

Communication Patterns of Thai Students in the Process of Acculturation

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Sociologists and anthropologists have long recognized communication as playing an incidental role in acculturation (for extensive reviews of literature, see Nagata, 1969, Shibutani and Kwan, 1965, Pool, 1965). Further scholarship has examined acculturation from a psychological perspective (see Church, 1982, for an exhaustive review of literature; also Berry, 1977, 1980; Padilla, 1980; Furnham, 1988). The crucial role of communication in the process of acculturation has only recently become a focal point of research. Among communication scholars are Nagata's (1969) study of differences in interpersonal and mass communication behaviors among first, second, and third generation Japanese Americans and Chang's (1972) report of differences in mass media behavior among three groups of Korean immigrants ("cultural assimilation group," "bicultural group," and "naturalistic group") distinctive in the patterns of change in cultural values. Ryu (1978) has reported a study suggesting a positive role of mass media in the acculturation of Korean immigrants.

The most extensive research linking communication and acculturation has been that of Young Kim. Kim (1976, 1977, 1978) first used path analysis in her study of Korean immigrants to explore a causal relationship between intercultural communication patterns and perceptual complexity resulting in a judgment of the degree of adjustment to new culture. Her major findings were:

- (1) language fluency, acculturation motivation, and interpersonal and mass media channel accessibility are major determinants of one's intercultural communication behaviors;
- (2) language fluency, acculturation motivation, and interpersonal and mass media channel accessibility do not affect one's cognitive complexity directly, but are

mediated by the interpersonal and mass communication experiences in the host society; and

- (3) the influence of interpersonal communication is greater than that of mass media consumption in developing a complex and refined cognitive system in perceiving the host society.

The uniqueness of Kim's approach was the causal model she used to investigate communication and acculturation.

J. K. Kim (1980) later examined the effect of occupational status, ethnic network, and family on acculturation level, finding their impact mediated by intercultural and ethnic communication activities. Intercultural communication was determined to have a facilitative effect while a damaging effect of ethnic communication was reported. Additionally, Maniwatana (1982) investigated the cross cultural communication and friendship patterns among Thai immigrants assimilating to American society. Inglis and Gudykunst (1982) replicated Young Kim's study among Korean immigrants in Hartford, Connecticut, and reported a significant difference between the two groups in the overall size of ethnic ties. The degree of ethnic involvement of the Hartford immigrants, an area with a lower level of institutional completeness, was found to be significantly lower than that of the Chicago immigrants, an area with a higher level of institutional completeness, in Kim's study. Jun (1984) examined host and ethnic interpersonal and mass media communication patterns among Korean immigrants.

More recently, Kliger (1985) examined communication and ethnic community, Corroni-Lang (1986) used communication as an approach to the study of ethnicity, and Rizk (1986) studied the communication patterns of international students in the acculturation process. After reviewing group and individual approaches to cross-cultural adaptation from anthropological, sociological, social-psychological, and communication perspectives, Y. Kim (1986) called for greater integration in cross-cultural adaptation research, particularly in the use of concepts, group-level and individual-level approaches, and studies of immigrants and sojourners.

Later, Y. Kim (1988) advanced a theoretical model of adaptation consistent with this study that systematically integrated adaptation research. Gudykunst and Hammer (1988) advanced a theory of adaptation based on uncertainty reduction theory. Gudykunst and Sudweeks (1992) applied this theory of adaptation emphasizing knowledge of the culture and language of the new culture, positive expectations, and flexibility as facilitators of effective adaptation.

Research problem and rationale

Although an increasing number of studies have focused on communication and acculturation patterns of Asian immigrants, few have concentrated on Thai students,

despite the growing numbers studying in the United States (Barry, 1967). A need exists to study the communication patterns of Thai students in the process of acculturation. This investigation will assess the similarities and differences between the acculturation of Thais and other Asians examined in prior research. Accordingly, this study will constitute a test of the generalizability of existing acculturation models to the acculturation process of Thais.

Though prior studies provide considerable evidence regarding the positive contribution of communication to the general acculturation process, they have focused on descriptions of the overt communication behaviors, and with the exception of Y. Kim (1976, 1977, 1979), directed insufficient attention toward a theoretical explanation for the communication behaviors. The theoretical development of this study is indebted to the foundation laid by Kim. In order to advance the theoretical foundation, this study follows her groundwork and attempts to develop a causal theory through which the following questions are explored:

- (1) What are the most important factors that affect the degree of a Thai student's participation in communication channels of the host society?
- (2) How are these causal factors related to the student's background characteristics such as age, sex, education, financial support, relative availability, length of stay, marital status, income, work, and visiting other foreign countries?
- (3) How does the degree of a Thai student's participation in the host communication channels affect the cognitive structure underlying his or her perception of the host society?

The intent of this study is to describe communication patterns among Thai students and to establish a causal explanation for individual differences in communication behaviors and perception of the host society. Further, the theory of the present study provides a basis from which to predict future phenomena related to the communication patterns of the students.

Following Y. Kim's lead (1976, 1977), the theory behind this study consists of nine interrelated assumptions regarding the communication patterns of the students, all of which are clearly and concretely stated in order to be tested empirically. The evidence in sociological, anthropological, and psychological studies regarding human communication patterns and information processing are incorporated in developing this theoretical framework.

"Cognitive structure" or "perceptual process" refer to the organization of experience into a form which allows the individual to deal with a given stimulus. Kelly (1955), in the *Psychology of Personal Constructs*, has provided the major theoretical basis for contemporary understanding of cognitive structure. Personal constructs, Kelly theorizes, are the conceptual tools one uses in understanding and differentiating among similar or adjacent objects in the psychological environment. The greater the number of constructs present in one's cognitive system, the greater the ability to articulate differences. Beiri

(1955) applies the label "cognitive complexity" to describe the psychological construct or composite of variables. Cognitive complexity, according to Beiri, is ". . . the degree of differentiations of the construct system" (p. 263).

The role of communication with the host society in a student's cognitive structure is apparent when one considers that any form of cultural learning occurs through communication. Through interpersonal communication with the host and through the use of the host mass media, the student is able to comprehend wider and more complex perspectives than his or her own. This leads to the first two of our nine assumptions:

Assumption 1: The more a student participates in interpersonal communication with members of the host society, the more complex the student's perception of the host society.

Assumption 2: The more a student consumes the mass media of the host society, the more complex the student's perception of the host society.

The next question is why different students are engaged in different degrees of intercultural communication. Language fluency, acculturation motivation to learn and participate in the host society, and accessibility to communication channels of the host society (both interpersonal and mass) are considered the key determinants directly or indirectly influencing one's communication behaviors.

The importance of the host language in intercultural communication of the sojourners is self-evident. Effective cross-cultural communication can take place only when language appropriate to a given society is at least minimally used and comprehended. According to Taft (1957), "The function of language in intercultural communication is to facilitate one's cultural learning and to permit maximum group participation" (p. 144). Research has largely supported the generalization that the learning of the host language accelerates acculturation (DeFleur and Cho, 1957; Breton, 1964; Chance, 1965; Richmond, 1967; Graves, 1967; Price, 1968). Similarly, fluency in English is considered to be the most important determinant of a sojourner's exposure to the American mass media (Richmond, 1967). Thus, two more assumptions emerge:

Assumption 3: The more fluent a student is in the host language, the greater the participation in interpersonal communication with members of the host society.

Assumption 4: The more fluent a student is in the host language, the greater the usage of host mass media.

Acculturation motivation is defined simply as the student's desire to learn about and participate in the host society (Kim, 1976). From that motivational potential, two assumptions surface:

Assumption 5: The greater a student's acculturation motivation, the greater the participation in interpersonal communication with members of the host society.

Assumption 6: The greater a student's acculturation motivation, the greater the student's use of host mass media.

Interaction potential refers to the degree of opportunity for association with Americans provided by the sojourner's environment (Kim, 1976), and this potential generates the seventh assumption:

Assumption 7: The greater a student's interpersonal interaction potential, the greater the participation in interpersonal communication with the host society.

Mass media availability indicates the availability of the American mass media at home (such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines). Thus, we assume:

Assumption 8: The more access a student has to host mass media, the greater the student's exposure to mass communication of the host society.

Unless there is some meaningful interpersonal communication experience or consumption of mass media of the host society, language fluency, acculturation motivation, and accessibility to host communication channels will not have any significant effect on perceptual complexity. This position leads to the final claim:

Assumption 9: The complexity with which a student perceives the host society will be influenced by language fluency, motivational level, interaction potential, and mass media availability, as mediated by intercultural communication experiences.

This final assumption, together with the other eight assumptions, enables us to generate a causal model of intercultural communication patterns, as described in Figure 1 on the next page.

Method

Respondents and Procedure

One of the common problems in survey research of ethnic sojourners is to obtain complete lists of the entire population from which a representative sample can be drawn. For example, the names and addresses of all the approximately 10,000 Thai students in the U.S. is unavailable. In this study, 750 names were provided by a combination of the Royal Thai Embassy in Washington, D.C. and Thai Student Associations in 19 U.S. institutions. Any overlapping of the sample was carefully

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eliminated before the survey. A representative random sample of 350 subjects was drawn from this population.

The method and procedure utilized in this study is primarily taken from Young Kim's study of communication patterns of Korean immigrants in Chicago in the process of acculturation (1976). The differences are that (1) this study is conducted among the Thais rather than the Koreans, and that (2) this study is designed to investigate the acculturation process of the students who are expected to return to their home country, not the immigrants who plan to spend the rest of their life in the U.S. The questionnaire developed by Kim was used with some modification.

The survey questionnaire consisted of the items which measured the key variables of the present study: interpersonal communication, mass media consumption, cognitive complexity, English fluency, motivation level, accessibility to interpersonal communication channels (interaction potential), and mass media availability at home. It also included the student's background characteristics, general satisfaction level, communication involvement with the Thai group and with other ethnic groups, and level of consumption of Thai mass media.

The questionnaire was printed in Thai. Although Thai students in the U.S. may understand English well, the use of Thai language seems preferable in eliciting more direct responses since one arguably thinks more freely in one's native language. Due to the widely diffused residential area of the Thai students, the survey was conducted by a mailed questionnaire. Out of the questionnaires sent to 350 Thai students, 260 completed questionnaires were returned, for a 74.3% return rate.

Item scales

The key variables were measured through composite item-scales constructed during a pilot study of Thai students prior to the survey. The pilot study provided an opportunity to check the ambiguity of wording and comprehensiveness of questions. The reliability of the measurement scales has been reported by Kim (1976). For this study, the reliability coefficients were determined by Cronbach's alpha.

Results

The key variables were tested in relation to one another against the originally hypothesized assumptions and the path model. Simple correlation, multiple regression, and path analysis were employed.

Results of reliability assessment

Perceptual complexity. Six adjectives were used to describe and evaluate Americans: "peace-loving," "frivolous," "industrious," "arrogant," "optimistic," "trustful." These were

found to be significant in explaining the perceptual complexity. The average inter-item correlation coefficient r among the six attitude items was .23 (Cronbach's Alpha = .64).

Interpersonal communication. Items found to be important in explaining interpersonal communication were (1) the number of American casual acquaintances one knows well enough to talk with when one happens to meet them, (2) the number of American friends one meets in one another's home, (3) the number of American intimate friends with whom one can discuss private and personal problems. These items were highly intercorrelated with one another showing an average correlation coefficient r of .51 (Cronbach's Alpha = .52).

Use of mass media. In this study, only three items were found to be important in measuring mass media use. They were (1) amount of exposure to American newspaper(s), (2) number of American magazine subscriptions for a student's own reading, and (3) amount of exposure to radio news. The average inter-item correlation coefficient r among the three items was .16 (Cronbach's Alpha = .33).

Interpersonal interaction Potential. Since there is only one item being used to measure accessibility to interpersonal communication channels of the host society, there was no need to conduct a factor analysis of this variable.

Availability of mass media at home. The four items, namely, availability of radio, television, newspaper, magazine/journal, were found to be significant in measuring the media availability. The average inter-item correlation coefficient r was .25 (Cronbach's Alpha = .50).

English fluency. The four items of English listening comprehension, English speaking ability, self-confidence in English, and comparisons in English were found to be significant in relation to English fluency. The average correlation coefficient r among the four items was .69 (Cronbach's Alpha = .78).

Acculturation motivation. The two questions concerning the student's level of interest in learning the norms and culture of the host society, and in making friends with Americans were found to be the most important items in describing acculturation motivation. The correlation coefficient between the two variables was .61 (Cronbach's Alpha = .76).

Results of correlation analysis

Table 1 on the next page provides the correlations among the seven variables of the theoretical system: perceptual complexity, interpersonal communication, mass media use, interaction potential, mass media availability, English fluency, and acculturation motivation.

At the .05 level of significance, the results showed:

1. Surprisingly, perceptual complexity is significantly correlated with only one variable which is acculturation motivation. In the present study, perceptual

complexity was not found to be significantly correlated with either interpersonal communication or the use of mass media.

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2. Interpersonal communication is significantly correlated with all of the other variables, except perceptual complexity.
3. Use of the host mass media is significantly correlated with all of the other variables, except perceptual complexity.
4. Interpersonal interaction potential with the members of the host society is significantly correlated with all of the other variables, except perceptual complexity.
5. Availability of mass media at home is significantly correlated with interpersonal communication, use of mass media, interaction potential, and English fluency, but is not significantly correlated with perceptual complexity and acculturation motivation.
6. English fluency is significantly correlated with interpersonal communication, use of mass media, interaction potential, and availability of mass media at home, but is not significantly correlated with perceptual complexity and acculturation motivation.
7. Acculturation motivation is significantly correlated with perceptual complexity, interpersonal communication, use of mass media, and interaction potential, but is not significantly correlated with availability of mass media at home and English fluency.

Results of path analysis

Assumption 1, which relates the student's interpersonal involvement with members of the host society to his or her perceptual complexity, was not supported by the data. The zero-order correlation coefficient r between the two variables was .04 ($p = .28$).

The hypothesized relationship in Assumption 2 regarding the level of mass media consumption and perceptual complexity was not supported by the data with the correlation coefficient r or only .06 ($p = .16$).

The correlational coefficient r between intercultural communication and mass media consumption was .12 ($p = .03$). This correlation demonstrates that a student who participates actively in interpersonal relationships with the hosts also assumes the host mass media to a greater extent than those who have less interpersonal involvement with members of the host society. Similarly, those students who do not use much of the American mass media tend to have less interaction with American people.

The postulated relationships between each of the four causal factors--English fluency (Assumptions 3 and 4), acculturation motivation (Assumptions 5 and 6), interaction potential (Assumption 7) and mass media availability (Assumption 8)--on one's intercultural communication behaviors were all confirmed to be statistically significant.

When both interpersonal and mass communication behavior were simultaneously regressed on the dependent variable (i.e., perceptual complexity), the two independent variables explained only .6% of the total variation in perceptual complexity which is not significant enough to develop a path model. The relative path coefficients and zero-order

correlation coefficients of the two independent variables in relation to the measure of cognitive complexity are indicated in Figure 1.

The relative importance of the four causal factors in explaining interpersonal and mass communication behaviors was determined by multiple regression analysis. The path coefficients between intercultural communication behaviors and the four factors of interaction potential, acculturation motivation, English fluency, and mass media availability, were found to be significantly different from zero. The results are reported in Figure 1 and Table 2 (see next page). It is clearly demonstrated that a student's proportion of daily contact with Americans, i.e., interaction potential, is the most important determinant among the three factors, explaining 17% of the total variance in involvement in interpersonal communication with members of the host society. Motivation level and ability to speak and comprehend English positively affect interpersonal communication, but not very strongly. All three factors, when combined together, simultaneously determine 19% of the total variation in the dependent variable.

In relation to mass media use, the availability of the media at home and English fluency are the two most powerful factors among the three, explaining 25% of the total variation in the dependent variable, i.e., American media use. Motivation level adds only 2% to the explanatory power of the other two factors.

The hypothesis used in constructing the path model was that the path coefficient between perceptual complexity and each of the exogenous variables (English fluency, acculturation motivation, interaction potential, and media availability at home) should be zero or not significantly different from zero (Assumption 9). To test the model, all the effects that indirectly influence the relationship between the exogenous variables and the ultimate endogenous variable (cognitive complexity) were partialled out. As a result, the direct path coefficients of interaction potential, availability of mass media, and English fluency turned out to be close to zero (.01, .02, -.03, respectively), but unexpectedly, the path coefficient of acculturation motivation on perceptual complexity (.13) was found to be significant. Thus, this result did not support the underlying assumption of the expected path model. The relative path coefficients and zero-order correlation coefficients of the four variables in relation to the measure of perceptual complexity are indicated in Figure 1.

Table 2

Multiple Regression of Language, Motivation,
Interaction Potential, Mass Media Availability On
Interpersonal and Mass Communication Behaviors

Independent Variable	Simple r	Multiple r	Path Coefficient	Change in r	Overall r
(a) Dependent Variable = Interpersonal Communication					
Interpersonal Potential	.41	.41	.36	.17	.17
Acculturation Motivation	.18	.42	.11	.01	.18
English Fluency	.22	.44	.11	.01	.19
(b) Dependent Variable = Mass Media Use					
Media Availability	.43	.43	.11	.01	.19
English Fluency	.36	.50	.27	.07	.25
Acculturation Motivation	.13	.52	.14	.02	.27

Thus far, the results of the data analysis have not supported all of the nine postulated assumptions. Assumption 1, 2, and 9 were not supported by the data. However, the multiple causality of English fluency, acculturation motivation, interaction potential, and mass media availability, did explain participation in interpersonal and mass communication with the host society. Second, of the four factors, interaction potential is the most powerful factor in explaining interpersonal communication; and in relation to mass media use, the availability of the media at home and English fluency are the most powerful factors. However,

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Figure 2. The Expected Path Model

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Figure 3. The Observed Path Model

the results show that the degree of participation in intercultural communication does not influence cognitive complexity in perception of the host society. Further, the data reveal that the influence of the three causal factors, namely, interaction potential, availability of mass media, and English fluency, on perceptual complexity is not directed and is not mediated by interpersonal and mass communication experiences. Unexpectedly, the path coefficient of acculturation motivation on perceptual complexity is significantly different from zero. For this study, the expected path model is shown in Figure 2 and the observed path model is shown in Figure 3 (see preceding page).

The result of the path analysis for this study is different from the one in the Kim study (1976, 1977). For the Kim study, it was found that perceptual complexity was influenced by interaction potential, motivation level, English fluency, and availability of mass media at home, mediated by interpersonal communication and mass media use. But in the present study, it was determined that interpersonal communication and mass media use do not determine perceptual complexity. It was also found that acculturation motivation influences perceptual complexity, but is not mediated by interpersonal communication or mass media use. This suggests that a student with a higher level of acculturation motivation who would like to learn more about the host society tends to have higher perceptual complexity. The more a student learns about the host, the more differentiated the initial stereotypes of the host become.

The differences in the results of the path analysis between the Kim study and the present study could be due to the uses of different groups of population. For the Kim study, the population was Korean immigrants in Chicago who plan to stay in the U.S. For the present study, however, the population was Thai students who come to the U.S. to further their education and expect to return to Thailand. These two population groups had different goals for coming to the U.S., and thus their perceptions and behaviors will likely differ.

Background characteristics analysis

To provide further causal explanation of the student's communication patterns, data on individual student's background characteristics were tested in relation to the four exogenous variables of language fluency, acculturation motivation, interaction potential, and mass media availability (see Table 3 on the next page).

The results show that the student's length of stay in the host society plays an important role in determining his language fluency, interaction potential, mass media availability at home, and acculturation motivation. Income, working, financial support (with or without scholarship) are also found to be important background characteristics. Income was found to be the most important factor in explaining acculturation motivation. Working while staying in the host society was found to be a significant factor in

explaining the accessibility to the host interpersonal communication channels. Age, sex, education, were not found to be significant factors in explaining any causal factor.

Table 3

Correlation Coefficients Between
Background Variable and Four Causal Factors

(English, Motivation, Media Availability, Interaction Potential)

Background Variables	English Fluency	Acculturation Motivation	Media Availability	Interaction Potential
Age	.12	-.07	.04	.12
Sex	-.07	-.02	.02	.02
Length of stay in U.S.	.29*	-.10**	.18*	.36*
Marital Status	-.16*	-.03	-.07	-.04
Place of Origin	-.07	.04	-.05	.01
Financial Support	.22*	-.04	-.05	.18*
Income Level	.02	-.15**	.16	.24
Work	.13	.02	.17	.36*
Availability of Relatives in Host Society	.11	.13**	-.10	.09
No. of Foreign Countries Visited	.18*	.00	.07	-.04
Length of Stay in Foreign Countries	.16*	-.03	.06	-.01

* Significant at $p < .01$
** Significant at $p < .05$

Discussion

Throughout this study, communication patterns have been conceptualized as the fundamental mechanism by which students achieve control over their environment and by which the host society maintains basic unity and coherence within the system. An explanatory theory consisting of nine postulated assumptions regarding the relationships among the behavioral and cognitive levels of communication patterns and four factors of English fluency, acculturation motivation, interaction potential and mass media availability, were postulated as major determinants of one's communication participation in the host society. Not all of the nine assumptions were supported by the data. Assumptions 1, 2, and 9 were not supported. From this study, the following conclusions are posited:

1. The student's participation in interpersonal and mass communication channels of the host society were not found to be significant determinants of the cognitive complexity of his perception of the host society. Both interpersonal and mass communication experiences with the host society determine only .6% of the total variation in the student's perceptual complexity.
2. English fluency, acculturation motivation, interaction potential, and mass media availability are significant multiple causal factors that influence the student's participation in intercultural and mass communication channels of the host society.
3. The three causal factors of English fluency, interaction potential, acculturation motivation determine 19% of the variation in the student's interpersonal communication behavior, and the three causal factors of English fluency, acculturation motivation, and mass media availability at home determine 27% of mass media consumption.
4. English fluency, interaction potential, and media availability at home do not affect one's perceptual complexity directly and are not mediated by interpersonal and mass communication experiences with the host society. Unexpectedly, it was found that the influence of acculturation motivation on perceptual complexity is direct. This result suggests that the greater a student's acculturation motivation, the more complex will be his perception of the host society. A student with a higher motivation level is the one who would like to learn more about the culture, the members of the host society, and to make friends with the host. The more a student learns about the host, the more differentiated the initial stereotypes of the host become.

These results do not support the existing view of communication as functional to the general acculturation process (Kim, 1976). The contribution of both interpersonal and the use of host mass media to the development of a refined and realistic perception and understanding of the host society was not proved to be strongly significant. This could

be due to the differences between the two groups of population under study that led to different results.

However, one important aspect of the present theory is in its identification of multiple causal factors for individual differences in the student's intercultural communication behaviors. The present theory attempts to consider simultaneously the four factors of English fluency, acculturation motivation, interaction potential, and media availability in explaining and predicting Thai students' communication behaviors. Fluency in the host language has been commonly regarded to be important in facilitating intercultural communication. What has not received attention in previous research, except, of course, in Kim's study, is that an immigrant's communication participation in the host society can be even more powerfully predicted by the additional two factors of acculturation motivation and channel accessibility. It was found in the present study that interaction potential and mass media availability at home were shown to be the two primary causal factors of the four in facilitating intercultural communication.

On the whole, the present theory of communication-acculturation, which was originated by Young Kim, fills the gap between the broad conceptualization of the acculturation function of communication and empirical evidence on specific communication patterns of sojourners. The present theory is stated in specific testable assumptions and yet has a broad range of possible applications to intergroup variations as well as intragroup variations of communication patterns across different ethnic communities. It not only explains individual differences in communication patterns but also provides an independent framework for ordering and predicting the degree of a student's participation in intercultural communication in the host society.

The Kim study vs. the present study

The differences in the findings between the present study and the Kim study are the following:

1. The correlation between perceptual complexity and intercultural communication is not as significant as found in the Kim study. This could be due to the measurement of cognitive complexity used in the Kim study; her techniques might not be very effective in measuring the cognitive complexity of the Thai students. Or it might be that the differences between the two groups of population under study led to different results.
2. Except for the length of stay in the host society, most of the background characteristics of sex, age, and education determined to be the most important variables in influencing the four causal factors in the Kim study, were not found to be as important in the present study. Instead, working, income, financial support, relative availability, number of other foreign countries already visited,

and length of stay in those other foreign countries, were found to be the important variables.

Thus far, the findings of the present study have been discussed from a theoretical perspective. Additionally, there are several methodological and practical implications to the study. Methodologically, the multi-item scales developed and tested in the study have generated a few guidelines for future studies. First, the study demonstrates that a foreign student's language fluency can be effectively measured through his subjective evaluations without having to employ independent and objective judges. Second, the measurement of cognitive complexity, although not found to be very significant in this study, is simple enough to be used in mail-surveys. Since these measures do not require one to consider culture-specific characteristics, such as cultural values and attitudes, they can be easily adapted in developing scales for studies of other ethnic groups and cross-ethnic comparisons. However, more research is needed to prove the contribution of both interpersonal contact, and the use of mass media to the development of a refined and realistic perception and understanding of the host society.

On a more practical level, it is believed that this research *should be helpful* to those concerned with the successful adjustment of the growing number of Thai students in the American social system. With respect to the host society, the customary goals are reducing the likelihood of prejudice or stereotype-based hostility on the part of sojourner groups and the development of integration mechanisms for accomplishing their smooth adjustment. The results of the study alert one to the importance of communication as a fundamental mechanism by which such goals can be better accomplished. The study has demonstrated the role of interpersonal and mass communication experiences in the host society in promoting the student's understanding of the new environment.

With respect to the student's themselves, goals generally include attention to those factors which increase the likelihood of their making a satisfactory transition. To meet these goals, students should, according to the findings of this study, develop their language competence, attempt to motivate themselves to participate in the host society, and make the host communication channels readily available in their everyday life. Once these conditions are met, the students can participate in intercultural communication more actively, which will help them to develop more realistic and refined knowledge of the environment. Ultimately, such refined understanding of the host society will produce better psychological well-being. Further, the findings concerning the students' individual background characteristics might be valuable information to future students as well as the host society.

Conclusion and Recommendations

One of the shortcomings of the present study concerns the data collection process. Due to limited time and resources, the data were collected only at one point in time. Obviously, the theory and the research questions can be more accurately answered through time-series observations of the same individuals over an extended period of time.

Another weakness of this investigation is in its study of the process of acculturation from a "monistic" point of view; the research focus has been only on the students. Little attention has been paid to the interlocking forces of "push" and "pull" in the relationships of ethnic individuals with the host society. One can argue that the key to successful acculturation is essentially in the hands of the host society, not the ethnic community. Therefore, future investigations in communication of foreign students should focus on the nature and content of communication interactions between the two groups.

Considering the significant numbers of international students studying in the U.S. and the important roles they will fill in their respective cultures, a great deal of attention should be paid to assisting their communication processes. The problem of ethnic groups in contemporary American society can be more effectively approached when our scientific knowledge provides insights into the underlying processes of communication between and among members of different ethnic groups and the majority of the host society.

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