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Korean University Students' Progress in Developing Social Interaction with Native Speakers in the UK

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Although Korean university students' primary concern is academic success in their higher degrees in the UK, they highly desire to develop English communicative competence through a number of opportunities to speak with natives speakers. The paper aims at examining to what extent they are able to be socialised into a new environment while they are studying at UK universities. The in-depth, longitudinal interviews with the targeted group of six Korean masters' students at the University of York was undertaken to observe the pace of their progress in developing social skills. Reluctance and hesitance to contact and interact with their supervisors and other academic staff persisted for most of them to the final term caused by cultural reasons such as face and hierarchy rather than language problems. Despite the six participants' variation in their patterns of social interaction, they struggled with pressures towards monoculture-biased interaction with Korean people, which was quite extreme for the five participants. This passivity can be explained by several reasons such as the students' lack of communicative competence and other situational factors on one-year course. It is important to note that students' failure to develop network with native speakers is strongly associated with experience of cultural withdrawal and frustration with developing communicative competence in English.

[English communicative competence/social adaptation/interaction/culture]

I. INTRODUCTION

Korea has become one of the main sources of overseas students seeking advanced degrees in English-speaking countries (Park, 2006). Korean students are going to overseas universities in increasing numbers for two main reasons; firstly, there is an undoubted

desire among students to improve their communicative English competence. Emphasizing the role of English as a medium of delivering and exchanging knowledge and information in every aspect of life such as economics, politics, and education, the need for developing English ability has been increased (Chang, 2008). This is associated with their desire to have many opportunities to meet and interact with native speakers in a foreign country which may benefit, they think, developing their communicational skills and raising their cultural awareness (Chalmers & Volet, 1997). This is thus also supported by the idea that exposing them to the target culture can accelerate second language learners' motivation to learn English (Kim & Park, 2008). In parallel with this eagerness for English as a lingua franca, the aspiration for overseas study can be also explained by the prestige of attaining a degree from a university in an English-speaking country.

Despite their hope of successfully undertaking academic studies when studying abroad, many Asian students are frequently reported as having serious difficulties or problems adjusting to a new cultural context. Although there have not to date been many studies dealing specifically with Korean students' problems or difficulties at university level, the problems of socially adapting to a new environment may also be a significant concern for Korean students. To judge from my own experience, I had felt a strong sense of isolation when I joined activities on campus which included a large proportion of British students in the UK. While academic contacts with native speakers on the course were not a problem, I had difficulty developing interaction with native speakers and this often made me depressed. It was very different from what I had expected, as I thought I would have numerous opportunities to meet and interact with British students. This motivated me to begin the present study on the issues of Korean overseas students' sociocultural adaptation, as I thought that other Korean students might well have similar experiences.

The purpose of study is to observe the pace of Korean students' progress in developing social interaction skills, especially on short one-year masters' programmes. Rather than the areas as regards perceived academic success and language improvement, this paper particularly focuses on their socialization into their host environment, which thus includes their nature and extent of social interaction on and off campus. Their attempts to develop interaction with native speakers and reactions to solving their problems will be also covered.

II. BACKGROUND

1. The Concepts of 'Face' and 'Hierarchy' in Korean Society

Contemporary South Korean society, generally treated as a homogeneous group of "Confucian Heritage Culture" (CHC) like Japan, Taiwan (Watkins & Biggs, 2001, 1996, cited in Ho et al, 2004), is deeply rooted in Confucian values and ideology since a rebirth of Confucianism in the late 1990s (Kim, 2005). Indeed Confucianism remains one of the most dominant factors influencing Korean culture which covers all human relationships, educational processes and legal systems in all aspects of everyday life (Lee, 1983; Park & Cho, 1995). Korean Confucianism has been developed in a particular way, based on the major cultural factors such as collectivism, hierarchy and harmony, and face which still prevails in 21st century Korean society and are interrelated with each other. It is highly valuable to maintain social harmony through individuals' proper behaviour in their place in the hierarchical social order (Halpin, 2002). This harmonization extends to the use of language. Speakers are expected to make appropriate use of honorific endings in the language and to take clear account of social factors, such as age, sex, family background, home town, social position, and the speaker's social status relative to the person being addressed.

As "collectivistic culture" stresses interdependence and hierarchy in human relationships, the concept of face in Korean society is more likely to be "the positively social (socially desirable) images (or value) that persons claim for their public selves" (Kang, 2004, p. 264). People in Korea thus take this 'involvement type of face' into consideration whenever they speak and behave particularly in public (Choe, 2001). Face plays an important role in maintaining social harmony in hierarchical order by identifying one's own self in the community, which is based on education, seniority, or occupation (Flowerdew, 1998).

2. Face and Hierarchy in Student-Teacher Relationship in Korean Educational Context

As the authority of and the respect towards teacher is highly valued in Confucian culture, the hierarchical relationship has been constructed between students and teachers in Korea. Although teachers' authority has been degraded of late by many sociocultural changes, traditional ideas about what teachers should be and how to respect teachers still remain strong in the Korean educational system (Egeler, 1996).

In Korea, saving face is an important way of keeping authority, and thus, superiors are expected not to lose face through criticism or confrontation in public (Flowerdew, 1998). It

is accordingly unsurprising that the concept of face is reflected in the field of education. Indeed, according to Murphy (1978), "Hong Kong students display unquestioning acceptance of the knowledge of the teacher or lecturer." (p. 43) As a result, students are often very reluctant to express their opinions so as not to challenge their lecturers' authority. The same situation exists in Korea (Lim & Griffith, 2003). As a recent study of students and teachers in Korean high school science classrooms showed, the teacher-student interaction was 'a scene of directing teachers and obeying students' (Lee et al, 2003, p. 67). This may be problematic to Korean university students studying in western countries, where the concept of face is weak, as a result of the prevailing individualistic culture, students are more willing to speak up in class and be open to public confrontation (Ho et al, 2004).

III. RESEARCH DESIGN

1. Sampling

To investigate cultural and language issues of Korean students at UK universities, the in-depth interviews were conducted with six Korean masters' students at University of York. At al longitudinal level, the qualitative approach was designed to observe the pace of the participants' progress in their academic success, language improvement and social integration into a new environment in their one year courses. As this paper focuses on their social adaptation in the UK, the in-depth interviews were accordingly aimed at answering the following questions:

1) What is specifically problematic to Korean Masters' students in the areas of social integration into their host environment?
2) What caused key social problems and challenges?
3) To what extent and how did the students adjust to a different academic culture within the UK university system across the year?
4) What attempts did the students make to solve their problems?

To track the pace of their adjustment, starting from their initial worries to their overall evaluation at the end of the course, the study involved six individual interviews with each participant across the three terms and the summer vacation. The interviews were scheduled at each participant's convenience. Each participant had two interview sessions each term; one in week one or two and another in the final week. However, the sixth interviews were undertaken in September/October, in the final week of the academic year, so there was a

rather longer interval between the fifth and the final interviews. There were two reasons for delaying the final interviews. The first was that I did not want to disturb them while they were in the process of writing their dissertations, in most cases, the most important part of their assessment at MA level. The other reason was that the final interview sessions had a slightly different aim from that of other sessions as they involved the participants' overall evaluations of their adaptation in each topic area across the year as a whole. The sixth interview their sessions needed to function as a 'review stage' (Gillham, 2005) allowing me to confirm (or not) what each participant had reported in his or her term time sessions; they thus required more time for discussion than the other sessions. At the end, I presented my summary of what they had described as their experiences and opinions over the year as a whole and asked them to give me feedback on my summary as Gillham (2000) suggests. This was intended to minimise researcher bias when it came to interpreting the participants' responses. The relevant information about the six participants is summarized in Table1.

TABLE 1

Summary of Baseline Information on the 6 Participants.

ID	Sex	Age	Subject
NJ[1]	M	36*	MA in Social policy
BK	F	26	MA in Linguistics
YJ	M	35*	MA in Social Policy
JM	M	28	MSc in Financial Mathematics
MK	F	29	MA in TESOL
HC	F	43*	MA in TESOL

* Participant was older than the researcher

In terms of recruiting the students, I first contacted the representative of the Korean Society within the university (2005 to 2006) to obtain information on how many members were undertaking masters programmes during the academic year; just eight Korean students were currently enrolled at the University on Masters' programmes. One of the eight people was not appropriate because he had taken another master course previously in the UK, so I excluded him as a participant. One of the remaining seven, who was oldest among the eight people, was not easy for me to contact and interact with: he lived off campus, and did little interact with other Korean society' members. This means that I would have difficulty interacting with him at the longitudinal study. As a result, I finally sampled six masters' students, as none of the six students refused my request and they all

[1] NJ ....HC: the initial of each participant

appeared to have a positive attitude towards participating in the interviews all the year.

In order to reduce bias across courses, I originally planned to have a balance between students on science-based courses and those studying non-science related subjects. This was based on the assumption that according to the nature of the disciplines, different types of academic performance would be required and different assessment methods employed. However, in the event this was not possible and there was only one 'science' student approachable, who was studying for an MSc in Finance Mathematics.

2. Procedures

With regard to 'the degree of control over the interview exercised by the interviewer' (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 3), I adopted Toyoshima's (2007) 'structured conversation' method (Conteh & Toyoshima, 2005) that has been shown to work well with Japanese university students and an older interviewer with experience of the same institution. Toyoshima (2007) explains 'structured conversation', which she developed and tested for use in 'eliciting learning histories', as follows: "In this research, I proposed mainly to address questions to the informants in line with the topics I had structured, but it was the informants who decided how they would answer them. This suggested that our interaction would not be a question-answer type in some parts, as can be seen in structured or semi-structured interviews; rather, they would be more naturalistic conversations within the overall structure. I therefore developed a semi-structured format which I called structured conversation (p. 120).

I modified and extended the method to fit the situation, applying it to postgraduates rather than undergraduates, while maintaining the assumption that the researcher should share culture, L1 and academic background with the participants. Interestingly, the senior-junior relationship between the researcher and the participants and the sharing of culture and L1 have affected the structured conversation; the researcher played a role of counseling by giving advice and helping when the students had problems or questions. This implies the Korean students' strong tendency to rely on a tied relationship between senior as an experienced person and junior in a hierarchical Korean higher education experience. My role as an experienced senior encouraged the participants to talk about their problems or experiences, and this seems to have been a major factor in keeping our discussions productive across the year. However, my taking on a consultant role lengthened some of the interview sessions to around 2 hours (the researcher tried to counter this by locating any advice after a 40 to 60 minute interview proper). My advice may at times have affected the very behaviour in was trying to study.

The 'structured conversation' method allowed a 'data triangulation' approach to be used. The three types of data I used were 1) the participants' responses in the interviews (all 36

interview sessions), 2) information from their emails or informal talk on the phone, and 3) informal conversational meetings with groups involving the sample students. I initially intended to ask the students to write a diary about their experiences, feelings, and changes to show me for the next interview, but in the event I felt this was impossible, because of a sense of courtesy about not imposing on them and a strong impression that they would not agree to do the work. As an alternative, I asked them to email or phone me between interview sessions, whenever something specific, relevant to the issues highlighted in the interviews, happened to them. HC, YJ, and MK started emailing me between their first and second interview sessions. I had 18 email letters from JM, YJ, BK, and NJ. MK and HC phoned me to discuss their problems 12 times throughout year. This proved to be fairly effective in developing the integrated approach.

The final source of data derived from informal conversation meetings with groups involving the sample students; I tried, for example, to participate in social meetings of the Korean community, in the course of which I tried to hear and pick out experiences or opinions that were provided by any of the six participants. The Korean society had all six time meetings including the parties for Korean traditional occasions. I also made several attempts to create informal meetings with participants, and connect with them in a more intimate setting such as over dinner. However, it was not easy for me to organise this type of informal meeting with NJ, YJ, and HC who got married and who were older than me. As they tended to spend most of their time with their family, I personally thought it would not be good etiquette to ask them for another time to have dinner or tea, outside the interview hours. Furthermore, they tended to have more social meetings with other families in the community of married people, and thus I did not have many opportunities to personally meet them. For this reason, such informal meetings were limited to the younger students.

I invited some of them (MK, BK, JM,) to dinner or lunch once a month on average to explore the process of their adaptation in UK university life in more natural settings and function in a similar way to the previously mentioned diaries. The students discussed many issues they currently faced in a sort of 'focus-group discussion' and made more complaints about some aspects of their university life in the UK. Using a data source which relied more on 'the description and explanation of phenomena as they occur in routine, ordinary natural environments' (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1995, p. 296) yielded very positive results, though it inevitably led to a slight imbalance between participants; the data from the 'focus-group discussion' can be limited to younger students' experiences and feelings, which would have led to a research bias against the older participants.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

To aid readability, the results are presented via a theme-based structure, which is classified into two aspects of social adaptation: 'interaction within department' and 'interaction with native speakers outside department'.

1. Participants' Motivation to Study in the UK

It is of some importance to examine what motivated the participants to study overseas for their masters' courses. Such understanding may allow us to observe what the students placed the emphases of his and her studies. The six students focused mainly on academic success and language competence. This is line with the reasons why Korean students study overseas discussed in the section 1.

TABLE 2

In-depth Interviews: Participants' Motivation to Study in the UK

ID	The motivation to study for a master's degree in the UK
NJ	To understand British culture (traditions, values, and beliefs) and thus find out what are the differences between Korea and the UK. To learn English as a second language in an English-speaking culture with more focus on communicative language competence. To achieve an MA degree from a UK university.
BK	To study language and linguistics (English) in an English speaking country and experience the culture of the target language, in order to learn her subject and the language better. To achieve a degree in a shorter time than at US or Canadian universities (one-year MA programme).
YJ	To acquire knowledge more systematically in the UK, where both theoretical foundations and practical research have been developed. To obtain the prestige of a degree from a UK university. To expand his world view by experiencing cultural diversity.

	To enhance his English ability by maximising the benefit of using English through interaction with native speakers as well as by means of acquiring knowledge and expressing opinions in academic contexts.
JM	Primarily to improve his English in an English language culture and secondly to achieve a Master's degree. To experience British academic culture.
MK	To improve her English skills and gain an MA degree in the UK. This means she would be more qualified to teach English in Korea (this was recommended by the high school where she had been working as an English teacher). To experience British culture and language (she was looking forward to learning British accents and cultural information). To complete a Masters course in a shorter time (one-year in the UK) for practical reasons.
HC	To develop English communicational skills by using English through interaction with British people in a British cultural context (she desired to learn British English and thus speak English more naturally and fluently in real speaking and listening contexts).

As Table 2 shows the details, all six participants expected to improve their English communicational skills in a British cultural context, in addition to gaining a master's degree there. They believed that prolonged exposure to an English-speaking culture would be beneficial to the development of their communicative competence. In this respect, they anticipated encountering numerous opportunities to interact with native speakers through various informal social activities. As JM commented,

> Most of all, I think the best thing is to meet many British people and experience British culture, as well as getting a masters' degree for the course here. I really want to improve my English and thus speak with many British people and take part in many social activities during the course (JM, I1[2], 14/ December 05).

They said using English in academic contexts like classrooms or seminars is also an additional advantage to studying in an English-speaking country, which enables them to enhance their language skills as well as experience a new academic culture. Most of all,

[2] I1 : First session Interview (interview 1)

they showed a strong desire to expose themselves to real listening and speaking situations with local people through informal meetings, which can contribute to their language competence and cultural experience. Despite their aspirations for their learning language and culture, their primary goal of studying in the UK was seen to be that of successfully receiving a master's degree from a UK university, anticipating that the masters' degree awarded by a UK higher education establishment would guarantee them getting a more prestigious job or better educational opportunities than in Korea. A degree from a 'developed' English-speaking country such as the UK or USA is perceived as being highly valuable, although it still depends on the prestige of the university in that country (Park, 2006). In short, they were highly motivated to develop their English communicative competence through interaction with native speakers as another important reason for studying in English- speaking countries.

2. The Nature and Pattern of Their Social Interaction in the UK

1) Interaction with Academic Staff and Departmental Activities

None of the six students were active about interacting with academic staff and were satisfied with the frequency of formal departmental receptions.

TABLE 3

In-depth Interviews: Progress of Interaction with Other Academic Staff and in Department

ID	Interaction with academic staff other than one's supervisor	Participation in receptions and departmental social events
NJ	He did not attempt to interact with other academic staff from. (term 1 to the end of the year) He never expected to have unclear interaction except with his supervisor. (I1)	He participated in the first reception, expecting to interact with other students and academic staff. (I1 and I2) He continued to participate throughout the year, although it was not as useful as he expected. (term 1 to term 3)
BK	She did not attempt to interact with other academic staff: she did not have any chances to interact with them and she was not even willing to create any interaction with other	She participated in the first reception, expecting to interact with other students and academic staff.

	academic staff across the year. She did not feel academic staff were friendly and considerate, although they were not authoritative. (term 1to term3)	She continued to participate throughout the year. She complained that there were few departmental activities where the students and staff could freely converse with each other. (I5)
YJ	He did not attempt to interact with academic staff all the year when he needed to discuss or ask something; he was concerned if it would be impolite or not. He never expected to have this sort of interaction except with his supervisor. (term 1 to term 3)	He actively participated in each reception until the end of the second term. He intentionally attempted to interact with staff and students. (term 1 and term 2) Formal receptions only occurred three times, which was not useful enough to practice communicational skills with them. (term 1 to term 3)
JM	He tried to actively ask questions and discuss things with other academic staff, by creating meetings on his own. He often had some misunderstandings in communication with them. Since the final term, his tendency to actively interact with the academic staff has diminished.	He actively participated in each reception every term, trying hard to interact with staff and students. Although he felt more receptions or formal meetings were required to improve his communicational skills, he felt it was good to see people in the department. (term 1 to term 3)
MK	She was not comfortable with interacting with academic staff. She was very afraid that her lack of English skills would lead to misunderstandings and was thus concerned about losing face; she never expected to interact with other academic staff and she only relied on	She participated in the receptions in the first and second term. Initially, she intended to improve her communicational skills through interaction with people in the department, but it was less satisfying than she expected. (I3 and I4)

	supervision meetings. (term 1 to term 3)	It was a very good experience to exchange cultural points with her coursemates who were mostly international students. (term I and final term)
HC	She tried to rely on interaction with other academic staff when she felt the supervision meetings were not useful at all from the second term. This did not help her to improve either her academic or her language skills.	She participated in the introductory reception, but it was hard to interact with people and get to know them. (I1) She participated in the receptions only twice (term1 and term 2) because it was not really useful to interact and use her communicational skills. She never attended social events from the third term.

The six participants' departmental interaction was fairly limited to their supervisory meetings: they all relied on only the interaction with their supervisors rather than making attempts to interact with other academic staff. Furthermore, because of this lack of experience and understanding, the students said that they felt very reluctant to contact their supervisors and other academic staff at the beginning of the first term and could not overcome this passivity. This can be explained by the cultural assumption that the Korean students had experienced a more hierarchical and vertical relationship between teachers and students in Korea. In the first interview sessions, although they found out who were their supervisors and wanted to meet them, NJ, HC and YJ reported being very worried about waiting until their supervisors first contacted them. They were not clear about whether this was the more courteous procedure or not and were also concerned about what they needed to prepare for their first supervision meetings. HC commented that a psychological distance from her supervisor as an authority figure led her to hesitate to contact her supervisor. All the six students showed a high level of concern about being polite when it comes to using language and meeting role expectations. For instance, YJ was stuck with using the expressions of 'could you' or would you' when speaking with them and writing emails to them. Also, all the students said that they were often hesitant to ask their supervisors for academic advices in order not to disturb them or lose their face in case the supervisor was not able to help them. Their concern about being polite continued

throughout the year, although they all thought that the student-teacher relationship in the UK is more open and less vertical as the term progressed. For instance, NJ noted,

> As I experienced in the first term, I think I bothered my supervisor, making him open such a silly email I sent as soon as I got home after I finished my supervision meeting in the first term. The email was to express my gratitude for the meeting with him; 'Thank you very much for giving me your time for the meeting today. I hope that I did not bother you....' Although I realised what a useless email he would think it was, I still hesitated about whether I needed to express my gratitude whenever I had a meeting with him (NJ, I5, 03/ May 06).

In terms of departmental activities, they also tried to expand their social activities with their coursemates through departmental receptions across the terms, but the frequency of the receptions was not enough to develop their interaction with people in the department. Although NJ and MK were more active and excited about participating in the receptions in the first term, they felt that the meetings were unhelpful, so they did not motivate the students to expand their social life as the terms progressed.

In more details, BK was an extreme case with a minimal social life in the department, making no attempt to have interaction with any academic staff other than her supervisor. In the case of HC, her approach did not help with her academic development, even though she tried to rely on some advice from other academic staff from the second term as she was not satisfied with her supervision sessions. Other participants like NJ, YJ, and MK did not expect to have other academic staff except for their supervisors. Among the participants, JM was the most active about interacting with other academic staff and his coursemates, trying to create a number of informal meetings by himself from the middle of the first term, although he had his problem with spoken English. However, his attempts and efforts to develop increasingly reduced as the terms progressed. Despite these individual variations of experiences and feelings about being socialised into to a British higher education system, it seemed true that they could not overcome such minimal interaction within departments or courses.

2) Interaction with Native Speakers Outside Department

The social interaction of the Korean students in the UK can be divided into three categories; interaction with other Koreans, interaction with other international people, and interaction with British people. This categorisation is adopted from Brok and Levy (2005), who talk about interaction in 'monocultural settings, multicultural settings, and intercultural or bicultural settings'.

TABLE 4

In-depth Interviews: Pattern of Participants' Social Interaction

ID	Who did they meet most frequently?
NJ	Most of his social interaction was focused on Korean people from term 1 to term 3. Sometimes, he interacted with other international students on the course or flatmates in the college (in most cases, they were Asian students, such as Chinese or Japanese). He initiated interaction with British classmates on a few occasions, but his interaction with British people was minimal and increasingly diminished across the terms. He met almost only Korean people during the final term.
BK	She continued to have interactions with other international classmates until the course ended. She tried hard to avoid Korean people in the first term, but she increased her interaction with them after term 2. She interacted at times with British people in the Church, but had limited minimal interaction with British people elsewhere during the year.
YJ	Most of his social interaction was with Korean people during the year. He had minimal interaction with British students on the course as well as at the British church, or at the restaurant where he temporarily had a part-time job during the course. He had minimal informal interaction with other international students during the course.
JM	He had interaction with Korean people, other international students in the department and the Athletic Union, and British people even off campus in the first term. From term 2 to the end of the course, he made few attempts to have interaction informally with native speakers, because he found it was hard to make friends with British people. Instead, he focused more on interaction with other international students or Korean students.
MK	She was keen to interact with British people in term 1, but became more discouraged as the term progressed. From term 2, she focused more on meeting Korean people than other international students or British people in the church, but informally she met them two or three times a month and discussed things (with them).

	During the final term, she had minimal interaction with other international students or British people.
HC	Almost all of her interactions were with her Korean family and Korean classmates during the year and had minimal interaction with British people. She could only talk to British people when she visited her son's school once in a while and talked to the other parents. From the second term, she often interacted with several international friends after class until the course ended.

As Table 4 shows, there were a range of variations across the participants in their pattern of social interaction throughout the year, although none of them were able to overcome their tendency to rely on 'monocultural interaction' with Korean people. NJ initially tended to meet Korean people far more frequently than British people, or people from other countries. This continued up to the last term and his attempts to meet native speakers became less and less frequent: he had a limited time for meeting native speakers and was very reluctant to use his English in an intercultural or multicultural setting.

Although BK tried hard not to meet other Korean people in the first term, focusing instead on interacting with other international students, from the end of the second term she depended more on interaction with Korean people than with people from other countries. This means, as she said, she could not overcome a sense of isolation and loneliness and also discovered that the potential for improving her spoken English was quite limited when she communicated with her international friends. Most of all, she believed that it was not feasible to make British friends with an unfavourable attitudes toward British people that they are very hard to get close to and are not friendly. This is based on her experience that there was not much interaction between the international group of students and the British students in the class which has a prevailing number of (over 80%) international students. Her minimal interaction with British people was one of the main factors to which she attributed her cultural withdrawal:

> I do not feel very often I am studying in the UK. I wanted to meet British people rather than Koreans or other international friends. I could not meet British people. I have met my classmate from Hong Kong, though it was difficult for me to truly open my mind to her because I felt very often invisibly a distance between her and myself, which comes from different sociocultural backgrounds and insufficient language skills to completely understand each other. I just meet her to use English though.... I did not want to meet Korean friends, which made me feel guilty using Korean. This made me very lonely and depressed. Thus I avoided

everyone in the first term, but later I tried to meet Korean people for the second and final terms. Nevertheless, I have still been depressed and lonely." (BK, I6, 24/ September 06).

She was accordingly very reluctant to join social meetings as an international student and even developed a fear of approaching British students from the second term. She had her similar behaviour to showing reluctance to talk to department staff, and represented an extreme case in terms of interaction with British classmates. This led her to focus on the negative aspects of overseas study in relation to social interaction with local people, and she was the most frustrated of the group in this respect.

YJ was different, as he focused on meeting Korean people throughout the first term, as did N.J. However, in the second term, he became more active about speaking to native speakers, attempting to have informal meetings with people at his British church. He said that he was very interested in becoming socialized into British society, even though he said he experienced a number of challenges, such as communication problems, or a lack of opportunities to make British friends.

JM was very proactive in setting up and participating in many informal social meetings with native speakers, as well with as other international students, mainly from his course. He also participated in social clubs to play sport and did part-time jobs to improve his spoken English skills, although these did not in the event provide him with many opportunities to speak with British people. However, from the second term, the opportunities to speak with native speakers decreased and he reported feeling more comfortable mixing with Korean people for his final months at the university. Although he did not manage to have as much interaction as he had initially expected, and although the interactions he did have did not notably contribute to enhancing his spoken English skills, it is worth emphasising that he did try to enjoy meeting people from the UK and other countries, which stimulated him to explore many cultural aspects of British society.

MK was initially motivated to meet British people and other international students, and was quite excited about exploring different aspects of culture in the UK. However, she had far less opportunity to meet British people than she expected and did not actively set up meetings with them. In particular, she could not overcome the problem that she was still very intimidated by speaking to native speakers as miscommunication often occurred, even in the last term. As well as problems with language, she formed an unfavourable attitude towards British students, seeing them as hard to approach, and believing that they were not interested in meeting international students. She did not have any informal meetings with British students at all during the third term, so she is a more extreme case than BK. MK too felt isolated because she had perceived that British people were hard to approach and like BK she had such little interaction with British people made her feel that she was not

actually in a foreign country. However, unlike BK, who had initially avoided meeting Korean people but gradually come to rely on social interaction with them, MK repeatedly interacted with Korean people from the beginning of the course, although she had expected to also interact with British people. She became increasingly isolated due to being unable to realise her expectations about being socialised into an English-speaking country where she could communicate in English and explore the culture. It consequently appears to be the case with MK and BK that the failure to generate social interactions with British people may well have affected the experience of cultural withdrawal.

Finally, HC said she could not afford to converse with people other than her family due to lack of time. She met a few other Asian classmates during the first term, and thus her passivity in creating social interactions with native speakers was reinforced. She had just a few informal meetings with a British classmate and other international friends after classes during the second term. Although this did not, she felt, contribute to her developing communicative competencies in English, she did enjoy speaking to them in English and attempted to have more opportunities to meet British people. However, a very limited cycle of interaction with both native speakers and Korean people (except for her own children) prevailed over her social life during the course.

Except for JM, this reached extreme proportions. Thus, the participants were dissatisfied with their social interaction overall, especially when it came to being socialized into various activities on campus or making British friends. This can be partly explained in terms of English communicational skills, in the sense that the degree of social interaction in the UK is inevitably related to one's English skills. The data from NJ and BK show clearly how communicative competence can impede socialisation into a host culture: being unable to overcome their language difficulties meant they were discouraged from interacting socially with native speakers (Heikenheimo & Shute, 1986; Perrucci & Hu, 1995; Surdam & Collins, 1984). The other participants also preferred to interact with Korean people because of language problems. The resulting minimal interaction with native speakers could not, they felt, benefit the development of their communicative competence. This may in part confirm that students who have more interaction with conational group of students tend to show less progress in learning the target language (Furnharm &Erdmann, 1995; Kim, 1998; Ryan, 2005).

Situational factors and the attitude of the Korean students towards British people and culture also affected their ability to socialise into British culture. A one-year course does not offer many social activities and therefore the chances of interacting with local people are limited. This meant that the students spent most of their time on their coursework. They tended to be fairly passive and reluctant to meet British people or other international students, and certainly all the six cases showed an extreme passivity in terms of bicultural or multi cultural interaction in the final term. MK and BK both felt that British people are

hard to get close to. However, JM did try, by having informal meetings with native speakers (see Table 3 to 4), although this ultimately did not contribute to developing a broader range of social contact with British friends in and outside university.

From a psychological point of view, the participants' dissatisfaction with social interaction related, in part, to their feelings of loneliness and isolation. This experience of cultural withdrawal also supports several researchers' findings about the association between international students' frustration with developing a social network with the community of the host culture and feelings of anxiety and isolation (Chen, 1999; Hull, 1978; Schram & Lauver, 1988, cited in Trice, 2004). BK and MK specifically said that they avoided Korean people, as well as people from other countries, for a while and struggled with feelings of isolation. Indeed, MK reported having a strong sense of isolation, and depression, and of feeling lost in her overseas studies. In order to overcome this psychological distress, the students understandably developed a marked tendency towards a monocultural pattern of interaction with Korean people. As MK commented during the final term,

> I feel very guilty about using only Korean in the UK whenever I met Koreans. Although I am sick and tired of meeting only Korean people, I cannot avoid this recycling pattern of interaction and thus have become very passive about being socialized into British culture. Ultimately, I have failed to have active and useful social interactions with native speakers." (MK, I5, 30/ April 06)

To sum up, the interview data give a clear answer to how far Korean students are concerned about developing social interaction with native speakers in the UK and how they try to overcome any problems or difficulties with social adjustment. Firstly, although they expected to increase their degree of social interaction with native speakers and looked upon this as a benefit of overseas study, the group was very dissatisfied with the breadth or amount of interaction they achieved. They developed a stronger and stronger tendency to rely on meeting Korean people as the year progressed. Alongside language limitations, their dissatisfaction with social interaction can be also explained by a lack of time and opportunities to meet native speakers. However, as the data above showed, their passive and reluctant attitude towards developing social interactions with native speakers can be seen as another main reason for their dissatisfaction; three participants (NJ, YJ & HC) made few attempts to set up informal meetings with local people, and MK and BK made none at all. JM was far more active in making social interactions with native speakers than other participants, but still could not overcome a lack of time and opportunity across the year. Consequently, the several factors made it clear that there was a limit to the extent which the six Korean students were able to develop their social interaction with native

speakers. In short, all six showed a fairly high level of dissatisfaction with their social adjustment in the UK, given that they had had high expectations of interacting with native speakers, as one of their major aims of studying abroad. This partly follows Ward Bochner and Furnham (2001)'s claim that contact with the host community rarely occurs to many international students in overseas study, which frustrates them.

V. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The interview data give a clear answer to 'how far Korean students are concerned about developing social interaction with native speakers in the UK and how they try to overcome any problems or difficulties with social adjustment. Firstly, although they expected to increase their degree of social interaction with native speakers and looked upon this as a benefit of overseas study, the group was very dissatisfied with the breadth or amount of interaction they achieved. This happened both on and off campus: they showed a level of passivity about contacting and interacting with their supervisors and other academic staff over the year. This can be partly explained by their difficulty with adapting to a different cultural norm in terms of student-teacher relationship and supervisory meetings in the UK within one year. They were still very accustomed to hierarchical relationship between students and teacher in the final term by showing a high level of concern about politeness such as sticking to polite linguistic devices and hesitation about asking their supervisors for some academic help. Although they actively participated in the departmental receptions at the beginning of the course, they failed them to expand informal meetings with their coursemates or academic staff.

Their greater tendency to be passive and reluctant to interact with native speakers appeared outside department, which had led to a higher degree of dissatisfaction and frustration with developing social network with native speakers. They all tended to rely more heavily on a monocultural pattern of interactions with Korean students than on cross-cultural interactions with other international students or native speakers. This tendency became stronger as the year progressed and was fairly extreme for five of the students, though less so for JM who was the most active among the participants about being socialized into British society. Although they all initially made attempts to increase interaction with native speakers - for example, BK tried to talk with people from other countries and avoid meeting Korean people and JM tried hard to create informal meetings with British friends, these attempts gradually diminished for all the six in-depth interview students.

It may have been the case that students' lack of communicative competence contributed to their passivity about developing social interaction with native speakers on and off

campus, as was clearly the case with NJ and BK. Alongside their language problems, their dissatisfaction with social interaction can be also explained by their passive and reluctant attitude towards developing social interactions with native speakers. In particular, Korean students' attitudes toward British people and culture impeded their active social interaction, as in the case of both BK and MK who felt quite strongly that British people were not friendly and hard to get close to. On the one hand, both students experienced psychological distress, such as feelings of loneliness and isolation in the foreign culture, which only increased the tendency towards a monocultural-pattern of interaction with other Koreans. Finally, a simple lack of time and opportunity to meet native speakers on a one-year course may have also contributed to the students' passivity about developing social interaction with native speakers.

In short, all six showed a fairly high level of dissatisfaction with their social adjustment in the UK, associated with multiple factors, given that they had strongly desired to interact with native speakers, as one of their major aims of studying abroad. This partly follows Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001)'s claim that contact with the host community rarely occurs to many international students in overseas study, which frustrates them. This, as a result, impeded their improvement of English communicative competence Both departments and Korean students need to be more proactive for fostering cross-cultural interaction; it is necessary for British institutions in the UK to consider Korean students' aspirations and needs for developing social interaction with native speakers. Korean students' more open and positive attitude towards their host culture and people will benefit their being acculturated into a British academic context. Further study for either undergraduate or PhD group will be also needed.

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APPENDIX A

A sample Transcription of an in-depth interview

Participant: HC (Female)
Session: the first interview
Date: 21st Oct. 2005
Time: 12: 30 pm to 2:00 pm.
(Before the tape-recording, I explained the aim, and general theme of the interviews roughly and asked her several questions about personal information, such as her course, academic experience in Korea and other details).

(Key: I= interviewer, P= participant)

I: First, really thank you very much for your participation in this interview.
As I said to you before on the phone, just be relaxed and give me your answers saying what you felt and experienced honestly. As I also confirmed, your name will not be identified at all so don't worry about this matter.

P: OK, no problem (with a smile)… it's my pleasure to participate in your work. I think your PhD topic is really interesting and is very relevant to our life here.

I: Thank you,.. I will start with the first question, um… can you tell me what motivated you to come to the UK? Did you have any specific reasons?

P: I .. umm… (pause) most of all, really wanted to learn how to express myself in English like native speakers. I think English education as a foreign language in Korea should be more focused on 'communicative language teaching'. So we teachers need to focus on developing students' communicative competence rather than an exam-oriented teaching methods, emphasizing reading and writing skills. As an English teacher, I am very enthusiastic about learning how to implement an interactive approach in the Korean teaching and learning context by taking this TESOL course, and want to improve my communication skills through a lot of interactions with native speakers in the UK. In addition, I am expecting to experience British culture with my family who are staying with me in the UK now.

P: Thank you for your long answer ha ha.(laughs). That' s all that made you come to the UK? If you have any particular reason for coming to the UK for a masters course, can you tell me about that?

P: Most of all, the prestige of the UK universities was one of the main reasons to choose UK higher education. It would look better on my resumé when I need to get a job in Korea. When I chose the university, I placed the importance on the status of the university in the ranking system for all the UK universities.

I: I see... Did you have any first impression about British culture or people that you remember now? As you said that you arrived here one year ago and had stayed in a different city, can you say anything that made an impression on you, or surprised you, in terms of tradition, values, life styles or food in the UK ?

P: Many things seemed to be different .... um... I found that systems on the whole are very slow as compared to those in Korea. As you know, everything is so fast in Korea, is that right you think? I need to be very patient in the UK

I: Yes. I agree. I felt the same as you ... I felt that in Korea doing things quickly is very important, but here people seem not to be very sensitive about waiting.

P: Ah, something just struck me. I noticed that 'charity shops' here are very common. This made a big impression on me. In fact, I was not accustomed to buying things in charity shops. I would have thought about what other people think of me using this sort of second-hand things.

I: I sometimes use a charity shop - it is cost effective and good to spend money on charity work.

P: But I found that it was very hard to make friends with British people. They do not seem to be open to becoming friends with people from different countries like me. It is really hard to get close to them.

I: OK. So you feel like that about British people.
Let's move on to the next question.. have you experienced anything that was a surprise or shock since your arrival?

P = I was very nervous about communicating with the administration staff in the university. I could not understand some words, so I was very embarrassed at the time.

I = So how did you cope with the problems?

P = I just repeated 'pardon? But I was slightly worried in case the staff weren't pleased with this. Actually I am not confident about understanding their English accents or expressions in many cases, particularly less confident when interacting on the phone.

I = Have you had any difficulties to understanding documentation?

P : (pause) Not yet.

I: I see . So you did have communication problems which made you feel embarrassed.? What makes you the most worried now? Are they academic matters or others like communication problems?

P= I am worried about everything. Um… anxiety about English, and so on. ….but, I feel most concerned about writing academic essays, which I think can strongly affect my completing the MA course successfully, as the modules comprise several essay assessments. I am really really worried … (a sigh) … I have not written any essay assignments yet, and this has made me more insecure about writing an academic essay.

I = You mean academic writing is of the most concern to you now. All right I will ask for details later and move to the next theme…

P = OK.

I : have you ever contacted your supervisor?

P : No

I: Didn't you want to? Or can you tell me if you have any particular reason?

P: I wanted to ask several questions, but I was not sure whether I could do so or not. I am not clear what sorts of questions are acceptable in supervisory sessions. I am also wondering what I need to prepare for the next supervisory meetings and when I could contact her. I am very uncertain about all these things.

I: I remember that you did a masters course in Korea. Can you tell me what the supervision meetings were like there?

P: I did not have any regular supervision sessions in Korea when I did my master's course, although it depends on the department. During the course in Korea, I always felt a psychological distance between my supervisor and me, which discouraged me from contacting him, even though I needed to discuss my dissertation with him. During the course in Korea, in many cases, I contacted my seniors more often than my supervisor; they were mostly on the PhD courses, when I needed to discuss things and request academic advice

I: I see. Do you also feel a psychological distance with your supervisor here? Has this made you hesitant to contact her ?

P: Sure.. She was quite friendly at the first meeting, but I keep thinking she is very much on authority figure, so tried to be polite … this can be, to some extent, because I am moer of an old generation student (with a big smile). The younger generation students would be different these days.

I: This may be... but I understand how you feel about meeting your supervisor. I also was very concerned about being polite at the beginning of the MA course here. Like you, I am more accustomed to a rather hierarchical relationship between teacher and students. Did you experience any communication problems when you met your supervisor?

P: I remember.. Not really …because we did not talk a lot.
(after some hesitation)
Ah. Can I ask you a question? I think you have a lot of experience here. (smile)

I: Sure.

P: Do you think it is Ok if I email her to ask several questions, (showing the paper with the questions). I am concerned that I would bother her.

I: I think it is OK. Don't worry.

P: All right, I will try today. Thank you!

I: My pleasure, ask me at any time you need help. Can you tell me if you've joined any student societies?

P: No, I really want to, but it is hard to join clubs or social activities with native speakers or other international students because I need to spend time with my children and husband after class. It's a pity! I feel like that I am losing a lot of opportunities to interact with British friends on campus. I believe that it is a great benefit to learn English and explore the host culture through interaction with local students.

I: Oh, I see.... the situation is that you don't have even friends in accommodation because you're living in a house with your family. Have you tried to meet up with native speakers formally or informally on and off campus? If so what did you do?

P: Yes. I sometimes meet the parents whose children are my son's classmates at the primary school.

I: Does it help to improve your communication skills?

P: Not really yet, but it's better than nothing! Ha ha.. (laughs)

I: Yes.. Do you have difficulty with actively talking to them or other British native friends in your department?

P: Well... I don't have problems with the parents. They tend to speak slowly and in most cases, so far we just talk about things to do with our children for a short time. However, I can't understand what young British students from my department say. They speak too fast!! Particularly, when I am discussing in a group, I have more difficulty communicating in English. I also often miss my 'turn' to speak.

I: How did you react when you could not understand what others said in English?

P: I just pretended to understand it.

I: Can you tell me why?

P: I did not want to the conversation to break down.

I: I see. What do you do to improve your English communicational skills?

P: I watch TV with my children. I enjoy the 'Simpsons' with them and try not to miss the BBC news after dinner at home, which is quite useful for improving my listening ability.

I: OK.. what about speaking skill?

P: As I told you, I hoped to have many opportunities to socially interact with native speakers here, which I believe it is a best way of improving speaking skills, but I don't think that I would make this often. I am not sure yet.

I: um m.. Let's talk about more next session. I will move on to the questions about your academic life. Have you read the handbook about the course you are taking?

P: Yes.

I: Did you have any difficulties understanding it?

P: No.

P: You did? Really? But in my case I am not sure whether I can improve my writing skills or not. Do you think I can successfully complete the course, because I know nothing about academic essays in the UK? (sigh)

I: Course you can! You can do well. Just keep working on it.

P: Are you sure? Ha ha (laugh)

I: Yes ! OK let's move on to the next question.
Did you go to the department reception at the beginning of this term, like an introductory meeting ?

P: Yes, I try to participate in all the departmental activities.

I: Did you go to the departmental introductory meeting at the beginning of this term?

P :Yes

I: Was the meeting interesting?

P: It was less interesting than I expected.

I = Did it help you to start to engage more actively in university life?

P = I expected that I would get to know some of my course mates, but I don't remember who they were, because actually there were so many students on the course. The meeting was not very useful for helping create chances to meet up with other course mates socially.

I: You mean it was not as useful to create any social meetings as you expected.
Are you going to join any other social activities if they are ?

P: Um I will think about it.

I: Are you really active in taking part in the seminars in the department?

P: Yes, I try to participate in all the departmental seminars.

I: How do you feel about preparing for and taking part in seminars? I mean are you stressed, under pressure, or worried?

P: Um... I am stressed about preparing for the seminars. If I don't prepare for the seminars, such as reading the articles relevant to the seminar topic, I feel very insecure about participating in the seminar.

I: So you always try to prepare for the seminars every time?

P: Yes. Actually I am very interested in taking seminars. It is of great interest to experience an aspect of academic culture in the UK. It was a remarkable new experience seeing the students in class freely debate with each other. In the case of British students or other European students, they freely give any negative comments in face-to-face interaction, and this really shocked me. I don't even want to think about giving critical comments in the seminar discussions.

I: So you cannot actively take part in the seminar discussions? This is problematic for you?

P: Yes. Although I think I can give some comments on some issues in the seminar discussions, I am always hesitant to offer my opinions.

I: Can you tell me why? Because of a lack of confidence in expressing yourself in English?

P: Yes, but not for language reasons; I am concerned that I would interrupt the discussions when I asked a question which was not be appropriate to the issues debated in the context. I mean I tend to care about what others think of me.

I: So have you tried to ask any questions?

P: Not yet.

I: Have you experienced any other challenges when participating in seminars?

P: As I said, I am not confident about expressing myself in English in public.

I: I will ask the final question now. Please give me any comments about your experiences or feelings in relation to culture and language issues that you had since arrival. If you do not have anything, never mind.

P: Let me think… although I am just at the beginning of the new academic year, I feel that it's very difficult to have any social interactions with British students.
I haven't talked to any British students socially on campus yet. It is really hard to meet them unless I join a club. I feel like it's not easy to join any friendship groups with native speakers here. In addition, I don't think I have enough time to participate in social events. As term goes on, I need to keep up with academic assignments and spend spare time with my family. From my personal experience of campus culture, I have also found that the relationship between juniors and seniors in the UK is not considered very important. In Korea, I was very active in going to social events involving the senior-junior relationship on campus.

I: I understand. I hope that you enjoy your life on campus here and be, most of all, confident about doing anything here. Thank you very much for your participation today. I will call you to set the time for the next session. Good luck with your work.

P: Thank you.

Examples in: English
Applicable Languages: English
Applicable Levels: College

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