

Advising International Students in the United States: Strategies to Face Intercultural Communication in NUC's Tourism Undergraduate Program

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Abstract

This research paper aims to reflect on the strategies used by ten academic advisors to deal with intercultural conflicts. These strategies include being respectful, demonstrating patience and empathy toward international students, creating rapport to foster mutual understanding, and fostering a positive attitude toward other cultures. This paper also analyzes conflicts emerging from cultural differences and language barriers between international students and advisors by considering a qualitative social research approach, which includes interviews and thematic analysis as data collection and interpretation methods. In addition, this paper provides essential information about how international students' poor understanding of the educational system can lead to potential conflicts with advisors. Advisors apply strategies to overcome challenges derived from miscommunications in multicultural educational contexts, like providing emotional support and offering information about the university. Moreover, advisors participating in this study explain how important it is to get training to deal with challenges in advising international studies. Therefore, the primary contribution of this paper to educational and social science research is to propose interculturality and intercultural communication as concepts and pedagogical tools to promote a mutual understanding between advisors and educational students that enhance learning and teaching initiatives within universities. Furthermore, introducing interculturality in the education advising process allows respect for cultural differences between teachers, professors, and students, resulting in more inclusive learning and teaching initiatives.

Keywords: intercultural communication, interculturality, advising, international students.

1. Introduction

Cultures are typically defined through people's beliefs, values, and actions (Nirmala & Krishnagopal, 2015). Therefore, cultures influence behavior patterns and determine appropriate roles in specific contexts (Raef et al., 2020). The field of research on intercultural communication and education has taken the concept of culture as a

reference because it allows a better understanding of how values, behaviors, and thoughts shape ideas about learning, teaching, and advising (Moon, 2009). It has also explored the links between culture and globalization and contemplated how networks of meaning structure both concepts in the context of educational initiatives that involve different peoples across categories of cultural difference, including language, nation, ethnicity, race, gender, sex, migration status, and health condition. The relationship between non-English-speaking international students at English-speaking universities has become relevant when researching the role of interculturality and intercultural communication in educational research.

Given that social relations and webs of meaning define culture and globalization, this research presents a multi-structuralist perspective to explore how advisors from higher education institutions who interact with international students in the United States face intercultural communication conflicts. These advisors deploy intercultural communication strategies to deal with these conflicts and generate better advisory relationships with their students. In this situation, intercultural communication strategies create bridges between different culturally different actors in high education institutions.

This research aims to reflect on the strategies used by academic advisors to deal with intercultural conflicts that arise with international students who are not proficient in the English language. The professors' experiences in the NCU tourism undergraduate program in the United States will be considered, and their thoughts on language barriers and intercultural conflicts with international students when advising will be identified. In addition, these teachers' strategies to generate intercultural dialogues with these students will be analyzed.

This research is based on a qualitative methodological strategy that integrates interviews with NCU's tourism program advisors. Also, the information from these interviews is analyzed according to a thematic analysis approach that allows interpreting how strategies and challenges emerging from the interaction between students and advisor is motivated by culture, language, and difference. This research is expected to raise awareness about intercultural relations when advising international students of higher education in the United States.

This research article is structured in three parts. First, a literature review is presented. This section explains concepts associated with intercultural communication and student counseling. Second, the research methodology is unfolded. Third, research results are disclosed and discussed considering the following topics: (1) intercultural conflicts and challenges in advising international higher education students; (2) awareness of cultural differences; (3) strategies used to advise international students; (4) affective aspects of advising from an intercultural education approach; (5) behavioral aspects of counseling from an intercultural approach, and cultural identity in intercultural communication with students. Finally, conclusive remarks for this research are presented.

2. Literature review

This paper considers theories and concepts related to intercultural communication in connection to globalization, including intercultural competence, barriers to intercultural communication, challenges to intercultural communication, intercultural communication strategies, and intercultural education advising in tourism undergraduate programs to reflect on the strategies and challenges faced in teaching advising involving international students. Intercultural communication refers to communication between individuals or groups of different cultures or subcultures. It occurs when members of a particular culture give a message to members of another culture (Samovar et al., 2014:13). An essential aspect of intercultural communication is interpersonal communication between communicators. A key to effective intercultural communication is, undoubtedly, knowledge.

Intercultural communication and globalization

Intercultural communication is related to globalization and has been connected to understanding national cultures as the fundamental principle. Hence, the whole idea of intercultural communication was linked to national culture. Nonetheless, Hannerz (1992) argued that we should see all cultures as creolized societies, grasping early the discourse that continued in new discussions about globalization. Moreover, globalization typically refers to two opposite processes: a) the globalization process, in which we are all getting closer and closer to each other through consumerism, ideology, and knowledge about each other; and b) the localization process, which makes us focus intensively on our local nation or local ethnic group (Featherstone 1990, Eriksen 1993).

In the debates about globalization, it is intensively discussed whether globalization is a new process. Yu (2010) suggests that there is nothing new. For instance, he argues that mobility, central to globalization, primarily applies to the elite. In addition, Bauman (1999) agrees but adds that it makes sense to see mobility as society's idea. Bauman (1999) also argues that a mobile society is not open to everybody. Globalization has, according to him, caused a new polarisation in societies that divides people into two groups: tourists and vagabonds. Tourists can travel free with few restrictions. However, the vagabonds are forced to migrate because of war, poverty, or hunger. The vagabonds are not welcomed like tourists but are met with high walls of customs duties and barbed wire (Bauman, 1999). Although Bauman (1999) can be criticized for presenting a very simplistic picture, he points to some of the essential discourses in Western societies, significant to the intercultural communication process. These discourses are associated with whom to include, and whom to exclude, which I find is a social practice crucial to research in intercultural communication.

It is often argued that there is no difference between intercultural communication and other forms of communication (Palmer, 2013). However, in multiethnic societies, one of the differences is that it is a legal discourse to discuss who of the participants in a communication process 'really' belongs to the majority culture in intercultural communication. Intercultural communication in a globalized world must consider that circumstance and include questions of globalization and cultural identity. A

model for intercultural communication from a poststructuralist approach was developed for this research. This model paper was based on the contributions of Maylath et al. (2013).

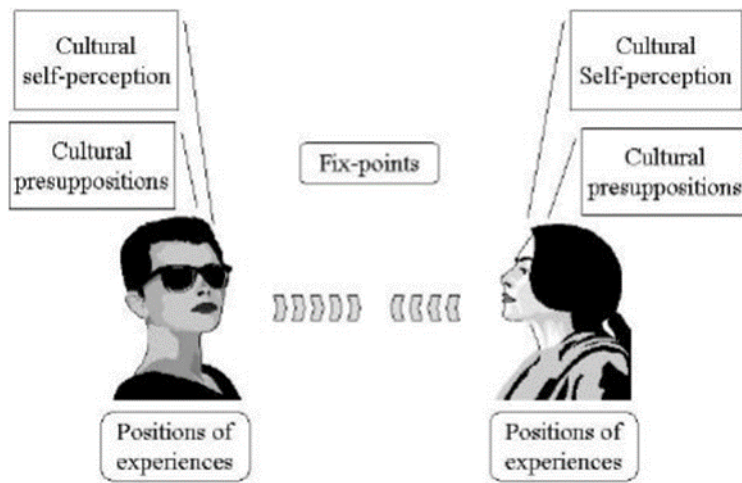


Figure 1. Intercultural communication process

Note. From "Navigating with the stars: Critical qualitative methodological constellations for critical intercultural communication research," by Willink, K. G., Gutierrez-Perez, R., Shukri, S., & Stein, L., 2014, *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 7(4), p. 292.

This model intends to describe the intercultural communication process between two actors, classified as addressers and addressees. Likewise, this model emphasizes the participant's interconnected nature in the intercultural communication process and shows that communication is always an ongoing process (Yoshikawa 1987).

Intercultural communication competence

Intercultural communication competence is the impression that behavior is appropriate and effective in a given context. Typically, competence is considered an ability or a set of skilled behaviors. However, any given behavior or ability may be judged competent in one context and incompetent in another. Consequently, competence cannot inhere in the behavior or ability itself. It must instead be viewed as a social evaluation of behavior. This social assessment integrates the two primary criteria of appropriateness and effectiveness (Spitzberg, 2000). Appropriateness means that the relationship's valued rules, norms, and experiences are not violated significantly. Effectiveness is the accomplishment of valued goals or rewards relative to costs and alternatives. Therefore, with these standards, communication will be competent in an intercultural context when it appropriately accomplishes the actor's purposes in the context and relationship (Spitzberg, 2000). People who are competent in communicating means they can communicate effectively. Messages are interpreted the same by both the sender and the recipient. Thus, intercultural communication competence sees the success and feasibility of communication and interaction between people from different cultures (Yu, 2012).

Intercultural communicative competence (ICC) has been variously defined. For example, Byram (1997) views ICC as a term that covers critical components like linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and intercultural competence. ICC enables individuals to interact with others from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Likewise, Chen and Starosta (1996) define ICC as speakers' abilities and competencies. These ICC competencies are intercultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness, and intercultural adroitness. ICC competencies are vital for effective and appropriate communication in a culturally diverse community. Similarly, Chen and Starosta (1996) state that ICC comprises speakers' communication skills and attitudes in various cross-cultural situations. ICC refers to speakers' communicative abilities, competencies, skills, and attitudes toward others in multilingual and multicultural contexts. In this study, this model for ICC is considered:

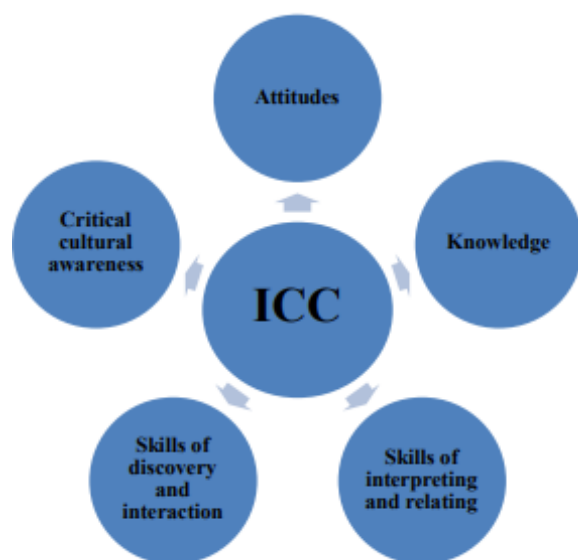


Figure 2. Intercultural communication competency

Note. From "Global virtue teams create and translate technical documentation: Communication strategies, challenges, and recommendations," by Cleary, Y., Flammia, M., Minacori, P., & Slattery, D. M., 2015, *IEEE International Professional Communication Conference (IPCC)*.

According to this model (1997), five competencies are essential to developing intercultural communicative competence as follows: first, attitudes; second, knowledge; third, skills of interpreting and relating; fourth, skills of discovery and interaction; and fifth, critical cultural awareness; each of which will be discussed below. The first element is attitudes, which consist of curiosity, openness, and readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and beliefs (Batova, 2018). This can help the development of intercultural knowledge and skills essential to interacting appropriately and effectively with people from other cultures. The second competency is intercultural knowledge, which is the information about social groups,

products, and practices on one's own. Knowledge is into two categories: conscious and unconscious; the former is the knowledge that can be more or less refined but present to some degree, and the latter is knowledge of concepts and processes in interactions. The third and fourth skills are those of interpreting and relating and skills of discovery and interaction. The skills of interpreting and relating are the capabilities to interpret information in different cultures and relate them to one's own.

In contrast, discovery and interaction skills are the ability to acquire new knowledge of other cultures and employ knowledge, attitudes, and skills within communication and interaction. Finally, the fifth component is critical cultural awareness, which is the ability to evaluate critically based on the explicit criteria of perspectives, practices, and products in the individual's culture and others (Byram, 1997, p.54).

Barriers to intercultural communication

Infante (1993) contributed to the idea of intercultural communication. He distinguished between low-context and high-context cultures in terms of communication patterns. In high-context cultures such as Japanese and Korean cultures, most information or message is conveyed through the physical context or implicitly based on the rules, roles, and values. Conversely, most information is contained in verbal and explicit messages in low-context cultures like American cultures. Although there is a message between low and high culture, Hall believes that one context tends to dominate the other (Turistiati, 2016).

It is crucial to consider ethnocentrism to understand the barriers to intercultural communications. Liliweri (2013) defines ethnocentrism as "an understanding" in which the followers of a culture or a tribal group feel superior to others outside their group. Ethnocentrism can evoke an attitude of "we" and "they," more specifically, may form subcultures from a great culture. Nationalism is a form of ethnocentrism; for example, Americans feel superior to those Chinese or Indonesian. Ethnocentrism often entails the belief that one's race or ethnic group is the most important or that some or all aspects of its culture are superior to those of other groups (Parumasur, 2012).

Prejudice is also a barrier to intercultural communication. According to Mulyana (2014), prejudice is a mistaken perception of different people. Prejudice is an unfair attitude towards a person or a group. Prejudice also means decisions and judgments based on experience. Richard W. Brislin (in Mulyana, 2014) defines that unfair prejudice as an attitude that deviates from or is intolerant of a group of people. Like stereotypes, prejudice can be positive or negative. However, prejudice is generally a negative bias (Koc, 2020).

Culture shock is another essential concept for analyzing cultural barriers to intercultural communication regarding advising international students. Brambell (2012) defined cultural shock as a state of disorientation experienced by a person who enters unfamiliar environments away from the comfort zone. Culture shock is standard for people who move to a new country or region. Culture shock can be experienced by anyone who, after an extended stay in one place, moves to another

with a different culture. To cope with culture shock, people must attempt to adjust or adapt to new environments and people with different cultures (Suen & Suen, 2019).

When considering cultural shock, the U-curve theory initiated by Lysgaard is crucial. The U-curve framework has been widely used to describe the cross-cultural adjustment process of expatriate employees or sojourners within a host culture. The U curve relates the time path of an expatriate's adjustment to a host country's culture. It involves a honeymoon stage, followed by culture shock and a process of improvement or adjustment to the host culture, culminating in a mastery stage, characterized by 'small incremental increases in the expatriate's ability to function effectively.

The degree of adjustment is measured not by conformity to the host country's culture but by variables such as comfort or satisfaction with the new environment, attitudes, degree of contact with host nationals, or difficulties with aspects of the new environment (Black & Mendenhall, 1990). The different stages suggest a transition in understanding and living when shifting from a home to a host country's culture. Initially, adjustment difficulties may be overridden by a cultural infatuation caused by the newness of the environment. Then, culture shock sets in when coping with the new environment become necessary (Lee, 2006).

Challenges to intercultural communication

Challenges in intercultural communication emerge because people have different perceptions and attitudes toward other people's languages and cultures. Accordingly, various speakers' social roles, thoughts, and communication behaviors exist. For instance, in a hotel environment, some people bring their language, culture, and attitude; thus, hotel staff faces challenges related to intercultural communication whenever they interact with others of a different cultural background. Hotel staff must be culturally sensitive to communicate with foreign guests because effective communication depends on various interpretations and comprehension. It is common for people to freely communicate with those who share a similar language, culture, and attitudes. The opposite is also true in that they avoid communicating with people with different linguistic and cultural backgrounds since it is more likely that an intercultural communication breakdown will occur. Thus, adequate intercultural communication competence is essential to overcome communication challenges. Such challenges between people of diverse language and cultural backgrounds usually stem from sociolinguistic and cultural differences that influence their distinctive perceptions, interpretations, lack of shared experiences, and frames of reference (Doheny-Farina, 1961).

Vivatananukul (2016) categorizes three kinds of communicative obstacles: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. In communicative situations, cognitive obstacles are caused when speakers do not understand others' language and are unaware of the appropriate language to use in terms of the intrinsic meaning of words and signs. Speakers usually encounter intercultural communicative problems when they translate languages without changing the original meaning. In addition, intercultural

communication challenges emerge from language genders; for example, using slang words in formal conversation or rituals or formal language with casual acquaintances, intimate acquaintances, or friends. Finally, a lack of cultural knowledge is also a key barrier to intercultural communication.

This kind of problem can be divided into several levels, including being the unaware or lacking experience of the culture or knowledge of a particular society's sociocultural background and subcultures. People do not always recognize the complexities of intercultural communication, leading to misinterpretations or failures in translation. Secondly, emotional obstacles, such as negative attitudes, biases, prejudices, and stereotypes, lead to inappropriate and discriminatory practices. Lastly, behavioral obstacles stem from the lack of recognizing other people's cultural backgrounds and non-verbal cues such as gestures, smiles, movements, social distances, and practices, which can constrain and hinder effective communication. Acculturating themselves to the new social environment requires mutual understanding, a flexible mindset, and adaptability from interlocutors, especially at their first encounter (Matheson & Petersen, 2020).

Dang (2016) asserts that communication between cultures is likely less effective because of the violation of cultural norms; in fact, people are unlikely to know if they are expected to follow others' cultural norms or behave according to their traditional culture. Speaker anxiety and assumptions of similarity rather than difference can widen the intercultural communication gap, cause negative perceptions toward one another, and lead to ethnocentrism. Ethnocentrism is based on "negatively judging aspects of another culture by the standards of one's own culture" (Jandt, 2003, p.83), which means every culture has its rules and standards (Kimball, 2017).

Intercultural communication strategies

Communication strategies were first discussed in Selinker's (1972) work regarding interlanguage. This explores strategies related to errors in learners' interlanguage systems in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The interactional perspective sees communication strategies as the "mutual attempts of two interlocutors to agree on a meaning in situations where requisite meaning structures do not seem to be shared" (Tarone, 1980, p.420). Both speakers have a common effect on negotiating an agreement on meaning "to ensure that both interlocutors are talking about the same thing" (Tarone, 1981, p.288). Færch and Kasper (1983) state that communication strategies are "potentially conscious plans for solving what to an individual present itself as a problem in reaching a particular communicative goal" (p.36). Schmidt et al. (2007) emphasize the internal features of communicators in terms of their cognitive intelligence, emotional intelligence, and behavioral skills, which are correlated to intercultural communication challenges. According to Schmidt et al. (2007), cognitive intelligence concerns interpretive scheme development, multiple viewpoints, acculturation and openness to the third culture, innovative mindset, and awareness of being part of a cultural jigsaw (Madson, 2014).

On the other hand, emotional intelligence focuses on mindfulness, rhetorical sensitivity, positive attitude, empathy, and no anxiety in ambiguous situations. However, behavioral skills deal with language proficiency, observation and ability to capture a more comprehensive picture, flexibility, activeness, accessibility to new information and changes, adaptations to changes, cooperative relationships rather than self-centeredness, and management ability in a negative situation. Kasper and Kellerman (1997) suggest that communicative strategies should be employed to attain speakers' goals to alleviate communication challenges.

Huang (2011) highlights strategies employed in intercultural communication for language teaching and tourism education: adapting to cultural differences, adopting appropriate skills, creating similarities, maintaining appropriate relationships, and promoting conflict resolution strategies (Jones, 2014). According to Han (2013), intercultural awareness has become a prerequisite for successful intercultural communication. This can be developed by: (i) "knowing yourself" because "you" are one side of intercultural communication, and your manifestation will have a direct effect on the success or failure of intercultural communication. Secondly; (ii) "disclosing yourself" through methods of exchange and introduction to let the other side know yourself, your own culture, and both sides' cultural differences; (iii) "increasing cultural awareness," led by the fact that globalization demands the enhancement of intercultural communication among people from diverse cultures for us to survive in the 21st century; (iv) "obtaining cultural knowledge," which refers to the cognitive information you need to have about the people, the context, and the norms of appropriateness that prevail in a specific culture, and with such knowledge, it is likely that you will interpret the meanings of other people's messages or behaviors correctly; (v) "mastering communication skills," which refers to how well the behaviors that are regarded as appropriate and effective are performed, meaning that competent communicators are required (Wang, 2018).

Intercultural communication in education settings

Quality advising depends on effective communication. Communication between advisors and advisees can support and facilitate students' learning, but it can potentially impede their academic success, which relies heavily on the quality of the communication. Therefore, advisors must exhibit interpersonal relationships and intercultural communication skills when interacting with non-native speakers from different cultures. The ICC model is considered in this study to guide the data analysis on the communication of international students and academic advisors. In advising, intercultural communication competence refers to one's ability to conduct meaningful, appropriate, and effective communication with others of different cultural backgrounds. Intercultural communication competence linked to advising consists of three closely related but separate dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Communicators are unlikely to demonstrate competent intercultural communication if they lack ability in three dimensions (Walwema, 2018).

The cognitive aspect represents awareness and understanding of information or actions needed for intercultural communication (Chen & Starosta, 1998; Wiseman,

2002). The affective dimension is depicted by motivation, which refers to "the set of feelings, intentions, needs, and drives associated with the anticipation of or actual engagement in intercultural communication." Finally, the behavioral dimension refers to the skills and ability needed to communicate effectively and appropriately in an intercultural context. The framework of intercultural communication competence has been used in higher education, but most research focused on international students' understanding and communication ability. For instance, Zimmermann (1995) assessed. International students' perceptions of intercultural communication competence and adaptation in US higher education institutions.

Campbell (2012) evaluated international students' adjustment to a New Zealand university and sought to determine whether the students' intercultural communication competence was improved through pairings with native students. Despite the value of these studies, how individuals in the host culture interact with newcomers from unfamiliar cultures needs attention. Understanding the views and practices of natives may prove particularly important for advisors whose ability to conduct effective intercultural communication directly relates to the quality of international students' experiences and satisfaction on campus. Therefore, this study primarily focuses on academic advisors and uses the framework of intercultural communication competence to guide data collection and analysis (Palmer, 2013).

3. Methodology

Semistructured interviews were conducted with five educators in tourism fields of knowledge to discover challenges, solutions, and strategies to address intercultural communication conflicts when advising and NUC. This study also used a qualitative research method. According to Sugiyono (2008), qualitative research examines natural conditions. Bogdan and Biklen, cited by Sugiyono (2008), also explain that descriptive qualitative research uses data collected in words or images, not figures.

An approach was implemented for collecting and analyzing data: a thematic analysis. According to Hoffe (2011), "Thematic analysis (TA) is a method for identifying and analysing patterns of meaning in a dataset" (p. 209). Consequently, this method aims to identify constellations or sets of meaning present in data collected in a given research. Typically, these constellations or sets include affective, cognitive, and symbolic dimensions and rely on coding to identify themes and correlations. In this research, thematic analysis allows for establishing patterns in advising international students regarding challenges imposed by the complexities of cultural differences.

Information from educators in tourism at NUC was recorded in software and analyzed afterward. Each interview lasted approximately 50 to 90 minutes and consisted of open-ended, semistructured questions focused primarily on the academic advisors' interactions with international advisees, their awareness of cultural differences, knowledge, and skills for dealing with cultural diversity, and the challenges of advising this population at NUC University. The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim for analysis. Purpose sampling was applied to select the professors and advisors participating in this study.

3. Results and discussion

Intercultural conflicts and challenges in advising international students

The academic advisors in the study acknowledged the unique challenges those international students encounter at NUC. They reported low English proficiency, unfamiliarity with US higher education, and difficulties in evaluating and transferring credits earned in their home countries as the most prominent issues confronting international students at NUC. These factors also complicate effective communication processes and the provision of assistance and guidance to advisees. Mendenhall et al. (2002) recognized this issue: "Team members from the virtual environment can encounter numerous challenges due to cultural differences. These differences can influence team members' attitudes towards communication, sharing of information, leadership, and status of team members".

Also, when discussing the advising initiatives with international students, these scholars recognized how the perception of incompatibility between cultural values, situational norms, objectives, guidelines, limited resources, and different styles and processes leads to intercultural conflicts. For example, different behaviors, such as unfamiliar communication styles and various polite expressions, can make communication and negotiation situations more difficult when there is a second language of communication. This matter was remarkable in advising initiatives faced by these scholars when dealing with international education. In addition, advisers express a preoccupation with how these intercultural conflicts and challenges are connected to ethics in teaching. We meet ethical codes in each culture that friends, family, and society pass on and religious codes of ethics. Fundamental notions of good and evil affect every individual's everyday life and behavior toward those with different traditions or beliefs.

On the other hand, academic advisors expressed common concerns over effectively communicating with international students from non-English speaking countries. For instance, Crystal, a participant in this research, indicated that language barriers significantly affected her experiences advising international students. Sometimes, advising a student amidst intercultural communication conflicts can be challenging. For instance, one of her students demonstrated difficulty understanding the course sequence in a nursing program and kept returning to her with the same or similar questions.

Kelly's experience reveals that language barriers challenge international students' learning at NUC and add difficulties in navigating through NUC academic programs. In addition, students with insufficiencies in language education add complications to NUC advisors since they can spend a significant amount of time explaining how the US higher education system works, including differences between 4-year universities and community colleges, transfer processes between different types of institutions, and the ways academic advisors can help students.

Mandy described that the advising process with international students at NUX can be "very overwhelming" and "draining." Betty also shared her thoughts on advising international students: "I think many international students come in at a disadvantage because they have to learn how this system is set up. In many countries, they may not have 2-year colleges, okay? In many countries, they may not have the same requirements. The transfer situation is unique to the US community college and typically not fully understood by international students from a different education system. For example, Emily needed to explain the transfer function and ways the student could take advantage of it: "The student was so relieved to hear that she could complete courses here and then continue without having to start at a university so soon and having to pay all the money so soon. So she was very relieved and happy."

Awareness of cultural differences

Research participants recognized cultural differences, in varying degrees, in their interactions with international students. In particular, the advisors discussed cultural differences concerning gender and negotiations. Treating people by gender adds complexity to advising sessions with some international students. Specifically, many women from Middle Eastern countries came to advising meetings at NUC accompanied by a male family member, such as a father, brother, or husband. Furthermore, in many cases, the male relative hijacked the conversation. The male asked many questions on behalf of his female relative and made decisions for her. As a result, advisors struggled to understand the advisee's thoughts while trying not to offend or ignore the male holding the conversation.

Maria shared her observation of Middle Eastern advisees: "A lot of times, women from Middle Eastern countries, they'll come in with their husbands or significant others and they [the men] tend to dominate the conversation. The woman will just sit there and not really say much even though they are the student".

In addition, NUC female advisors discussed difficulties in advising male students from certain cultures, citing a feeling of rejection during the communication, and they each handled the situation differently. For example, Tina indicated that she changed her tone to sound particularly assertive when advising Caribbean male students. Joy shared that she has employed the assistance of others when addressing male advisees from Iran, India, or Israel: "There has been a handful who simply don't want to listen to what I have to say or feel I don't know what I'm talking about because of my gender. And I've picked up on that, and I would call in a male colleague to come in and share the information the same way, and it was better received in that regard. It didn't offend me any. I understood it was a cultural thing". Paige explained some challenges in communicating with male students from Uganda. Because she considers herself a "very shy person," she felt that she needed to accommodate her communication style to interact with this group of students: "The men are just very boisterous and very outgoing. And I have to not take that as a personal thing onto me, but that's just how they are. And so, I just have to be able to work with them and laugh with them and take it as it is".

Strategies employed in international student advising

To overcome the intercultural communication challenges of advising international students, the academic advisors in the study employed a wide variety of strategies to engage advisees and maximize their learning outcomes. Being respectful, demonstrating great patience, showing empathy, and establishing relationships with international students emerged as the essential strategies that participating advisors used to advise international students. In addition, showing awareness of different cultures and respecting international students' decisions emerged as the most widely used strategy of participants advising international students.

For example, Betty believes that respecting other cultures could narrow the gap between people and help advisors better serve students with diverse backgrounds. She commented; "All people want to be . . . accepted and heard . . . and respect[ed]. . . . And I think once we do that, it doesn't really matter what the culture is." For example, when advising students who were constantly trying to convince her to bend the rules, Linda understood this might be "a cultural thing" and responded to the repeated requests with respect and questions related to the students' home countries, such as "Hey, what was it like at home where you came from? To get things to happen, how did you move forward when you needed to work with a large institution?" She also explained how things might be different here and how they might be perceived.

The study sheds light on the experiences of academic advisors in communicating with international students in a community college context. Specifically, the intercultural communication competence approach was a multidimensional construct to guide the analysis of community college advisors' experiences interacting with international students. The assessment of the cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions of academic advisors' intercultural communication competence provides essential information on their knowledge, attitudes, motivation, and skills in working with international students and suggests implications for practice, policy, and future research (Stevens, Bird, Mendenhall, & Oddou, 2014).

This study suggests that academic advisors in community colleges understand that international students are confronted with unique challenges, such as language barriers, limited knowledge about US higher education, and difficulties in transferring credits earned from their home institutions. These obstacles hinder international student advising and advisor-advisee interactions. The interviewed advisors also expressed awareness that cultural differences added complexity and sometimes difficulty to the practice of advising international advisees.

The study's findings indicate that understanding the types of challenges faced by international students helps academic advisors communicate effectively and develop strategies for assisting students transitioning to college and the culture. However, the study results also imply that advisors were unfamiliar with educational systems in the students' home countries. None of the academic advisors discussed or provided examples regarding educational requirements in other countries, nor did they indicate knowledge about the specific academic preparations of international advisees.

Academic advisors can examine published statistics (e.g., from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization reports) on the quality of work and rigor offered by different academic systems to advance their knowledge about international students. In addition to knowledge of students' academic preparation, advisors can strive to integrate students' academic achievement goals, career development, and life desires in guiding international students (Deardorff & Arasaratnam-Smith, 2017).

Affective aspects of advising from an intercultural communication approach

The advisors interviewed for this study held a positive attitude toward other cultures and advisees from different nations concerning the affective dimension of intercultural communication competence. They were interested in learning about different cultures, open to opportunities for enhancing their intercultural understanding, and willing to take extra steps to improve their communication skills in a cross-cultural context. However, the findings also suggest that advisors recognized a lack of formal diversity and intercultural communication training. They called attention to the need to improve advising professionals' understanding of other cultures and their ability to advise international students.

However, most participants did not report enforcing a plan for further intercultural understanding and communication education. This may suggest that academic advisors need additional encouragement and time release to engage in training. Community colleges should make professional development opportunities accessible for academic advisors and consider incorporating cultural training as a part of their job responsibilities. In addition, with community college support, advisors may wish to obtain firsthand experiences in activities that enhance intercultural understanding, such as auditing courses on multiculturalism, attending conferences on international education, participating in international student organizations, and traveling abroad for business or pleasure. Academic advisors may better understand themselves and other cultures, beliefs, and values through participation.

Behavioral aspect of advising from an intercultural approach

The behavioral dimension of intercultural competence refers to the abilities and skills needed for effective and appropriate intercultural communications. The advisors in this study used multiple resources to overcome the challenges confronting the students and themselves. First, they provided emotional and informational support to assist international students in navigating the US community college. Specifically, when international advisees felt frustrated, the advisors demonstrated sincere concern and provided detailed information to explain unfamiliar processes and structures to students. Despite their successes in communication with international students through trying circumstances, advisors developed strategies case by case. In other words, they relied entirely on their knowledge, experiences, and motivation, which varied from one practitioner to another (Arasaratnam, 2015; Willink et al., 2014).

This finding supports calls for training on procedures for avoiding misunderstandings and resolving conflicts with international students. Learning communities composed

of academic advisors who share experiences and valuable tips may also prove helpful. In addition, the interviews with the academic advisors focused primarily on face-to-face communication and advising international students. None of the participants discussed using the Internet or other online tools to advise international students. However, regardless of their nationalities and generations, many students rely on computers and the Internet for communication, social networking, information searching, online courses, and many other tasks in their daily lives. Therefore, academic advisors may consider embracing synchronous and asynchronous technology, including streaming video, advisors' web pages, and real-time chat rooms, to advance international students' experiences (Arasaratnam, 2015).

As Jordan (2000) indicated, technology integrated into developmental advising practice allows advisors to provide individualized attention and information sources that advisees can access independently. Non-native speakers, in particular, may benefit from using a relaxing environment where spoken English is not required, as created through Internet-based tools. International students could also spend additional time reading posts, responding to questions, and exploring information online at their own pace (McLoughlin, 1999).

Technology makes information accessible to students and can serve as an alternate format that strengthens relationships between advisors and students. Finally, academic advisors can incorporate empirical research into their daily practice of assisting students and developing advising programs. Research in academic advising and intercultural communication guides frontline practitioners. It can also broaden their understanding and enrich their knowledge of academic advising (Aiken-Wisniewski, Smith, & Troxel, 2010). In addition, advisors may use their firsthand experiences for empirical investigation, informing other advisors with valuable and practical understanding in helping international students (Zhang, 2015).

4. Conclusions

Issues associated with intercultural communication are crucial to address in our classrooms. Students engage in various intercultural experiences during their education and entry into the workforce. Without a sophisticated understanding of intercultural communication issues, students are likely to perpetuate unhelpful stereotypes and flounder in a marketplace that requires an intercultural understanding of business matters. We hope the critique and discussion here are helpful for instructors who want to provide a more critical and complex perspective on intra- and intercultural issues in their classrooms, a perspective extending beyond the starting points provided in many contemporary professional and technical communication textbooks. Instead, they require textbooks to move into a not easily defined-space. Students are asked to pay attention to their subject positions and identify their own cultural biases about other cultures within and outside the United States. This means encouraging students and teachers to take risks, and it means creating activities that bring issues that are often uncomfortable into the classroom.

Addressing these complexities in textbooks and our classrooms is not easy. Cultures run deep and inevitably affect how we communicate. Although this kind of questioning may not appeal to or seem appropriate to some business and technical communication instructors, it would be helpful to bring this questioning into classrooms to improve communications. We ultimately hope that these activities will enable students to enter intra- or intercultural communication experiences equipped with a more critical and complex understanding of communication, a set of helpful tools, and an awareness of the mutual negotiations made by all members of the experience.

These strategies can equip students with tools that carry across cultural settings and contexts and enable them to become better listeners, thinkers, and communicators, regardless of setting. Intercultural communication strategies must be developed on the fundamental premise that a domain of relationships can be used to categorize the various types of relationships that an organization can enter into. Each of the various types of relationships necessitates a variance in communication strategies due to the differences in potential partner categories. For example, communications between channel-of-distribution partners differ from those with strategic partners.

5. References

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