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Chapter 7

Teaching in China:
Culture-based Challenges

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1. Introduction

Management education has become increasingly popular in China since the formal introduction of the first MBA program in 1990 (Guo, 2000). China's Ministry of Education reported that applications for Master's in Business Administration (MBA) degrees rose 18% from the year 2000 to the year 2001 (Cui, 2001). Currently, China hosts dozens of Western-based higher education institutions offering management and business undergraduate degrees, graduate degrees, several types of certificates, as well as shorter non-degree programs. Some examples include China Rutgers University, China European International Business School, California State University, and The International College at Beijing (Heytens, 2001). The presence of Western-based education programs in China is likely to continue to increase given China's "desperate need for high-quality business leaders" (Guo, 2000). Furthermore, this trend is likely to be accentuated because many companies are starting to follow the Western model and sponsor business and management programs as a tool to retain and attract top talent (Heytens, 2001). Our main goal in this chapter is to describe how cultural differences between the United States (U.S.) and China pose unique challenges to U.S. instructors teaching in China, and to relate these cultural differences to instructor-student dynamics in the classroom, student expectations and behaviors, and the learning process in general. An additional goal is to provide suggestions regarding pedagogical strategies and techniques for U.S. instructors teaching in China to address challenges posed by cultural differences.

We make two clarifications. First, we frame our analysis from the perspective of educational dynamics inherent in Western and, specifically, U.S.-style business instruction in China. Our manuscript addresses the fact that numerous Chinese institutions are embracing the U.S. approach, including an emphasis on English instruction, because this makes graduates more attractive to potential employers. We emphasize that we are not advocating the adoption of U.S. culture and business style education in China; we are addressing a situation that is already in place. And, although some of our propositions could be considered pejoratively, they are based on careful derivation from literature. Thus, we adopt a normative framework that may be perceived as "resolutely American" because this is the framework adopted by an increasing number of higher-education institutions in China.

Second, our manuscript does not include a consideration of the typical U.S. management curriculum and its applicability to the Chinese political and business environment. There is substantial evidence challenging the transportability of U.S. management theories and practices to China (Berrell, Wrathall, & Wright, 2001; Fan, 1998; Newell, 1999). This topic goes beyond the scope of the present chapter and deserves in-depth treatment elsewhere; therefore, we focus on pedagogical as opposed to curricular issues.

The chapter is structured as follows. The first section reviews general cultural differences between the U.S. and China, as well as some unique features of Chinese culture, and links these differences to specific instructional challenges. This section also offers 9 testable propositions based on theory considerations to help direct future empirical research. The second section provides a discussion of pedagogical approaches and techniques that may prove useful for non-Chinese instructors teaching in China.

2. U.S.-China Cultural Differences and Their Consequences for Instruction

In spite of hundreds of cross-cultural articles published every year in management and the social sciences in general, the definition of culture continues to remain elusive. In fact, a common criticism of

cross-cultural research is that investigators fail to provide a definition of culture as their focal construct of interest (House, Wright, & Aditya, 1997).

We view culture as a construct that results from *shared experiences,* applies to a *collective,* and is *multi-faceted* (Aguinis & Henle, 2003). First, culture results from shared experiences such as a common history and geography. However, these common experiences are antecedents that create a culture, and are not culture per se. Second, culture is a collective construct because it applies to groups of individuals. Third, culture is multi-faceted.This means that to describe a group's culture we need to examine more than one dimension (e.g., individualism-collectivism, power distance, Confucianism, and so forth). The examination of a group's relative position on simply one dimension does not suffice to describe a group's culture. And, we must keep in mind that when we describe a group's relative position regarding a specific cultural dimension (e.g., individualism-collectivism), we are necessarily making a generalization. Because there is variation within each cultural group (Bond, 1997), the fact that person A belongs to a more collectivistic society than person B does not make person A automatically more collectivistic than person B. When we discuss cultural dimensions, we are referring to group-level generalizations that may not apply to the individual level of analysis. Numerous articles and books have been published about Chinese culture. The majority of these sources originate from scholars in academic institutions in Hong Kong. However, authors from Mainland China have had an increasing presence in English language publications since the 1980s. Because the history, geography, and other common experiences are different for the Mainland and Hong Kong Chinese (e.g., Communism vs. English rule), some cultural aspects also differ. Most of the studies of Chinese culture are based on extrapolations of studies conducted in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore. Nevertheless, there are some cultural features that seem to be common to all, or most, of China, particularly if we contrast these features to the U.S. and the West in general.

Next, we provide a brief review of three salient cultural dimensions together with a discussion of how these cultural dimensions are linked to instructional challenges for U.S. instructors teaching in

China. We focus our discussion around the following three salient cultural dimensions: Individualism-collectivism, power distance, and Confucianism.[2] By necessity, we must describe each of these dimensions separately. But, these dimensions are artificially separated for the sake of clarity. In truth, they form an interrelated pattern of cultural dimensions that, together, serve as good indicators of the underlying Chinese culture.

2.1 *Individualism-collectivism*

China has been identified as a collectivistic society (Triandis, 1995). A collectivistic society is one in which the individuals define themselves as part of one or more collectives such as family, tribe, nation, and are primarily motivated by the norms and duties imposed on them from these collectives.

Individuals in collectivistic societies are willing to give priority to the goals of the collective over their own personal goals, and emphasize their connection to the members of these collectives. In contrast, the U.S. is considered an individualistic society (Hofstede, 1980). An individualistic society is one in which the members see themselves as independent of collectives and are motivated by their own preferences, needs, and contracts established with others (Triandis, 1995). In the Chinese cultural context, individualism is seen as a pejorative term (Triandis, 1995). According to the Chinese, individualism connotes selfishness, a lack of concern for others, and an aversion to group discipline, whereas collectivism is understood to affirm the solidarity of the group (Ho & Chiu, 1994). Cultural groups like the Chinese, who espouse collectivistic values, focus their trust and solidarity toward the norms of the members of their collectives, also called ingroups, and are often distrustful of outgroups. In other words, the Chinese society, by virtue of being collectivistic, shows more dissociation from outgroups and more subordination to ingroups than members of individualistic cultures (Triandis, 1995).

Triandis (1995) refined the concepts of individualism and collectivism further by identifying their vertical and horizontal facets. This distinction allows for the following four possible cultural

preferences regarding the individualism-collectivism dimension: vertical individualism, horizontal individualism, vertical collectivism, and horizontal collectivism. For collectivistic societies, the vertical preference includes a sense of serving the ingroups and sacrificing and doing one's duty for the ingroups' benefit. Inequality and rank are an integral part of a vertical collectivistic group, as well as ethnocentrism and prejudiced views that are used as a means of distinguishing themselves from outgroups (Triandis, 1995). Alternatively, a horizontal collectivism preference includes a sense of social cohesion and of oneness with the members of the ingroup (Triandis, 1995).

Although both facets of collectivism seem to be present in Chinese society, several independent studies suggest that, overall, the Chinese lean towards vertical collectivism (Chen, Meindl, & Hunt, 1997). For instance, although their study did not include a sample from Mainland China, results reported by the Chinese Culture Connection (1987) indicate that both Taiwan and Hong Kong are low on integration, a value that emphasizes tolerance of others, harmony, non-competitiveness, and solidarity. Therefore, these two Chinese cultural groups could be classified as low on the horizontal collectivism facet. In addition, vertical collectivism is manifested by the Chinese preference for an orderly and hierarchical society based on rank and obedience (Triandis, 1995).

In short, the Chinese society is collectivistic and, specifically, displays characteristics of vertical collectivistic societies.

2.1.1 *Relationship between collectivism-vertical collectivism and instructional challenges*

How do the general collectivistic and more specific vertical collectivistic societal orientations affect specific educational practices in China? First, collective cultures display a preference for a high-context as opposed to a low-context approach to communication. A high-context form of communication emphasizes indirectness, implicitness, and nonverbal expressions over a low-context approach that utilizes directness,

explicitness, and expressiveness (Gao, Ting-Toomey, & Gudykunst, 1996).

In China, confrontation and directness are strongly avoided. For example, Chua and Gudykunst (1987) found that Taiwanese students are more likely to gloss over differences and conceal ill feelings as compared to U.S. students. Stated differently, the concept of *hanxu* (i.e., implicitness) is preferred. This implicitness applies to the use of both verbal and non-verbal communication. As a result, not only are emotions not expressed verbally, but also they are often difficult to determine through a person's nonverbal behaviors. Contrary to the U.S., non-verbal behaviors are more subtle and, to a Western eye, do not seem to convey social influence and emotional expression (cf. Aguinis, Simonsen, & Pierce, 1998).

Moreover, the expression of emotion is seen as embarrassing and shameful (Kleinman, 1980). For example, we have observed that in the classroom it is rare for instructors to receive positive or negative feedback from students, either verbally or nonverbally, regarding their level of satisfaction with the material being taught. Thus, we offer the following proposition:

> Proposition 1: *Because of a vertical collectivistic orientation, students in China are more likely to use a high context approach to communication including a preference for indirectness and implicitness, and they are not likely to express their opinions, beliefs, and feelings as openly and directly as compared to students in the U.S.*

Second, another putative consequence of vertical collectivism is the indigenous (i.e., emic) concept of *lian* (i.e., "face"). Face refers to "the confidence of society in the integrity of ego's moral character, the loss of which makes it impossible for him [or her] to function properly within the community" (Gao *et al.*, 1996, p. 289). Saving face is of great concern to most Chinese and face management is essential to maintaining harmonious relationships (Gao *et al.*, 1996). Overall, the Chinese attempt to protect the face of both parties involved in a communication process. Direct confrontation or questioning can be seen

as a potential threat to the face of either party and could invite chaos or imbalance. Consequently, in the classroom, rarely do students ask questions or challenge the instructor for fear of shaming themselves or the teacher (if s/he does not know the answer to a question), which would disturb the structure and balance of the roles. What in the U.S. is seen as assertiveness, a positive trait (Aguinis & Adams, 1998), in China is interpreted as bad character and perceived as threatening (Gao *et al.*, 1996). Based on the preceding discussion, we offer the following proposition:

> Proposition 2: *Because of the fear of losing face or making the instructor lose face, students in China are less likely to ask questions and participate in class as compared to students in the U.S.*

An additional issue related to face management is a course's syllabus. In the U.S., a syllabus represents a formal agreement between the instructor and the students. Collectivistic societies including China have a preference for informal and private agreements as opposed to formal and public agreements. An informal agreement is less likely to be scrutinized and the chance of losing face is minimized (Leung, 1997). Thus, "informal agreements are preferred because an agreement that unexpectedly causes one side to lose face can then be easily revised to restore that party's face" (Leung, 1997, p. 650). Congruent with this argument, we have observed that very few Chinese instructors distribute a syllabus at the beginning of their course. Additionally, Chinese students in our classes did not view our syllabi as formal and fairly final documents. Instead, students treated the class syllabi as "informal documents in progress" which could be revised at any time regarding reading assignments, examination dates, nature and goals of outside projects, and so forth. Thus, we offer the following proposition:

> Proposition 3: *Because of the fear of losing face, students in China are more likely to view a course syllabus as an informal "in progress" document as opposed to a formal agreement between an instructor and the students as compared to students in the U.S.*

2.2 *Power distance*

Hofstede's (1980, 2001) seminal study identified power distance as one of four values that differentiate cultural groups. Power distance refers to the degree to which inequalities in the distribution of power are tolerated and accepted (Hofstede, 1980, 2001). Hofstede's study did not include a sample from Mainland China, but it included ethnic Chinese groups from Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore. Based on Hofstede's results regarding these samples, Chinese culture can be classified as high on power distance. Cultural groups that score high on power distance have a tendency to prefer to obey without question those who are in authority positions and have clearly defined role differentiation of a hierarchical nature. In the Chinese cultural context, these preferences can be understood through the indigenous concept of *filial piety*.

Filial piety is a cultural value indigenous to China that serves as a guiding principle for socialization and intergenerational conduct for the length of one's lifespan (Ho, 1996). Filial piety refers to a hierarchical relationship of social roles such as father to son, husband to wife, and older son to younger son, whereby the senior in age has authority over the younger person. The younger person is to bring honor to his or her elders and eventually be responsible for providing for these elders. While it traditionally refers to behavior toward one's parents and ancestors, Yeh and Yang (1989, cited in Ho, 1996) showed that filial piety can be generalized to all authority relationships.

Based on the indigenous concept of filial piety, Ho (1996) argued that "authoritarian moralism" is a central characteristic of Chinese socialization processes. Ho identified the following two components of authoritarian moralism: (a) hierarchical ranking of authority in family members, the educational system, and socio-political situations, and (b) a pervasive application of moral principles as a primary standard from which people are judged.

2.3 *Relationship between power distance and instructional challenges*

How does high power distance, and the related emic concepts of filial piety and authoritarian moralism, affect specific educational practices in China?

First, instructors in China have absolute authority and are treated with high deference. In fact, the word teacher in Chinese can be literally translated as "born early," implying that teachers (because they were born earlier) deserve respect and deference. In exchange, instructors are expected to demonstrate wisdom and to form the moral character of their students. Thus, filial piety teaches Chinese students to fear authority figures, to adopt silence, negativism, and passive resistance when dealing with authority demands (Ho, 1996). Instructors, in return, focus on the demonstration of proper behavior, impulse control, and the fulfillment of obligations (Ho, 1996). Thus, we offer the following proposition:

> Proposition 4: *Because of the indigenous filial piety and authoritarianism moralism values, students in China are more likely to accept a professor's instructions and rules without question and give instructors more deference as compared to students in the U.S.*

Students' filial piety and authoritarian moralism results in levels of respect, obedience, and submission that are unusually high for Western standards. Moreover, there is evidence that compared to U.S. students, Chinese students are more willing to accept insulting remarks from a high-status individual (Bond, Wan, Leung, & Giacalone, 1985). Teachers are respected as authority figures second only to their parents and Chinese students do not challenge teachers' authority (Siu, 1992). Detrimental effects for students may result from Western instructors' lack of understanding of these issues and violation of social codes of which they are not aware.

Chinese students may risk losing face and being socially embarrassed when Western instructors make atypical role demands, which students feel they cannot refuse from an authority figure. One example of this kind of violation that we saw frequently was the practice of Western instructors to use Chinese students to show them the city and help with non-educational activities including shopping or sightseeing. Some Western instructors had little awareness of the stress this may put on the extremely busy students or the inappropriateness of making such requests. When a Chinese student is asked such an inappropriate favor

by a professor, she or he may not be feel it is appropriate to decline the request.   Moreover, as noted above in the discussion regarding the Chinese preference for a high-context (i.e., implicit and indirect) style of communication, a Western instructor may miss an indirect effort of refusal. Missing an indirect refusal from a student can become a very serious issue and Western instructors may violate serious norms such as maintaining a professional relationship with students inside and outside of the classroom.   In short, we offer the following proposition:

> Proposition 5: *Because of a combination of filial piety and authoritarian moralism with a preference for an implicit and indirect communication style, U.S. instructors are more likely to not understand when Chinese students wish to refuse an instructor's inappropriate request as compared to a refusal by U.S. students.*

As discussed above, instructors are expected to reciprocate students' deference and respect for authority by demonstrating proper behavior, impulse control, and the fulfillment of obligations (Ho, 1996). This may lead Chinese instructors to display a rigid and structured teaching style. Thus, it is not infrequent for a Chinese instructor to enter the classroom, read from notes for the entire period while writing on the board, and leave at the end of the period without deviating from the pre-arranged "script."   In turn, this shapes students' expectations regarding classroom interactions in that Chinese instructors, in fulfilling their role and obligation, are expected to disseminate large amounts of information, which does not allow much time left for dialogue and instructor-student interactions. Thus, we offer the following proposition:

> Proposition 6: *Because of authoritarian moralism values, classroom interactions including Chinese instructors are more likely to be more rigid, structured, and include a teaching style featuring one-way communication and less student participation as compared to classroom interactions including U.S. instructors.*

2.4 *Confucianism*

In the previous two sections, we discussed cultural dimensions created by Western researchers (i.e., individualism-collectivism and power distance) and their relationship with indigenous Chinese values. In describing the cultural dimensions of individualism-collectivism and power distance, we also touched on some aspects of Chinese Confucian philosophy (e.g., filial piety, saving face). Confucianism is a multi-layered philosophy that has been part of Chinese culture for more than two thousand years and deserves to be discussed on its own. Also, there are aspects of Confucianism that are purely emic and cannot be directly related to more universal values. For example, the Chinese Culture Connection (1987) found that a value survey including indigenous Chinese themes yielded a "Confucian work dynamism" factor that was not related to any of the four cultural dimensions identified by Hofstede (1980) (i.e., individualism-collectivism, power distance, masculinity-femininity, and uncertainty avoidance).

It can be argued that the Communist system has attempted to erode the Confucian tradition. However, the Confucian tradition is still very much present in Mainland China, particularly if we compare Mainland China with the U.S. Many Confucian concepts (e.g., respect for authority figures) are present, but have been modified and adapted to fit a Communist system of government. For instance, our students could not say the name "Mao" without noting his title of "Chairman" before his name. And, roles within the Communist party structure have clearly-defined obligations and perks. This clear definition of roles and one's place in society is, as described below, one of four core Confucian values. In writing essays for class assignments, our students provided illustrative statements regarding the prevalence of Confucian values. Randomly selected quotes include the following: "All these huge piles of thought (Confucianism) are melted in Chinese people's mind and blood through its effective education system," "Confucianism influences much of Chinese politics, economics, and social value," "Confucianism is the main system of thought in China, from the past to the present," and "Confucianism has influenced the Chinese attitude toward life, set the standards of social value."

Confucianism can be summarized in four points.   First, Confucianism includes a belief that the stability of society is based on unequal relations between people. In spite of the inequality, however, these relationships are based on a sense of mutual and complementary obligation. In the words of Confucius, "jun jun chen chen fu fu zi zi," which in its context means "let the ruler rule as he should and the minister be a minister as he should; let the father act as a father should and the son act as a son should" (Fairbanks & Goldman, 1998, p. 52). Second, the family is the prototype of all social organizations. The dynamic that helps to maintain a sense of balance in the family is saving face.   Third, each person must demonstrate virtuous behavior, which means developing self-control and finding one's proper place within society. Lastly, each person is expected to acquire skills and education, work hard, and have patience and perseverance (Hofstede, 1991; Triandis, 1995).

In the Confucian tradition, individuals strive to accomplish a number of achievements.   These achievements are (in order of importance) (a) attaining virtue, (b) providing meritorious service, and (c) contributing scholarship (Yu, 1996).   However, empirical examinations of Chinese popular culture concluded that the relative importance of achievements is different for the majority of Chinese and that the original Confucian ordering of achievements seems to apply to a small minority only. Several studies have shown that the desired popular achievements are (in order of importance) (a) economics, (b) reputation, (c) health, and (d) morality (e.g., Johnson, Nathan, & Rawski, 1985; Yu, 1994, 1996).   This more "popular" hierarchy of desired achievements seems to reflect more accurately the actual practices of Confucians since pre-Qin times (i.e., 221-207 B.C.E.), who aimed toward achieving successful official careers, fame, and reputation over self-cultivation (Yu, 1996). The traditional way to achieve economic and reputational success, and simultaneously provide meritorious service, has been through the passing of the civil service examinations and entry into the official bureaucracy. An official career was a way of achieving wealth, fame, and honoring one's family (Yu, 1996). Passing these exams became a teleological goal of such importance to the society that if a person failed the exams and had to resort to trade, they would attempt to

earn enough wealth to provide their children with the best education so that their children could then pass the exams.

At present, it seems that things have not changed significantly in China in this regard. Multiple studies have shown that Chinese students aim toward dutiful service to their family and community (Kornadt, Eckensberger, & Emminghaus, 1980; Wilson & Pusey, 1982), and succeeding in examinations is a way of accomplishing this goal (Cui, 2001). More generally, there is a stress on duties rather than rights (Fairbanks & Goldman, 1998), which Yu (1996) referred to as a "social orientation achievement motivation" (SOAM). SOAM is the motivation to achieve goals set by significant others such as family, community, or society, instead of the more individualistic U.S. approach to achieve goals set by and for oneself.

2.4.1 *Relationship between Confucianism and instructional challenges*

How does Confucianism affect specific educational practices in China? First, dutiful SOAM tends to be in the direction of educational and career-based accomplishments demonstrated through succeeding in examinations. Education is highly valued in China and is seen as a ladder to social hierarchy and even as a means for the development of the person (Gow, Balla, Kember, & Hau, 1996). Through this service, students demonstrate their obedience and love for their families (Gow *et al.*, 1996). The need to fulfill the obligations to family and community refers back to the vertical collectivistic nature of the Chinese society. Instructors, parents, and other family members judge the students based on their demonstration of academic performance and often place high and strict demands on them regardless of their actual abilities.

The one-child policy of the Chinese government may have accentuated and contributed to the fierce competition that exists in China and the strong need to succeed and "get an A" that all students demonstrate. The one-child policy means that each student will eventually be responsible for supporting 2 parents and 4 grandparents. So, while growing up, a child receives the love and support of 6 adults. Together with this love and support come very high expectations and the

heavy burden of having to support one's elders without the help of other siblings.

In short, succeeding in examinations is seen as a status change or a rite of passage, a key means of assessing achievement (Gow *et al.*, 1996), and failing examinations is seen not only as a personal failure, but a failure that reflects negatively on one's entire family. In Hong Kong, for instance, "the pressure for success in examinations is so great that some educators are concerned about the detrimental effects of examination on students' social development" (Gow *et al.*, 1996, p.116). In sum, we offer the following proposition:

> Proposition 7: *Because of a Confucian orientation emphasizing success regarding examinations, and the sense of collective shame associated with failure, examinations are likely to generate higher levels of anxiety and students are more likely to focus on the examinations in China as compared to the U.S.*

Gow *et al.* (1996) noted that Chinese students use rote memorization to further their chances of success on examinations. However, Gow *et al.* argued that this does not mean Chinese students lack a deeper understanding of the material taught (see also S. Chan, 1999). Chinese students' deeper knowledge of the material often takes place in their own language, be it Mandarin or Cantonese, but the use of rote memorization aids students in the ability to learn complex concepts in English.

On a related note, multiple studies conducted in Hong Kong (Luke & Richards, 1981; Richards, Tung, & Ng, 1992), revealed that the use of English tends to be limited to educational settings, whereas Cantonese is used for all other areas of life. Also, some Chinese instructors resort to Cantonese in the classroom to explain complex material. These factors result in severe English language difficulties for a large number of students. [3]

The emphasis on rote memorization can be problematic because the concept of plagiarism has a different meaning in China. Traditionally, Confucian scholarship consisted of compiling the works of the classics (e.g., K'ung-fu-tzu a.k.a. Confucius, Mencius), rather than

creating original texts (Fairbanks & Goldman, 1998). Scholars would memorize vast portions of the classics and then construct their own works by cutting and pasting phrases and passages from older sources. The Chinese scholars did not see this as plagiarism, but as a way for them to be the "preservers of the record more than its creators" (Fairbanks & Goldman, 1998, p.101). The combination of needing to memorize textbooks, cases, and other course materials word for word because of a lack of English proficiency with a Confucian tradition of scholarship leads to misunderstanding and confusion regarding the meaning of plagiarism. Thus, we offer the following proposition:

> Proposition 8: *Because of a Confucian orientation defining scholarship as compilation rather than creation and emphasizing the need to succeed, and a lack of proficiency with the English language, students in China are more likely to (a) resort to rote memorization of course materials and (b) engage in behaviors defined as plagiarism (in the U.S.) as compared to students in the U.S.*

The Confucian definition of scholarship as compilation rather than creation is also the putative cause of why higher educational systems in Hong Kong have not succeeded in promoting a deeper approach to learning that incorporates independent and critical thinking (Gow & Kember, 1990; Gow, Kember, & Cooper, 1994). Critical thinking does not seem to be required of students from Chinese instructors as much as it is from U.S. instructors. For example, we have gathered illustrative statements from students who noted that one of the differences between Chinese and U.S. instructors is that "Chinese instructors demand silence in class; no questions; U.S. instructors encourage opinion and critical thinking." Although students state they value the freedom of a U.S. instructor, they feel that "U.S. instructors demand critical thinking, and this is hard" and "U.S. instructors should provide more guidelines about what's expected from students." In short, we offer the following proposition:

> Proposition 9: *Because of a Confucian orientation defining scholarship as compilation rather than creation, students in*

China are more likely to be unfamiliar and feel uncomfortable with examinations and in-class exercises involving critical thinking as compared to students in the U.S.

3. The Chinese Cultural Challenge: Suggested Pedagogical Approaches and Techniques

As described in the 9 propositions above, U.S. instructors teaching in China are likely to face numerous culture-based challenges. Below we offer some suggestions regarding how to address these challenges. We include suggestions originating from (a) our own teaching experiences in Beijing and Hong Kong, (b) U.S., Canadian, and European faculty teaching in Beijing, and (c) a qualitative study including two samples of Chinese students (n_1 = 48 and n_2 = 88) enrolled in a joint U.S.-Chinese university in Beijing.

Suggestion # 1: Use Chinese, as well as U.S., examples and stories. Results of the student study showed that the most frequent suggestion regarding how to teach more effectively is that instructors include not only U.S. examples and stories, but also examples and stories directly applicable to the Chinese business environment. Thirty percent of students noted that many of the illustrations and "war stories" told by faculty apply to the U.S., but not necessarily to China. Thus, many students cannot relate to these examples. For instance, one student wrote that "because cultural background or language problems, we feel it is difficult to understand some materials about the U.S."

Suggestion # 2: Distribute copies of lecture notes and overheads. Results of the student study showed that the second most frequent suggestion on how to teach more effectively is that faculty make their lecture notes available to students. Because of language difficulties, and the one-way traditional Chinese instructional model, students feel they would benefit from having access to the lecture notes. This includes sharing overheads with students. Overheads can be particularly useful because they help students focus on the key concepts.

Note, however, that allowing students to have "advance organizers" could potentially bring up the unintended effect that students may not pay as much attention in class or choose to not attend class

altogether. In our experience, we found that the benefits of sharing lecture notes and overheads outweighed the risks.

Suggestion # 3: Learn and learn to appreciate Chinese history and culture. Results of the student study showed that the most frequent suggestion (21%) on how to solve culture-related problems is that U.S. instructors learn more about Chinese history and culture. For example, one student noted that "everyone [U.S. instructors] has an ethnocentric thinking," another one wrote that "[U.S. instructors] speak with a sense of pride for being an American; there is a national superiority complex," and a third wrote that "instructors should know more things about Chinese culture and language."

Suggestion # 4: Speak slowly and emphasize and repeat key points and concepts. Results of the student study showed that the most common difficulty which students face when taking a class from a U.S. instructor is the language. Obviously, Chinese students are not native English speakers. And, in spite of many years of English instruction, learning management and business concepts in a foreign language is a big challenge. Consequently, students suggested that instructors speak slowly and emphasize key points. Students also suggested that it would be helpful to write key words and concepts, with their definitions, on the board.

Suggestion # 5: Allow student participation in a culture-sensitive manner. Results of the student study showed that the second most frequently mentioned difficulty of learning from a U.S. instructor was students' fear of asking questions in class. The educational system in China does not encourage students to ask questions. On the contrary, as noted above, Chinese instructors require complete silence while they lecture. As one student put it, "I don't like to participate in class because my Chinese teachers don't like it; I don't have that habit." Thus, U.S. instructors are appalled when they teach in China, ask a question to a class of 60, and receive no answers.

First, a method that we and other colleagues have used effectively to allow student participation in a way that is culture-sensitive is to distribute pieces of paper at the beginning of the class and allow students to write anonymous questions and pass them to the instructor. In this way, students can write questions anytime during the class period,

and the instructor can read the questions and choose to answer those that are most relevant. Thus, because the instructor has a choice regarding which questions to answer and which to ignore, students feel that the risk of the instructor's losing face is minimized.

Second, another method that we have found to be effective is to have students develop questions or responses in groups. This shifts the focus from individuals to the group. In our experience, Chinese students find collaborative group work to be more comfortable than working alone and are more willing to participate in class when speaking for a group.

Third, another technique that seems to be effective is to allow for one-on-one interactions outside of the classroom. Thus, it is helpful to schedule office hours because students feel that they can ask questions and interact with the instructor without losing face and, perhaps more importantly, one-on-one interactions minimize the chances that the instructor may lose face. A word of caution is in order, however. We suggest that office hours have a clear beginning and a clear end. Some of our colleagues noted that students are extremely eager to interact with faculty individually. It is not unusual for students to call an instructor's home telephone number, and even stop by an instructor's residence without advanced notice. Thus, one Canadian colleague advised that instructors "set limits so you don't wear out too quickly; a lot of students want a lot of your time."

Suggestion # 6: Define plagiarism clearly. Results of the student study showed that the third most frequent difficulty in taking a class from a U.S. instructor is understanding the concept of plagiarism. Students are surprised that U.S. instructors believe this is such an important problem. For instance, one student wrote that "U.S. and Chinese have two quite different cultures; the biggest conflict is on plagiarism; non-Chinese think it's very serious." Another student wrote that "we have different cultures, so there are some problems; for example, cheating in a paper; Chinese don't pay much attention to that, but non-Chinese instructors are very sensitive on it." Consequently, we suggest that U.S. instructors define the different forms of plagiarism at the beginning of the class, and it is important that examples of various forms of plagiarism be offered.

Suggestion #7: Define and treat the course syllabus as a formal contract. As noted above, Chinese students are not likely to view a course syllabus as a formal agreement with the instructor. Instead, they are likely to view the syllabus as ongoing "work in progress." Thus, based on our experience and that of other Western faculty, we suggest that U.S. instructors emphasize, from the beginning of the class, that the syllabus is a *formal contract* to which both students and the instructor are bound. Unless instructors make very clear and forceful statements regarding the importance of following this "formal contract," students are likely to not take deadlines and commitments (e.g., projects, reading list) seriously, and are likely to attempt (most likely in indirect ways) to constantly revise and make changes to the class structure.

Suggestion #8: Maintain clear boundaries with students. In China there are clearly defined roles for instructors and students. When these roles are altered, the boundaries become fuzzy for both instructors and students. Contrary to U.S. students, Chinese students do not feel comfortable setting boundaries with professors or voicing discomfort about inappropriate requests. Thus, our own experiences and that of other colleagues strongly suggest that instructors set clear and appropriate boundaries to protect the students.

Suggestion #9: Have an "email coach-buddy" back home. Teaching in China is a big challenge and instructors may not know how to handle certain situations. Thus, it would be very useful to be able to stay in touch (e.g., via email) with a "coach" back home. This person is someone who has taught in China before and is likely to have faced similarly challenging situations in the past. Having this email coach back home can be instrumental regarding teaching outcomes, but also useful as a source of personal support.

Suggestion #10: Have a plan B, a plan C, and a plan D. The instructional setting in China includes many surprises for U.S. instructors. For example, textbooks are regularly inspected by government officials and, on occasion, some of the material is censored. Thus, because this process can be lengthy, it is likely that the books may not be ready by the beginning of the course. Thus, it is advisable to have back-up materials for the first few classes. Similarly, because of the high cost of transparencies and other instructional materials, it is advisable to

bring all necessary office supplies from home. And, of course, bringing one's laptop computer is a must. In short, it is advisable to have back-up plans regarding instructional materials and to not count on the availability of reliable local instructional technology.

4. Concluding Comments

We have had a highly enjoyable and rewarding experience teaching in China. In spite of facing some adverse conditions in Beijing including noisy classrooms and hygienic standards much lower than those in the U.S., Chinese students are eager to learn and work very hard towards the attainment of their educational goals. Because of the increased proliferation of Western-sponsored management and business programs in China, it is important that U.S. and other Western educators understand cultural differences and how these cultural differences may affect student behavior, classroom interactions, and the learning process in general.

We hope the present chapter will serve as a catalyst for empirical research on the link between cultural dimensions, the teaching process, and teaching effectiveness of non-Chinese instructors in China. Also, we hope our suggested pedagogical approaches and techniques will be useful for Western instructors who are preparing for the challenging assignment of teaching in China.

Endnotes

[2] We chose to focus on these three dimensions after a careful and thorough review of over 40 cultural dimensions and values (cf. Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Lytle, Brett, Barsness, Tinsley, & Janssens, 1995; Schwartz & Sagie, 2000). Based on this review, we concluded that a discussion around individualism-collectivism, power distance, and Confucianism provides a high degree of predictive power as well as parsimony and unnecessary repetition.

[3] Given the difficulties with English, one may argue that instruction should take place in the local language (e.g., Mandarin). However, students choose to enroll in Western-style business programs precisely because instruction is in English and they are expected to learn "the Western way" of doing business. Historically, the interest in learning English can be traced to a suggestion made to emperor Tong Zhi by his Regents in 1862, who said they "had seen foreigners in China learn the language from native Chinese; why, they argued, should foreigners not teach their native language to Chinese?" (Porter, 1990, p. 10). The contemporary relevance of this story is now evident even at the elementary and secondary school levels. For instance, the government of Guangdong province recently announced a pilot program under which 200 of its primary and secondary schools will teach some of their subjects in English. The goal is to "prepare the next generation of business managers to be fluent in English and, if successful, the program will be expanded to all 20,000 schools in the region" (M. Chan, 2002).

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