WORKING ON CAMPUS:
THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EMPLOYEES’ DINING SERVICES
JOB EXPERIENCE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF INTERCULTURAL
COMMUNICATION COMPETENCE

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WORKING ON CAMPUS:
THE IMPACT OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENT EMPLOYEES’ DINING SERVICES
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Thesis

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ABSTRACT

With more and more international students coming to the United States to study, aside from gaining education, many of them also choose to work on campus to get a better experience of American life. Aside from working on campus as student assistants with assistantships, many international students work for dining services on campus to earn extra income. This paper explored the process of how working for dining services on an American university campus influences international student employees’ intercultural communication competence. The Campinha-Bacote (2002) cultural competence model’s five dimensions: cultural awareness, cultural desire, cultural knowledge, cultural skills, and cultural encounters were discussed through a qualitative investigation of eight international student employees who are working at a school cafeteria at a Midwest university. The analysis revealed that workplace cultural encounters became the one essential theme that represented the main influence for participants’ development of intercultural communication competence. Additionally, four sub-themes emerged from the data: (1) gaining cultural knowledge, (2) becoming culturally aware, (3) increasing cultural desire, (4) learning cultural skills. Meanwhile, the subcategories of self-awareness and stereotyping were found under the sub-theme of becoming culturally aware; self-motivation and motivation from “others” were found under the sub-theme of
increasing cultural desire; and English speaking, listening and asking questions were found under the sub-theme of learning cultural skills.

*Keywords*: The Campinha-Bacote Cultural Competence model; international student employee; working on campus; intercultural communication competence
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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Study abroad programs are currently being viewed as a legitimate form of learning for students who wish to experience different cultures (Gray, Murdock & Stebbins, 2002). More and more students from different countries are coming to the United States to gain an education with excitement and curiosity. Because of the rising number of international students on campus, many higher education institutions are trying to improve the way they invest limited resources to create educational environments to support international students’ adjustments to the social and academic demand of college life (Schweitzer, Morson, & Mather, 2011). Meanwhile, many universities prefer to develop their diversity by recruiting students from varied cultural backgrounds. Hopkins (1999) stated that today, “in their goals and missions statements, most colleges and universities include some visions of ‘knowledge of their cultures’ as a component of a liberal education” (p. 36).

For international students, study abroad is not only a learning experience, but also a life experience. Despite their busy school schedules, many international students choose to work on campus to gain more life experience and extra income. As a group of individuals who speak different languages and come from diverse backgrounds,
international students need to adapt to their American life through communication with others. During communication with other native co-workers and students, international students’ intercultural communication competence develops during their communication process. Working is not only a means for making money, for international students, it is also a way for learning the language and culture of the 21st century United States.

Intercultural communication competence has been examined by many of the studies of students’ overseas experiences. Intercultural communication competence has been researched in studies with many varying concepts such as: sojourner adjustment, immigrant acculturation, intergroup contact, culture shock, cross-cultural training, social change, international management, and foreign student advising (Benson, 1978; Brislin, 1981; Gudykunst, Wiseman, & Hammer, 1977; Landis & Brislin, 1983; Rogers, 1983; Stening, 1979). Lustig and Koester (2003) defined intercultural communication competence as “the degree to which an individual was able to communicate effectively and appropriately with individuals who were culturally dissimilar” (p. 17). According to Gudykunst and Hammer (1983), learning intercultural competence required psychological readiness, interaction with individuals from other cultures, and immersion training in another country.

International students that are studying and working in the United States fit all these conditions to develop their intercultural communication competence through their studying and working process. This is especially true for international student employees because they are utilizing intercultural communication competence every day during their work interaction. McCaffery (1986) argued that learning intercultural competence first
began with experiencing a different culture, then analyzing the experience, and
generalizing the knowledge learned from the experience to other potential situations, and
last applying those generalizations to future intercultural interactions. While working in
another country, international student employees are experiencing intercultural
interactions with customers and their co-workers through their daily communication.
Most importantly, for their work requirements, international student employees need to
apply generalizations of knowledge learned from their work experience directly to reality.
The work experiences influence international student employees’ development of
intercultural communication competence.

Meanwhile, for international students, there are a variety of jobs on campuses
offered by the universities. Many international students come to the United States with
assistantships or scholarships, students who are gaining assistantships are hired by the
universities as student assistants. According to Jenkins (2000), the largest numbers of
international student assistants having assistantships in graduate programs are from the
natural science and engineering departments. Certain studies had been done by focusing
on international students as teaching assistants and their communication in several
professions (Jenkins, 2000). Especially in education, miscommunication, second
language speakers, and students’ reactions to non-native teaching assistants have been
conducted on intercultural communication competence of international teaching
assistants (Jenkins, 2000; Nelson, 1992; Inglis, 1993). Except working on campus as
student assistants, another venue which offers job opportunities for international students
is dining services. For international students, without an assistantship or scholarship who
want to earn extra income and learn language and American culture, working for dining services on campus has become an option.

However, a review of the research on intercultural studies reveals that there is no study which focused on international student employees who work for dining services. The purpose of this thesis was to explore the process of how international student employees’ dining services work experiences help with the development of their intercultural communication competence. This thesis combined international student employees’ dining services work experiences and their development of intercultural communication in several aspects by utilizing the Campinha-Bacote (2002) model of cultural competence: cultural awareness, cultural desire, cultural knowledge, cultural skill, and cultural encounters.

The next portion of this thesis gives a description of international students and their work experiences. Following that, the literature review of intercultural communication is introduced. Then, intercultural communication competence and the Campinha-Bacote (2002) cultural competence model is defined, followed by a discussion of how the Campinha-Bacote cultural competence model related to the development of international student dining service employees’ intercultural communication competence.
CHAPTER II
LITERATURE REVIEW

This section will first give a background of international students and their intercultural communication. Then intercultural communication competence and the Campinha-Bacote (2002) cultural competence model will be defined. Finally, it will discuss how the Campinha-Bacote (2002) cultural competence model is related to intercultural communication competence. This information groundwork will give a picture of how intercultural communication studies developed, and how it is related to international student employees.

International Students in the United State

International students, a special group of people of different backgrounds, come to study in a different country. The Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (2007) defined international students as “those who travel to a country different from their own for the purpose of tertiary study” (p. 1). Studying abroad is no longer news for people today with the fast development of globalization. International students, who look different, speak different languages, and have different beliefs, not only are gaining study experience by studying abroad, but also life experience. Recently, there are more and more students from different countries who come to the United States to study. According to a report by the Institute of International Education (2010),
the number of international students choosing to attend universities in the United States has steadily risen in the past five years reaching a current total of 720,000. In addition, from 2009 to 2010 the number of international students at universities in the United States grew by 3% to 690,923 due in part to the Open Door report (Institute of International Education, 2010).

As Douglass (2012) stated, the top five counties that send most students to the United States to study are China, India, South Korea, Canada and Taiwan. India used to be the biggest supplier of international students from 2001 to 2009; however, China took over this top spot last year with nearly 128,000 students from China who studied in the U.S. (Douglass, 2012). From this data, Asian students clearly made up a large percent of the international student population currently studying in the United States. Meanwhile, the Institute of International Education (2010) reported that other countries also send significant numbers of students to U.S. schools, including Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, Turkey and Brazil. With the coming of more and more international students, American higher education institutions today are facing a more diverse campus environment.

Except for studying, with the restrictions on where international students can work in the United States, working on campus has become the primary source of income and supported a good chance to learn language and American culture for many of these students. According to U. S. Immigration Direct (2012), there are three kinds of student visas for international students who come to the United States depending on what program they are enrolled. The first one is F1 Visa, academic student visa. The F1 visa is the most common visa for international students who are interested in gaining a full-time
degree or entering in an academic program in schools, colleges, and universities (U. S. Immigration Direct, 2012). The second is the J1 exchange visitor visa. The U. S Immigration Direct (2012) stated that the J1 visa is created for students who are planning to participate in educational or cultural programs between the United States and other countries. The third visa is the M1 vocational student visa, which is for students who are enrolled in non-academic or a vocational program such as mechanical studies, technical studies, cooking classes and flight school (U. S. Immigration Direct, 2012). Among these three kinds of student visa, the M1 visa is the only visa which does not allow students to work on America universities’ campuses (U. S. Immigration Direct, 2012).

Most international students come to the United States holding a F1 or J1 visa. The F1 visa remains valid for the duration of time equal to the time that it takes for the student to complete their course of study. In addition, it allows students to work at their school, college, or university; and in rare situations, students may even work off campus (The U. S. Immigration Direct, 2012). According to the U. S. Immigration Direct (2012), students who are holding an F1 visa are “eligible to apply for employment-authorized practical training after the completion of their academic program”, and “this training is usually limited to twelve months”. Students holding a J1 visa came to the United States after obtaining sponsorship from an agency, which also allowed students to work for the agency (The U. S. Immigration Direct, 2012). Students who have a J1 visa usually are enrolled in short-term learning or exchange programs. International students who have been participating in these programs through American universities, which are the agency, can work on campus. For international students who are holding a F1 or J1 student visa,
most of them choose to work on campus due to the volume of their school work and convenience. Aside from gaining income, international students also treat working on campus as an opportunity to learn the language and American culture. By having a job on campus, international students are gaining chances to communicate more, aside from just communicating in class. Except for communicating with their classmates during classes, international students are having intercultural communication with their co-workers, customers, and managers in their work places. Therefore, intercultural communication becomes important for international students who are working on American universities’ campuses.

Intercultural Communication

By coming to a different country, especially for international students who do not speak English as a native language, communication becomes a learning process from the time they step into the United States. Intercultural communication is becoming a part of every international student’s education and life while they are in the U. S. While they are communicating with people in a different country, international students are communicating with a different culture at the same time. Intercultural communication becomes a tool for international students who are studying and living in the United States. In the past twenty years, many new theories about intercultural communication have been created (Gudykunst, 2002). Intercultural communication was first thought of as “communication between people from different national cultures, and many scholars limited it to face-to-face communication” (Gudykunst, 2002, p. 178). Gudykunst (2002) also pointed out that intercultural communication could be treated as one type of
intergroup communication, which was the “communication between members of different social groups” (p. 179). This initial study attempted to create a theory which described intercultural communication simply as interpersonal communication between people with different cultural backgrounds (Gudykunst, 2002). With more and more studies focusing on intercultural communication, there are many theories covering different aspects of intercultural communication. These theories showed the big picture of the development of intercultural communication studies.

By showing Burrell and Morgan’s (1979) distinction between objectivist and subjectivist approaches, Gudykunst and Nishida (1989) utilized this distinction to the theory to compare intercultural communication. Objective studies of cross-cultural variations in communication traditionally have compared specific cultures. As Gudykunst (2002) concluded, objectivists “see a ‘real world’ external to individuals, look for regularities in behavior, and see communication as ‘determined’ by situations and environments” (p. 183). However, subjectivists contended that no such external “real world” exists for individuals. They tried “to understand individual communicators’ perspectives and view communication as a function of ‘free will’” (Gudykunst & Nishida, 1989, p. 183). Gudykunst and Nishida (1989) argued that each of these approaches (objectivist and subjectivist) were vital for the understanding of intercultural communication, however, extreme objectivist or subjectivist perspectives were not defensible.

After looking at the theories of intercultural communication, Gudykunst (2002) summarized that there are five major theories of intercultural communication that focused
on “effective outcomes, accommodation or adaptations, identity management or negotiation, social networks, and acculturation or adjustment” (p. 184). These theories included both objectivist and subjectivist approaches; however, the majority of the theories were objectivistic. From these theories, it can be seen that studies of intercultural communication can have different focuses. By combining these theories and studies of intercultural communication, intercultural communication competence studies developed. Based on theories of intercultural communication, more and more researchers were interested in doing studies of intercultural communication competence based on different overseas experiences (Wiseman, 2002).

For international students, studying and living in the United States is not only an intercultural communication experience, but also an opportunity to develop their intercultural communication competence. International student employees, who are working on campus, have more chances to develop their communication competencies while they are working because international employees are facing more opportunities for intercultural communication with their co-workers, their managers, and customers while they are working. Most importantly, work experiences are giving more opportunities and challenging international students to develop their competencies of intercultural communication.

Intercultural Communication Competence

Communication competence had been examined by scholars from a variety of academic aspects (Hammer, 1989). Spitzberg (1998) first defined competent communication as “interaction that is perceived as effective in fulfilling certain
rewarding objectives in a way that is also appropriate to the context in which the interaction occurs” (p. 68). In addition, communication competence had been studied in a variety of intercultural fields, such as mental health, educational, occupational (Spitzberg & Cupach, 1984) and contexts, such as adjustment, immigrant acculturation, intergroup communication, cultural shock and cross-cultural training (Benson, 1978; Brein & David, 1971; Brislin, 1981; Dinges, 1983; Dinges & Duffy, 1979). The study of intercultural communication competence is an extension of communication competence with a specific application to culture (Chen, 2009). Due to the fast development of communication in today’s globalized society, intercultural communication competence has become more critical and important in supporting effective and successful communication between people from different cultures, races, and religions (Chen, 2009). In 1987, Chen defined communication competence as “the individuals’ ability to execute certain actions in order to elicit a desire response in a specific environment” (as cited in Chen, 2009, p. 530). Intercultural communication competence had been thought of in several different ways. Some of these conceptualizations were characterized in different ways, such as cross-cultural adjustment, cross-cultural adaptation, intercultural understanding, overseas success, personal growth, and satisfaction with overseas experience (Wiseman, 2002).

In the extensive literature about this topic, one variable that was most closely related to intercultural communication competence was intercultural communication effectiveness (Chen, 1989). Ruben (1976) argued that communication effectiveness was synonymous with the term communication competence. Through the research that had
been done, communication competence had been conceptualized in two ways: perceived effectiveness and appropriateness. Chen (1989) stated that the conceptualization of communication competence “should include effectiveness and appropriateness in interaction” (p. 118). According to Hammer, Gudykunst, and Wiseman (1978), there were three approaches that were used to “deal with intercultural communication effectiveness” (p. 383). The first approach focused on “characteristics of intercultural communication effectiveness” (p. 385), which mainly dealt with a temporary resident’s personality, world view, and cultural awareness. The second approach was integrative, emphasizing observations of a temporary resident’s behavior in interactions. The third approach explored intercultural communication effectiveness through studying both a temporary resident’s characteristics and behavior (Hammer et al., 1978). However, appropriateness referred to the ability “to demonstrate knowledge of the socially appropriate communicative behavior in a specific situation” (Backlund, 1978, p. 56). To be competent in these types of intercultural interactions, individuals must meet three conditions. First, Wiemann and Backlund (1980) stated that the verbal context asked “individuals to make sense of wording, statements and topics” (p. 187). Second, the relational context required individuals “to be consonant with the particular relationship through the use of message” (Wiemann & Backlund, 1980, p. 187). Third, the environmental context asked “individuals to consider the constraint imposed on message that is made by the environments” (Wiemann & Backlund, 1980, p. 187). Because of the importance of these two aspects, it is necessary to examine intercultural communication competence according to effectiveness and appropriateness (Chen, 1989).
According to Lustig and Koester (2003), intercultural competence is “the degree to which an individual is able to communicate effectively and appropriately with individuals who are culturally dissimilar” (p. 17). Chen (1987) advanced the intercultural communication model with four dimensions by applying communication competence to the intercultural context, and each of these dimensions contains four components (as cited in Chen, 2009). The first dimension is personal attitudes, which includes self-disclosure, self-awareness, self-concept, and social relaxation. The second dimension, communication skills, includes message skills, social skills, flexibility, and interaction management. The third is psychological adaptation, which contains frustration, stress, alienation, and ambiguity. The last, cultural awareness includes social values, social customs, social norms and social systems. In 1996, after reexamining these four dimensions, Chen and Starosta (1996) suggested intercultural communication competence should be studied from three aspects of human ability: cognitive, affective and behavioral. Many theoretical models in the field of intercultural communication had been focused on these three dimensions of intercultural competence (Chen, 2009). As Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey and Wiseman (1991) concluded, cognition referred to “knowledge about how cultures differ; affect was a willingness to communicate with others and increased sensitivity/openness; and behavior related to the ability to enact appropriate communication skills in intercultural situations” (p. 275). In summary, someone who is interculturally competent will have knowledge of how their native culture and the host culture differ and values both, has the ambition and drive to communicate appropriately, and “has the communication skills (both verbal and
nonverbal) to communicate effectively” (Lambert, 1993, p. 312). Kelly and Meyers (1995) found that culturally competent people had high levels of knowledge of the self and the other, flexibility/openness, and perceptual communication skills. Batelaan and Gundare (2000) built on this research stating “that people who were more successful in intercultural situations had knowledge of cultural and language differences, open mindedness, and strong communication skills” (p. 32). However, these two intercultural communication competence models were conducted based on quantitative research and studies (Chen, 1989; Chen & Starosta, 1996). With the development of this model, Chen (2005) extended it to study the impact of global trends on society. The focus of this model had been broadened and cultivated into the global communication competence area. In order to explore the development of intercultural communication competence of international student dining services employees, cultural competence model which is simple and similar to this original model is needed.

The Campinha-Bacote Cultural Competence Model

The original name of Campinha-Bacote cultural competence model is The Process of Cultural Competence in the Delivery of Health Services Model. It was introduced by Campinha-Bacote to analyze cultural competence in healthcare delivery. Campinha-Bacote (2002) aimed at exploring the development of cultural competence within the health-care services industry. As realizing “the changing demographics and economics of a growing multicultural world and the long-standing disparities in the health status of people from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds” (p. 181), Campinha-Bacote (2002) found that all these were challenging providers of healthcare to view cultural competence
as a crucial aspect in their industry. After presenting this cultural competence model, Campinha-Bacote (2002) hoped that this model could provide healthcare providers with “a framework for developing and implementing culturally responsive health care services” (p. 181).

The Campinha-Bacote (2002) model of cultural competence encompassed the competence dimensions of knowledge, affect, and skills, and the element of experience (Penington, & Wildermuth, 2005). The Campinha-Bacote model (2002) of cultural competence viewed cultural competence as “an ongoing process in which the health-care providers continuously strived to achieve the ability to effectively work within the cultural context of the client” (Campinha-Bacote, 2002, p. 181). Penington and Wildermuth (2005) explained that this model argued that people were continually in the process of becoming more competent and that the progress was dependent upon practice through cultural encounters. According to Campinha-Bacote (2002), this model required healthcare providers to change their view, making them able to see themselves as being in the process of becoming culturally competent, instead of their current view of already being culturally competent.

In the Campinha-Bacote (2002) model of cultural competence, there were five interdependent constructs: 1) cultural awareness, 2) cultural desire, 3) cultural knowledge, 4) cultural skills, and 5) cultural encounters (p. 1). Cultural awareness referred to the ability to engage in examination of one’s native culture and becoming appreciative of and sensitive to the values, beliefs, lifestyles, and practices of the other culture. Cultural desire referred to genuine motivation to “want to” rather than to “have to” learn about
other cultures and interact with people who were from another culture. Cultural knowledge described how individuals seeking and obtaining a sound understanding of the various world-views and specific physical, biological, historical, language, etc. differences among various groups. Cultural skill referred to the choice of appropriate communication tools and the use of those tools in a sensitive manner. At last, cultural encounters indicated direct intercultural competence through interaction with people from other cultures (Campinha-Bacote, 2002). These five constructs contained the components of the intercultural communication competence model that Chen (1989) introduced. Compared to Chen’s (1989) competence model, the Campinha-Bacote (2002) cultural competence model cultivated and simplified the dimensions and components. Except for two of the same dimensions of cultural awareness and skills, Chen’s (1989) model focused more on emotions of individuals. Among Chen’s (1989) model, personal attitude and psychological adaptation both focused on individual’s self-concept and internal feelings, such as frustration and stress caused by intercultural communication. However, the Campinha-Bacote (2002) cultural competence model includes cultural knowledge, desire and encounter, and these three constructs reflected the other two dimensions of Chen’s (1989) cultural competence model. Especially for the emotional components, the construct of cultural encounters in the Campinha-Bacote (2002) cultural competence model could cover emotional aspects for this study. Meanwhile, the specific components in Chen’s (1989) cultural competence model could be a good reference for helping specify cultural encounters in the Campinha-Bacote (2002) cultural competence model. Most importantly, the focus of the Campinha-Bacote (2002) cultural competence model
is the process of cultural competence, and it fits the goal of this thesis, which aims at exploring the process of the development of cultural competence of international student dining services employees through a qualitative investigation.

According to Gudykunst and Hammer (1983), learning intercultural competence requires psychological readiness, interaction with individuals from another culture, and immersion training in another country. The international students who are studying and working in the United States fit all of these three conditions to develop intercultural communication competence. International student employees are experiencing intercultural communication competence learning every day especially when they are working. McCaffery (1986) argued that learning intercultural competence began first with experiencing a different culture, then analyzing the experience, and generalizing the knowledge learned from the experience to other potential situations, and last applying those generalizations to future intercultural interactions. While working in another country, international employees are experiencing intercultural interactions with customers and their co-workers when they are working. Most importantly, for their work requirements, international employees need to apply generalizations of knowledge learned from experience directly while they are working. It can be seen that the working environment influences international employees’ development of their intercultural competence. Research studies on non-classroom based forms of intercultural education had demonstrated that experiential approaches learning intercultural communication competence had a direct positive impact on competence levels (Penington & Wildermuth, 2005).
Previously, the Campinha-Bacote (2002) cultural competence model had been used only for studies of cultural competence of healthcare delivery, but Penington and Wildmuth (2005) utilized this model to analyze the impact of short-term travel/study on American students’ development of intercultural communication competence through their trip to the European countries. However, the Campinha-Bacote cultural competence model has not been used for studies on international students in America before. The study abroad experience that international students have in America has very similar conditions to what the Campinha-Bacote (2002) cultural competence model aimed at exploring, which was cultural competence from overseas experiences. Especially for international student employees, they not only have study experience, but also work experiences. So this is the first study which combines international students’ work experiences with the Campinha-Bacote (2002) cultural competence model to explore the impact of work experience upon international student employees’ intercultural communication competence.

By looking at the categories of international student employees, there are many kinds of student employees on college campuses. For international students, two main job resources would be assistantships and dining services. Certain studies had been done by focusing on international students as teaching assistants through their communication in several professions (Jenkins, 2000). Especially in education, miscommunication, second language speakers, and students’ reactions to non-native teaching assistants have been conducted on intercultural communication competence of international teaching assistants (Jenkins, 2000; Nelson, 1992; Inglis, 1993). For international students who do
not have assistantships or a chance to work as a teaching assistant, dining services offers them another option for extra income and gaining work experience. International student dining services employees become a new group appearing on American college campuses experiencing intercultural communication. Since there are no previous studies focusing on this group of international students, as a communication investigator, it is interesting to see how international student employees’ dining services work experience influences their development of intercultural communication competence. Through their communication with customers, their co-workers and managers of dining services, international students are facing more verbal communications than non-verbal communications. Because of the job differences, international students who work for dining services would have more intercultural communication based on language; however, non-verbal communication is also a necessary part to explore in this thesis.

Overall, since there are no previous studies of this type in the intercultural communication field, the present research can be considered as a new topic for communication researches to analyze how, and to which degree the work experience of international student employees’ dining services work experience can influence the development of their intercultural communication competence by utilizing the Campinha-Bacote (2002) cultural competence model. Thus, the following research question is posed:

RQ: How do international student employees of dining services consider working on campus as helping with their development of intercultural communication competence?
CHAPTER III
METHOD

Due to the exploratory nature of this study, a qualitative methodology was used. The reason for using a qualitative research method was because the focus of this study was to explore the process and degree of the development of intercultural communication competence. According to Rubin and Rubin (1995), a qualitative method was appropriate for topics where “an in-depth understanding is best communicated through detailed examples and rich narratives” (p.51). A qualitative method supported in-depth interviews which could encourage participants to tell their own stories using language and style unique to them (Penington & Wildermuth, 2005).

Participants

This study aimed at selecting participants who were international students currently working for any type of dining services on an American campus, such as school cafeterias, coffee shops, and snack stores. There were no age, gender, or ethnic restrictions created for the participants. The participants in this study represented a snowball sample coming from an on campus cafeteria of a Midwest university, and consisted of students who volunteered for this study through face-to-face approval. The method of snowball sampling “yields a study sample through referrals made among
people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest” (as cited in Lindlof & Taylor, 2011, p. 130). All the participants who agreed to participate in this study were international students who are currently studying in this university. The participants in this study included four female and four male student employees who are currently working in the school cafeteria on campus. All four of the female student employees were graduate students, three of them were in their last semester of study and the other one was in her last semester of a second degree. There were two graduate students among the male student employees who were in the last semester of their study; the other two male students were both in their last semester of undergraduate studies.

The participants in this study included eight international college students who speak English as a second language, who are currently working in the school cafeteria. Three female and one male student are working as student managers and all of them already had more than one year work experience in the school cafeteria. All of the student managers were graduate students. Two of them came from Thailand and were studying for an MBA, one female and one male, both have been working in the cafeteria for one year and a half. The other student manager was a female who came from India, was majoring in Education, and has worked for three years in the school cafeteria. Their positions as student managers asked them to work in any section in the cafeteria where help was needed. The remaining four students are working in the cafeteria as student employees serving food in different sections. One female student came from Thailand, was majoring in Public Administration, and working at the Deli section in the cafeteria.
for one year and half. The other female student came from China, was majoring in Communication, and working as a floating employee. She worked from section to section as needed depending on her schedule, and she has been working in the cafeteria for one year and a half. One of the male students also came from China, was majoring in Chemistry, and working at the Asian section for one year. The other two male students, one came from Saudi Arabia and the other came from India, were undergraduates majoring in Computer Science and they both had worked in the Pizza section in the cafeteria for a year.

Data Collection

Data for this study were collected through face-to-face interviews with each international student employee after receiving permission from the interviewees (see consent form in Appendix B). All the interviews followed semi-structured interview protocols based on topics related to the research questions. All the names used for the participants in this study were picked by participants according to their preference; the names that were used in this study were not the real names of participants. The time of each interview was assigned according to the available time each participant offered. An interview guide (see attached Appendix A) was used for the interview, and all participants were encouraged to elaborate on their responses and provide as many details and personal examples as possible. Most interviews lasted for approximately thirty minutes, ranging from thirty minutes to forty five minutes. The interviews were audio recorded (after getting participants’ permission) and transcribed verbatim by the investigator.
Data Analysis

Grounded theory procedures and techniques (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) were used for data analysis in this study. All the transcripts were coded using a constant comparison analysis, and all the data were assigned to an emergent open coding scheme. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) suggested “when used to generate theory, the comparative analytical method they described could be applied to social units of any size” (p. 28). In order to better address the research question of how working for dining services on campus impacts student employees’ development of intercultural communication competence, the analysis was informed by the five core categories from the Campinha-Bacote communication competence model (2002) of knowledge, awareness, desire, encounter and skills. Then within these core categories, sub-categories were further developed during the coding process.

After looking at all the transcriptions closely, data were grouped and regrouped into the five categories of the Campinha-Bacote communication competency (2002) model. During the coding process, working environment and people who were involved in their working environment became two initial themes. After each transcript was coded, data from each interview was compared to the data which already had been coded into categories and emerging themes. When data was found that did not belong to any categories and themes that had previously existed, new categories were put into consideration. Memorandum (memo) was also used to record all the comparisons of new data and data which had been put into categories. Using memo helped guarantee data had been processed. Through the data analysis, one essential theme of workplace cultural
encounters was shown to be the main factor that helped with the development of communication competence, and it actually was the origin of other sub-themes and subcategories of cultural competence. Eventually, “workplace cultural encounters” had not been coded as a separate category, but used as the essential theme for the study. During the final stage of analysis, four sub-themes of gaining cultural knowledge, becoming culturally aware, increasing cultural desire and learning cultural skills were found from the data and coded into categories in the study. Subcategories also had been found and created under these sub-themes.
CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This study aimed at exploring how working for dining services on campus in the United States helped international student employees in developing their intercultural communication competence. One essential theme that the data analysis revealed was that international student employees in dining services perceived that they became more culturally competent through workplace cultural encounters. Aside from encounters with the different working rules and environment, most participants in this study agreed that the workplace cultural encounters were primarily from their interactions with people during their work. The individuals they encountered included customers, managers, and coworkers. Informed by the Campinha-Bacote (2002) communication competence model, one of the components, cultural encounter became the essential theme for this study. According to Campinha-Bacote (2002), each component that was included in the cultural competence model was interdependent. However, in this study, cultural encounter became the essential theme, which was also the main influence on the other four components. It was not viable to use the five components from the Campinha-Bacote (2002) cultural competence model for the following discussion of results since in this study cultural encounter was at a higher level than the other components. However, the
data also revealed that the other four components were relevant to the participants’ experiences. So, the essential theme and the four sub-themes in this study were renamed based on the five components of the Campinha-Bacote (2002) cultural competence model. The findings revealed that through workplace cultural encounters with different people and the working environment, the participants’ intercultural communication competence had been developed by gaining cultural knowledge, becoming culturally aware, increasing cultural desire and learning cultural skills.

Meanwhile, according to most of the participants, the reason they chose to work on campus was mainly because of extra income since many of them do not have assistantships or scholarships. However, some of the participants also viewed their job as a chance for them to learn language and American culture at the same time.

Workplace Cultural Encounters

As Penington and Wildermuth (2005) stated, encounter was conceptualized as “interaction with people, places or even objects that could potentially impact intercultural competency” (p. 172). From the interview with each participant, workplace cultural encounters were happening every day during their work. Coming from different cultural backgrounds, international students are facing cultural differences in their working environment and interaction with people. Especially by interacting with people, such as customers, managers, and coworkers, intercultural communication competency was developed through international student employees’ workplace cultural encounters. According to Campinha-Bacote (2002), cultural encounter referred to “directly participating intercultural competency through interaction with people from other
cultures” (p. 182). For each participant, the school cafeteria was not a place to work, but also their main location for daily communication.

In this study, workplace cultural encounters helped international student employees of dining services with their development of intercultural communication competence. From analysis of the data, through workplace cultural encounters, intercultural communication competence was developed by gaining cultural knowledge, becoming culturally aware, increasing cultural desire, and learning cultural skills.

Gaining Cultural Knowledge

According to Campinha-Bocote (2002), cultural knowledge was “the process of seeking and obtaining a sound understanding of the various world-views and specific physical, biological, historical, language, and etc. differences among various groups.” Other scholars also highlighted cognitive growth as an important component of the process of intercultural competency (Gudykunst, et al., 1991).

By working in a school cafeteria in America, most participants realized the differences between working in America and working in their native countries. Working also became a process of gaining American cultural knowledge. Malik, an undergraduate student from Saudi Arabia, who is working at the Pizza section, believed that the working environment changed him in some way. He found that the way American people managed their working time was very effective:

We have timecards; I have never seen that before. My manager told me to fill in my timecards every time when I come to work, because that is how I get paid. It shows the time I came in and leave for work, you know, you have to work on time, manager sees the time cards every day, it keeps me work on time and time is important for people [employees in the cafeteria] here. Because I work on time, it makes me realize the importance of time and also makes me do things on time.
Compared to Malik, Vik, who is an undergraduate student from India and working in the Pizza section in the school cafeteria, got a chance to know about American traditional holidays by talking with his American coworkers:

I could only get the general ideas of American holidays from the Internet or readings. When I talk with American students who are working with me, it is so interesting to hear different people having different opinions describing and celebrating the holidays… I was talking with them [American Coworkers] about Thanksgiving, one of the guys told me that the turkey their family had every year were hunted by themselves. However, another American girl was shocked by that since her family always buys turkey from the supermarket. I mean this is so interesting for me to hear different stories about their culture.

From working at the school cafeteria, another way participants accessed American culture was by witnessing American food culture. Kara, a graduate student from China who is working as a floating employee at the cafeteria, found that she knew a lot about American food, more than she realized:

Since I worked here, I know the names of different cheese. It is amazing that American people have to eat so many kinds of cheese, and it confused me at the beginning when I first started to work at the grill section. From working at the Asian section, it is interesting to see Americans have totally different kinds of American-Chinese food…since I have been working at different sections; I know what I need to make what kind of food. I even began to cook American food sometimes by myself since I know what I need…only when I was training new international students about the names of our food materials; they told me it is hard to remember which makes me realize I was just like them when I first started.

Aside from stating that the working customs were very different from their native countries, participants also learned greeting methods from communicating with customers. M, a graduate student from Thailand, who was working as a student manager in the cafeteria said:

I really felt confused about why people like to say “how are you” to each other… it’s like there is nothing happened and I didn’t know how to reply it. If I didn’t reply it, I felt it was kind of rude; when I did, I felt like maybe they want to talk
with me about something but they just stop talking when I replied. Then I found it was just the way people say “hi”.

Overall, working at the school cafeteria is also a chance to learn American culture for international students. From the working environment, interactions with people and the working process, international students gained cultural knowledge about America from cultural encounters. As Malik said, “I am living in America, studying in America, only when I am working it is the closest time I feel like I am with America culture since I am involved.”

Becoming Culturally Aware

As Campinha-Bocote (2002) described, cultural awareness is the process of “self-examination and in-depth exploration of one’s own personal and professional cultural background and the process becoming appreciative of and sensitive to the values, beliefs, lifestyles and practice of the other” (p. 371). From working in a different country, most participants found that they became more confident and comfortable about working and communicating with Americans through cultural encounters. Through the interviews with international student employees, cultural awareness developed through understanding of social values, customs, and systems. According to Hammer et al. (1976) and Abe and Wiseman (1983), individuals must understand the social customers and social systems of the host culture to be competent with their intercultural communication. Through working in the school cafeteria, all the participants felt they better fit themselves into the American culture after they learned more about America. There are two sub categories that have been found for better discussion of cultural awareness: self-awareness and stereotyping.
Self-awareness

According to Spitzberg and Cupach (1984), self-awareness is “the ability to monitor or be aware of oneself so that one can implement conversationally competent behaviors in interaction” (p. 45). It also showed that it was an important ability to help individuals to better adapt to other cultures (Brislin, 1979; Gudykunst et al. 1977; Triandies, 1977). Beger and Bradac (1982) also indicated that a person with a higher self-monitoring ability was more competent in interaction since they could adjust to different situations. Nu, a graduate student from Thailand, who is working as a student manager in the school cafeteria was talking about how he liked the way Americans work:

I feel like American people are on the equal positions, I mean the same level during their work. In Thailand, you have to respect your boss very much. Since I worked here [the United States]; I never feel the relationship between employees and managers is tense. My manager, she is very nice to me and everyone who works here. She likes joking with the employees and always asking for their feelings about their job. I even can talk with her about TV shows, and I like it. Everyone works like friends and there is no clear level in the working place. I became friends with my coworkers and I like joking with them a lot. Actually, it is very rare to see joking with your manager in Thailand and when your boss tells you to do something, it is a task you have to finish. I really enjoy working here.

Aside from the relaxing working environment, Vik found that Americans are very open and direct. He said “Sometimes when I ask question, it can be a sensitive question related to religious or politics. They [American coworkers] do not get upset or angry; they tell what they think.” Meanwhile, as Malik felt, “Americans are very open-topic, you can talk anything with them.”

After living and working in America for a while, most participants felt Americans are very polite and friendly. M felt surprised about how polite Americans are:
American people say ‘thank you’ all the time, especially when I serve people in the cafeteria. In Thailand, people show thankful when you help them with big things. In America, customers are saying ‘thank you’ even you just serve them food. For me, I am just doing my job. I was shocked when I first worked here that everyone was so polite to each other… Americans are friendly and they smile a lot. I was kind of shy when people smile at me a lot, then I realized that it is the way people show friendly. Compared to my country, people are friendly and nice, but they do not smile to strangers. Even now I say ‘thank you’ a lot to people.

Overall, when international students were aware of American social values and customs, they found themselves adjusting to the working environment easier.

Stereotyping

As Penington and Wildermuth (2009) described, stereotyping was the “faulty generations one has of another group can perpetuate the notion that the group is inferior to one’s own” (p. 176). Most participants were talking about how different America was compared to what they heard and knew before they came here. Malik found out that America was not as dangerous as people described it in his country when he was talking with his coworkers:

I thought it would be dangerous since people were talking about everyone in America can have guns before I came. When I first came here, I always heard other international students talking about how dangerous around our campus. I was afraid when I heard the news and especially when people were talking about robbery happened around. I can feel that American students feel the same way as I do, they are afraid about all the bad things that happened around. However, it is the same with anywhere, no matter where you go, dangerous existed especially when you go to a different country… it is not true that everyone has gun here.

Ni, a graduate student from India, who is working as a student manager in the school cafeteria shared her story about drinking and going to the bars in America:

In my country, especially as a woman, I am not allowed to drink any alcohol. It is bad and people will think you are a bad woman if you drink, especially going to the bars. When I first came here, I heard American coworkers talking about drinking and going to bars all the time. I thought it was so bad, sometimes girls
talk about it and one American girl even invited me to go to the bars with her and her friends. I felt they were bad girls and I was afraid to hang out with them... but I found out that drinking and going to bars were not bad things here. I mean it depends on what you drink and where you go, but it is the way people choose to relax. The guys [American coworkers] told me that sometimes the bar is a good place to watch sports games and hang out with friends; you can also order food and eat at the same time. It changed my thought totally when I talked with them.

Through working on campus for the dining services, participants felt that they were not only finding a place to work, but a place to get in touch with American people and their culture. Most of participants agreed that they had changed their thoughts about America in some way through their cultural encountering in their working place. As M said, “Only when you are here, you know what it really looks like.”

Increasing Cultural Desire

Campinha-Bocote (2002) described cultural desire was “the motivation of individual to want to, rather than have to, engage in the process of becoming culturally aware, knowledgeable, skillful and familiar with cultural encounters” (p. 182). According to Koskinen and Tossavaninen’s (2003) explanation, intercultural desire was conceptualized as “a general motivation of ‘want to’ rather than ‘have to’ interact with those of another culture” (p. 371). The willingness to communicate is influenced by a person’s willingness to communicate with people outside of their ethnic group, and the anxiety which is derived from actual or expected interchange with people from different cultural backgrounds (Neuliep, 2000). According to the participants, working at school cafeteria helped increasing their desire to communicate, and there were two kinds of motivation that encouraged them to communicate in their working place: self-motivation and motivation from others.
Self-motivation

Most international student employees agreed in their interviews that they are more willing to communicate actively in their working place. According to Vik, finding a job was like finding a place to talk:

I am kind of a quiet person and I do not talk much with other while I am not working. It is also hard for me to find a chance to talk with Americans outside the classroom. When I come to work, I finally find a place to meet different people and talk to Americans. Even I know that I may not be friends with them, it is always fine to talk and it is also a way to show friendly. I enjoying talking with people while I am working, I talk to everyone, such as customers, managers and coworkers; it is fun to talk to different people.

Meanwhile, having conversations with people in the working place was also the best way to make friends and get information. Sara, a graduate student from Thailand who is working at the Deli section, said:

I am happy working here because I meet people here and become friends with them. Sometimes, my classmates came here and I have a chance to talk with them beyond class time… I think the best way to make friends is talking, I like talking to people. Talking helps me getting information and working here is like working in an information center. Not only can I get information about my job from coworkers, I get informed about my school work from my classmates when they come here. Most of people complain about jobs like this, but I like it a lot because I can talk to people whenever I want to.

Through daily cultural encountering in their working place, International students eventually found a place to communicate and meeting people except for going to class. As Nu said, “If I was not working here, I would never had chance to share my thoughts and ideas with Americans.”

Motivation from “Others”

Students who are like Vik and Sara, they had the desire to communicate through their cultural encounters in their work place mainly because they were willing to have
communication by themselves. However, some other international student employees become active communicators because of the influence of “others” in their work place. Ni agreed that it was American coworkers who totally changed her to a person who was much more willing to talk openly:

When I was new, I don’t talk to people; I just work, very hard. Sometimes I would talk to other international students, I felt more comfortable talking with them since I know they were like me. Then other coworkers [Americans] began to talk with me after I worked here for a while. They asked me about my country and they shared stories with me about what happened every day. I found it was so much fun to work here when you can talk with people. Now I know people here, they are friendly and they started to make me becoming talkative. I become friends with my coworkers and I started to like making friends with people again and hanging out with them.

One of the challenges for international students was unfamiliarity. Through cultural encountering, international students could get familiar with everything around them easier. Not only were their American coworkers helping them, but also customers. After they knew how accomplish their work related activities, they began to have fun during their work. Wang, a graduate student from China working at the Asia section said,

I have to communicate with customers here [the cafeteria], it forced me to speak more. You know, if I am in class only, most of the time I just listen and, you know, I want to share comments and questions in class sometimes, we are international students, I am afraid to speak in class. But when I am working here, I talk to customers every day. I feel more confident speaking English and serving customers by saying ‘hello, how are you’ first... I like talking with people now; I even can talk with strangers first now.

Overall, the cultural encounters the participants were facing through their daily work at the school cafeteria offered them a platform of communication. It was the cultural encounter within their working environment and interaction with people that helped international student employees in building their confidence to be competent in their
intercultural communication. As Nu said, “I was so glad that I got hired and able to work here. I feel so happy that I can communicate with everyone here and I am really enjoying it.”

Learning Cultural Skills

As the Campinha-Bocote (2002) cultural competence model suggested, cultural desire developed with knowledge, awareness, and skill. When international students become more confident and comfortable communicating through cultural encounters in their workplace, not only do they become more competent with their intercultural communication, but some additional skills were developed. According to Chen (1989), communication skills implied “individuals must be competent in verbal and nonverbal behaviors” (p. 120). Because of the job requirements, the participants agreed that the most frequently used method for nonverbal communication was smiling. As Kara said, “We are required to smile when we are working, because it can make customers happy and it also shows the politeness.” Hand signals also had been used, however, not all the participants agreed about how or how often they had been used. According to Nu, he used hand signals only when he started this job because of his poor English,

I used a lot of hand signals when I first started, because my English was very bad. I used my hands to describe what I mean and want most of the time, however, when I get more used to this job, I know how it works and I don't use it [hand signals] anymore. I mean it is easy to get used to this job since you done it once, then you know how to do it. Especially when my English got better, I feel more comfortable to speak.

Except for smiles and hand signals, most participants agreed that the skills which had been developed the most were relating to speaking. There are three cultural skills the
participants mentioned that have been developed through their encounters in the work place: English speaking, listening and asking questions.

**English Speaking**

As most participants mentioned, the skill that had been most developed through their daily cultural encountering and communication in their work place was their English speaking skill. M stated how one of her American coworkers helped her with her use of English during their work:

Most of my coworkers are nice people; they teach me how to use English correctly. Like before I did not know how to use “a little bit”, but I want to use it so I tried to use it at any situations. Then one day a girl told me that I should not use it when there are a lot of things. She explained it to me; I finally know how to use it correctly. I feel thankful that I have people to ask and correct my English while I am working.

For most of participants, their English became better and better through encounters within their job, Vik even thought that he spoke too much English:

My English was definitely getting better when I am talking with everyone here [the school cafeteria]. I like it and I mean this is the kind of the reason why I came here. I want to practice and since I am in America, I want to speak English and I talk a lot with American coworkers…it was very funny that because I speak English too much that I forgot some words in my mother tongue. I felt that is so interesting and I feel happy about that… In India, not many people can speak English. If I can speak English very well, it is a proud of my family that I can speak English well.

**Listening**

During the communication through cultural encounters in the work place, international students found that their English skill was developed beginning first with listening. As Nu said:

When I first came here, I do not speak English since I was still learning the language. Working here helped me a lot with my English, especially oral English.
However, I listened a lot when I first started. When I listened, I learned the way how people speak and using words. The most difficult thing for me is how to use the words and sentences I learned in the real life. Working here helped me, every day I come to work, I practice what I heard and learned from others directly. I am so glad I am working here.

Similar to Nu, Ni found that listening to others also helped her with her English listening skill:

I speak Hindi [an Indian language] when I first came to America and I like listening to radio a lot when I was in India. Since I came here, everywhere speaks English and I don’t understand. After I worked here, I listen a lot every day; I listen to customers, my manager and other coworkers. I listen a lot and it actually helped me with understanding English. Now I can hear radio in America about news and songs in my car, and I can understand what other people are talking about rather than just be an outsider of the conversation.

Asking Questions

While working in America, another thing international student employees are facing is confusion. According to the participants, most of the confusion was caused by language. Asking questions became an essential skill for international student employees during their work every day. Meanwhile, most of them found that asking questions helped them learning American culture, most importantly, English. For Kara, she found that her English skill benefited from asking questions. She said:

When I feel confused or I do not understand others during my work, I always ask. I usually ask people to repeat or ask American coworkers come to help me. Sometimes, I understand people when they repeat it again, if not I feel I need to learn more. It actually motivated me to learn English because that is one of the reasons why I came to America…If I do not understand customers; I ask other American coworker came to help me. From their conversation and explanation from the coworker, I remember the meaning and next time I know how to handle it.

Compared to Kara, Wang found out that asking questions was also the best way to start a conversation. Wang said, “People always say that it is hard to find topic to speak with
Americans when they want to practice English. However, I think what you need to do is just ask questions.”

Overall, different kinds of cultural skills developed through the participants’ cultural encounters during their work on campus. Through the interviews with international students, most of them implied that the skills developed their English language ability. However, most participants also agreed that the increase of their English skill was only limited to speaking and listening, which caused different emotional feelings in the participants. According to Sara, she felt disappointed that she could not learn the words for her class while she is working:

I don’t think the words I learned here helped me with my school work, you know, every word related to food. I have to read more from the text book when I deal with the professional words for my homework.

Meanwhile, M commented this about this topic:

…of course, I learned a lot of words from working here. However, I cannot use the words I leaned here in my paper when I am doing my homework. When I am in class, it is still hard for me to follow what the professor said, because you cannot hear lectures through working and people do not talk about school stuff during their work.

Vik also agreed with this and he felt upset when he realized that when he goes to class, the English that is used becomes totally different:

I am fine with talking and I can talk everything here. I practice my English during my work every day, I like that a lot. When I talk everyone can understand me, but I am so bad at writing. I cannot write. Especially when I am writing papers, my grades are always so bad. I feel very upset about that; I hope that I can just ‘talk’ about my paper instead of writing.

Through their dining services work experience, international student employees got the chance to encounter the United States in a different and, according to the
participants of this study, closer way. From the interviews with international student employees, the data showed that workplace cultural encounters were the main cause for the development of intercultural communication competence. The results further showed that the participants’ communication competence developed by gaining cultural knowledge, becoming culturally aware, increasing cultural desire and learning cultural skills. Through these four sub-themes, it was clear that international student employees were competent in their communication with Americans in different ways and their workplace cultural encounters impacted their life and studies in the United States.
CHAPTER V
DISCUSSION

This study was designed to explore how do international student employees of dining services consider working on campus as helping with their development of intercultural communication competence. By utilizing the Campinha-Bocote (2002) cultural competence model, this study argued that individuals become more culturally competent when they experience cultural encounters and interactions from within a different culture. It showed that cultural competence could be developed in five components: cultural knowledge, cultural awareness, cultural desire, cultural skill and cultural encounter.

Based on the Campinha-Bacote (2002) cultural competence model, this study found that most of the participants agreed that it was their daily workplace cultural encounters that influenced the development of their intercultural communication competence. As Campinha-Bocote (2002) argued, people who were “continually in the process of becoming more competent and that progress is dependent upon practice through cultural encounters” (p. 167). By working on campus in the school cafeteria, the participants were experiencing cultural encounters every day in their working environment and through interactions with customers, managers and American coworkers.
Especially through the interaction with people who were involved in their working environment, most of the participants felt that they eventually had a chance to get involved in communication with Americans outside of the classroom.

After analyzing the data, workplace cultural encounters became the essential theme for this study. By looking at the Campinha-Bacote (2002) communication competence model, each component, cultural awareness, cultural desire, cultural knowledge, cultural skill, and cultural encounter, were interdependent. However, cultural encounter became the main factor that influenced the other components in this study, but it was not viable to utilize cultural encounter as the essential theme in this study. Meanwhile, according to the participants, the other four components from the Campinha-Bacote (2002) model were also found to be related to this study. So, the main theme and four other sub-themes in this study were renamed based on the five components of the Campinha-Bacote (2002) cultural competence model. The results showed that through workplace cultural encounters with people and the environment, the participants’ intercultural communication competence was developed by gaining cultural knowledge, becoming culturally aware, increasing cultural desire and learning cultural skills. Since most of the participants do not have assistantships or scholarships, many of them agreed that their main reason to work on campus was to gain extra income. However, some of the participants also viewed their on campus job as an opportunity for them to learn language skills and American culture.

With the first component of cultural knowledge, the opinions were varied according to different participants. However, most participants agreed that the cultural
encounters during their daily work did help them with learning about America, such as American traditional holidays, food culture social values and customs. The influence of cultural encounter included the working environment and interactions with people.

The second component, cultural awareness, was regarded as being developed from two aspects: self-awareness and stereotyping. After cultural encounters within their work place, international students were aware of aspects which were different or favorable for them in America. For self-awareness, participants expressed that through the encountering of cultural differences, they realized they could adjust to the way Americans work and live easier. For the aspect of stereotyping, participants found out that America was different from what they heard and leaned before they actually encountered the American environment and the cafeteria on campus offered them a place to experience the real America.

The third component, cultural desire, had been developed mostly through interactions with people in the school cafeteria. There were two factors that helped international student employees in the development of their cultural desire: self-motivation and motivation from other people who they encounter. The data revealed that students who were self-motivated were willing to communicate because their job eventually offered them a place to have communication with Americans, such as coworkers and American managers. However, students who were motivated by “others”, showed that they became more confident and comfortable with communication because of the encouragement from the customers and coworkers.
The fourth component, cultural skills were developed through three aspects: English speaking, listening and asking questions. By looking through the data, participants agreed that their English speaking had been improved through their daily communication within their work place, which mostly involved communication with American coworkers. The ways their English speaking had been improved was mainly through learning new vocabulary, and understanding the way words and sentences were used correctly. Some of the participants also found that they could also improve their English through listening to English conversations with others. It also improved their listening skill which enabled them to get involved in their American life easier. The third aspect, asking questions, was agreed upon by some of the participants who stated that it was a good method for them to learn English and communicate during their cultural encounters in their work place. However, participants also commented that cultural encounters during their dining service job only helped with their oral English including listening and talking, which showed no big impact or offered little help with their school work and academic English study, such as writing skills and academic listening skills.

Overall, the results of this study contributed to the field of intercultural communication studies. It qualified findings from earlier studies about cultural competence and clarified the development of intercultural communication competence through international student employees of dining services on an American campus. Most importantly, it supported the studies about international student employees, especially as one of the rare studies on international student employees who are working for dining services. Since there was a dearth of research on this particular group of individuals, the
present study can contribute to a better understanding of international student employees and the influence of their dining service job on their daily intercultural communication competence. The findings also showed that working for dining services on campus, such as a school cafeteria or stores, could offer an environment for international student employees’ development of intercultural communication competence. Through true stories and experiences from international student employees who are currently working in dining service jobs, this study offered evidence for future studies on international students and their abroad experiences.

Study Limitations

While this study presented information about how and to what degree did international student employees’ dining services work experience influence their development of intercultural communication, several limitations existed through this study. First, all the international students who participated in this study were from Asia and/or Asia Minor, which could cause the similar comments on cultural differences because of their similar cultural backgrounds. Because of this, the population of participants for this study was not very variable.

Second, all the participants were from the same school cafeteria on a Midwest university. Since they were all working at the same place, it could cause the possibility to have very similar comments. Meanwhile, because all the international student employees who participated in this study were obtained through a snowball sampling method, each participant would have the possibility to know who had participated in this study. This may have caused the participants to have more positive comments.
Third, because of the familiarity of this school cafeteria and all the participants in this study to the investigator, there could be possible positive response bias.

Possible Future Research

For future studies, the sample of the participants could be more variable than just limited to being from the same areas. A more variable sample could be acquired from other school cafeterias in the university or from cafeterias at other universities to get a more diverse group of participants, which may be able to solve the problem of familiarity.

Based on this study, several topics could be developed in future studies. First, the leadership level of the participants could be the sample for future exploration of the relationship within intercultural group working environments. Second, based on this study, research also could compare the intercultural communication experience with different types of international student employees on American university campuses, such as student employees with internships and who working in dining services. It also could be a possibility to find international students who had both of these working experiences, which would be interesting to see how different working experiences influence intercultural communication competence or give them different communication experiences. Third, the intercultural communication competence also could be studied in the intercultural group working within today’s globalized world. By combining organizational communication an interpersonal communication, the topic could be extended to examine multicultural groups working in global organizations, and how people from different cultural backgrounds working together help them in developing their intercultural communication competence through intercultural communication.
Conclusion

This study offered fundamental research for international student employees of dining services and the impact and degree of their dining service job experiences on their intercultural communication competence. Although there were limitations existing in the study, it validated the earlier studies of intercultural communication competence and how overseas experiences could influence individuals’ abilities to be intercultural competent in a different country. Meanwhile, the results of this study presented a new group of people, international student employees of dining services, to the field of intercultural communication, which could extend and influence the studies of intercultural communication and communication competence in the future.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

November 27, 2012

Ran Lei
738 Crane Walk, Apt. D
Akron, Ohio 44306

From: Sharon McWhorter, IRB Administrator


Thank you for submitting your Exemption Request for the referenced study. Your request was approved on November 26, 2012. The protocol represents minimal risk to subjects and matches the following federal category for exemption:

☐ Exemption 1 – Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices.

☑ Exemption 2 – Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior.

☐ Exemption 3 – Research involving the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior not exempt under category 2, but subjects are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.

☐ Exemption 4 – Research involving the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens.

☐ Exemption 5 – Research and demonstration projects conducted by or subject to the approval of department or agency heads, and which are designed to study, evaluate, or otherwise examine public programs or benefits.

☐ Exemption 6 – Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies.

Annual continuation applications are not required for exempt projects. If you make changes to the study’s design or procedures that increase the risk to subjects or include activities that do not fall within the approved exemption category, please contact me to discuss whether or not a new application must be submitted. Any such changes or modifications must be reviewed and approved by the IRB prior to implementation.

Please retain this letter for your files. This office will hold your exemption application for a period of three years from the approval date. If you wish to continue this protocol beyond this period, you will need to submit another Exemption Request. If the research is being conducted for a master’s thesis or doctoral dissertation, the student must file a copy of this letter with the thesis or dissertation.

Cc: Patricia Hill - Advisor
Cc: Valerie Callanan – IRB Chair

☑ Approved consent form(s) enclosed

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APPENDIX B
CONSENT FORM

APPENDIX A

Consent to Participate in a Study:
Working on Campus: A Qualitative Investigation of the Development of Intercultural Communication Competence of International Student Employees

You are being asked to participate in a research study about development of intercultural communication competence of international student employees. This study is being conducted by Ran Lei, a graduate student in the School of Communication at The University of Akron. This study is being conducted as a requirement for an M.A. Project at The University of Akron.

Your involvement in this study will be a face-to-face interview. Upon your agreement for participating, several questions will be asked through the interview by taping, and it will take approximately thirty minutes to one hour. There are no psychological or legal risks involved in participating in this study. All participation is completely voluntary, and you do not have to answer any questions with which you are uncomfortable. There are no costs associated with participating in the study or tangible reward offered in association with participation in this study. However, your time and effort in contributing to the study are greatly appreciated.

This study is a requirement for a master’s degree. Therefore, the professors will have knowledge of the information you provide, and all the information will be typed upon permission. Participation in this study is voluntary and you have the right to refuse to participate or withdraw from the study at any time. Through the interview, your name will be pseudonyms. Your name will not be used in any publication or presentation of results and no one will be able to link your responses to you. Overall, your private information will be protected and your participation will remain anonymous.

If you have any questions about the study, you may contact me at 615-970-1949 or rh33@zips.uakron.edu, or Dr. Patricia S. Hill, Associate Professor, School of Communication, The University of Akron at 330-972-6486 or phill@uakron.edu. You may also contact the Institutional Review Board, Office of Research Services at The University of Akron by calling Ms. Sharon McWhorter, Associate Director, ORSSP 330-972-8311 or smw46@uakron.edu, with questions about your rights as a volunteer in this study.

If you agree to participate, please sign and return this consent. You can keep a copy of this consent for future reference.

__________________________   ____________________________
Signature of Participant   Date   Signature of Investigator   Date

APPROVED

IFB
Date 11/28/15
The University of Akron

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APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Where are you from and can you describe your country?
2. How long have you been in America?
3. How long have you been at this university?
4. What’s your major?
5. Where do you work and what is your working position?
6. How long you have been working there?
7. Why did you choose to work for dining services on campus?
8. What do you usually do for your job?
9. Please describe your typical work day.
10. Do you like your job and if so what is your favorite part of your job?
11. Are you happy while you are working and if so what makes you happy?
12. How often do you communicate with other co-workers, Americans or other international students?
13. How do you feel when you are working with Americans?
14. How do you think working for dining services helps you with your English?
15. In what way does your job help you with your English?
16. What are the differences between American culture and your culture?
17. How do you think working in dining services helps you with understanding of America culture?

18. What have you learned about America while you were at work?

19. Have you ever felt uncomfortable because of the cultural differences and why?

20. How has your work changed you and why?

21. How do you feel if you don’t understand the customers? Do you ask for help and to whom?

22. Do you use nonverbal communication during your work, such as body language, facial expression or gestures, if so what kind and how?

23. What are the differences in the use of nonverbal communication between your country and America?

24. How do you feel if you make mistakes during your work?

25. Have you ever felt upset or pressured when you feel confused about culture or language during your work?

26. What do you usually do when you have these feelings?

27. What are the difference of the work environment between your country and America?

28. What makes you feel that it is hard to adjust to the work environment in America?

29. Do you feel pressured while you are working every day?

30. Is there anything you’d like to add?