you take other classes later?
A: I think maybe next semester, because now I am here at ———, so they did not give me the music theory, I think I will have this class like next semester.
J: Ok, and do you feel like there could be anything that could be challenging for you, joining more classes? What kinds of challenges might you face?
A: I think the most important questions, the thing I need to do is the language. Because when they are talking I actually feel a little bit stressed, because I am trying to take notes, and that depends on do I really understand what they are talking about. So I was like for the first twenty minutes or twenty five minutes I just listened, because they talked about some things it was not the topic, it was the other things. Then they have students will come and share their thinking, and they speak really fast, so I was like, ‘oh my’! I wanted to take notes but I didn’t know what…..
J: Yeah it’s hard to listen and take notes at the same time.
A: So the first part of the notes is not much, but the second part is more because I know what they are talking about, and have the power point, so I can write down.
J: Yes, so it helps to have some powerpoint to look at in addition to listening, or if you know about the subject..ok. That is hard for any students, even me now! So the powerpoint helped?
A: Yes, with the powerpoint it is very clear and very…br…b-r-i-..
J: Oh, yes, brief or simple.
A: Yes, it’s just like one sentence. If there was like one paragraph, it’s a lot and you need to pick out the information, but the powerpoint it just has one line to say something.
J: Aah, that’s great, that’s a really great thing. Simple, brief notes on powerpoint.
A: Yes
J: Ok good, so any other strategies you could use in the classroom? For communicating, taking notes, anything…what could help you to overcome some of those challenges?
A: Communicate….I wasn’t talking to anyone, the student in the class…
J: But if you were…..
A: Maybe I will like join, because they will have some kind of group, so you can join them and you can talk about the things the teacher wants you to do. So sometimes the group work is very efficiently.
J: Ok, yeah group work is good. Or sometimes its hard with a lot of people to get in there, but with a group of three or four people it’s easier to have discussions. Ok, great. And overall, what would you say you learned from the observation? About how the classes here are, how people communicate in the class…..
A: I would actually say I had a little bit like, not sad or upset but the teacher did not make them talk much, like every time she asks some questions, there are like one or two students that answer it. But people in the groups didn’t have a conversation, and I was a little disappointed.
J: So you were hoping there would be more time for students to talk and maybe do group work.
A: Yes.
J: Ok. Do you think when the teacher was asking questions and the student were raising their hands, do you think some students spoke more than other students?
A: Yes, yes. I can remember there were like 4 or 5 people, every time teacher asked a question they like very want to share, they often raise their hands, say something. But it’s not like most students in that class, just a few. There were many student didn’t talk.
J: It’s true, some people really like to talk in class, but some people don’t feel as comfortable, it’s interesting, watching a class you notice these things.
Ok, cool. I think that covers pretty much everything, so yeah, that’s it and you’re done.

Post Obs Interview
Student Marcy

J: So what class did you observe?
M: Actually I observed the ‘Classroom in American Society’.
J: Ok, who was the teacher for that?
M: Foster…
J: Ok, I don’t know who that is. The other one you were maybe going to watch was a professor that I had, she’s great. Ok, so you observed the class, and when you first started watching, you first went the the classroom, what was happening, what did you notice?
M: First, the class is room 50..60..something, and the classroom is very big. And I was waiting, but actually the classroom was different, the teachers office was the classroom.
J: Oh..
M: So the students are separated, eight students and one teacher and me.
J: Oh, so it was a small class..
M: Yes
J: Oh, interesting. But it was in the classroom or in the teachers office?
M: Teachers office
J: Ok interesting, so small class in the teacher’s office. That’s interesting, I’ve never had a class like that before. So it was a very small class, what else did you observe when you first went in there, what kind of teaching and communication was happening?
M: So, um maybe beforehand the students were designated as the presenter of the book, American classroom in Society, so then two students started to present. They teach us a sentence from this book and they, and this sentence is a little bit complicated, this is written about the problem about American Education system, or something, and hierarchy and so, then teacher just organize, and help make their presentation better, like, and if they say something a little bit long, they manage it.
J: Ok, so the teacher would kind of say, like, let’s move on to the next topic.
M: Yeah.
J: Ok interesting, so the teacher managed the presentation. Was there some discussion between the students and teacher, or was the presentation the whole class? Or was there a lecture part also?
M: Yes, but very short. I think the teacher shouldn’t interfere with the student’s lecture too much. So teacher emphasized students opinion.
J: Yeah that could be kind of weird if you are talking and the teacher starts talking and is like. ’oh, but…” and then you’re like ‘wait, I thought I was giving a presentation’….ok, Was there anything that really surprised you?
M: Like um, firstly the classroom was the teachers office (laughs).
J: Office class! (laughs)
M: Yes, office class. Maybe in America it is normal, but in Japan it is unusual students can use laptop to memorize something.
J: So you don’t usually use laptops in class?
M: Yes, like they prohibit that we use them. Sometimes we are allowed to use, but most of the time we can’t.
J: Ok interesting. Anything else that surprised you?
M: So after the presentation, so maybe just other students, just say the part of the book which they are interested in. Maybe they didn’t consider before class, but they say this part is interesting, so let’s discuss, like something like that. I was surprised by that, in such case they can like promote their discussion.
J: Ok, so they were able to comment, ask about certain parts. So was that during the presentation, or after?
M: After the presentation.
J: Good, so questions and further discussion. So you said back home you usually don’t use laptops in class, was there anything else that was very different, or something that was the same as back home? With communication, or the way they interacted, or tools they used?

M: Hmmm, I think, compared to my university to this class, almost similar, besides laptop. We can have group form of lecture, like group discussion, but back home in my class we can have a discussion group, but in one classroom, we don’t separate the group, like this form in the office we can shut down other interruption, so I think it’s very good to like know the contents of the lecture.

J: Ok, like it makes it more focused on your small group.

M: Yeah

J: Anything else, so did the teacher give any sort of lecture at all? Or not very much.

M: It was mostly students.

J: Yeah for presentations that makes sense, the students take over. Was there anything that was challenging or difficult? Like if you were in this class…..

M: Yeah I can say that it was not just observation, actually I attend. Because the students wanted to know about Japanese education, so they asked me questions, and I answered.

J: That’s great! That’s cool. So were there any challenges with this, anything difficult?

M: Not only me, but Japanese students, these Hutchins students, were very good at making questions, good topics of discussion, so I think this is challenging for me. They very obvious they can think of this topic.

J: So being able of thinking of questions and topics to discuss…

M: They can discuss very well

J: So that would be a challenge. How about when you’re in the class and taking notes and observing, or discussion, what kinds of strategies could you use to help you with language and communication?

M: In this class?

J: yeah, or when it comes to the classroom environment, what can you do to help yourself understand better, or do anything?

M: Um, the student seems like maybe very prepare before the class. I think. Because this book, this kind of book, they already memorize, or…

J: Ok, so preparing before class would help.

M: Yes I think.

J: That’s true, if you have the book, you can read it and get the know the material before you go.

M: Beforehand I make one perspective of the contents, so this is better.

J: Ok so what did you learn, by observing a class? Here at the University, that is different from the language program?

M: Um, actually I was overwhelmed. Like thinking about these question, about how to make American education system better and they can discuss about this topic. So, firstly, um attitude is different, it is completely different from Japanese.

J: You don’t think you would have this same discussion topic in Japan, about changing the education system?
M: No, yeah, one interesting thing about the content is in Japan our government say our education system should be like American, because like when I enroll in University we are just decided by one big test. So, we should be more like American education system. But, American education system still try to find the new way too, and find the talents. (laughs)

J: Right, it’s like ‘who has it right? What should we do?’ (laughs). Nobody is happy!
M: Yeah!

J: Now they are pushing more testing here, but a lot of people don’t like it, they say like what’s the point because teachers and students do all the work for so many years, and if your college admission is about one test, what about your grades? Like how did you do all those years? So it’s really interesting, like nobody is ever happy about education.
M: So here is SAT?
J: Well when you apply to college here they look at SAT score, which is the big test people take, but they also look at your grades, your grade point average, from all your years at high school. If you’ve done very well at classes, they look at that too.

So overall the topic, these ideas, it was kind of overwhelming? We do a lot of critical thinking here, like what is this person telling us, but do we think that’s right, do we believe it? It’s challenging.

So that’s about it, is there anything else you want to tell me about observing before we wrap it up? Anything else that you think was important?
M: Hmmm..
J: Do you think you would want to go to school here? Do you think you would want to be a student for a masters degree or teaching degree?
M: Here?
J: Yeah, after watching this class.
M: Yes, but first I think I would have to improve, my English.
J: Ok, first get the language to where you are comfortable, but you would be interesting in studying here…
M: In Japan most classes are more like lectures, so many people are using their cell phone, or just skip the class. Even though there is a system to recognize these people, they still do it.
J: Ah, but with classes like this where you have to participate and discuss, you can’t really not go, it’s hard to miss.
M: So this office room does not, it doesn’t have to be in office, but small class is better than lecture.
J: You like the small classes?
M: Yes, very much
J: Ok good.
M: I don’t like big lectures.
J: So back home, how big are the classes usually? You said you also have some foreign teachers, are those classes big too?
M: No. Uh, the biggest class which I have experienced is twenty.
J: Ok, that’s not bad.
M: And the smallest is four.
J: Wow, that’s small. But for the main lecture classes at a university, it can be big.
M: Yeah
J: Yeah we have both here, but the think about small classes is you really have to work hard.
M: Even though my high school classroom was usually forty, but I was dead, so…. (laughs)
J: You were sleeping under the desk! (laughs) Ok thanks, …. 
## Pre-Observation Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. What do you think the class will be like?</th>
<th>Thanai</th>
<th>Andrea</th>
<th>Marcy</th>
<th>Kash</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Lecture</td>
<td>- Large class</td>
<td>- Not sure</td>
<td>- Conversation between teacher and student; also student to student</td>
<td>- Not sure, maybe lecture or group work</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Will need to focus</td>
<td>- Will need to use all forms of language: speaking, listening, reading and writing</td>
<td>- Anthropology class, so something about humans</td>
<td>- In Japan, teachers talk a lot</td>
<td>- Powerpoint</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Will need to use all forms of language:</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. What Language/communication skills will be used in class?</th>
<th>Thanai</th>
<th>Andrea</th>
<th>Marcy</th>
<th>Kash</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Powerpoint</td>
<td>- Lecture</td>
<td>- Listening</td>
<td>- Teacher asks questions, tells stories</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Asking questions</td>
<td>- Teacher talks</td>
<td>- Need to understand teacher</td>
<td>- People in class (teacher or classmates) speak fast</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Maybe discussion or group work</td>
<td>- Maybe group work</td>
<td>- Writing and reading</td>
<td>- Will ask questions for clarification</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Q &amp; A</td>
<td>- Understand implied meanings</td>
<td>- Teacher speaks fast, can't understand everything</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>3. What kind of student are you?</th>
<th>Thanai</th>
<th>Andrea</th>
<th>Marcy</th>
<th>Kash</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Bored in lectures, likes interactive and hands on classes</td>
<td>- Doing well in US so far</td>
<td>- Before: terrible. Now: likes international education and English, doing much better.</td>
<td>- Sometimes nervous speaking English in groups</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Likes teachers here because they are patient and friendly</td>
<td>- More motivated</td>
<td>- Likes doing exercises in class</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Likes that it's ok to ask questions</td>
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<td>- Likes variety</td>
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<tr>
<th>4. Challenges you might face? What strategies could you use?</th>
<th>Thanai</th>
<th>Andrea</th>
<th>Marcy</th>
<th>Kash</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Understanding vocabulary. Can use electronic dictionary to help with meaning.</td>
<td>- Feels comfortable right now because of previous English experience in Singapore</td>
<td>- People in class (teacher or classmates) speak fast</td>
<td>- Teacher speaks fast, can’t understand everything</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Will ask questions for clarification</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- Writing can be more difficult than speaking.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Post-Observation Questions</td>
<td>Thanai</td>
<td>Andrea</td>
<td>Marcy</td>
<td>Kash</td>
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| **1. What did you notice?** | -Large Class  
  -Lecture  
  -Used video clips & models  
  -Teacher engaged students | The teacher started class by making some announcements | Class was divided up into small groups, his group held class in the teacher's office | -Big class  
  -Lecture  
  -Topic is different each week |
| **2. What surprised you?** | Not many surprises | The teacher talked about some university issues unrelated to class | -Class in an office  
  -Laptops are ok to use in class  
  -Students could ask questions to the presenter | No surprises |
| **3. Differences/Similarities to classes in home country** | S: Class layout, used PowerPoint, lecture  
  D: Here, students paid attention more, less phone use | S: The teacher is the leader  
  D: Students talk more, ask questions, more confident to speak | S: Small class size, group discussion  
  D: More participation required, people didn't skip class | S: Lecture, discussions  
  D: More group work, classes are longer in duration |
| **4. What communication did you observe?** | -Teacher asked students questions  
  -Students answered freely, discussion style, no hands raised | -Teacher asked questions, students would talk and share ideas.  
  -Lecture/discussion  
  -Powerpoint | -Students were presenters, led discussion about topic in book  
  -Teacher was facilitator | -Interesting questioning style from teacher  
  -Powerpoint  
  -Laser pointer  
  -Lecture |
| **4. Challenges faced, Strategies used.** | C: Didn't understand everything, sometimes hard to hear  
  S: Prepare beforehand, review notes after | C: People spoke quickly, didn't understand everything, note taking is hard  
  S: Read PowerPoint, talk to classmates | C: Thinking of questions to ask, participating in discussion  
  S: Prepare before class, read book | C: Teacher spoke fast, note taking is difficult  
  S: Watch videos on Youtube, ask questions in class |
<table>
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<th>5. What did you learn?</th>
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<tr>
<td>- Teacher uses more gestures and video clips</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Students pay more attention</td>
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<td>- IEP has very interactive, communicative classes</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Disappointed that some students talked more than others in class, it is not balanced.</td>
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<tr>
<td>- No group work</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Felt overwhelmed</td>
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<td>- Attitudes about US education here are different from what he thought they would be</td>
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<tr>
<td>- How to ask questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>- What kinds of communication happen between teacher and student</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Teacher uses evidence and experience in lecture</td>
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