

RECOGNIZING THE EFFECTS OF COMPREHENSION LANGUAGE BARRIERS
AND ADAPTABILITY CULTURAL BARRIERS ON SELECTED FIRST-
GENERATION UNDERGRADUATE VIETNAMESE STUDENTS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Faculty of Argosy University, Seattle
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education

by

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June, 2009

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ABSTRACT

This investigation is about recognizing the effects of comprehension language barriers and adaptability cultural barriers on selected first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students in the Puget Sound region of Washington State. Most Vietnamese students know little or no English before immigrating to the United States; as such, language and cultural barriers significantly impact first-generation Vietnamese student's lives and their learning process. Understanding lecture materials can be challenging, and students are often confused by different communication and learning styles. Seven selected first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students living in the Puget Sound area were interviewed in a phenomenological qualitative study. This study not only investigated language and cultural barriers but also suggests the types of effective training programs to help non-native college students succeed in trans-cultural settings.

DEDICATION

I would not have had the energy to complete this dissertation and degree without God's vision and inspiration. Faith can lead to accomplishment. I want to thank my wife, Ai, for her unfailing support. I am grateful to my wife for her wisdom, encouragement, and love. She also has worked very hard in the pharmacy store to financially support my study. My wife's smiles and words have encouraged me to finish this study. I want to thank my parents for giving me a loving foundation from which to explore the world. I also dedicate this study to first-generation Vietnamese students who are getting along with my pastorship and as a brick to lay a foundation of Vietnamese study.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First of all I would like to thank my chair, Dr. Wayne Benenson, for his guidance, wisdom, and encouragement throughout this study. I am deeply grateful for the faith that he had in my abilities. I am grateful to Dr. Pam Dell Fitzgerald and Dr. Russell Wright for sharing their knowledge with me at key moments. Their assistance has helped this research project enormously. I am grateful to Dr. Daniel Kmitta, chair of the education department, in working alongside to make this study possible. Also, I am grateful to Deann Ketchum, the registrar, in helping me to accomplish all the paper work.

I want to thank my participants for their significant involvement to enrich this study. I offer thanks for opening their lives, thoughts, and time so I could learn from them.

Finally, I want to thank the Vietnamese community leaders for their time, thoughts, and information through personal interviews.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The United States is a linguistically and culturally diverse country. Over the last three centuries, immigration to our country has fueled the image of the United States as a place of language and cultural diversity. However, most immigrants have encountered language and cultural barriers during their first few years in the states.

From the 17th to the 19th centuries, many laborers were brought to the Americas from Africa to work as slaves. Reimers (1984) reported that approximately 12 million Africans were shipped and enslaved during this time. Of these, 5.4%, or 645,000, were brought to what is now the United States; however, by the 1860 Census, the slave population in the U.S. had grown to 4 million. These individuals met great barriers such as language, culture, social, and economic status. After 1896, new immigrant groups began arriving from southern and eastern European countries such as Poland, Greece, Austria, Hungary, and Russia. Many Jews also immigrated during this period (Reimers), and met great language and cultural barriers as well.

Asians were another significant immigrant group coming to the United States. The Library of Congress (2003) reported that Chinese immigrants were one of the first groups to start immigration movements from Asia to the United States in the 1800s. Most of the Chinese immigrants came to work in the gold mines and on the railroads in the West. Another significant immigrant group from Asia during this time was the Japanese, who worked on farms in California and Hawaii. In the last few decades, people from many different countries of Asia have come to America. According to Reimers (1984), "In the 1970s, immigrants from many parts of Asia composed a third of the total number

of immigrants to the United States” (p. 100). Reimers suggested that most Asians do not speak English when they first arrive; moreover, Asian cultures are extremely different from the dominant Anglo-Saxon American mainstream culture.

The Problem Statement

On April 3, 2009, Jiverly Wong killed 14 people, including himself, in New York State. Wong, a 41-year-old unemployed man from Johnson City, had been taking English classes at the American Civic Association in nearby Binghamton. Officials reported that Wong was seemly upset about both losing his job at a vacuum plant and being picked on for his limited English (CNN Television, 2009). Did Jiverly Wong’s frustration with learning a new language and customs lead him to murder–suicide?

Vietnamese immigrants have come to the United States since the beginning of the Vietnam War in the early 1950s. According to the U.S. Census (2000), the Vietnamese-American population is more than 1.2 million people and ranked fourth among Asian American groups in the United States. As one works to adapt to the mainstream culture, differences of language and cultural backgrounds can create significant barriers to learning. First-generation Vietnamese college students often meet language barriers in listening, speaking, and writing English. Furthermore, they experience social challenges in adapting to formal and informal relationships and understanding the subtle and changing communication styles around them.

Barriers to Learning

Language barriers. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2000), more than 46 million people in the United States do not speak English as their primary language, and more than 21 million speak English less than very well. Confronting this language barrier

is one of the major challenges for Vietnamese adult immigrants. Diaz (2001) defined a language barrier as the difficulty people have in communicating with each other when there is no common language. First-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students often feel frustrated, sad, angry, confused, and anxious about many areas of their new lives. As non-native English speaking individuals, having to constantly listen, speak, and write in English often becomes overwhelming for them. Although their written English language proficiency is quite good, many find it difficult to understand conversations because people speak in slang, or speak too quickly, or use idioms that they do not understand.

Many immigrant Vietnamese students experience significant challenges when listening to a colloquial conversation. Listening effectively is not easy for most first-generation Vietnamese immigrant students because they lack vocabulary and general knowledge about the new society and have instructors who speak too fast, which easily frustrates them. The failure of Vietnamese students to listen to their professors is a common barrier to a successful learning process.

Speaking is another language barrier. Cultural norms also affect one's willingness to speak in public. Americans practice individualism, which holds that the individual is the primary social standard. Vietnamese practice collectivism, which holds that the group is the primary social standard. Whereas members of individualistic cultures are more focused on self, members of collective cultures are more focused on group. As such, in Vietnam, students seldom speak in public individually, a difference that impacts first-generation Vietnamese students when they are expected to speak publicly in U.S. schools. Vietnamese students are willing to work cooperatively with a team, but they are

often afraid to represent the team as a speaker. They generally prefer to be a person behind the scene.

First-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students also face writing barriers. Their limitation in English language proficiency can lead to extensive grammar mistakes and incorrect spelling, punctuation, and structural errors in writing. Incorrect sentence structure can cause misunderstandings. For example, note how an error in punctuation can significantly change meaning: “For a while longer, break time will not be permitted.” Yet the intended message was, “For a while, longer break time will not be permitted.” In addition, an adjective is placed before the noun in English, whereas in Vietnamese, the adjective is placed after the noun. Furthermore, due to their indirect communication style, first-generation Vietnamese students often have problems with run-on sentences.

The limitation in English proficiency often leads first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students to avoid art and linguistic majors; instead, they more often choose to study mathematics, computer science, or chemistry. The difficulties of learning the English language are far beyond Vietnamese immigrant students’ preparations. One such student commented on this frustration, “I never expected so much difficulty in learning a brand new language with a brand new culture” (T. Nguyen, personal communication, September, 10, 2007).

Cultural barriers. First-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students experience unique differences in social relationships compared with their more acculturated or U.S. born peers. Social relationship between Vietnamese teachers and students is based more on positional authority. This cultural difference causes some Vietnamese students to fear close relationships with American teachers. They are afraid to approach their teachers to

ask questions or express opinions. On the other side of this divide, American teachers expect students to come to them when faced with challenges in their learning process. American teachers and Vietnamese immigrant students are like two sides of a coin within the teaching and learning process. They rarely meet with one another.

Cultural differences create a lack of self-confidence with first-generation Vietnamese students, who are often afraid to have new friends who are non-Vietnamese. Vietnamese first-generation students usually feel uncomfortable when approaching new people who are different from them. Garcia (2002) discovered that many students reported they felt tired, bored, and frustrated in building cross-cultural relationships. Sometimes, such suffering creates physical ailments such as headaches, stomachaches, and insomnia. Some students feel unable to concentrate on their studies or become uninterested in socializing, and they begin to withdraw from new friends because maintaining new relationships seems to require too much effort. These social-relational barriers create frequent miscommunication and misunderstandings.

Differences in communication styles can create learning barriers as well. The mainstream culture in the United States uses language primarily to express thoughts, feelings, and ideas as clearly and logically as possible, and the majority of the information is carried in a clear verbal message. On the contrary, Vietnamese culture relies on nonverbal actions. Vietnamese students born and raised in Vietnamese culture are less likely than American students to offer a clear verbal “No” to an undesirable request. Instead, they would more likely use a roundabout expression. Vietnamese culture discourages students to raise questions with professors in the classroom: Such behavior, from the Vietnamese perspective, would be interpreted as a display of disrespect. For

these reasons, Vietnamese students usually choose not to respond verbally to teachers' questions.

In addition, differences in communication styles can create powerful obstacles in writing for Vietnamese students. Whereas American students state opinions directly to convince others to accept their own viewpoints, Vietnamese students state opinions indirectly to avoid conflict, such as avoiding saying "No" directly. Instead, they use an indirect communication style that usually creates a misunderstanding. This tendency toward indirect communication can also create writing challenges for Vietnamese students. American students' style is to write straight to the point, while Vietnamese students' style is to write around the point. This style of writing causes most Vietnamese students to encounter problems with run-on sentences.

An examination of certain cultural assumptions of the learning process reveals the cultural impact on Vietnamese students. In the Vietnamese educational process, teachers are a source of knowledge. The teaching/learning process is a one-way communication from teachers to students, and memorizing lecture materials and regurgitating the information on tests measures their achievement. By contrast, in the American educational process, the real-world circumstance is the source of knowledge. The teaching and learning process is a two-way communication process, and achievement is measured by applying knowledge in a real-world situation. Furthermore, popular culture has a direct influence in university lectures. American professors often use sports metaphors, especially football or baseball, during lectures. Most of the first-generation Vietnamese students understand football in terms of soccer, and many know little about American football or baseball. Because they do not understand the rules of these sports,

they fail to understand the concept of these metaphors. Likewise, American professors also use American movies as analogies to expand their points during lecture times; however, very few first-generation Vietnamese students know these movies because most have not had a chance to watch them yet. Moreover, first-generation Vietnamese students lack knowledge about U.S. history and the U.S. political system. Most did not have the opportunity to take American Studies in Vietnam. For these reasons, Vietnamese students often fail U.S. History and Political Science in their first semester of college. These things are likely to make it difficult for Vietnamese students to succeed in academics.

A bittersweet paradox exists among first-generation Vietnamese students. They have a strong desire to pursue their college education in the United States, yet cultural and language barriers create challenging problems for their learning. Understanding these challenges and their own perspectives may help first-generation students succeed academically and provide mentoring possibilities for future Vietnamese students attending college for the first time. The purpose of this research was to interview the first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students about their perspectives on cultural and language barriers and to learn from them how they overcame or how they are going to overcome these barriers.

Problem Background

The minority population in the United States is growing. Bergman (2004) proposed that the African American population will rise from 35.8 million to 61.4 million by 2050, an increase of about 26 million, or 71%, raising their share of the country's population from 12.7 % to 14.6 %. In addition, the nation's Hispanic and Asian populations will triple over the next 50 years, increasing the country's general population

from 282.1 million in 2000, to 419.9 million in 2050. Nearly 67 million people of Hispanic origin will be added to the nation's population between 2000 and 2050. These numbers are expected to grow from 35.6 million to 102.6 million, an increase of 188%, nearly doubling the Hispanic population from 12.6 % to 24.4 %. Moreover, the Asian population in the United States, according to Bergman, is expected to grow 213 %, from 10.7 million to 33.4 million, increasing their share of the nation's population by over double, from 3.8 % to 8 %.

Growth of the Minority Population in the United States

From 1980 to 1998, the minority population in the United States increased dramatically, by 63%, compared to an 8% increase for non-Hispanic Whites (Banks & Banks, 2001). In 1998, the combined population of African Americans, American Indians, Asian Americans, and Hispanics was estimated at 74.9 million people (Banks & Banks). This increase reveals a significant change in the U.S. population. For example, Henry (1990) identified one in four American students as minority status. These students create approximately one-third of U.S. public school students. Educational leaders are challenged to work with, in, and for a diverse student population.

The Asian American population has changed rapidly. The most significant change occurred in 1965 when the Immigration and Nationality Act amendments were passed. These amendments led to the removal of the Immigration Act of 1924, which limited the number of immigrants who could be admitted from any country to 2% of the number of people from that country who were already living in the United States in 1890. New country-specific quotas opened significant immigration numbers from every country in Asia, leading to dynamic changes in the Asian American population. Schwartz (2002)

stated that Asian Americans represented “one of the fastest growing groups in the nation; over the last decade there was a 69 percent growth in that population, and their number is expected to reach 20 million by 2020” (p. 181).

According to the last U.S. Census (2000), Vietnamese Americans represent the fourth-largest Asian American group: There were 1,122,528 people who identified themselves as Vietnamese alone, and 1,223,736 people in combination with other ethnicities.

Waves of Vietnamese Immigrating to the United States

During the Vietnam War, only a small number of Vietnamese immigrants, mostly students, immigrated to the United States. According to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services (2000), only 650 Vietnamese arrived from 1950 to 1974. When the Vietnamese Communists took over Vietnam on April 30, 1975, ending the Vietnam War, within the first week about 132,000 Vietnamese fled Vietnam (U.S. Immigration). This created the first huge wave of Vietnamese from Vietnam to the U.S. Many of these Vietnamese served with the South Vietnamese government, and many fought alongside the American forces or were religious leaders. They left Vietnam for political and religious purposes. This first wave of refugees was educated and wealthy, and most had political connections with the U.S. government.

The second wave of Vietnamese to the United States consisted of the boat people, refugees who fled communist rule. Most had a close relationship with the first wave Vietnamese refugees and were also associated with the South Vietnamese government. Their connection to both the former South Vietnam and the U.S. governments made them targets of persecution by the Vietnamese Communist government. These second wave

immigrants adapted more easily to their new society because they had Vietnamese American relatives, friends, or church connections already living in the country.

The third wave of Vietnamese immigration to the United States included the combination of Vietnamese refugees and immigrants in the Orderly Departure Program (ODP). This program allowed for the processing of former political prisoners, former employees of the U.S. Government or U.S. organizations, and Vietnamese Amerasians (individuals with Vietnamese mothers and American soldier fathers). According to the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Services (2000), about 45,000 Vietnamese were accepted as refugees in 1994.

Currently, the U.S. government is establishing diplomatic and economic relations with Vietnam (United States Embassy, 2007). The increase in business, trade, and educational relations between the U.S. and Vietnam will continue the flow of Vietnamese immigrants and Vietnamese international students to the U.S. (U.S Embassy).

Vietnamese Americans usually seek to bring their relatives to the U.S., and some Vietnamese Americans travel to Vietnam to marry Vietnamese citizens and start a new round of immigration for their spouses. The huge waves of refugees, immigrants, and international students from Vietnam have provided a large influx of first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students to U.S. colleges and universities. The resulting clash of language and cultural differences make it difficult for immigrant Vietnamese students to adapt to their new academic environment.

Purpose of the Study

As Diaz (2001) stated, “Students for whom the cultural difference between home and school were insurmountable experienced greater academic problems and adaptation

difficulties” (p. 93). Language and cultural barriers create an ineffective learning process and make a hard life for first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students. Surprisingly little information is known about how language and cultural barriers affect Vietnamese student’s lives and their learning outcome.

The purpose of this study is twofold: First, to explore the perspectives and experiences of the first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students regarding the affects of language and cultural barriers within their learning process; and second, to offer suggestions in overcoming these barriers.

The Puget Sound area of Washington State has one of highest foreign-born Vietnamese American student populations within the Northwest region of the United States. Pfeifer (2001) reported that the Seattle–Tacoma–Bremerton metropolitan area is ranked third in the West with 40,001 enumerated Vietnamese residents, and most of them are new immigrants. For this reason, several first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students in the Puget Sound area were interviewed about their language and cultural barriers. A phenomenological study was employed to learn about their experiences and how to overcome the language and cultural barriers. During the beginning of the spring of 2009, 7 selected first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students were interviewed using a semi-structured interview, which allows for a more conversational flow, with new questions spontaneously brought up during the interview process. A qualitative phenomenological study was used to ascertain the attitudes of the targeted group. Phenomenological research design helps the researcher focus on discerning the lived experience of participants.

Research Questions

The research questions are divided into two different areas and three different points of time. The two different areas concern language barriers in comprehension and cultural barriers in adaptation. The three different points of time are the 1st week, the 5th week, and the 10th week of the spring semester of 2009 (see Appendix C). The two general research questions are: What are the language and cultural barriers that the first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students have faced? and How do first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students overcome or adapt to these barriers to build confidence and competence?

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

Using a qualitative approach to research typically indicates a smaller number of participants and the assumption that the results cannot be generalized. Qualitative research does not collect numeric data from a representative sample of the target audience; as such, it does not use statistical analysis to estimate the level of opinions expressed by participants as a reflection of a larger population of the sample.

However, this does not affect the validity of the study. Johnson & Christensen (2004) suggested that validity is plausible, credible, trustworthy, and therefore defensible. Patton (2002) indicated that validity has more to do with the information richness of the cases and participants selected than with the sample size.

This research focused only on the perspectives of selected first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students about language and cultural barriers. It did not reflect all minority groups' perspectives about language and cultural barriers. Professors and school leaders were not included in the participant group. This study examined the

internalization of attitudes, values, and beliefs of individuals; therefore, no direct information was gathered regarding cultural and language backgrounds of the families of the participants or the Vietnamese community at large. All of the selected participants are living with their parents, who are Vietnamese-speaking people. These students speak Vietnamese at home with their parents and practice English at school and in their church environments.

Personal disclosure: I came to the United States when I was 17 years old; I was a first-generation Vietnamese student. One potential bias is the unconscious support I extend (while interviewing) to others of my nationality. However, for the purpose of this study, I did not allow in any preconceived bias about the language and cultural challenges facing first-generation Vietnamese students. The findings of this study came directly from the interviews of the participants.

Definitions

Culture refers to the system of understanding characteristics of that student's societal background. This system of understanding includes language, values, concepts of acceptable and unacceptable behavior, and other socially constructed ideas that members of the culture are taught are true (Garcia, 2002).

Cultural adaptability is defined as the willingness and ability to recognize, understand, and work effectively across cultural differences (Deal & Don, 2007).

Cultural and language barriers indicate the difficulties faced when people without a culture and language in common attempt to communicate with each other (Cornes, 2004).

Diversity is the ideology of inclusion among people of diverse cultural and language backgrounds (Diversity, 2007).

First-generation immigrant refers to the first generation of a family to live in the United States (First Generation Immigrants, 2007).

First-generation Vietnamese students are the first generation of Vietnamese people to study in the U.S. universities/colleges (First Generation Immigrants, 2007).

Language refers to the group's common use of grammatical structures, slang, idioms, and patterns of speech, etc. (Sedlacek & Brooks, 1976).

Language comprehension is the ability to connect to and interpret both oral and written language (Bell, 2005).

Minority population is defined as anyone who identifies as Hispanic, African American, Asian, or a race other than White alone (Ipsaro, 1997).

Multicultural education is a field of study designed to increase education equality for all students (Banks & Banks, 1995).

The mainstream culture in the United States is the culture influenced by the Western tradition, especially the White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (Banks, 2006).

White Anglo Saxon refers to White Americans of European descent residing in the United States, who have formed a most powerful cultural influence (Banks, 2006).

Significant of the Study

To establish an effective learning process, many universities and colleges in the United States seek experienced professors to provide compelling lectures. Yet however important lectures may be, a question can be raised about how the learning environment affects student receptivity. A learning environment that values every student's cultural

and language background encourages learning diversity. Moreover, sensitivity to varying styles of learning and communicating helps create a learning environment that is inclusive and safe.

Most research on language and cultural barriers has focused on African American, Hispanic, Chinese, Koreans, Japanese, and Indian student populations, but not on Vietnamese students who have a different language and dialects than Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and Indian people. The Vietnamese language in use today is an adapted version of the Latin alphabet, with additional diacritics for tones and certain letters. In contrast, the Chinese, Korean, Japanese and Indians languages are symbolic languages.

This study represents one of the first investigations of first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students by a Vietnamese American researcher. Because the Vietnamese college-age population is increasing, this research provides important information about Vietnamese students' cultural and language barriers. This information could help university administrators establish a diverse learning environment to accommodate non-Western students.

Training in multicultural education, which increases educational equality for all students, is necessary for college instructors and leaders (Banks & Banks, 2001). This study may provide useful information toward the development and implementation of diversity training programs for university student services programs; furthermore, it seeks to provide guidance for first-generation Vietnamese students toward overcoming cultural and language barriers to achieve successful learning outcomes. Equally important, it may establish a model for mentoring subsequent Vietnamese students in order to lower the language and cultural barrier impeding their options for an undergraduate degree.

Summary

Language and cultural barriers are a significant issue for non-English speaking students attending universities in the United States today.

A qualitative study was used to investigate a deeper understanding of the perspectives of first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students regarding their experiences with language and cultural barriers. Chapter 2 contains the review of the literature and highlights theories about cultural development as well as cultural and linguistic influences on education. Chapter 3 describes the methodology, research design, and data collection process; it also includes a discussion of the participants, instrumentation, procedures, data analysis, and validity measures. Chapter 4 includes analysis of the data and discusses emerging themes. Chapter 5 concludes with a discussion about the implications for practice with suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The United States is known as the country of immigrants; newcomers to our shores bring with them the richness of their native culture and language. The minority groups from non-European cultural and language backgrounds have made significant impacts on U.S. culture and society in many different areas, and their children, the second-generation immigrants, adapt quickly to the mainstream lifestyle of the dominant North American culture. However, these immigrants, especially first-generation college students, face significant cultural and language challenges when they first arrive in the United States. Barriers include listening, speaking, writing, social relationship, communication style, and the education process, challenges that may prevent them from becoming successful in their studies. To overcome these barriers, these first-generation students need to learn communications strategies to prepare them for their new life.

Defining Culture, Diversity, Barriers, Language and Cultural Barriers

Trenholm & Jensen (1992) defined *culture* as the set of values, beliefs, norms, customs, rules, and codes that socially define groups of people, giving them a sense of commonality. Expressed through human behavior that includes the language, thoughts, communications, actions, customs, beliefs, and values of racial, ethnic, religious, or social groups, culture strongly impacts students' learning. Indeed, Asian culture influences Asian students toward a culture-specific learning style. Fuller (1996) pointed out that Asian American students prefer highly structured activities: For example, their familiarity with learning by memorization and their difficulties with the English language have allowed Asian students to choose and do very well in mathematics and science.

Additionally, a student's academic success provides high value to his or her family. Asian students view their performance in school as bringing honor or shame to their families.

Ipsaro (1997) defined *diversity* as the face of change in people and in institutions; it commonly includes differences in race or ethnicity, age, gender, socioeconomic factors, philosophy, cultural values, and politics. Cultural and language barriers comprise a very broad area, including core topics such as nonverbal communication, cultural adaptation, identity development, communication styles, value patterns, discrimination and power, culture and language, and diversity.

Multicultural education helps students, teachers, and school leaders to understand and appreciate cultural differences and similarities. In the *Handbook of Research of Multicultural Education*, Banks and Banks (1995) defined multicultural education as a field of study and an emerging discipline whose major aim is to create equal educational opportunities for students from diverse racial, ethnic, social-class, and cultural groups. One of its important goals is to help all students to acquire the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to function effectively in a pluralistic democratic society and to interact, negotiate, and communicate with peoples from diverse groups in order to create a civic and moral community that works for the common good. (p. xi)

Griffin (1984) stated that the United States represents more cultures and population groups than any other country in the world. In large cities, many languages are spoken. The immigration movements have helped to counterbalance aging populations by allowing young immigrants into the United States. In the last century, the U.S. population

doubled in half the time of the previous doubling: It reached the 100 million mark in 1915, the 200 million mark in 1967, and the 300 million mark in 2006.

Estimates from the most recent U.S. census (2000) suggested that 45% of American children under the age of 5 are members of minority groups. In 2006, the nation's minority population reached 100.7 million, more than one-third of the total population. The United States is a diverse country that mixes many cultural and language backgrounds, and many people from around the world still want to immigrate. The 2000 U.S. Census revealed that the African American population spread throughout the South, with 70% of Blacks living there, making up 20% of its population. Asian Americans mainly resided in Western coastal areas. Hispanics, which comprise the largest minority group, mainly lived in the Southwest and comprised up 25% of the region's population.

Green (1988) described this mixture as living in a world in which everyone is required to live in relation to others unlike themselves. Schools in the United States are like a microcosm for the real world, populated by students from many different cultural and language backgrounds. Ideally, schools should provide an opportunity for all to touch and to be touched by the lives of those different from them. School personnel will never understand class, social justice, racism, multiculturalism, diversity, or their students without quietly listening to the stories of those who experience the world in different ways (Diaz, 2001).

All college students have prior knowledge and experience. Minority students have their own experiences, specifically cultured experiences that lay the foundation for interpreting new information. An effective teaching process takes into account the knowledge and life experiences of the students; indeed, there is general agreement that

we learn by integrating new input into our existing cognitive structures or schemata (Cummins, 1996). Our prior experience provides the foundation for interpreting new information: “No learner is a blank slate” (Cummins, p. 17). Culture and its relational concepts are very complex, so they will be defined.

Cultural Influences

Culture impacts the life span development and lifelong learning of students. Piaget (as cited in Gardiner, Mutter, & Komitzki, 1998), who introduced cognitive development theory, recognized that “cognitive development occurs as a result of children’s attempts to make sense of the many experiences taking place around them” (p. 81). As such, individual cultural backgrounds influence how students interpret their worlds. According to Gardiner, et al., Piaget viewed child development as “a dynamic process that results from an individual’s ability to adapt thinking to meet the demands of an ever-changing environment (p. 81).

Vygotsky (1978) concluded that child development is the result of interaction between cultural and historical factors. He also believed that the key point of development lies in matching children’s demands with the requirements of their cultures. According to Kozulin (1990), Vygotsky’s three major components in this process are (a) the role played by culture, (b) the use of language, and (c) the child’s zone of proximal development, which refers to the distance between a child’s actual development level and the higher level potential (Vygotsky, 1978).

The sensory–motor period is the first period of cognitive development (from birth to 2 years). Werner (1979) noted that:

even in the sensory motor period, culture seems to influence the rate of development to some extent, although admittedly, the similarity of structure and process is more striking than the differences. Content seems to have little relevance to the activation of sensory motor schemata. (p. 216)

Bornstein, Toda, Azuma, Tamis-LeMonda, & Ogino (1990; as cited by Gardiner et al., 1998) studied infant cognition by observing patterns of interaction between American and Japanese mothers and their infants. They noted an example that clearly demonstrates Vygotsky's (1978) claim that culture plays an active role in directing cognitive activity, even in infancy:

It was noted that American mothers responded more favorably to their babies' requests when the infants were playing with physical objects. Japanese mothers, on the other hand, were more responsive when their babies were engaged in play with them. The researchers also noted how often mothers responded to their infants' vocalizations. Interestingly, motherly responsiveness appeared to be positively related to the IQ scores of Japanese children when they were about two and a half years of age and to scores of American children at the age of four years. At five months of age, infants in both cultures showed early signs of object permanence and were equally likely to engage in goal-directed behavior.

(Bornstein et al.; as cited in Gardiner et al., p. 89)

The impact of culture cannot be underestimated; it strongly influences people. Greenfield and Cocking (1994) found that children who interact with parents become socialized into a particular set of cultural values and beliefs. Vygotsky (as cited in Wertsch & Tulviste, 1994) claimed that cultural influence and language are dynamic processes that occur

simultaneously. Gardiner et al. (1998) discussed Vygotsky's belief that the continuous interaction between language and culture occurs in dialogue between individuals, especially with a mother and her child. When children verbally communicate with each other, they internalize language and use it to organize their thoughts (Vygotsky, 1978).

Cultural socialization influences how people think and act. For example, Kaffman (1993) stated that drinking is unacceptable for adolescents in many kibbutzim in Israel. In contrast, Smith and Blinn-Pike (1994) noted that the attitude toward alcohol consumption by adolescents in Jamaica is careless, and few legal restrictions apply. Similarly, they compared to those in the United States, adolescents in Spain are able to consume more alcohol per week before they are labeled as "drinkers." Among European countries, Van-Reek, Adriaanse, and Knibbe (1994) observed that adolescents in Greece and Italy drink about twice as much alcohol per week as their counterparts in Ireland. Cultural differences in beliefs related to alcohol consumption and adult drinking patterns form the basis for what is acceptable (Gardiner et al 1998).

Culture influences religion too. Huebner and Garrod (1993) stated that the Buddhist conception of morality is different from the Christian belief, based on orientation. From the Christian perspective, autonomous individuals with strong convictions who stand up for their rights and the rights of others demonstrate the moral ideal. They use their power to influence others in a good way (Gardiner et al., 1998). In contrast, from the Buddhist perspective, individuals who are connected through their compassion and detachment from their own individuality demonstrate the moral ideal. Gardiner et al. confirmed this point: "Buddhist morality is characterized by an understanding of interconnectedness and interdependence" (p. 178).

Culture influences social identity. Gardiner et al. (1998) strongly asserted that “culture also plays an important role in the progression of social identity formation and its psychological consequences such as self-esteem” (p. 182). Phinney, Lochner, and Murphy (1990) proposed that the most influential of these cultural factors are (a) the position an ethnic group holds in the larger society, and (b) the relationships between ethnic groups. Gopaul-McNichol (1995) demonstrated this cultural identification in his research with West Indian children. He gave black and white dolls to Black and White preschool children and asked them a series of questions, including “Which doll do you want to be?” “Which doll would you like to play with?” “Which doll is rich, poor, pretty, ugly?” Gopaul-McNichol found that most of the children chose the white doll in response to the positive questions. The researcher concluded that these children’s attitudes and perceptions of ethnic identification in the West Indies were no doubt influenced by the European colonial history on the islands. Paul and Fisher (1980) pointed out that stronger identification with one’s ethnic group is related to higher self-esteem among adolescents. People who come from a dominant group have higher levels of self-esteem than those who come from a less dominant group.

Marriage takes many forms in cultures around the world. These include (a) monogamy, or the practice of having one mate in a relationship; (b) polygamy, or the practice of having more than one wife at the same time; (c) polyandry, the practice of having several husbands at the same time; and (d) group marriage, the practice of having several men and several women form a family unit. As Kenkel (1985) asserted, “if we were to judge solely on the basis of a preponderance of a given marriage form, then few,

if any, societies could be classified as polygamous” (p. 22). “Monogamy,” Kenkel wrote, “is actually the preferred form in relatively small of societies” (p. 23).

Individuals are attracted to each other differently across cultures. Gardiner et al. (1998) noted that in many Western cultures, especially in the United States, marriage is often viewed as the result of romantic love: “The belief is that each of us has an ideal mate that we are destined to meet, fall in love with, marry, and live with ‘happily ever after’” (p. 197). Yet other beliefs characterize non-Western cultures. Eastern cultures, for example, continue to characterize many of the arranged marriages, with the ideal, according to Gardiner et al., “based on the premise that each person has several possible mates with whom they could develop a successful marriage. In India, for example, families will discuss a possible future liaison between their infant children” (p. 197).

Gardiner et al. (1998) wrote about a related story on cross-culture marriage, where a female Indian graduate student was returning home to Bombay to get married. When a professor of a cross-culture course asked her what her future husband did, she replied that she did not know because she had never met him. The liberated young American women in class told her that she should not marry someone she did not know. Yet the female Indian graduate student trusted her parents to make a wise decision regarding a future husband because they knew her, the young man, and his family. For most Vietnamese people, marriage is viewed similarly, as the coming together or blending of two families.

Linguistic Influences

Language powerfully influences a student’s learning process. Thomas and Collier (1996) discerned that language achievement and academic achievement are only part of

the struggle for refugee and immigrant youth trying to adapt to a new society and a new school. According to Diaz (2001),

Schools often link students' English-language proficiency with their prospective economic and social mobility: that is, students who speak a language other than English are viewed as 'handicapped' and they are urged, through subtle and direct means, to abandon their native language. Teachers simply withhold education until the students have learned English sufficiently well, usually in the name of protecting students' future. The negative impact of these strategies on language minority students is incalculable. (p. 157)

In the United States, most people have generally been socialized to think of language diversity as a negative condition (Crawford, 1992). Yet today, many different languages are used by students in the United States schools (Valle, 2003). For purposes of communication, one language is as valid as any other, "but socially and politically, the languages spoken by most language minority students in the United States are accorded low status" (Diaz, p. 154). Students who speak these non-English languages are perceived to have a problem. As Diaz suggested,

The dramatic increase in the number of language minority students in our country in the past three decades means that every classroom in every city and town has already been or will soon be affected. The responsibility for educating language minority students can no longer fall only on those teachers who have been trained specifically to provide bilingual education and ESL services; this responsibility needs to be shared by all teachers and all schools. (p. 164)

The Impact of Culture and Language on the Learning Process

Hones' (2007) research drew on stories of many immigrant and refugee students arriving from Australia to the United States regarding how they daily faced the contradiction of their languages and cultures in a new society. Hones argued that teachers should offer a pathway to engage these students, honoring their linguistic and cultural abilities, acknowledging their many struggles, and encouraging their academic and social progress through a transformative educational process. However, one of the greatest challenges facing immigrant language learners in colleges is how to learn academic subject areas while learning a new culture and language at the same time. In actuality, some bilingual students have limited formal education experiences in their countries of origin, and low (or non-existent) literacy in their first language. Hones concluded that these factors can contribute to a lack of academic success in high school, and sometimes a failure to graduate.

Short (2002) suggested several pathways to more effective practice with newcomer secondary students. These include program emphasis on (a) academic content and social knowledge, (b) using small, interdisciplinary groups led by a single teacher, (c) early access to mainstream academic courses, (d) extension of instructional time, (e) systematic, ongoing assessment, (e) teacher planning and implementation teams, (f) strengthening of partnerships with parents and institutions, and (g) better teacher preparation (Short).

Pettigrew and Troop (2000) maintained that bringing different racial and cultural groups into contact may generate more heat than light. When people who have different cultural and language backgrounds come together, issues could lead to conflict. Most

public institutions in America are inadequately prepared to deal with diversity issues, which in turn can create huge cultural and language barriers for non-English speakers. Bennett and Bennett (2004) explained that difficult dialogues about race, ethnicity, and other cultural differences are hindered when people are developmentally unprepared to handle them. For a more effective communications exchange, professors, school leaders, and students as well would do well to pay attention to these cultural and language barriers. Schools are advised to help their staffs, faculty, and students gain a better understanding of people who have different backgrounds. Depending on the readiness of the school's members, an institution's well-structured curriculum may fail to produce constructive interaction among its members.

Cultural and language discussion are often addressed in the context of the teachers' education curriculum more than in the process of teaching and learning. Pettigrew and Troop (2000) noted that educators also face new challenges both in teaching about culture and in teaching across cultures.

Cultural and Diversity Education

James A. Banks (2006), a leading multicultural theorist, described the concept of *cultural education* as a movement designed to empower all students to become knowledgeable, caring, and active citizens in a deeply troubled and ethnically polarized nation and world. Learning from other cultures is important for all students, and the aim of diversity education is both to ensure equity in education for all students and to help inspire young people to make the world a better place, both individually and collectively (Banks)

An acknowledgement of cultural and language barriers helps to create a more diverse learning environment. Moya (2002) maintained that diversity education is not only an instructional product but a continuous process involving many aspects, including (a) reflection, learning, and the development of cultural self-awareness, (b) the acceptance of conflict for its educational potential, (c) the willingness to learn about one's own cultural reality from interaction with others, (d) the improvement of communication with people from other cultures, and (e) the recognition of the universality of multiculturalism.

Hagen's (2005) research revealed that 20 to 30% of companies have identified a lack of cultural awareness as an obstacle to doing business internationally. If company leaders fail to appreciate cultural differences, problems can ensue. Hagen also identified specific cultural barriers such as body language, etiquette, establishing trust, religious beliefs, and social habits. Cultural awareness training can make an important impact on any business or organization wanting to maximize its potential internationally. By providing efficient cultural awareness training, an organization can learn to deal sensitively and effectively with clients, customers, and colleagues from other cultures (Hagen).

For a more effective teaching and learning process, the school culture has to reflect the diversity of the student population as well. As Diaz (2001) pointed out, "Students whose cultures are more consistent with the school culture have greater opportunities for academic success than students whose cultures conflict with the school culture" (p. 12). Bush (2003) echoed this notion with college students:

America is a diverse country, racially, economically, and ethnically. And our institutions of higher education should reflect our diversity. A college education should teach respect and understanding and goodwill. And these values are strengthened when students live and learn with people from many backgrounds. (p.22)

In addition, students from different cultures learn and behave differently. Rallis and Casey (2005) stated that one of the most visible reasons for differences in students today are their differences in culture and language, a wealth of diversity that creates culture-rich environments at U.S. universities.

Diversity education is not only an instructional product (Moya, 2002), but also a continuous process that includes learning and developing cultural self-awareness. The willingness to learn other people's cultural realities by interacting with them helps construct their diversity education, the promise of which is to ensure equity in education for all students and to help inspire young people to make the world a better place.

Comments of First-Generation Vietnamese Immigrants in Puget Sound

The following section contains a life literature snapshot of selected elders of the Vietnamese community. Many current leaders of the Vietnamese community in the Puget Sound region of Washington State were first-generation immigrants; they understand the nature of cultural and language challenges. They shared such amazing stories in these interviews, which are part of the preparation for the study rather than information developed during the study.

A clinical mental health counselor, Mr. Ha, commented that "cultural and language challenges, directly or indirectly, impacted all first-generation immigrants" (Ha,

personal communication, November, 9, 2008). He received his bachelor's degree when he was in Vietnam. His English was quite good before he came to the states; however, he was quite confused about his job-related vocabulary. For example, he revealed, "I didn't have any background knowledge about medical billing and coding because these things didn't exist in Vietnam." He chose accounting as his major because "it is easier to work with the numbers than the English language." However, after graduation, a local mental health clinic hired him because he was bilingual. He was required to take many courses in mental health. Yet because he was over 45 years old, memorizing new vocabulary words presented a tremendous challenge for him. He overcame this barrier by encouraging himself to learn several new vocabulary words every day, by asking his American friends or specialists at work about things that confused him, and by feeling no shame when he did ask.

Mrs. Dang, a librarian employed by the King County Public Library, revealed that she had listening challenges: "Most Vietnamese face listening barriers. English teachers in Vietnam have a British English accent. Some of them didn't even have adequate English language skills to teach. Schools in Vietnam hired them because of the lack of available English teachers" (Dang, personal communication, November 10, 2008). To overcome this listening barrier, she spent a lot of time listening to radio, television, and tapes. She noted that "the King County Public Library system provides unlimited resources for English language learners."

Dr. Lee, now a dentist, came to the United States when he was 18 years old. His most challenging barrier was public speaking. He recalled, "I was 'scared to death' when I did a presentation in the front of the class" (Lee, personal communication, November

10, 2008). He had trouble with pronunciation, and recalled, “My English accent was very bad. It wasn’t good.” Improving his pronunciation skills was helpful to his career; to overcome this barrier, he revealed, “I went to a bookstore and purchased a pronunciation book on CD. I listened to it at home or while driving around and repeated the words aloud. This way, you can go back and listen to difficult words multiple times until you get it right.”

This researcher found particular attributes helpful when he was learning English and integrating into American culture as a new immigrant. The most important features included having a passion for learning, building self-discipline and self-confidence, receiving instruction and resources emphasizing practical situations, and applying practice time and discussions on social norms of the American culture.

Muldoon (2003) shared that learning languages is his passion, and he has observed that students have to have a passion for learning languages and for communicating in English with people from around the world. Creating life-long learners for immigrant students is a wonderful thing to do. In addition, Dale and Poms (2005) stated that if foreign-born students live, work, or study among English speakers, they must quickly find ways to receive instruction and to utilize resources for learning English. To gain better learning outcomes, receiving instruction and using resources effectively are very important for first-generation students. Furthermore, practice and adjustment are essential actions and requirements of foreign-born students. Entering into college requires these students to adjust to their new environment. Dale and Poms (2005) suggested to foreign-born students to:

Watch English language news on TV as often as you can. Pay careful attention to the newscaster's pronunciation. Notice especially words and phrases that are repeated every time you watch, practice saying them and write them down. Listen to radio news station from 5 to 10 minutes at a time. Repeat common words and phrases after the announcer. Whenever you have the opportunity to converse with a North American English speaker, use it. When you don't understand a word or idiom, look it up in your dictionary. (p. ix-x)

Summary

Many scholars and researchers have spent time in researching, studying, and writing about language comprehension and cultural adaptability barriers, and their efforts have contributed to the knowledge and practice of teachers and students in the United States. First-generation Vietnamese students are confronted with many language challenges when they enter U.S. colleges. Not only do they have to face a new oral and written language quite different from their native tongue, but additionally, these students must deal with an American school and teaching system that is generally quite different from their former way of learning. First-generation Vietnamese students are both curious and confused about how to turn these challenges into opportunities.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to recognize the perspectives held by selected first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students in the Puget Sound area of Washington State regarding the effects of language and cultural barriers they have encountered. Students face several challenges to their academic success because of difficulties with listening, speaking, writing, social relationships, communication styles, and the education process. This study provides some valuable guidance for first-generation students to comprehend English language quickly and to effectively adapt into the mainstream culture.

Research Design

A qualitative design, specifically phenomenology, was used in this research. Phenomenological methodology allows the researcher to focus on the details of the lived experience of participants. “The key element of a phenomenological research study,” according to Johnson and Christensen (2004), “is that the researcher attempts to understand how people experience a phenomenon from the person’s own perspectives and experiences” (p. 46).

Selection of Participants

The Puget Sound area of Washington State is a desirable place to live for many Vietnamese immigrants. According to data from King County Records (2000), it is striking that between 1990 and 2000, the rate of Vietnamese population growth in the Seattle–Tacoma area far exceeded that observed in the two largest California metropolitan areas, Los Angeles and San Francisco. In 1990, 14,210 persons of

Vietnamese origin were counted by the census in the Seattle–Tacoma area (King County Records).

Significant studies about the impact of language and cultural barriers' on first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students' learning process are needed. The study's 7 participants were selected first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students in the Puget Sound area. Undergraduate students were chosen because of their limited exposure to the college environment, with probably more cultural and language barriers to overcome than graduate students.

Role of Researcher

The researcher received a bachelor's degree in administration from the University of Fullerton (2000) and a master's degree in divinity from Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary (2002). Given his long-term involvement with the local Vietnamese community, including church and administrative posts, the researcher is interested in providing pathways of success to the next generation of Vietnamese students, as well as making the general public more aware of the barriers and remedies which prompted this study. As a Vietnamese American, the researcher is able to understand both Vietnamese and American languages and cultures. This background has given him an opportunity to interact with Vietnamese American undergraduate students effectively.

Settings of Interviews

Seven selected Vietnamese undergraduate students were interviewed individually using a semi-structured interview, an interview method that helps the interview flow more like a conversation. Interviews were divided into three points of time. The first time

was in early February 2009, with each audio-taped interview lasting approximately 45 minutes. The second point of time was mid-March, in 2009, with each audio-taped interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. The third point of time was toward the end of April 2009, with each audio-taped interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. All interviews took place at a Puget Sound area public library.

The general focus of the interviews concerned the perspectives and experiences of college students regarding the effects of cultural and language barriers. The topics of focus included the defining, identifying, experiencing, and impact of language and cultural barriers in the learning process of these first-generations Vietnamese students.

Data Collection

A one-on-one semi-structured interview method was used, which allowed the interviewer to enter into the inner world of participants and to gain an understanding of these interviewees' perspectives. The participants' information was shared with no one. All of the participants' privacy and confidentiality of interview information was destroyed upon completion of the project. Participant names are not used in any form or any place in the dissertation, but they are replaced by participant numbers 1 through 7. The researcher used a data collection form (see Appendix E).

Data Analysis Process

Data analysis in this qualitative research began soon after the data collection started. The process of data analysis included the following stages: reading, describing, classifying, and interpreting the data. The reading stage involved a close reading through the text and making margin notes. The describing stage illustrated the meaning of the experience for the researcher. The classifying stage uncovered and listed emerging

patterns of meaning for participants and then grouped the patterns into meaning themes. The interpreting stage developed a textural description (what happened), a structural description (how the phenomenon was experienced), and an overall description of the experience.

Data collection and data analysis usually go together. Creswell (1998) suggested the most important work of the qualitative researcher is to establish patterns and look for a correspondence between two or more categories. The process involves (a) recognizing the identification of patterns, (b) generating tentative explanations for the patterns and seeing if they are present or absent in other settings or situations, (c) working explanations into a theoretical model, and (d) confirming and/or modifying the theoretical model.

After the interviews were completed, each of the audiotapes was transcribed verbatim. Theme development began with word-based techniques. Each transcript was read several times, until data were clarified. The investigator carefully read the text and noted words or synonyms that participants used frequently. Throughout the readings, a number of patterns were identified, and major themes were developed. After the identification of the patterns, sub-themes emerged. Next, these sub-themes were grouped based on the most appropriate major themes. From these themes and sub-themes, a coherent meaning was constructed.

Validity

Although this qualitative study involved a limited number of participants, Patton (2002) indicated that validity has more to do with the participants selected and the richness information gathered rather than with the sample size. A member checking

procedure was used to make sure this study represents both the participants and their ideas accurately. The participant coding table was sent to participants for their clarification and approval through e-mail.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

In the following chapter, an analysis of this phenomenological qualitative research is presented to answer proficiently these original research questions: What are language and cultural barriers that the first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students have faced? and How do they overcome or adapt to these barriers to build confidence and competence? Seven selected first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students were interviewed following a semi-structured interview. Each had learned English prior to arriving in the United States.

Table 1

Participant Demographic Chart

Participant	Sex	Age	Number of years in U.S. school	Number of years in U.S.	Number of years studying English
1	M	22yr 5mo	1.5	1.7	7
2	F	21yr 6mo	2	2.5	4
3	M	20yr 2mo	2	3	6
4	F	17yr 8mo	3	3	5
5	M	21yr 6mo	2	3.4	4
6	F	25yr 7mo	3.5	5	7
7	F	18yr 2mo	1	2	6

In order to help the reader understand the effects of language comprehension barriers and cultural adaptation barriers, significant statements are identified and their meanings explained. What the data revealed were the following themes: (a) the recognition of language barriers, (b) overcoming those language barriers, (c) the recognition of cultural barriers, and (d) a description of those barriers to cultural

adaptation. These themes serve as a guide to direct all descriptions of the data. Finally, the data are presented. Together, the process explored how the participants are challenged by the effectiveness of comprehension language barriers and adaptability cultural barriers, and how they struggled to overcome their challenges in order to succeed. At the end of the chapter, a summary is offered.

Significant Statements

The one-to-one interviews took place between February and May 2009.

Throughout the interviews, participants shared many of the barriers they have faced during their first years in college. They provided valuable suggestions for new immigrant students who have limited English proficiency. The following significant statements were discovered during this study. Speaking, listening, and writing represented the most significant barriers for many of these students:

- “My language barriers are speaking, listening, and writing” (P1-R1; P5-R1).
- “Speaking, listening, and writing are the most challenging skills for first generation undergraduate Vietnamese students” (P2-R1; P7-R1).

In many cases, students with limited English proficiency struggled to translate their thoughts into speaking and writing in English:

- “It is hard to translate Vietnamese to English and structure sentences immediately right in my thought” (P1-R2).
- “I don’t know how to organize and structure my thoughts for writing in English” (P5-R2, P7-R2).
- “I can’t express my feelings or meanings exactly or what I really meant due to I don’t know how to structure my thoughts” (P2-R2).
- “[With] more opportunities of interacting with the text, writing down ideas, and sharing these ideas with peers, [I] gained more confidence” (P6-R1).

- “Most of my struggle in learning is during the first 2 years of college. The longer first-generation undergraduate Vietnamese students live in the U.S., the better English proficiency and cultural adaptability they get” (P1-R3)
- “I got lost all the time during my first 2 years of college. The learning process was getting better after the first 2 years” (P2-R3).
- “It is a nightmare in learning English. I felt completely lost during the first year in college” (P4-R3)

The participants revealed many effects of comprehension language barriers and adaptability cultural barriers. Many of the first-generation undergraduate Vietnamese students worried about how to meet their educational goals. Those with limited English proficiency experienced frustration about their learning process. Many spent several semesters taking five levels of ESL courses to build their English skills before they took English 100, the first English composition course. Some students tried to take history, political science and ESL classes at the same time; some of them failed, and most of them revealed that they did not receive the grades they needed. They also felt frustrated and pressured by their academic inadequacies.

- “I had tried to take the Political Science at the same time with ESL classes and I got an F” (P3-R3).
- “My English skills do not allow me to get a good grade and I feel frustrated of my bad learning outcome” (P2-R3).

In many cases, limited English proficient students have not yet learned to structure their thoughts for speaking and writing in English; their communication often displays weaknesses in sentence structure. Participants shared that their limited vocabulary challenged their abilities to coherently organize and structure their thoughts. Their perception was that lacking English proficiency creates barriers to effective college-level speaking and writing.

The interview participants observed that they gained more confidence when they had more opportunities to interact with the text, write down their ideas, and share these ideas with peers. Participants appreciated learning environments that supported cooperative activities in which they could both listen to others and share their ideas. This helped them to write meaningful comments on their assignments.

All participants agreed that the longer first-generation undergraduate Vietnamese students live in the United States, the better they became with English proficiency and cultural adaptability. They experienced the sense of “getting lost” within the first 2 years of college, with many challenges in language and culture. However, they hold the belief that they will get better learning outcomes in the near future. They reported needing several years to learn the English language and to adapt to the mainstream culture.

- “I think after 3 to 5 years living in the United States, I am able to use English effectively and my learning outcome will be better” (P3-R2).
- “I get a lot better with English after 2 years studying ESL and 1 year in college” (P4-R2).

As the research progressed, following four themes emerged from the data: (a) recognition of language barriers; (b) overcoming comprehension language barriers (Figure 2 provides a snapshot of the participant’s emerging awareness of how to deal with these barriers); (c) recognition of cultural barriers, and (d) adapting to cultural barriers.

Table 2

Participant Coding Chart

	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3	
Language	1a. Listening barriers	Speaking too fast, differences in pronunciation (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7) Slang and idioms (P3)	New words and lack of vocabulary (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6)	Lack of knowledge about new society, without common knowledge (P2, P3, P5)
	1b. Overcoming listening barriers	Listen to radio, music, and news from TV (P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7)	Learn new words every day (P3, P4, P5, P6) Tape-recorded (P2, P3) Ask to repeat or rephrase (P3, P7)	Gain more knowledge by more reading (P3) Have more conversations with American native speaking (P7)
	2a. Speaking barriers	Wrong pronunciation and Vietnamese accent (P1, P3, P4, P5)	Use wrong words (P2) Lack of vocabulary (P2, P3, P6)	Practice translation process: think in Vietnamese then translate to English (P4, P5)
	2b. Overcoming speaking barriers	Practice speaking with Americans (P1, P3, P4, P5, P6)	Say new words out loud many times (P2) Speak directly to myself in the front of a mirror (P4)	Ask for repeat (P2) Online dictionaries (P4) Think and translate faster between Vietnamese and English (P6)
	3a. Writing barriers	Lack of vocabulary (P1, P3, P5, P6)	Run-on sentence, not straight to the point, wasted words (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7)	Differences in writing style and writing structure, (P1, P2, P3, P4, P5)
	3b. Overcoming writing barriers	Practice writing (P1) Learn new words, read A+ papers (P4)	Get help from teachers, friends, writing lab, and online (P1, P2, P3, P5)	Write in journal (P2) Discuss ideas with peers (P5, P6)

	4a. Social relationships	Low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence (P1, P4) Shy personality type (P2)	Authoritarian relationships vs. autonomy relationships (P2, P3, P4, P6)	Group oriented vs. individual oriented (P2) Lack of cultural understanding (P7)
	4b. How to adapt to differences	Build self-confidence and self-esteem (P1, P3, P4, P5)	Have more American friends and learn more American culture (P1, P7)	Learn new things from Americans and the mainstream culture (P2, P7) Understand American way of living (P2)
	5a. Differences in style of communication	Indirect vs. direct communication (P1, P2, P5, P6, P7) One-way vs. two-way communication (P4, P5, P6)	American style of communication uses more polite and friendly terms and saying sorry and thank you (P3)	Americans practice eye contact skills (P4) Americans give hug vs. Vietnamese bow head (P7)
Culture	5b. How to adapt to differences	Try to think like American and practice direct communication (P1, P2, P3, P6, P7)	Show politeness to others by holding the door open for people behind me, saying thank you and sorry often (P7)	Improve eye contact skills (P3)
	6a. Differences in education process	Vietnamese teachers focus on lecturing vs. American teachers focus on practicing (P1, P2, P4, P5, P6, P7)	Memorizing vs. understanding (P1, P2) Teacher's knowledge oriented vs. the world's knowledge oriented (P7)	More interactive between teachers and students in the U.S. (P3)
	6b. How to adapt to differences	More independent on learning process and focus on practicing (P2, P6, P7)	Understanding lecture materials (P1)	More active in the classroom and being interactive student (P3)

Theme 1: Recognition of Decoding Language Barriers

The first-generation Vietnamese college students, who have limited English proficiency, meet great language barriers in the classroom. These barriers prevent these students from reaching their full learning potential. The research question in this section asked the students, “What are language barriers that you have faced?” This study discovered that they generally experience listening, speaking, and writing barriers.

Listening Barriers

Listening skills played an important role in the participant’s learning process. All 7 participants have faced listening barriers during their first years of college, including teachers who speak too fast, a lack of basic vocabulary to understand what is being said, slang and informal English, and a lack of general knowledge about the new society. These students have limited background knowledge about the world. They use their own culturally specific background knowledge to interpret their new culture. The participants shared that they do not know a lot about the U.S. culture, which causes them to get lost during lecture times or conversations.

- “Sometime I can’t catch the voice of teachers and American friends, because they speak too fast, and actually I don’t have a lot of vocabulary to understanding. Pronunciations that I had learned from Vietnamese teachers in Vietnam are very different from American teacher’s pronunciations that caused to not comprehending lectures” (P1-R1).
- “American teachers speak too fast. I get lost all the time, even until now (after 2 years in college). A lot of new vocabulary that I couldn’t catch up and understand” (P2-R1).
- “I have a lack of knowledge about new society” (P2-R3).
- “Slang and idioms are hard to understand. There are many of contexts that we can use the slang and idioms. Americans speak too fast” (P3-R1).
- “Many words are new to me” (P3-R2).

- “I am lacking in knowledge about my new country” (P3-R3).
- “I have been in the U.S. College for a while (more than 1 year) and I am facing many challenges. Listening is one of the most language barriers. Most teachers speak too fast” (P4-R1).
- “Actually I don’t have enough words to understand their lectures” (P4-R2).
- “Teachers, to me, speak too fast” (P5-R1).
- “I don’t have enough of a vocabulary to understanding comprehensively” (P5-R2).
- “I don’t have fundamental understandings of how the new society and school’s structure work. It is real hard to listen to understanding without common language and common knowledge” (P5-R3).
- “American teachers speak too fast” (P6-R1).
- “I don’t have enough of a vocabulary to understand lecture materials” (P6-R2).
- “When Americans were talking, they usually use the shortened-words like “what’s up” or “what cha doing?” It takes a while to understand. And they also talk so fast, that why I lose some parts in their talking” (P7-R1).

Speaking Barriers

Five participants shared that they often remained silent in the classroom because they could not speak English properly and did not want to be embarrassed. These students really wanted to be active conversationalists but their speaking skills remain limited. Some of these students have learned English in Vietnam with wrong pronunciations. Pronunciation plays a very important role in their willingness to engage in conversation. An incorrect pronunciation can communicate something that the student never intended. The listener can be distracted by mispronunciation and his or her comprehension of the message tends to suffer. In addition, the participants were frustrated by accent difficulties and a lack of basic vocabulary.

- “My speaking barrier is my pronunciation. Pronunciations that I had learned from Vietnamese teachers in Vietnam are very different from American teachers’ pronunciations. Sometime my teachers and friends can’t understand me. My Vietnamese accent is too strong” (P1-R1).
- “My speaking barriers are lack of words to express my thoughts. I use wrong words to fix in a concept (P2-R2).
- It is hard to translate Vietnamese to English immediately right in my thought. Sometimes I know how to answer questions, but the way I try to say that caused misunderstanding” (P2-R3).
- “My accent is so strong. I can feel my teachers’ frustration when they listen to me” (P3-R1).
- “Sometimes, I can’t express my feelings or meanings exactly what I really meant due to lack of words” (P3-R2).
- “Sometimes it is hard to construct proper sentences while talking that makes other person unable to understand” (P3-R3).
- “I have problems with pronunciation. My accent is very hard to hear for Americans. My former English teachers (in Vietnam) had strong Vietnamese accent. She will never be able to really teach the right American English pronunciation (P4-R1).
- “I have to make a sentence in Vietnamese before translating it to English; then I speak it out. This process takes a lot of time and makes me unable to speak as fast as I wish” (P4-R3).
- “I have to deal with pronunciations. My accent, just as with many Vietnamese immigrants, is very strong when I speak English” (P5-R1).
- “I don’t have enough vocabulary to express my thoughts” (P5-R2).
- “My Vietnamese thinking process is different than the American thinking process. I have to think in Vietnamese then translate my thought into English with correct grammar, punctuations, sentence structure, and words before speaking out not to loud with lack of self-confidence” (P5-R3).
- “As with many newcomers, my pronunciation is difficult to hear for many Americans. English teachers in Vietnam taught me with wrong pronunciation. (P6-R1).
- “I am lacking of new vocabulary” (P6-R2).

- “I have to come face-to-face with my speaking skills a lot of time, when I speak my American teachers and friends always ask me to repeat or to explain what I mean. And I don’t know how to use right words in different situations” (P7-R2).

Writing Barriers

Writing was less challenging compared to listening and speaking for the participants. The participants are able to write because they had learned how to write an essay in English before they arrived to the United States. However, they also met significant writing challenges. The lack of new vocabulary makes it hard for them to express their ideas even when they have many good ideas to contribute. The most challenging barriers for writing are run-on sentences, lack of basic vocabulary, and differences of writing styles between English and Vietnamese.

- “I don’t have a lot of vocabulary to write an essay. My English vocabulary is not enough” (P1-R1).
- “I am weak in writing because my Vietnamese writing style, which is to write around the point and provide unnecessary information” (P1-R3).
- “Speaking, listening and writing are the most challenging skills for first-generation undergraduate Vietnamese students. I was good in Vietnamese writing but I have met a great challenge when I write a paper in English. It is so hard to express my thoughts in American way: every idea is straight to the point” (P2-R2).
- “I used to write around the topic, and then narrow down my topic” (P2-R3).
- “Lacking of new vocabulary makes hard time for me to express my ideas even I have many good ideas to write” (P3-R1).
- “Run-on sentence and sentence structure are my writing barriers. For example, in English plural and singular nouns go with plural and singular verbs. But my first language doesn’t have plural or singular verbs and it also doesn’t have the same rule in grammar” (P3-R2).

- “I have problems with run-on sentence and wasted words. I also face problems with articles: ‘the,’ ‘a,’ and ‘an.’ The first 2 years learning English I made many errors of the definite and indefinite articles” (P4-R2).
- “My old writing style is different with American writing style. Vietnamese writing style goes around the point then narrow down to the point. American writing style goes straight to the point” (P4-R3).
- “Writing in English for immigrant students is very difficult. I am a good writer in Vietnamese. But writing in English is another side of a coin. Vietnamese write around the points and use a lot of wasted words creating run-on sentences” (P5-R2).
- “I don’t know how to organize and structure my thoughts for writing in English. Sentence structure is different too. For example, in Vietnamese an adjective usually is placed after a noun such as ‘house beautiful or day nice’ but in English an adjective usually is placed before a noun such as ‘beautiful house or nice day’” (P5-R3).
- “I remembered that I made 25 errors in a 20-sentence paragraph of my first essay paper in my ESL class. Most of my writing errors are articles, run-on sentence, wrong words, plural, and singular. I don’t have enough words to express my thoughts” (P6-R1).
- “After 2 years in college, I made two errors in a same paragraph length” (P6-R3). “I usually have some mistakes in my essays with the run-on sentences” (P7-R1).
- “I don’t know how to structure my thoughts for writing in English” (P7-R3).

Theme 2: Overcoming Comprehension Language Barriers

Listening, speaking, and writing represent the three common language barriers for the first-generation Vietnamese students. The question posed to the students for language comprehension was “How do you deal with or overcome these language barriers to build confidence and competence?”

Listening to English

There are many ways that can help first-generation students build up their proficiency with listening to English. To overcome these listening barriers, students

report a need to gain more general knowledge about the new society. They attended workshops and training about new things to learn in the new society. They listened to radio and watched television, learned new vocabulary, and regularly tape-recorded lecture materials.

- “I tried to listen to radio, music and news from television” (P1-R1).
- “I have tried to watch TV. The first time, I didn’t like to watch any American movies because I don’t understand anything. But because I want to improve my English, I have forced myself to watch American movies” (P2-R1).
- “I am using tape-recorded teacher’s lectures” (P2-R2).
- “I want to face English language environments most of the time” (P2-R3).
- “When I don’t understand I ask the person to repeat or rephrase the sentences. In that way, I can understand and maintain self-confidence by being able to understand all the situations. I learn new vocabulary daily” (P3-R2).
- “I read more books to gain more knowledge about the new country. I used tape-recorded lectures” (P3-R3).
- “I discipline myself to listen to radio and music. I also watch movies and TV” (P3-R1).
- “I watch TV and listen to music, especially the classical music. It is easier to understand lyrics of the classical music than the contemporary music” (P4-R1).
- “To learn a new language I need a lot of time and self-discipline. I learn new vocabulary everyday” (P5-R2).
- “I usually go to the audio center at my school’s library to build my listening skills. I watch television and listen to radio” (P6-R1).
- “I discipline myself to learn new vocabulary everyday” (P6-R2).
- “When I was losing their story I ask them to stop or repeat and explain some new words for me. I listen to the radio and watch news” (P7-R1).
- “I usually have more conversations with American native speaking” (P7-R3).

Speaking in English

Improving speaking skills is difficult and requires a significant amount of time for Vietnamese immigrant students. For most of them, speaking is the most difficult part of learning a foreign language. However, they are very positive about their learning of the English language. These students improved their speaking skills by talking with native English-speaking friends and by practicing English pronunciation online by using free dictionary Web sites such as www.dictionary.com or www.vdict.com

- “I make friends with American guys and talk with them a lot. My American friends help me to improve my speaking skills. I went to the South Center Mall to talk with sale-people in improving my speaking and listening skills” (P1-R1).
- “Actually, I don’t feel satisfied about my speaking skill. I did try to say new words out loud many times. I try to explain to American teachers and friends that I don’t understand what they say. I asked them to repeat or rephrase” (P2-R2).
- “I allowed them [American friends and teachers] to ask me questions if they don’t understand what I am saying. I know that I need to practice speaking with American friends but it is hard to have American friends. I am afraid to make friends with Americans” (P3-R1).
- “I practice my English conversations with native English speaking friends” (P4-R1).
- “I stand in the front of a mirror in my bathroom to speak directly to me” (P4-R2).
- “I must study how to pronounce new words through dictionary Web sites” (P4-R3).
- “Speaking, especially public speaking is very challenging for most people even a native English speaking person. I practice speaking with my American friends through basic conversations and ask them to correct my pronunciation” (P5-R1).
- “I talk with my American friends. It was hard for them to spend time with me, but I told them that I really need their conversations in practicing my speaking skills. They were very happy to spend time with me” (P6-R1).

- “I learn to think and translate fast between Vietnamese and English or English and Vietnamese. However, I am learning to think only a language that I speak. I don’t want the translation process. This takes a lot of time to build this thinking and speaking English skills” (P6-R3).

Writing in English

Overcoming writing barriers can go a long way to improving first-generation Vietnamese college students’ chances of developing successful communication skills and improve their learning process. To be able to overcome writing barriers, these students read more books and newspapers, learn English grammar, and practice English writing by proofreading, editing, and rewriting. Some found journal writing to be helpful.

- “I tried to read and write a lot. I tried to write many essays” (P1-R1).
- “I got some help from American friends and faculty in college with proofreading, editing, and rewriting. I used online dictionaries such as vdct.com or dictionary.com” (P1-R2).
- “I try to proofread before the final writing. I let more people who are graduate students look at my papers and then rewrite. I often go to the writing center for editing my essays” (P2-R2).
- “Another thing, I keep a writing journal and use it everyday to make me professional in my writing” (P2-R3).
- “I try to write more English essays and bring my papers to the writing center. People here are willing to help me to fix my grammar. That way I can improve my English skills and get more confidence as I get to know more English” (P3-R2).
- “I read A+ papers from my school library. I learn from their writing style. I try to write short sentences and directly to the point” (P4-R1).
- “I learn new vocabulary every day. I write new words on small paper cards and place them everywhere in my room and on the wall. By this way, I can learn more new vocabulary” (P4-R2).
- “Practice to write” (P5-R1).
- “I usually bring my papers to my school writing center for help to edit and rewrite” (P5-R2).

- “I worked together with friends as a learning team. I discuss with peers and in small groups” (P5-R3).
- “I am learning new vocabulary everyday” (P6-R1).
- “More opportunities of interacting with the text, writing down ideas, and sharing these ideas with peers gained more confidence. Interactive learning with other students is a must. This learning approach helped me to think and write effectively. As a group of students, I can share my ideas and through discussion process” (P6-R3).
- “I learn grammar, new verbs and how to place right verbs in the right tense” (P7-R1).
- “I practice writing everyday and ask someone to help in editing and proofreading” (P7-R2).

These language barriers made an impact on the feeling and thoughts of the participants as well. They expressed their frustration and bad feelings during their first years of college. They shared that sometimes they wanted to quit school and get any job that does not require English skills.

- “I have limited English proficiency and that ended up feeling frustrated through my learning process” (P1-R3).
- “Learning English was my burden, I could not imagine how hard learning English. Learning English is a long and hard trip” (P3-R3).
- “It is a nightmare in learning English. I felt completely lost during the first year studying ESL” (P4-R1).
- “I had a lot of mixed feelings. I was scared of this new experience and yet, at the same time, excited about realizing my childhood dream of speaking English as I grew up in Vietnam” (P7-R3).

Theme 3: Recognition of Cultural Barriers

Vietnamese culture is far different than American culture. The research question in this section asked the students, “Can you describe differences in cultural barriers that you have met at your school?” Three major differences between Vietnamese and

American cultures emerged: social relationships, communications style, and educational processes.

Social Relationship in the Education Process

The teacher–student relationship in Vietnam presents different social positions and social roles compared to the teacher–student relationship in the United States.

Vietnamese teachers practice an authoritarian relationship; American teachers practice an autonomous relationship. Vietnamese students have a lack of self-esteem compared to American students, and this lack is a common barrier that many immigrants face. The main cultural barriers revealed by the participants during the interviews were the authoritative relationship vs. the autonomous relationship in the education process, low self-esteem vs. high self-esteem of students, and collectivism vs. individualism.

- “I had low self-esteem, always afraid to say or comment anything in classroom. I have lack of self-confident in relationship with other students” (P1-R1).
- “It is hard for me to have American friends because of my shy personality type” (P2-R1).
- “I seem to have low self-esteem in the new country” (P2-R1).
- “Teachers in my country show authoritative relationship with students” (P2-R2).
- “In my country, we are more group-oriented. A group of students always study together, have lunch together, hang out together, and go home together. But over here, I see students are more individual and do their own work” (P2-R3).
- “Vietnamese teachers in Vietnam have a lot of authority. Teachers and students in Vietnam bind with an authoritative relationship. American teachers are friendly. When I am able to speak English I can make friends with American teachers easily” (P3-R2).

- “It is easy to make friends but it is hard to build a friendship with American teachers or American students. It is hard to explain why but I think cultural differences” (P3-R3).
- “The education process in Vietnam has formed me with lack of self-confidence and low self-esteem” (P4-R1).
- “There is more authoritative relationship between teachers and college students in Vietnam. Teachers in the United States are very open that makes me surprised” (P4-R2).
- “The relationship between teachers and students in the U.S. schools is very friendly. American teachers are more open than Vietnamese teachers. They encourage me to approach to them when I have questions. However, my limited English language proficiency prevents me to come to talk with them” (P6-R2).
- “It is really hard to make friend with American students. I don’t know what they mean when they talk in the nice-way. It seems very hard for me to have my best friend be an American” (P7-R3).

Communication Style in the Teaching/Learning Process

Vietnamese teachers practice one-way communication in the classroom. Teachers transfer their knowledge to students. The students may ask questions in order to clarify; however, the knowledge transfer is a one-way aspect. Teachers talk most of the time and students listen passively. Alternatively, American teachers practice two-way communication in the classroom: American teachers pass on knowledge; students can ask “why” questions to clarify; they may also add comments based on their own experiences and perspectives. In this way, students transfer some of their own knowledge to teachers, who may in turn use the information, based on the contribution of students, as a continuous loop. The study participants revealed some of the differences in communication style between Vietnamese and American teaching and learning processes, including one-way communication vs. two-way communication and indirect communication vs. direct communication.

- “The American culture is very different from Vietnamese culture. American students say what they want, but Vietnamese students say indirectly about what they want or from their thoughts” (P1-R1).
- “American teachers and friends communicate directly to the points. Vietnamese communicate around the point and give space for others to fill-in” (P2-R1).
- “In my opinion, American people always like to praise other people. I always hear ‘great’ and ‘nice.’ Sometime I feel that is not so sincere. I feel American communication style is more polite and friendly and has more positive attitude” (P3-R2).
- “Most classrooms in Vietnam practice one-way communication style. Teachers do the talking and students carry out the listening. The U.S. schools practice two-way communication style. Students can communicate directly to teachers without worry about interruption” (P4-R1).
- “Vietnamese communication style is lack of eye contact skills” (P4-R3).
- “I think the differences in communication styles are one-way communication vs. two-way communication and command communication vs. motivated communication” (P5-R1).
- “I think Vietnamese teachers practice one-way communication and American teacher practice two-way communication. Vietnamese students indirectly talk with teachers when they give suggestions, and American students directly talk with teachers when they give suggestions. I think indirect communication create more misunderstandings” (P6-R1).
- “Americans directly talk to the problem and Vietnamese just talk around the problem”(P7-R1).
- “Americans like to give hug, kiss or shake-hands to show their care and love toward others, Vietnamese just bow head down to show respect” (P7-R3).

Educational Process

Vietnamese teachers focus on traditional lecture and American teachers prefer a cooperative learning process. American teachers shift the educational process from teaching to coaching in helping students to achieve their learning outcome for success in life. The study participants faced two educational challenges to their learning: lecture-

oriented vs. practical-oriented teaching and memorization vs. understanding activities.

All of the participants prefer the educational process in the United States over the educational process in Vietnam, and they are enthusiastic to adapt to this new process of education.

- “The U.S. educational process focuses on practicing and Vietnam educational process focuses on lecturing” (P1-R1).
- “In Vietnam, students view teachers as the source of knowledge, but the U.S. students view the real world as the source of knowledge” (P1-R2).
- “American teachers teach in a way that has a tendency towards practicing rather than learning by memorizing like the Vietnamese’s way. Teachers are not the source of knowledge but the real world. The U.S. education process is more practical” (P2-R2).
- “The U.S. educational process is more flexible than the Vietnam educational process. It provides more options and more choices for me to improve my abilities” (P2-R3).
- “The American educational process is more interactive between teachers and students. I can ask questions in the middle of the lecture, and it’s not considered interrupting teacher’s lectures or being rude” (P3-R3).
- “The U.S. educational process focuses on practical-oriented and the Vietnam educational process focuses on lecture-oriented” (P4-R1).
- “Students in Vietnam require memorizing lecture materials for passing examinations” (P4-R2).
- “Students in Vietnam are required to memorize lecture materials and students in the U.S. are motivated to understand lecture materials. Most of my examinations are the multiple-choice format, which requires more understanding than memorizing” (P5-R2).
- “Vietnam educational process focuses on lectured-oriented and memorization, the U.S. educational process focuses on practical-oriented and understanding” (P6-R1).
- “In my country, teachers teach me the knowledge but they rarely teach me how to practice the knowledge that I have learned. In the States, teachers teach me to practice the knowledge that I have learned” (P7-R1).

Theme 4: Adapting to Cultural Barriers

The question for this theme asked the students, “How have you adapted to these cultural barriers?”

Social Relationships

One reason the participants gave for their low self-esteem is the lack of fluency with their new language. They are afraid to talk in the classroom and to have American friends. To adapt the new social relationship in the classroom, participants shared that they need to build high self-esteem, to be more self-confident, and to learn American culture by having American friends. They can accomplish this through a direct communication style, an engaged learning process, and a strong desire to learn English.

- “I need to learn more about American culture and have more American friends. Build up my self-confidence and self-esteem. I learn to trust my potential” (P1-R1).
- “I try to understand the American way of living. I read books, watch news and listen to the radio to update news, so I could have more things in common to talk to American friends” (P2-R2).
- “I taught myself to be strong and to be independent” (P3-R1).
- “Be more confident person” (P4-R1).
- “I learn to like social relationship in the U.S. Everybody is straightforward. They don’t hide their feelings, so I could know clearly. They are friendly and healthy” (P4-R3).
- “Strengthening myself with self-confidence and high self-esteem. My mind has been changed from authoritarian relationship to interpersonal relationship”. (P5-R1).
- “I learn to see teachers as friends who are helping me to achieve my education goals” (P5-R3).
- “I must open my feeling to understand what they really mean. I should build relationship with American friends and learn their culture” (P7-R2).

Communication Style

The study participants were told in their ESL classes to practice direct communication style, which allows for the listener's input and opinions. According to the participants, indirect communication style creates misunderstanding during the learning process. Their teachers struggle to understand what they want to express. The participants want to adapt a direct communication and practice direct eye contact.

- “Indirect communication can create a lot of misunderstanding. Sometimes I talk a lot but not to the point creating an effective conversation. I learn to think like Americans and to say what I want directly. I believe in the power of direct communication” (P1-R1).
- “I have many experiences of confusing and misunderstanding speech caused by indirect communication. I learn to communicate directly to the points” (P2-R1).
- “I practice direct communication” (P3-R1).
- “I improve my eye contact skills” (P3-R3).
- “I practice direct communication” (P4-R1).
- “I encourage myself to practice [with] eyes” (P4-R3).
- “Talk directly to the points” (P6-R1).
- “I learn to practice direct communication. I think direct communication prevent misunderstanding” (P7-R1).

Educational Process

The teaching and learning process in Vietnam is lecture-oriented. To achieve balance between lecture-oriented and practice-oriented activities, it was necessary for the participants to adapt to the American educational processes. Specifically, they can learn and understand new material through practice, more than through memorization.

- “It is just more than memorizing, I discipline myself to understanding lecture materials” (P1-R2).

- “I practice more independent on my learning process and focus more on practicing” (P2-R1).
- “I learned to be more active in the classroom and was able to adapt into being an interactive student” (P3-R3).
- “I carry out the practical and understanding education process. I like the U.S. education process; it is very practical” (P6-R1).
- “It [the U.S. educational process] challenges me to have a practical way” (P7-R1).

Motivations to Learning English

The participants revealed that the following things helped them learn English effectively: schools giving more support to emotional needs as well as language skills, having experienced ESL teachers, getting to know more about American life, and being able to communicate with others in English.

- “I think schools need to have more support and resources for limited English students not just in building the language skills but also with emotional needs” (P1-R3).
- “It is a big opportunity to understand the way of American life, how to become a part of this and also meet with people who came from different cultures. Learning English is a must for me and I am so glad that I am attending ESL classes” (P3-R3).
- “I was really happy to meet good teachers and friends and different kinds of ways of learning English” (P4-R3).
- “I know I must study hard! After a year, with friends’ and the teachers’ help, I was able to fit in the class. I think it is interesting to study English from an easy level to a harder level, one step at a time” (P5-R3).
- “I am a baby bird but when I will get ready to fly by myself, I will be successful with it. I will speak English well, I will be a contributing person for my community, I will be ready to work” (P7-R3).

Most of participants believed that the longer they live in the United States the better English proficiency and cultural adaptability they will get.

Summary

In Chapter 4, the participants revealed their perspectives about overcoming comprehension language and cultural barriers. The four themes that emerged were: (a) recognition of language barriers, (b) overcoming comprehension language barriers, (c) recognition of cultural barriers, and (d) adapting to cultural barriers with specific strategies. The participants have acknowledged that the new language and culture play a very important role for their learning and career success.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In the final chapter, conclusions, discussions, and suggestions are presented about how first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students can overcome language and cultural barriers. In order for the first-generation Vietnamese students to fully achieve success in the U.S. society, they must know how to speak and write English proficiently. Seven first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students in the Puget Sound area of Washington State were interviewed three times over a 3-month period about their attitudes concerning comprehension language barriers and cultural adaptability barriers. Through the interviews these students have shared that they did not have problems with their mathematics or physics classes, but they have faced challenges with American language and culture. These barriers can prevent these students from achieving a successful learning outcome.

Lacking a basic vocabulary, a workable sense of grammar, and an understanding of the structure of the language have made it difficult for these students to listen, speak, and write in English. Approaching language comprehension requires knowledge of the structure of the language (vocabulary and grammar) with the pragmatics of the language (the knowledge about what has already been communicated, the knowledge about the situation in which the communication is taking place, and the knowledge about the new society). Moreover, every society has a different worldview. For first-generation Vietnamese students, their incomplete general knowledge about the U.S. society also affected the content and context of the participants' understanding of lecture material and

conversations with American peers. Simply put, these students did not understand the social rules between teachers and students, which often prevented them from making contact with native classmates and teachers. These students were not as socialized as native students because of the language and cultural differences.

The differences in social relationships, communication styles, and educational processes have created huge barriers for the first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students. Their experiences showed that they are lacking in self-confidence and self-esteem, stemming from the authoritarian structure between teachers and students in Vietnam. The student's learning process in Vietnam depends completely on teachers' direction, methodology, knowledge, and philosophy. College students in the United States are expected to be independent. Furthermore, the participants found the American style of communication challenging. Vietnamese students come from a one-way communication learning process, and they need time to adapt to the American two-way communication learning process. Practically, they have to transform their lecture-oriented learning style to an applied-oriented learning style. The newer measurement of accomplishment is not only based on memorization but also on understanding and using new information.

These barriers can be overcome by formal trainings and seminars at schools and through individual study. The participants exhibited a strong passion for learning, and they are willing to adapt to the mainstream culture. That said, schools also have a responsibility to provide more holistic services. More class time can be given to explaining cultural social rules and offering strategies to enhance emotional support. Also, schools in the Puget Sound area should cooperate in making long- and short-term

plans for language and other services that provide opportunities for students to overcome their barriers. The first generation undergraduate Vietnamese students stand between languages and cultures. The sooner they overcome these challenges, through English language comprehension and American mainstream culture adaptability, the better learning outcome they can achieve.

These participants in this study held strongly that first-generation Vietnamese college students must practice enculturation every day. They intentionally leave their native culture and embrace the mainstream culture. They try to learn the new things from their adopted culture, while balancing what is familiar from their native culture. For example, they learn to be more independent, and at the same time, to maintain a high level of interaction between their family members. The participants extended themselves to this new way of life in the United States.

- “I open my feeling to understand what American friends really mean. I try to build relationship with them and learn their culture” (P7-R2).
- “I try to understand the American way of living. I read books, watch news, and listen to the radio to update news, so I could have more things in common to talk to American friends” (P2-R2).

Discussion

As a new immigrant, this researcher found particular attributes helpful when learning English and integrating into American culture. Those attributes are similar to the participant’s experiences. The most important features included having a passion for learning; building self-discipline; receiving instruction and resources emphasizing practical situations; and applying practice time and discussions on social norms of the American culture.

Having a passion for learning English is very significant thing for these students. For Muldoon (2003), “Learning languages is my passion” (p1). He asserts that “students have to have a passion for learning languages and communicating with people from around the world in English” (p.1). The new language and culture of the United States often causes discouragement for new-comers. Through the interview process, these first-generation Vietnamese students revealed they want to learn, and they have a full passion for the new language and culture. This represents a very good beginning.

Dale and Poms (2005) encourage foreign-born students to be proud that they speak English with an accent because their accent tells people that they speak at least two languages. In addition, building self-discipline in the learning process is vital for the first-generation students in learning English:

- “I discipline myself to understanding lecture materials” (P1-R2).
- “I discipline myself in learning environments” (P5-R2).

Self-discipline in learning means training oneself for personal learning improvement; it is necessary to establishing a habit of life-long learning. For example, a self-disciplined learning can begin quite simply: to organize a list of things to do, to be on time, to finish what is begun, to do the most important task first, to accept help from others, and to commit to study.

Foreign-born students also need self-confidence, which is realized when they trust themselves in their decisions and actions. Immigrant students are very rich in culture and language. They can soon become bilingual and bicultural people when they commit to learning the new language and adapting into the new culture. They can gain their confidence through socialization with the people around them. Many participants spoke

of being embarrassed when speaking in public due to their perception of language and cultural deficits. Yet there are so many opportunities for them to overcome these perceived deficits. They can practice open-communication with their native English-speaking friends or teachers and join clubs in their schools or organizations in society. Students need to practice speaking in front of a crowd for gaining confidence.

Dale and Poms (2005) maintain that if foreign-born students live, work, or study among English speakers, they must quickly find ways to receive instruction and to use resources for learning English. To improve language comprehension and cultural adaptability skills, students have to recognize the importance of daily practice of the new language, and must be willing to adjust themselves to the mainstream culture. As Dale and Poms suggest to foreign-born students,

[You] must watch English language news on TV as often as you can. Pay careful attention to the newscaster's pronunciation. Notice especially words and phrases that are repeated every time you watch, practice saying them and write them down. Listen to radio news stations from 5 to 10 minutes at a time. Repeat common words and phrases after the announcer. Whenever you have the opportunity to converse with a North American English speaker, use it. When you don't understand a word or idiom, look it up in your dictionary. (p. ix-x)

Vietnamese first-generation college students generally do not plan to go back to Vietnam to live; instead, they choose to spend the rest of their lives in their new country. Yet, they are not going to forget Vietnamese easily. They need to live and learn in English-only environments for a few years, which should help them comprehend the new language and adapt to the mainstream culture to become successful adults.

Suggestions for the Future Research

Accomplishing positive learning outcomes for the first-generation Vietnamese students is dependent on many different factors that combine effective teaching practices and engaged learning opportunities. Research can be a powerful force for change in education and can help immigrant students in overcoming their common language and cultural barriers toward achieving better learning outcomes. The following section identifies four areas that may be useful in providing a more holistic approach.

Vietnamese Studies

There are few reviews of Vietnamese studies in the current literature. The Vietnamese population worldwide includes about 85 million in Vietnam, 2 million in Cambodia, more than 1 million in the United States, and more than 2 million Vietnamese individuals in other parts of the world. Many researchers know about the Vietnam War, but not many know about the Vietnamese people and the first-generation Vietnamese students in the United States. Tran (2002) suggests that continued support of Vietnamese studies will help to forge new directions in research to bring benefits for the whole society. For the benefit of all, more Vietnamese studies should be addressed.

First-Generation Vietnamese Student Behaviors

Students are primarily responsible for their learning process and learning outcome. However, every student has his or her individual background that directly affects his or her learning process and learning outcome. Between Vietnamese students within the U.S. colleges, many differences exist. The students of a Vietnamese family who arrived in 1980 will have different needs from the current first-generation students of a Vietnamese family who were born in a refugee camp and finally have been admitted

to the United States. Newly immigrated Vietnamese students who lived in urban areas of Vietnam and those students who lived in high mountainside villages will have radically different needs, academic and otherwise.

Teacher Behaviors

Teacher responsiveness to the immigrant student learning process remains an ongoing and important context for further research. How well are ESL teachers being trained to teach effectively in multicultural and diverse environments? Further study is required regarding teacher responsiveness to the wealth of knowledge and experiences of the first-generation immigrant students. Such research will bring to the teaching and learning process a rich context to influence the adequacy and efficiency of student opportunities to learn.

Practice of Cross-Cultural Education

In a similar context, more emphasis can be placed on cross-cultural education, especially building a scaffold that supports the rationale and practices of both native and immigrant cultures. Ideally, the new immigrant can experience and practice in the classroom what the American culture preaches, namely democratic and student-engaged learning environments. The diverse classroom environment is necessary to support multiple learner identities. Researchers should be aware of the significance and interconnection of language, cultural, social, and educational issues. A rich challenge for future research involves the impact of multiple languages, experiences, ethnicities, identities, and achievement patterns in the classroom environment. Possible questions for future research may include:

- How do first-generation Vietnamese college students build their identities, self-confidence, and self-esteem?

- How are first-generation Vietnamese students influenced by teacher expectations?
- How do first-generation Vietnamese college students' backgrounds and family members affect their learning process and outcome?
- How do first-generation Vietnamese college students move their transformation process from dependent (teacher-based, Vietnamese learning style) to independent (self-based, American learning style) within their learning process?

As Diaz (2001) suggests, “the responsibility for educating language minority students can no longer fall only on those teachers who have been trained specifically to provide bilingual education and ESL services; this responsibility needs to be shared by all teachers and all schools” (p. 164). Maximizing the achievement level of every immigrant student in the U.S. education system requires commitment from both formal and informal teachers regarding language comprehension and cultural adaptability. As one participant noted, “Schools need to have more support and resources for limited English students not just in building the language skills but also with emotional needs” (P1). This involves a commitment by schools to believe and demonstrate that when immigrant students are provided language skills and their emotional needs are met, they are capable of success.

There are many paths to language comprehension and cultural adaptability. If first-generation Vietnamese college students want to learn English effectively, they must make sure of their passion for learning the new language. If they really do not want to learn, there is no book, no class, and no instructions that will make it simple for them. Along with a personal passion, first-generation Vietnamese college students also need to build self-discipline and self-confidence. They must have confidence about their learning

potential. English has become a world language in commerce and education and science. It is unfamiliar to the untutored ear but not necessarily difficult. With skillful instruction and consistent practice, language barriers can be overcome. Further quantitative studies to articulate self-confidence are needed, as is more knowledge about how first-generation Vietnamese college students quantify their progress with developing confidence. For example, how many hours does it take of interacting with English-only media (TV, radio, Internet) to build English proficiency for these students? What does it take to feel more confident with their proficiency in the new language? When students try their best, they can overcome language barriers. Students new to the English language must make sure to receive effectively instruction from their teachers as well as from other resources such as tutors, libraries or the Internet. The art of overcoming language and cultural barriers includes making small adjustments, frequently over time, and then practice, practice, and practice. As one participant remarked, “I think it is interesting to learn new culture and study English from an easy level to a harder level, one step at a time” (P5-R3). The sooner first-generation Vietnamese college students fully approach language and cultural adaptability, the sooner they will reach their full potential of learning.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

The Census 2000 Demographic Profile

Table 3

Census 2000 Demographic Profile, Selected Population Group: Vietnamese

General Characteristics	Selected Population Group	Total Population
Total population	1,122,528	281,421,906
Male	567,514	138,053,563
Female	555,014	143,368,343
Median age (years)	30	35
Under 5 years	84,643	19,175,798
18 years and over	818,183	209,128,094
65 years and over	58,241	34,991,753
Household population	1,109,268	273,643,273
Group quarters population	13,260	7,778,633
Average household size	4	3
Average family size	4	3
Occupied housing units	292,244	105,480,101
Owner-occupied housing units	158,319	69,815,753
Renter-occupied housing units	133,925	35,664,348
Social Characteristics	Selected Population Group	Total Population
Population 25 years and over	693,441	182,211,639
High school graduate or higher	429,134	146,496,014
Bachelor's degree or higher	134,820	44,462,605
Civilian veterans (civilian population 18 years and over)	20,547	26,403,703
Disability status (population 5 years and over)	222,464	49,746,248
Foreign born	844,893	31,107,889
Male, Now married, except separated (population 15 years and over)	233,770	60,720,716
Female, Now married, except separated (population 15 years and over)	241,278	59,510,557
Speak a language other than English at home (population 5 years and over)	957,700	46,951,595

Economic Characteristics	Selected Population Group	Total Population
In labor force (population 16 years and over)	526,614	138,820,935
Mean travel time to work in minutes (workers 16 years and over)	26	26
Median household income in 1999 (dollars)	45,085	41,994
Median family income in 1999 (dollars)	47,103	50,046
Per capita income in 1999 (dollars)	15,655	21,587
Families below poverty level	34,925	6,620,945
Individuals below poverty level	175,924	33,899,812
Housing Characteristics -	Selected Population Group	Total Population
Single-family owner-occupied homes	135,944	55,212,108
Median value (dollars)	151,400	119,600
Median of selected monthly owner costs	(X)	(X)
With a mortgage (dollars)	1,304	1,088
Not mortgaged (dollars)	328	295

(X) Not applicable.

Source: United States Census Bureau, Summary File 2 (SF 2) and Summary File 4 (SF 4).

APPENDIX B

The Percentage of Foreign-Born Students

Table 4

Students Who are Foreign-born or Have Foreign-born Parents, 1999

Characteristics	All Students	Students with at least one foreign-born parent					
		Total		Foreign-born student		Native student	
		Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
College, 1 to 4 years							
Total	12,046	2,496	20.7	1,280	10.6	1,216	10.1
White	9,481	1,525	16.1	648	6.8	877	9.3
White non- Hispanic	8,410	832	9.9	297	3.5	535	6.4
Black	1,726	268	15.5	167	9.7	101	5.9
Asian & Pacific Islander	743	676	91.0	450	60.6	226	30.4
Hispanic (of any race)	1,136	725	63.8	378	33.3	347	30.5
Graduate Schools							
Total							
White	3,157	794	25.1	498	15.8	296	9.4
White non- Hispanic	2,571	455	17.7	225	8.8	230	8.9
Black	2,408	348	14.5	158	6.6	190	7.9
Asian & Pacific Islander	271	54	20.0	42	15.8	12	4.2
Hispanic (of any race)	298	283	94.8	228	76.4	55	18.5
	170	110	64.7	68	39.7	42	25.0

Note. The number of students in the two race groups shown here do not sum to the total because data for American Indians and Alaska Natives are not shown.

Source: United State Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, October 1999

APPENDIX C

The Interview Questions

Table 5

Semi-structured interview questions

<p>Questions regarding language barriers in comprehension for the 1st point of time Các câu hỏi liên quan đến những trở ngại trong việc thông thạo ngôn ngữ phần 1:</p> <p>1a. What are the listening barriers that you have faced? Những trở ngại nào về nghe mà bạn gặp phải? 1b. How do you deal with or overcome these listening barriers to building confidence and competence? Làm sao bạn vượt qua được những trở ngại về nghe này để đạt kết quả trong việc học?</p> <p>2a. What are the speaking barriers that you have met? Những trở ngại nào về nói mà bạn gặp phải? 2b. How do you deal with or overcome these speaking barriers to building confidence and competence? Làm sao bạn vượt qua được những trở ngại về nói này để đạt kết quả trong việc học?</p> <p>3a. What are the writing barriers that you have met? Những trở ngại nào về viết mà bạn gặp phải? 3b. How do you deal with or overcome these writing barriers to building confidence and competence? Làm sao bạn vượt qua được những trở ngại về viết này để đạt kết quả trong việc học?</p>
<hr/> <p>Questions regarding cultural barriers in adaptability for the 1st point of time Các câu hỏi liên quan đến những trở ngại trong việc hội nhập văn hóa phần 1:</p> <p>4a. Can you describe the differences in social relationship that you have met at your school? Bạn có thể nêu lên sự khác biệt trong mối quan hệ xã hội mà bạn gặp phải tại trường học? 4b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences? Làm sao bạn hội nhập được với những khác biệt này?</p> <p>5a. Can you describe the differences in communication styles that you have met at your school? Bạn có thể nêu lên sự khác biệt trong cách truyền đạt thông tin mà bạn gặp phải tại trường học? 5b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences? Làm sao bạn hội nhập được với những khác biệt này?</p> <p>6a. Can you describe differences in education process that you have met at your school? Bạn có thể nêu lên sự khác biệt trong tiến trình giáo dục mà bạn gặp phải tại trường học? 6b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences? Làm sao bạn hội nhập được với những khác biệt này?</p> <hr/>

Questions regarding language barriers in comprehension for the 2nd point of time
Các câu hỏi liên quan đến những trở ngại trong việc thông thạo ngôn ngữ phần 2:

- 1a. What are the new listening barriers that you have faced?
1b. How do you deal with or overcome these listening barriers to building confidence and competence?
- 2a. What are the new speaking barriers that you have met?
2b. How do you deal with or overcome these speaking barriers to building confidence and competence?
- 3a. What are the new writing barriers that you have met?
3b. How do you deal with or overcome these writing barriers to building confidence and competence?

Questions regarding cultural barriers in adaptability for the first point of time
Các câu hỏi liên quan đến những trở ngại trong việc hội nhập văn hóa phần 2:

- 4a. Can you describe the new differences in social relationship that you have met at your school?
4b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences?
- 5a. Can you describe the new differences in communication styles that you have met at your school?
5b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences?
- 6a. Can you describe the new differences in education process that you have met at your school?
6b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences?

Questions regarding language barriers in comprehension for the 3rd point of time
Các câu hỏi liên quan đến những trở ngại trong việc thông thạo ngôn ngữ phần 3:

- 1a. What are the listening barriers that you have never thought?
1b. How do you deal with or overcome these listening barriers to building confidence and competence?
- 2a. What are the speaking barriers that you have never thought?
2b. How do you deal with or overcome these speaking barriers to building confidence and competence?
- 3a. What are the writing barriers that you have never thought?
3b. How do you deal with or overcome these writing barriers to building confidence and competence?
-

Questions regarding cultural barriers in adaptability for the 3rd point of time
Các câu hỏi liên quan đến những trở ngại trong việc hội nhập văn hóa phần 3:

4a. Can you describe differences in social relationship that you have never ever thought?

4b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences?

5a. Can you describe differences in communication styles that you have never ever thought?

5b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences?

6a. Can you describe differences in education process that you have never ever thought?

6b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences?

APPENDIX D

The Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol #1

Project: Recognizing the effectiveness of comprehension language barriers and adaptability cultural barriers on selected first-generation undergraduate Vietnamese students

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Questions:

1a. What are listening barriers that you have faced? Những trở ngại nào về nghe mà bạn gặp phải?

1b. How do you deal with or overcome these listening barriers to building confidence and competence?
Làm sao bạn vượt qua được những trở ngại về nghe này để đạt kết quả trong việc học?

2a. What are speaking barriers that you have met? Những trở ngại nào về nói mà bạn gặp phải?

2b. How do you deal with or overcome these speaking barriers to building confidence and competence?
Làm sao bạn vượt qua được những trở ngại về nói này để đạt kết quả trong việc học?

3a. What are writing barriers that you have met? Những trở ngại nào về viết mà bạn gặp phải?

3b. How do you deal with or overcome these writing barriers to building confidence and competence?
Làm sao bạn vượt qua được những trở ngại về viết này để đạt kết quả trong việc học?

4a. Can you describe differences in social relationship that you have met at your school? Bạn có thể nêu lên sự khác biệt trong mối quan hệ xã hội mà bạn gặp phải tại trường học?

4b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences? Làm sao bạn hội nhập được với những khác biệt này?

5a. Can you describe differences in communication styles that you have met at your school? Bạn có thể nêu lên sự khác biệt trong phương cách truyền đạt thông tin mà bạn gặp phải tại trường học?

5b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences? Làm sao bạn hội nhập được với những khác biệt này?

6a. Can you describe differences in education process that you have met at your school? Bạn có thể nêu lên sự khác biệt trong tiến trình giáo dục mà bạn gặp phải tại trường học?

6b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences? Làm sao bạn hội nhập được với những khác biệt này?

(Thank you for participating in this interview. Your confidentiality of responses is assured.)

Interview Protocol #2

Project: Recognizing the effectiveness of comprehension language barriers and adaptability cultural barriers on selected first-generation undergraduate Vietnamese students

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interview:

Questions:

1a. What are new listening barriers that you have faced? Những trở ngại mới nào về nghe mà bạn gặp phải?

1b. How do you deal with or overcome these listening barriers to building confidence and competence? Làm sao bạn vượt qua được những trở ngại về nghe này để đạt kết quả trong việc học?

2a. What are new speaking barriers that you have met? Những trở ngại mới nào về nói mà bạn gặp phải?

2b. How do you deal with or overcome these speaking barriers to building confidence and competence? Làm sao bạn vượt qua được những trở ngại về nói này để đạt kết quả trong việc học?

3a. What are new writing barriers that you have met? Những trở ngại mới nào về viết mà bạn gặp phải?

3b. How do you deal with or overcome these writing barriers to building confidence and competence? Làm sao bạn vượt qua được những trở ngại về viết này để đạt kết quả trong việc học?

4a. Can you describe new differences in social relationship that you have met at your school? Bạn có thể nêu lên sự khác biệt trong mối quan hệ xã hội mà bạn gặp phải tại trường học?

4b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences? Làm sao bạn hội nhập được với những khác biệt này?

5a. Can you describe new differences in communication styles that you have met at your school? Bạn có thể nêu lên sự khác biệt trong phương cách truyền đạt thông tin mà bạn gặp phải tại trường học?

5b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences? Làm sao bạn hội nhập được với những khác biệt này?

6a. Can you describe new differences in education process that you have met at your school? Bạn có thể nêu lên sự khác biệt trong tiến trình giáo dục mà bạn gặp phải tại trường học?

6b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences? Làm sao bạn hội nhập được với những khác biệt này?

(Thank you for participating in this interview. Your confidentiality of responses is assured.)

Interview Protocol #3

Project: Recognizing the effectiveness of comprehension language barriers and adaptability cultural barriers on selected first-generation undergraduate Vietnamese students

Time of interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer:

Questions:

1a. What are listening barriers that you have never thought? Những trở ngại nào về nghe mà bạn chưa từng nghĩ đến?

1b. How do you deal with or overcome these listening barriers to building confidence and competence? Làm sao bạn vượt qua được những trở ngại về nghe này để đạt kết quả trong việc học?

2a. What are speaking barriers that you have never met? Những trở ngại nào về nói mà bạn chưa từng nghĩ đến?

2b. How do you deal with or overcome these speaking barriers to building confidence and competence? Làm sao bạn vượt qua được những trở ngại về nói này để đạt kết quả trong việc học?

3a. What are writing barriers that you have never met? Những trở ngại nào về viết mà bạn chưa từng nghĩ đến?

3b. How do you deal with or overcome these writing barriers to building confidence and competence? Làm sao bạn vượt qua được những trở ngại về viết này để đạt kết quả trong việc học?

4a. Can you describe differences in social relationship that you have never thought? Bạn có thể nêu lên sự khác biệt trong mối quan hệ xã hội mà bạn chưa từng nghĩ đến?

4b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences? Làm sao bạn hội nhập được với những khác biệt này?

5a. Can you describe differences in communication styles that you have never thought? Bạn có thể nêu lên sự khác biệt trong phương cách truyền đạt thông tin mà bạn chưa từng nghĩ đến?

5b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences? Làm sao bạn hội nhập được với những khác biệt này?

6a. Can you describe differences in education process that you have never thought? Bạn có thể nêu lên sự khác biệt trong tiến trình giáo dục mà bạn chưa từng nghĩ đến?

6b. Describe how you have adapted to these differences? Làm sao bạn hội nhập được với những khác biệt này?

(Thank you for participating in this interview. Your confidentiality of responses is assured.)

APPENDIX E

Consent Form

CONSENT FORM

Recognizing the Effects of Comprehension Language Barriers and Adaptability Cultural Barriers on Selected First-Generation Undergraduate Vietnamese Students

I have been asked to participate in a doctoral dissertation research study for the purpose of exploring the cultural and language barriers in the education process. I was selected to be a possible participant because I am a first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate student who is 18 years or older. The purpose of this study is twofold: 1) to explore the perspectives and experiences of the first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students about the effects of language and cultural barriers within the learning process; and 2) to offer some suggestions to overcome these barriers.

If I agree to be in this study, I will be asked to participate in a one-to-one interview about cultural and language barriers that I have met. I agree to participate in three interviews at three different periods of time. The first interview will be at the beginning of February 2009; this interview will take approximately 45 minutes and will be tape-recorded. The second interview will be in the middle of March 2009; this interview will take approximately 30 minutes and will be tape-recorded. The third interview will be at the end of April 2009; this interview will take approximately 30 minutes and will be tape-recorded. The interviews will take place at the Renton public library at 2902 NE 12th Street, Renton, WA 98056, Phone: 425-430-6790.

All information received will be treated as confidential. Confidentiality may be breached in the event a participant threatens harm to self or another, or if court ordered. In these instances confidentiality will be breached only to the extent necessary to avert harm or to meet the demands of the court. In any event, the participant will be informed of the breach and the extent to which it occurred as well as the reason why it was necessary.

Participants have the opportunity to contribute valuable input about their learning experience and what they can learn to improve their learning condition. Their input has the potential to aid other first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students. Participants will receive no monetary compensation for participating in the study.

My decision of whether or not to participate will not affect my current or future relations with Argosy University. If I decide to participate, I am free to refuse to answer any of the questions that may make me uncomfortable. I can withdraw at any time I want. I can contact Christian Phan, the researcher, at 5114 NE 8th Pl, Renton, WA or (206) 240-2605 or phan1010@hotmail.com with any question about this study. I understand that this research study has been reviewed and certified by the Institutional Review Boards of Argosy University, Seattle, Washington. For research-related problems or questions regarding participants' rights, I can contact either of the Institutional Review Boards through the Argosy University IRB Chair, Dr. Dana Waters, at (206) 393-3549, or through the dissertation chair, Dr. Wayne Benenson at (206) 393-3569 or wbenenson@argosy.edu

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had my entire question answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this consent form. By signing this document, I consent to participate in this study.

Signature/Date: _____ Signature of Investigator/Date: _____

t© tán CỜng tham d; phỔng vÃn

S; nh HỦng của Nh»ng Trª Ngỏi Trong ViEc Thỏng Thỏo Ngôn Ng» Và Nh»ng Trª Ngỏi Trong ViEc H¶i NhÆp Væn Húa của Sinh Viên nải H†c ViEt Nam thu¶c Th%o HÆ ThỦ NhÃt

Tôi CỬ@c m©i C< tham gia vào cu¶c nghiên cỪu vổ nh»ng trª ngỏi væn hoá và ngôn ng» trong tỉon trình giáo đợc cho luÆn án tỉon sĩ. Tôi CỬ@c ch†n vì tôi là sinh viên ViEt Nam thu¶c th%o hÆ thỦ nhÃt. ChỈ có bảy ngỬ©i CỬ@c m©i C< tham gia cu¶c nghiên cỪu này. Mợc Cích của cu¶c nghiên cỪu là: (1) khám phá nh»ng nhÆn xét và kinh nghiEm của sinh viên ViEt Nam thu¶c th%o hÆ thỦ nhÃt vổ nh»ng trª ngỏi væn hoá và ngôn ng» trong tỉon trình h†c tÆp; (2) CŞ xỦşng m¶t số góp s; C< có th< vỦ@t qua nh»ng trª ngỏi này.

N%ou tôi CỜng s; tham d; cu¶c nghiên cỪu này. Tôi sẽ CỬ@c phỔng vÃn m¶t-vşi-m¶t vổ nh»ng s; trª ngỏi væn hoá và ngôn ng» mà tôi g¶p phải. Tôi CỜng s; tham d; ba LẦN phỔng vÃn. LẦN thỦ nhÃt vào CẦu tháng 2 nặm 2009 vşì cu¶c phỔng vÃn 45 phút và CỬ@c ghi âm. LẦN thỦ hai vào gi»a tháng 3 nặm 2009 vşì cu¶c phỔng vÃn 30 phút và CỬ@c ghi âm. LẦN thỦ ba vào cuÓi tháng 4 nặm 2009 vşì cu¶c phỔng vÃn 30 phút và CỬ@c ghi âm. Nh»ng bu'i phỔng vÃn sẽ CỬ@c th;ic hiEn tải thỦ viEn Công C¶ng Renton tải CỈa chỈ 2902 NE 12th Street, Renton, WA 98056, C;En thoãi: 425-430-6790.

TÃt cả d> kiEn CŞu CỬ@c bảo mÆt. S; bảo mÆt chỈ CỬ@c tỉot l¶ trong trỦ@ng h@p cá nhân hay ngỬ©i khác g¶p t'õn hải, hoẶc n%ou tòa án Còi hỎi. Trong trỦ@ng h@p này, s; tỉot l¶ chỈ nhệm bảo vE s; C< khỎi dÃn C%on t'õn hải hay tòa án Còi hỎi. Trong trỦ@ng h@p d> kiEn CỬ@c tỉot l¶, tham d; viên sẽ CỬ@c thông báo vổ lổ do phải tỉot l¶ s; bảo mÆt.

Nh»ng tham d; viên có CỬ@c cỔ h¶i C< cÓng hi%on nh»ng kinh nghiEm giá trỈ trong viEc h†c và nh»ng C;Sũ mà h† Cã h†c hỎi C< tỉon trình h†c CỬ@c tỐt hỔn. Nh»ng kinh nghiEm này có giá trỈ C< giúp C< nh»ng sinh viên ViEt Nam thu¶c th%o hÆ thỦ nhÃt. Nh»ng tham d; viên không nhÆn thù lao nào cho viEc tham d; cu¶c nghiên cỪu này.

S; quy%ot CỈnh của tôi có hay không tham gia vào cu¶c nghiên cỪu này không ảnh hỦng gì C%on MÓi liên hE trong tỦ@ng lai của tôi vşì trỦ@ng nải H†c Argosy. N%ou tôi quy%ot CỈnh tham gia, tôi có quySñ tỔ chÓi không trả l©i nh»ng câu hỎi mà tôi cảm thÃy không thoãi mái. Tôi có th< không tham gia cu¶c nghiên cỪu này bÃt cỪ lúc nào tôi muỐn. Tôi có th< liên lặc vşì Christian Phan, nghiên cỪu viên, tải CỈa chỈ 5114 NE 8th Pl, Renton, WA or 206-240-2605 hay phan1010@hotmail.com khi có bÃt cỪ câu hỎi nào. Tôi hi<u cu¶c nghiên cỪu này cỪng CỬ@c diEt lải b¶i H¶i ñỜng Xét DiEt thu¶c nải H†c Argosy - Seattle, Washington. Khi có nh»ng th;ic m;ic hay câu hỎi liên hE C%on quySñ của tham d; viên, tôi có th< liên lặc vşì CỈ diEn H¶i ñỜng Xét DiEt của nải H†c Argosy qua trỦ@ng ban Dr. Dana Waters, (206) 393-3549, hay trỦ@ng ban luÆn án, Dr. Wayne Benenson, (206) 393-3569 hay wbenenson@argosy.edu.

Tôi C†c và hi<u nh»ng giải thích trên CẬy. Nh»ng th;ic m;ic của tôi cỪng CỬ@c trả l©i cách thích Cạng, và tôi CỜng s; tình nguyEn tham d; cu¶c nghiên cỪu này. Tôi có nhÆn m¶t t© tán CỜng tham d; phỔng vÃn. Qua viEc kş tên vào CẬy, tôi CỜng s; tham gia vào cu¶c nghiên cỪu này.

Kş tên/Ngày: _____ Kş tên của Nghiên CỪu Viên/Ngày: _____

APPENDIX F

Audio Tape Permission

**AUDIO TAPE PERMISSION
CHO PHÉP GHI ÂM**

I understand the interviews will be tape-recorded for transcription. Participants' information will only be seen by the researcher and his dissertation chair. To protect participants' confidentiality and privacy, all files under investigation will be shredded or purged upon completion of the study. By signing this paper, I give the researcher a permission to tape-record each interview.

Tôi hiu rong nhung buoi phong vàn sẽ có ghi âm có chép lài. Chỉ có nghiên cóu viên và trung ban luu án có xem thông tin cá nhân của tham dự viên. nh bảo và số riêng từ của tham dự viên, tất cả mài hồ số trong cul nghiên cóu này sẽ bê hủy bỏ hay xóa cói sau khi hoàn tất viêc nghiên cóu. Ký tên vào tờ giẤy này, tôi cho phép nghiên cóu viên ghi âm các cul phong vàn.

Signature/Date: _____ Signature of Investigator/Date: _____

APPENDIX G

Advertisement for Study

ADVERTISEMENT TO RECRUIT PARTICIPANTS

Language and cultural barriers can create ineffective learning processes and make a hard life for first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students. Surprisingly little information is known about how language and cultural barriers affect Vietnamese student's lives and learning outcome. Please participate in a doctoral dissertation research study for the purpose of exploring the cultural and language barriers in the education process.

Who can participate this study? First-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students, either new immigrants or those living in the United States under 7 years, who are 18 years or older.

What are potential benefits of the study? Participants have the opportunity to contribute valuable input about their learning experience and, potentially, learn how they can learn to improve their learning condition. Their input has the potential to aid other first-generation Vietnamese undergraduate students. Participants will receive no monetary compensation for participating in the study.

What are protocols? Participants will participate in three interviews of 30-45 minutes at three different periods of time during the Spring Semester of 2009.

How can I participate in this study? Call Christian Phan, researcher, at (206) 240-2605, email: phan1010@hotmail.com, or home address: 5114 NE 8th Pl, Renton, WA 98059. Thank you so much for your participation!

Nh»ng trª ngi ngn ng» v vn ha to nn khng ít kh khn trong tion trnh hc v Ci sng ca sinh vin Ci hc Vit Nam. Tht ngc nhin v c rt ít nh»ng thng tin tho no nh»ng trª ngi ngn ng» v vn ha nh hng Ci sng v kot qu hc tp ca sinh vin Vit Nam. Xin bn vui lòng tham d vào cuc nghin cu cho lun n tion s vi mc Cch C nhn din nh»ng trª ngi vn ha v ngn ng» trong tion trnh gio dc.

Ai c th tham d cuc nghin cu? Sinh vin Vit Nam mi Con hay  Hoa K di 7 nm. Tham d vin phi 18 tui trª ln.

t li g cho vic nghin cu ny? Tham d vin s c Cc c hi C Cng gp nh»ng kinh nghim gi tr v nh»ng g h C hc hi C làm tt hn trong tion trnh hc tp. Nh»ng kinh nghim ny cng s gip C cho nh»ng sinh vin Vit Nam khc. Tham d vin s khng nhn tin thù lao khi tham d cuc nghin cu ny.

Tion trnh nghin cu nh tho no? Tham d vin s Cc phng vn 3 ln, mi ln khng 30-45 pht, trong sut k hc ma Xun nm 2009.

Lm sao C tham d? Vui lòng gi Christian Phan, nghin cu vin, ti Cin thoi 206-240-2605, email: phan1010@hotmail.com, or Ca ch nh: 5114 NE 8th Pl, Renton, WA 98059.

Cm n s cng tc ca bn!

