ACTIVE VERBAL PARTICIPATION IN U.S. CLASSROOMS: PERCEPTIONS OF EAST ASIAN INTERNATIONAL GRADUATE STUDENTS

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
The Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of The Ohio State University

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The Ohio State University
2007

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ABSTRACT

East Asian international graduate students (EAGS) report frustration and isolation while interacting with university instructors and American classmates. Not much attention has been paid to matriculated ESL students beyond the language classroom in spite of the growing expectation of all students for verbal classroom participation in content classrooms in U.S. higher education.

The purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of EAGS’s academic oral communication needs and verbal participation in U.S. graduate courses. The two-phase design approach is applied by surveying 139 EAGS and interviewing 15 EAGS at a large Midwestern research university.

The survey findings revealed that EAGS believe that raising questions and participating in whole-class discussions are the two most frequently expected oral tasks in graduate courses. EAGS were most concerned about leading class discussions and participating in whole-class discussions. EAGS considered listening
comprehension and participation in whole-class discussions to be the most important skills for academic success, and pronunciation and note-taking, the least important.

Most EAGS in the two group interviews shared similar views with their university instructors and American classmates, associating active class participation with verbal participation. At the same time, some EAGS argued that remaining silent, but attentively listening is another way to actively engage in class. Some wanted to remain legitimately silent through peripheral participation, especially at the early stages of their academic life in the U.S.

EAGS in both the survey and group interviews reported the importance for all parties—content-area university instructors, domestic students, and international students—to be aware of linguistic and cultural diversity of EAGS and to share the communication burden in order to promote EAGS’s verbal classroom participation in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms.

Several important issues and specific pedagogical suggestions for English for Academic Purposes course planning and material development have emerged from the current study. These can help better prepare ESL students with oral communication skills that they need in order to succeed in university content classrooms. The present study also provides teaching strategies for all university instructors to create more
inclusive classroom environments, where linguistic and cultural diversity of EAGS is appreciated.
Dedicated to my beloved husband, Seongyeon (Honest) Kim, 김 성연
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Many people have accompanied my long journey throughout the research process of this dissertation. First and foremost, I would like to thank all survey respondents and group interview participants in my study.

I am grateful to my dissertation committee members, Dr. Keiko Samimy, Dr. Kalish, and Dr. Soter. I would especially like to acknowledge and thank my dissertation advisor and long-time mentor, Dr. Keiko Samimy, for her encouragement and guidance. She has always been with me through my academic and professional journey during my graduate work at Ohio State – as a trusted and experienced counselor, cheerleader, and close colleague. My special thanks also go to Director of Faculty and TA Development Dr. Alan Kalish, who has been a long-term friend, colleague, and mentor to me, for regularly reading multiple drafts of my dissertation and sharing his expertise in faculty development. I would like to also acknowledge my two external mentors, Dr. Deborah Crusan at Wright State University and Dr. Ryuko
Kubota at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill for their encouragement
and support.

Among my peers, many academic and personal friends have contributed to my
work in different ways. I thank the dissertation support group members, Dr. Chiho
Kobayashi, Yuka Kuhihara, Dr. Yesim Bektas Cetinkaya, and Jihyun Jeon, for their
valuable feedback on earlier versions of my dissertation. I also would like to thank
JuYoung Song, who has always been available to listen to my highs and lows and
with whom I had some sleepless nights during the writing stage. I am deeply indebted
to Dr. Masataka Kasai, a long-term dissertation support group member and
collaborator, for his unlimited friendship and his intellectually stimulating and
challenging feedback from the early stages of my proposal until the present. I also
wish to thank those who helped me handle various statistical issues during my survey
data analysis and writing stage, especially the statistical consultants at The Ohio State
University, Dr. Sheryl Dingus, Jeni Squiric, and Jeff Pan, and my statistics professor
at Ohio State, Dr. Larry Miller. I am also grateful to my dear friends and my
daughter’s godparents, Julie and Michael Jacobson, for their unlimited love, support,
and belief in me.

This research was supported by the following research grants from The Ohio
State University: (a) alumni grants for graduate research and scholarship; (b) new
diversity initiative research grant; (c) Sonkin-Berman-Wasserman families’ scholarship for international understanding and peace; and (d) critical difference for women’s professional development grant. Additional funding from several sources in the form of travel grants, including the POD Diversity Committee Travel Grants by the Professional and Organizational Development in Higher Education and TESOL Professional Development Scholarships, made it possible for me to present earlier findings of this study at major national and international conferences and to improve my dissertation based on valuable feedback from multiple audiences. I would like to acknowledge that a different version of the text related to some of the survey findings appears in my recent publication through *English for Specific Purposes* (Kim, 2006).

Finally, I am deeply indebted to my family. My father, now deceased, Jeongho Kim, 김정호, and my mother, Eulsoon Chae, 채을순, have always been the strongest motivation for me to pursue my degree. Also, a big, special hug goes to Jeanie Jungmin Kim, 김정민, my four-year-old daughter, for being with me throughout my dissertation research journey. Last, but not least, I am most grateful to Seongyeon (Honest) Kim, 김성연, for being my long-term friend and my long-term research assistant, as well as being my husband and the father of our daughter. It is a very well-known fact that my dissertation would not have been possible without him.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since I started living in the States, I have felt pushed to talk and talk all the time, in class, at work, or even in person. The people always want to hear something from me. However, I am not a person who always makes a comment, especially in public. I am willing to talk only when I think I need to address the issue. Other than that, I rather stay thinking instead of pushing myself to talk. Even though I didn’t participate in the discussion in a class or a meeting in Korea, nobody, I believe, seemed to think of me as not intelligent or critical. However, here I realized that they think I am ignorant of the topic or do not have any idea to contribute if I don’t say anything.

(Suhee\(^1\), a doctoral student from South Korea, stay about one year in the U.S.A., personal communication, October 2001)

1.1 Problem Statement

Suhee is not alone. Her unease or unwillingness to speak up in class seem to be shared by many non-native English-speaking (NNES hereafter) international students in predominantly native English-speaking (NES) U.S. university content classrooms.

Although she is unwilling to speak up in public, she feels pressured to speak up in order to demonstrate both her topic knowledge and language ability. Not doing so, she fears,

\(^{1}\) The interview data were excerpted from my previous study (Kim, 2002) in relation to university ESL students’ classroom participation in U.S. graduate-level courses. The name used here and all other names, except one, in the current study are pseudonyms.
sends a message to university instructors and NES peers that she does not have enough language proficiency or that she does not have the necessary content knowledge. Like her, many NNES international students in NES-dominant American university classrooms have reported feelings of frustration and inadequacy while interacting with domestic peers (e.g., Leki, 2001; Liu, 1996, 2001; Morita, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2004).

International students are an important component of campus diversification and internationalization in U.S. universities. According to *Open Doors,* there were more than half a million international students studying in U.S. universities and colleges in the academic year 2005-2006. Their presence in U.S. university classrooms exposes domestic students to diverse cultures, languages, and perspectives and improves cross-cultural communication skills. Creating a collaborative learning environment between international students and American students encourages genuine dialogue among all students from diverse backgrounds, and provides domestic students with an invaluable experience to broaden their global perspectives. Furthermore, the presence of international students promotes the international appeal of universities, contributes to better international relations, and often increases visible diversity (*Institute of International Education, 2005*).

In spite of the large number of international students and their great impact on U.S. education, however, little is known specifically about the inclusion of international

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2 *Open Doors* is the annual report on international academic mobility published by the Institute of International Education (IIE) with support from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.
students in academic classroom communities. Our universities emphasize that a diverse environment is central to their mission and to their academic goals. This belief has long been professed, but we, as academics, have neither acted aggressively nor consistently on it. Unfortunately, the linguistic and cultural diversity that international students bring to the university is not universally appreciated and welcomed (Less, 2003). On the other hand, numerous studies (e.g., Banks & Banks, 1999; Gay, 2000; Neito, 2002; Ogbu, 1978) have examined barriers to access and retention for racial and ethnic American minority students. In failing to create a welcoming learning environment for international students, we overlook tremendous internationalization resources in a global community and underserve an important constituency for campus diversity. By paying more attention to the diversity international students bring to U.S. higher education and furthermore by enhancing their interactions with domestic students, we can create a campus environment that truly values diversity, is enriched by it, and is welcoming and supportive of all people.

East Asian students3, the research participants in this study, are the largest international student group in U.S. higher education. The four East Asian countries account for almost half of the total foreign student population in the United States.

3 East Asia includes China, Hong Kong, Japan, Macau, Mongolia, North Korea, Singapore, South Korea, and Vietnam according to the geographic and cultural definition. However, East Asia for the purpose of this study refers to China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan. East Asia is also called Eastern Asia or Far East.
Students from China (62,582) are the largest international student population; students from South Korea (58,847) the third; students from Japan (38,712), the fourth; and students from Taiwan (27,876), the sixth. East Asian international graduate students in particular, form a significant community within graduate studies (Open Doors 2006).

East Asian international graduate students (EAGS, hereafter) in English-speaking countries report frustration and isolation while interacting with instructors and domestic classmates in class (e.g., Leki, 2001; Liu, 1996, 2001; Morita, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2004). Many university instructors also express their frustration and difficulties in encouraging EAGS to actively engage in class. East Asian students are, as a group, typically labeled negatively as silent or passive and their reticence or passivity tends to be interpreted as linguistic deficiency or as a characteristic of their Asian culture (for a similar argument, Cheng, 2000; Duff, 2002; Jones, 1999; Liu & Littlewood, 1997; Spack, 1997). These insights prompt us to ask some questions: Under what conditions and to what extent do EAGS participate in class? What are the thoughts, feelings, and perspectives of EAGS when remain relatively silent in the classroom?

It is worthwhile to examine EAGS’s own perspectives and experiences related to their academic oral communication-related challenges. Verbal participation is a regular feature of American classrooms in many disciplines, often in the format of seminars or lecture-discussion type classes and plays a significant role in the academic enculturation process (Lucas & Murry, 2002; McKeachie, 2002; Myers & Jones, 1993). To achieve academic success, students are required to have a good command of English in general
and of the discourse of their individual discipline in particular (Ferris, 1998; Less, 2003; Kim, 2006; Murphy, 2006; Murphy, Mendelsohn, Folse, & Goodwin, 2005; Parkhurst & Bodwell, 2005).

Oral classroom participation is an especially important area of concern in graduate courses. American universities, particularly at the graduate level, value discussion as a learning tool. At the graduate level, the seminar is a very common format that requires students to take responsibility within the oral classroom discourse (Edward, 1996). Students are required to develop and hone their “speaking-to-learning” abilities (Murphy, 2006, p.31) in English in order to succeed in American classrooms. Graduate students need to be actively involved in oral participation through thesis or dissertation oral defenses, as well. Research has demonstrated that engaging in classroom discussions, especially participating in whole-group discussions, is one of the most problematic areas for international students, as identified by both teachers and students themselves (Ferris, 1998; Ferris & Tagg, 1996b; Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001; Kim, 2006). Therefore, understanding how EAGS perceive their own roles in classroom discussions and being aware of the conditions that allow creation of an inclusive environment for them provide important university pedagogical and policy implications. In addition to the significance of oral participation as graduate students for their academic development, their active oral engagement is also important possibly as instructors through teaching assistantships, and as academic colleagues through their conference presentations for their professional development (Kim, 2006; Morita, 2004, 2006).
In spite of the growing expectation for verbal classroom participation in higher education and concerns and difficulties of NNES university students in content classrooms and their instructors, not much research attention has been paid to matriculated ESL students beyond the language classroom. Furthermore, most previous studies of ESL students in the ESL field have focused heavily on reading and writing, without paying much attention to speaking and listening, except extensive research on the issues of international teaching assistants (ITAs) (for a similar argument, see Ferris, 1998; Ferris & Tagg, 1996a, 1996b; Robinson, Stong, Whittle, & Nobe, 2001 in Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001; Morita, 2002, 2004). We, as ESL professionals, need to direct our efforts toward conducting more research on academic oral communication skills, in order to assist university ESL students’ smooth transition from being general English language learners to being subject-specific English users (Kim, 2006; see also Leki, 2001; Murphy, 2006; Murphy et al., 2005; Parkhurst & Bodwell, 2005).

There are a small but growing number of studies on EAGS’s oral classroom participation in the ESL field (Leki, 2001; Liu, 1996, 2001; Morita, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2004). For example, Liu’s (1996) dissertation research, later expanded in a book (2001), was one of the first qualitative studies to examine EAGS’s overall perceptions on oral classroom participation in U.S. subject-matter classrooms by interviewing 20 EAGS in various academic disciplines. The study indicates that, besides linguistic factors, multiple other factors, such as cultural, cognitive, pedagogical, affective, and socio-cultural aspects, affect EAGS’s classroom participation patterns. Another dissertation study by
Morita (2002) and a published article in 2004 based on that dissertation, followed up academic socialization through classroom participation of six first-year Japanese female masters’ students in education for one academic year. The study points out that second language (L2) students’ silence in class is situational, not fixed, and multiple and complex meanings of some second language students’ silence should be critically examined.

EAGS’s silence and unwillingness to speak up in NES-dominant U.S. university classrooms are complex and situational, as the aforementioned studies revealed. Even though recently there has been some empirical research, mostly qualitatively-approached, on the issue (e.g., Liu, 1996, 2001; Morita, 2002, 2004) along with some position papers (e.g., Cheng, 2000; Liu & Littlewood, 1997), this is still an area needing to be explored further with various research methods and research participants in order to provide a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of EAGS’s oral classroom participation with their own voices. In this study, I examine academic oral communication needs and verbal classroom participation of EAGS across the curriculum, through a hybrid approach of a survey and two focus group interviews.

Last, but not least important, the previous studies did not provide an extensive theoretical description or practical pedagogical suggestions to mainstream instructors, instead, focusing on providing suggestions to the ESL fields. There is a need to provide practical suggestions to mainstream subject-matter instructors because, first, ESL teachers cannot change content class climates and, second, regular university instructors
are not likely to have much knowledge of or training with NNES international students in
their multilingual, multicultural classroom even though their roles are critical to facilitate
NNES international students’ oral participation in order to help their learning and positive
classroom experience in U.S. classrooms.

1.2 Objectives and Research Questions

The objectives of this study are two-fold: First, this study intends to better understand self-perceptions and experiences of EAGS regarding verbal classroom participation in U.S. graduate-level classrooms. Second, the study aims to analyze perceptions of some silent EAGS and to reveal reasons for their passivity and reticence. The following research questions were asked to achieve the objectives.

Overarching Research Question:

What are EAGS’s perceptions of academic oral communication needs and of active verbal classroom participation in U.S. graduate-level university classrooms?

Sub-Research Questions:

1. What are EAGS’s perceptions of instructors’ expectations of them concerning oral communication needs in graduate courses?
2. What are EAGS’s self-identified difficulties in meeting these perceived expectations in graduate courses?

3. What are EAGS’s perceptions of the importance of specific academic oral communication skills for their academic success in graduate courses?

4. What are EAGS’s definitions of active classroom participation in graduate courses?

5. What are EAGS’s perceptions of importance of active verbal classroom participation in graduate courses?

6. What do EAGS suggest instructors, American classmates, and EAGS themselves can do that could help EAGS to be more verbally active in class?

1.3 Overall Research Methodology

“The two-phase design approach” (Creswell, 1994, p. 177) was applied to answer the six research questions. First, a questionnaire was distributed to all 632 East Asian international graduate students at a large mid-western, research-intensive university in the U.S. By surveying the total population, the survey was used to examine EAGS’s overall perceptions of academic oral communication needs across the curriculum and their suggestions to instructors, domestic classmates, and other international students to help international students be verbally more active in class. Furthermore, the second phrase comprised of two focus group interviews with a total of 15 EAGS in various disciplines
to gain more comprehensive understanding of their perceptions of active classroom participation, reasons for their non- or reduced participation and/or reticence in U.S. classrooms, and their suggestions to instructors, domestic classmates, and other international students to help international students be verbally more active in class.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study has both theoretical and pedagogical contributions to offer regarding the issues of EAGS’ verbal classroom participation. This study advances theoretical knowledge in several ways. First, this study helps researchers, instructors, and administrators better understand verbal participation of EAGS in regular university classrooms. This is essential, considering that matriculated ESL students’ verbal participation in regular content classrooms beyond the ESL language classrooms is still an under-explored area in spite of the great needs. Second, a major contribution of this study is to explore the complexities and multiple meanings of East Asian students’ unwillingness to speak up or reticence in the classroom. East Asian students’ reticence is often associated with linguistic deficiency or considered to be a characteristic of their Asian culture. Considering that little scholarly attention has been given to many other contributing aspects of EAGS’s passivity in a class other than linguistic and cultural aspects, this study’s importance is underscored. Last, this study is critical because it addresses EAGS’s verbal classroom participation with the hybrid approach. Through a survey administered to all 632 EAGS and two focus group interviews with the selected
15 EAGS participants at a large mid-western research-extensive university, this study provides their overall perceptions of academic oral communication needs in regular university classrooms across the curriculum. So far, none of the studies examined the issue with this approach.

In addition to theoretical contributions, this study provides various academic audiences with a wide range of useful practical suggestions. First, university instructors and faculty developers can use the knowledge gained from this study to better understand the perceptions and needs of EAGS in order to create more inclusive classroom environments for EAGS. Students in U.S. higher education are expected to be actively engaged in class. Accordingly, they are expected to have strong oral communication skills to learn an academic subject well (Lucas & Murry, 2002). Therefore, it is important for university faculty to be attentive to international students’ actual experiences when trying to understand their difficulties in actively engaging in regular university content classrooms. The current study seeks to provide instructional strategies for all instructors to create more inclusive classroom environments, where linguistic and cultural diversity of EAGS is appreciated and their participation is encouraged. For example, we could, and should, devise programs for instructors to increase their linguistic and cultural awareness of the importance of inclusive classroom environments for EAGS. Without the data provided by this research, devising such programs would be difficult, and possibly overlooked.
Second, the results of this study can be shared with American students across the curriculum to help them raise their awareness and sensitivity to EAGS by understanding EAGS’s similar and sometimes different perceptions and experiences from themselves regarding verbal academic participation.

Third, with the knowledge of the regular U.S. university classrooms from EAGS’s own views from this study, EAGS can better anticipate and be ready for possible academic challenges they may encounter while interacting with instructors and American students in regular university classrooms. This study helps them become aware of aspects which need to be addressed and improved upon in order to be full participants in the academic community as well as in their professional lives at the present time and in the future. This study can also promote positive self-image and self-perception of EAGS by exploring not only problems associated with them but also some of the positive attributes involved with EAGS’s self-identities and participation.

Fourth, this study is especially helpful for ESL teachers to create classroom environments which provide appropriate levels of support to help ESL students’ smooth transition from general language learners in ESL language classrooms to content-specific language users in regular university content classrooms.

Fifth, international student support offices can use the findings of this study to better understand perceptions and classroom experiences of EAGS in order to develop and implement events or policies that provide appropriate academic and social support for international students.
Finally, while acknowledging that there are issues that are unique and specific to EAGS, I cautiously attempt to generalize instructional and policy recommendations from their situations to apply to other international students and U.S. racial, ethnic, and linguistic minority groups in U.S. graduate education. The academic enculturation process for many EAGS, through oral participation in pre-dominantly NES American classrooms, is embedded in racial and ethnic issues across the curriculum, and thus, their experience can inform our understanding of the process for others.

1.5 Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined to clarify what they mean in the context of this study although they have other definitions.

*Non-Native English-Speaking (NNES) International Students*

Non-native English speaking (NNES) international students refer to visa students whose native languages are other than English. Second language (L2) students and ESL university students are interchangeably used in this study.
Perception

In the current study, perception is defined as research subjects’ responses to each of the survey questionnaire questions and focus group interview questions. I do not distinguish perceptions from the aspects of feelings, beliefs, and perspectives.

Active Classroom Participation

To describe active classroom participation from EAGS’s own words, instead of starting from pre-conceptions, I purposefully do not define active classroom participation even though it is an important concept to frame this study. See Chapter 5 for a full discussion of active classroom participation as defined by EAGS.

Verbal Classroom Participation

In general, verbal classroom participation in American contexts means that one engages in class by talking in speaking-related classroom activities. It includes participating in whole-class discussions, small-group discussions, or other oral communication situations by asking questions and responding to questions during class to instructors or classmates. More definitions came from focus group interviews in EAGS’s own words in Chapter 5.
**ESL Classes versus Content Classes**

ESL classes or English language courses focus on assisting students to improve their English language skills to prepare ESL students to succeed at an American university. Content classes, on the other hand, refer to a class where NNES international students learn a specific subject-matter (e.g., physics, education, or business) with other NES classmates in U.S. classrooms. Subject-matter classes, regular university classes, disciplinary classes, mainstream classes, and classes across the curriculum are simultaneously used for the purpose of the study.

1.6 Assumptions of the Study

For the purpose of this study, the following assumptions have been made to help readers understand my perspective and the research orientation of this study. First, I assume that speaking overrides other skills in a classroom setting (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001). Verbally engaging in class requires immediacy and interpersonal skills so it is likely to be more anxiety-provoking than other modes of communication such as listening, reading, and writing. The importance of speaking is increasing, especially when NNES international students interact with NES classmates in mainstream content classrooms because NES students are likely to be more capable in terms of speaking ability. Second, while acknowledging that speaking is not the only way to engage them in the classroom, I started this study with my belief that engagement in oral classroom participation
promotes NNES students' learning in terms of both language and content. Last, the research participants have the ability and willingness to articulate their sensitive feelings and experiences related to verbal classroom participation in regular university classrooms. They respond honestly and openly to the questionnaire and group interviews.

1.7 Scope and Limitations of the Study

First, I limited the scope of the study to verbal participation in a classroom setting even though academic/social relationships with NES classmates outside of the classroom could be another important contributing factor affecting their classroom participation patterns. Second, I focused exclusively on verbal communication interaction in a classroom setting even though there are other communication modes and settings such as on-line interaction, writing and the like. Third, because of the specific context of the survey and the small size of the focus group interviews, the conclusions may be generalizable only to similar settings such as similar types of institutions of higher education and academic disciplines.

1.8 Overview of the Dissertation

Chapter 1 introduces the general research topic and the significance of the study. Chapter 2 reviews relevant literature and presents the conceptual framework of this
study. Chapter 3 describes methodological approaches, data collection methods and procedures, data analysis, and reliability and validity issues.

Findings chapters are divided into three by the combination of data collection methods and research questions. Chapter 4 provides survey findings of EAGS’s overall perceptions of academic oral communication needs across the curriculum to answer Research Questions 1, 2, and 3. Chapter 5 presents EAGS’s definition of active classroom participation and the importance of active verbal classroom participation, based on the two group interviews (Research question 4 and 5). Chapter 6 reports EAGS’s suggestions to instructors, domestic classmates and international students concerning their active verbal participation revealed through both the survey and focus interview findings (Research Question 6), revealed through the two focus group interviews.

Finally, Chapter 7 provides implications for theory, pedagogy, and research. This section first summarizes research findings. It then synthesize common themes and issues arising from data with some of the research and debates surrounding EAGS’s verbal classroom participation and reticence summarized in Chapter 2 in order to discuss theoretical and practical implications of the findings. This section concludes by offering pedagogical suggestions for content-area university instructors and English for Academic Purpose (EAP) teachers. Limitations of the study and comments on directions for future research conclude the dissertation.
CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Included in this chapter is a review of the relevant research on non-native English-speaking (NNES) international students’ verbal classroom participation in subject-matter classrooms to examine the current status of research on their oral classroom participation and thus identify research areas and research methodology for this and future study. **Section 2.1** reviews needs analysis survey research, with mainly quantitative approaches, in relation to academic oral communication skill requirements and expectations in post-secondary education in order to support the significance of international students’ oral classroom participation research. **Section 2.2** introduces recent studies on second language (L2) oral classroom participation in higher education with qualitative approaches. The literature review of these two areas provides general understanding relating to L2 oral classroom participation and supports the needs and usefulness of mixed method approaches with the topic, which I choose for this study.
2.1 Needs Analysis Survey Research Related to Academic Oral Communication Skills Requirements in Higher Education

Several needs analysis survey studies, mostly quantitative in nature, have been conducted to identify speaking/listening classroom activities faced by university ESL students and the relative importance of the tasks for their academic success (Ferris & Tagg, 1996a, 1996b; Ferris, 1998; Kim, 2006; Mason, 1995; Ostler, 1980; see also Johns & Johns, 1977). This section reviews surveys of academic oral communication tasks by views of university instructors and then L2 university students.

2.1.1 Survey of Academic Listening/Speaking Tasks: University Instructors’ View

Ferris and Tagg (1996b) provide teachers’ perspectives on speaking/listening skills required in content classrooms. They surveyed over 900 professors at various institutions and across academic disciplines and class types to identify subject-matter instructors’ aural/oral skill expectations towards college/university students in a subject-matter classroom. The study indicated that the U.S. classrooms tend to become less formal and more interactive, which implies the importance of speaking skills and thus supports the significance of further in-depth study in L2 international students' oral classroom participation. Also, instructors' requirements varied across academic discipline, type of institutions, class level, and class size. For example, professors in a graduate-level with small size classroom in business, social sciences and humanities
tended to prefer more interactive tasks than undergraduate science and engineering classes with 10 or more students.

In Ferris and Tagg’s subsequent article (1996a), which dealt with the same survey, content-area professors reported that ESL students’ inability or unwillingness to participate in class discussions and to ask or respond to questions were the largest problems of ESL students in university classrooms. The professors advised ESL teachers to provide content-based instruction, make ESL students aware of the importance of classroom interactions, and teach effective communication skills.

These two studies provide extensive and significant pedagogical implications for ESL programs such as course planning, material development, and teaching activities. On the other hand, suggestions for mainstream instructors were overlooked. It needs to be also addressed, considering that not all university ESL students necessarily go through an ESL program. A considerable number of international students are directly admitted to an academic program after meeting certain language and other requirements. They may not be familiar with the U.S. academic oral discourse despite their high language proficiency. Therefore, providing pedagogical suggestions to mainstream instructors as well as ESL teachers is important. Also, mainstream instructors should take responsibility dealing with NNES international students’ possible language issues and any other issues coming from L2 speakers in their classroom, rather than considering that such issues are ESL teachers’ responsibility, not theirs, or assuming ESL students should already master the language before matriculation. At the same time, ESL professionals need to expand
their research scope and teaching context beyond the language classroom in an ESL program in order to provide consistent, on-going support throughout the students' academic life (Leki, 2001).

2.1.2 Survey of Academic Listening/Speaking Tasks: L2 University Students’ View

Given the grounds that instructors’ views should be completed by students’ point of view and students are the best resource, especially, of their own difficulties in academic oral communication needs (Ferris & Tagg, 1996a, 1996b), some needs analysis survey research were conducted to examine L2 university students’ own view of required aural/oral skills by instructors and their own perceptions of the importance of academic speaking/listening skills (Ferris & Tagg, 1996a; Kim, 2006; Ostler, 1980; see also Johns & Johns, 1977).

While Ferris and Tagg (1996b) highlighted ESL programs’ support for ESL students to be ready in a content classroom after the completion of the language classroom, Ferris and Tagg (1996a)’s study is significant, in that they mentioned that subject-matter instructors should be responsible for improving international students’ oral classroom participatory skills while ESL programs should design a class activity to help ESL students better be ready for the aural/oral tasks in their content classes after/during the language class completion (Liu, 1996; Leki, 2001).

Ostler’s (1980, cited in Ferris & Tagg, 1996b) survey with L2 students at the undergraduate and graduate level at one university demonstrated that ESL students felt
they did not have enough listening and speaking proficiency and they considered note-taking, raising questions and participating in discussions the most important skills for academic success.

Ferris (1998) provides a comparative analysis of instructors and L2 students. She examined the view of 768 ESL students at three different higher education institutions in various context such as college, research-focused, and teaching-focused university regarding speaking/listening tasks required by instructors, their own difficulties in meeting those requirements, and their own perceptions of the importance of academic aural/oral skills and then it was compared with the instructors' view from the previous survey (Ferris & Tagg, 1996a, 1996b). The students’ responses varied considerably across different contexts such as students’ majors, class level, status, first language (L1), and gender, but in general, L2 university students have the most concern with oral presentations, whole-class discussions, and note-taking and little difficulty with small-group discussions and class participation. Also, the responses of students and teachers showed significant differences across items. In this study, it is not easy to identify the needs of a specific group because it includes many different groups who were in various institutions and disciplines and because it surveyed not only NNES international students but also immigrant students at both graduate and undergraduate level, without separate data analysis. Even though this study provides broader understanding of teachers and students’ expectation on aural/oral skills required in a content class, there is a need to
conducted a further study with a more focused group to better understand a specific group’s needs.

Very recently, my own needs survey research (Kim, 2006) directly addressed academic oral communication needs in U.S. university classrooms perceived by EAGS. The survey identified university instructors’ academic listening and speaking needs perceived by EAGS, their own difficulties in meeting these expectations, and their views on important academic oral communication success for their academic success. More detailed discussion will come in Chapter 4 since the research utilized a sub-group of this current dissertation population, EAGS in only non-science and engineering fields, to analyze the data and report findings.

Needs analysis surveys on academic oral communication skills in higher education have identified the important required aural/oral skills by both instructors and students and helped understand university ESL students' difficulties in meeting these requirements and their own perceptions. These studies are valuable to address the importance of improving L2 students' oral/aural skills in regular university content-area classrooms. Also, such studies are worth noting that the survey findings have established the importance of interactive oral participation in classrooms and identified the needs of further research in L2 students' oral classroom participation when most previous studies on L2 students had focused on writing and reading without paying much attention to speaking and listening (for a similar argument, see Ferris 1998, Ferris & Tagg, 1996a, 1996b; Morita, 1996, 2002, 2002, 2004).
2.2 L2 Oral Classroom Participation Research in Higher Education

While quantitatively-oriented needs analysis survey is efficient to be able to collect a large amount of data in a relatively short period of time, it is not enough to provide deeper understanding of the nature of these speaking tasks and L2 international students' oral classroom participation experiences in a subject-matter class. To achieve the goal, more in-depth research using more precise means (such as discourse analysis), ethnographic approaches (persistent and long-term classroom observations and ethnographic interviews with prolonged engagement), and/or case studies should be conducted (Cheng, 2000; Ferris & Tagg, 1996b; Ferris, 1998; Liu & Littlewood, 1996; Morita, 1996, 2002, 2002, 2004). Hereafter, several recent studies, mostly using qualitative approaches, will be reviewed to provide the overview of current understanding of L2 international students' classroom experiences in relation to oral classroom participation in U.S. mainstream subject-matter NES-dominant classes. Even though it is still scarce, recently a few qualitative studies on oral classroom participation, of mostly graduate-level international students, in mainstream subject-matter classes have been conducted in light of L2 students’ perspectives (e.g., Leki, 2001; Liu, 1996, 2001; Morita, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2004).

Liu’s (1996) dissertation study, later expanded into a book in 2001, was one of the first qualitative approach studies to examine L2 international graduate student’, specifically East Asian students’, overall perceptions on oral classroom participation in a content class. He mainly used interviews with twenty graduate-level Asian international
students in various majors and disciplines and observed their classrooms approximately once per participant. The results demonstrated that classroom participation is a complex issue, and there are multiple factors affecting their classroom participation patterns, such as cultural, cognitive, pedagogical, affective, socio-cultural, and linguistic factors. The study indicated that socio-cultural factors, not linguistic factors, are mainly responsible for Asian students’ possible oral classroom participation mode.

His study is worth noting that it was one of the first qualitative interview studies to explore Asian international graduate students’ oral classroom participation in a content classroom in view of their own perspectives. His study provides a general understanding of L2 Asian international students’ perceptions about classroom participation in content classrooms. However, as Liu (1996) also admitted, oral classroom participation is a complex issue that needs further investigation. Therefore, there is a need to look more closely at NNES international students’ oral classroom participation behaviors along with their perceptions through the persistent long-term observation in their classroom setting, where their real interaction with domestic peers and teachers can be observable. This way allows us to comprehend a fuller picture of their classroom experiences with the respect to oral classroom participation in a mainstream content class.

Further, there is a need to conduct an updated study to deepen our understanding of current NNES Asian students' classroom participation. Liu’s (1996) research data collected in 1995 hardly reflects on the current NNES Asian students' oral classroom participation communication patterns and their perceptions, given that Asian societies
have rapidly changed in many fields including education fields because of political, economic, cultural influence of the Western countries, especially, the United States (Cheng, 2000; Liu & Littlewood, 1997). Consequently, it is not likely to properly reflect current Asian students' classroom participation patterns with his study in 1996. A strong need for further investigation is required to be up to date.

Morita’s (2002) dissertation study and her recent article based on her dissertation in 2004 help us understand NNES international graduate students’ oral classroom participation patterns. She closely examined the experiences and perspectives of L2 international students’, specifically six female Japanese M.A. students’, academic socialization into oral academic discourse through their on-going participations in mainstream subject-matter classrooms. Weekly student self-reports, ethnographic interviews with students, and persistent classroom observation for a full academic year from September 1999 through April 2000 were conducted with an ethnographic multiple case study in a Canadian university. The six focal students’ negotiation of membership in their first-year experience in the mainstream subject-matter classes through oral classroom participation was analyzed. This study indicates that academic discourse socialization needs to be seen as a potentially “complex, conflictual, and transformative process”, constantly negotiating with competence, identities, culture, and power rather than a “static, monolithic process,” simply acquiring new academic knowledge and skills. Also suggested here is that rather than treating L2 international students’ silence simply as a lack of speech or action, multiple meanings and interpretations along with its
significance, complexity, and situated nature should be examined to better understand international students' possible silence and factors affecting their classroom behaviors, which I plan to explore through my study.

Whereas Liu’s (1996, 2001) qualitative study helps us to understand the overall perceptions of NNES international students on oral classroom participation with mainly interviews with the students, Morita’s (2002, 2004) study enables us to deepen their experiences in mainstream content classrooms as well as their insights on oral academic discourse by providing triangulated multiple perspectives with multiple data sources, such as the researcher's prolonged engagement with the participants and the context and a more intimate way through persistent classroom observation along with multiple ethnographic interviews throughout the whole academic year, and students’ weekly self-reports.

On the other hand, as opposed to the previous two studies by Liu (1996, 2001) and Morita (2002, 2004), which looked at overall oral classroom participation without specifying a speaking activity, another study by Morita (2000), originating from her dissertation in 1996, examined a particular classroom speech activity, academic oral presentations, in a specific context, two Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) graduate classes at a Canadian university. She studied perceptions and strategies of oral classroom presentation of both native and non-native English speaking students in two TESL classes. She used an ethnographic approach to collect data over eight months through classroom observation, video taping and transcribing 25 oral presentations,
formal and informal interviews with students and instructors, two open-ended questionnaires, and collections of relevant documents. The NNES students reported that their difficulties in oral presentation are related to their limited English skills, certain cultural differences, and psychological difficulties such as lack of L2 confidence. In addition to NNES students, some NES students also had feelings of insecurity about their oral presentations, but because of different reasons. The study indicates that NNES students negotiate different, sometimes conflicting identities within themselves during their engagement in oral communication in an academic setting as she found in her subsequent study in 2002.

It is noteworthy that, as opposed to the previous two studies (Liu, 1996, 2001; Morita, 2002, 2004) which only focused on NNES students, the study by Morita (1996, 2000), includes both NES students as well as NNES students as the research participants and made a good balance in describing the experiences and strategies between NES and NNES students. It is important to look at both groups to get a better picture of classroom interaction in mainstream classrooms and identify the similarities and differences between them since classroom interaction occurs between NNES students and NES peers. It may allow us to truly understand NNES students’ classroom experiences and explore a way to promote active oral classroom participation with NES domestic peers. Moreover, the study findings demonstrate that NNES students' classroom participation behaviors are much affected by the relationship and attitude of NES peers; for meaningful contribution from NNES international students, domestic classmates’ understanding for NNES
students' potential value and factors affecting their classroom participation, positive attitude, and cooperation with them are important (Duff, 2002; Leki, 2001; Liu, 1996; Morita, 2000, 2002). In sum, triangulated perspectives from the related parties including instructors in a classroom will make it possible to provide deeper understanding of intercultural communication and complete interpretation about NNSE international students' educational experiences in a mainstream content class, which I pursue in this study. Without such research, NNES international graduate students’ classroom experiences are not likely to be explained in a complete picture. The three aforementioned studies share commonalities in that the researchers themselves bring insider perspectives as one of the NNES Asian international graduate students at the time of the research, which is my position in this study. This could enrich the research in the field by being able to provide insider perspectives as NNES graduate students as well as researchers.

In conjunction with Morita’s (1996, 2000) study, Leki’s (2001) study is another notable example, which closely examined academic/social relationship between NES and NNES students related to a particular oral classroom activity, a course-sponsored group project. The social and academic aspects of six NNES international students’ group work interaction with NES peers across the curriculum in a tertiary level—mostly undergraduate level except one graduate level—was analyzed. For the study, two NNES students’ experiences in a group work reported in detail. The main data were collected from in-depth weekly or biweekly interviews with the six NNES students and persistent
observation, along with interviews with professors and relevant documents over five years. The finding demonstrated that NES peers positioned NNES peers as “novices, incompetents, or apprentices” and themselves as “experts, masters, or at least more senior members of a community practice,” (for a detailed discussion of community of practice, see Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998) which may come from their unconscious bias and ethnocentric view, according to a student’ term, “narrow-thinking system” due to their limited experience with cultural and linguistic groups from outside the United States. It may undermine NNES international students’ potential contribution in a group work. Accordingly, NNES students experienced difficulties in positioning themselves as capable, valuable members and were aware of their marginalized position, which played as an inhibitor of their potential contribution on a course-sponsored group work. The study indicates that NNES students’ positive experiences and contribution to a group project may be significantly affected by their social/academic relationships they develop with NES peers within the group.

Leki’s (2001) study considerably contributes to the study of NNES international students in subject-matter classes beyond the ESL program, which is still under-explored in the ESL field. She strongly posits the importance of the expansion of ESL researchers’ research scope and responsibility beyond the language classroom and the continuous, ongoing support of ESL teaching professionals and programs beyond the language program in order to assist NNES international students’ academic success in a mainstream content
class. The argument provides a persuasive rationale for some ESL professionals who still think that expanding our research scope into a content class is beyond ESL field.

Another noteworthy aspect of the study is the solid research design, which provides in-depth understanding of NNES international students' educational experiences in a specific oral classroom activity. Ethnographic and phenomenological interviews and observations with persistent long-term engagements over five years of courses with the six NNES students, for some, throughout their undergraduate career at the university, could make it possible to examine a more complete picture they have gone through in their group work experiences. This indicates the importance of long-term engagement with the NNES international students to understand how their academic experience becomes changed as they become better acquainted with academic discourse culture in their major.

To conclude, the review of a needs analysis survey of academic oral communication skills with the perspectives of both university instructors and L2 university students helped us to identify important required aural/oral skills needed for academic success in higher education and to understand university ESL students' difficulties in meeting these requirements and their own perceptions. Following the overview of quantitatively approached survey research, several recent studies, mostly used a qualitative approach on academic oral classroom participation were reviewed to provide a deeper understanding of the nature of these speaking tasks and L2 international students’ oral classroom participation experiences in a subject-matter class.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the methodology that I utilized to conduct this study. After a brief discussion of my methodological approaches, I describe me as the researcher and research contexts and participants that I chose for the study. The section is then followed by discussions of data collection methods and procedures, data analysis, and the validity and reliability of this study.

3.1 Mixed Methods

For this study, I chose eclectic methods (Greene, 2000) by mixing qualitative methods and quantitative methods to attain a more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the research context. I support the following position presented by Lincoln and Guba (2000):

[A]t the paradigmatic, or philosophical, level, commensurability between positivist and post-positivist worldviews is not possible, but that within each paradigm, mixed methodologies (strategies) may make perfectly good sense. (Lincoln & Guba, 2000 p. 169; see also Creswell, 1994, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1981, 1982, 1994; Greene, 2000; Lincoln & Guba, 1989; Marshall & Rosssman, 1998).
While qualitative methods enable us to better understand the research context and the insider experiences and perspectives in their own words with the close, direct engagement with the participants and settings, quantitative methods provide different layers of data, which enriches the study which otherwise we may not obtain by studying a large sample of the participants (Greene, 2000; see also Creswell, 1994; Greene & Caracelli, 1997, cited in Greene, 2000). Therefore, rather than competing with each other, qualitative and quantitative methods can complement each other and make the research more credible when they are effectively used (Creswell, 1994, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 1998).

Such mixed methods best serve to achieve the purpose of this study and answer research questions while filling research contextual and methodological gaps in the topic. That is, perceptions toward academic oral communication needs and verbal classroom participation experiences in subject-matter university classrooms cannot be explored solely with quantitative approaches (Harding, 1993). An explanation of any human condition is context-bound, so the way in which people make sense of their everyday experience is hard to be explained only by controlled experiments (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). Therefore, additional and complementary approaches which can better explain unique human experiences need to be applied in order to understand the given social settings deeper (Janesick, 2000; Marshall & Rossman, 1998). The optimal combination of the qualitative and quantitative methods to address research questions provides multiple
and diverse understandings of classroom experiences related to verbal classroom participation (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991).

For the current study, “the two-phase design approach” (Creswell, 1994, p. 177) was applied: In phase I, a survey using an on-line questionnaire with both quantitative and qualitative items was administered. Then, focus group interviews in Phase II were conducted in order to explore academic oral classroom participation of East Asian international graduate students (EAGS) in U.S. graduate courses. The first stage, in which a quantitative approach was dominant by surveying 630 EAGS across the curriculum, was to examine overall perceptions of EAGS concerning academic oral communication needs in U.S. graduate courses in general. And the second stage, with the qualitative approach through the two group interviews, was to explore perceptions and experiences of 15 selected EAGS concerning active verbal classroom participation in their graduate courses in depth.

In what follows, I describe in more detail the design of this study. I combined these two data collection methods to provide a broader understanding of the researched topics. None of the previous studies of the topics, to my knowledge, utilized these combinations of data collection methods; most studies of the topics applied purely qualitative approaches such as individual interviews and/or classroom observations (e.g., Leki, 2001; Liu, 1996, 2001; Morita, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2004) or a quantitative approach using questionnaire surveys (e.g., Ferris, 1998; Ferris & Tagg, 1996b).
First, the survey method was used to examine the overall perceptions of EAGS in terms of academic oral communication needs by surveying the total population. The survey was an effective means to collect a large amount of data in a short time and provided a broader picture of the topic I am researching (Dillman, 2000; Creswell, 2005). The survey also provided baseline data for the subsequent focus group interviews.

Following the survey questionnaire, in Phase II, the focus group interview method was applied to provide EAGS with an opportunity to express their perceptions, feelings, opinions, and thoughts in a group setting that fosters different perceptions and points of view (Madriz, 2000; Morgan, 1988, 1998; Morgan & Krueger, 1993). The technique is effective to minimize the voice and influence of the researcher and to uncover specific and little-researched aspects such as this study (Madriz, 2000). The focus group interview was the second stage of the data collection process in the larger research project with the two-phase design approach with mixed methods after the administration of questionnaire survey with 630 EAGS at the research site. In Phase II, after the preliminary data analysis of the survey, focus group interviews were implemented to gain a deeper understanding of EAGS’s perceptions of verbal classroom participation in their subject-matter graduate-level university classrooms.
3.2 Research Contexts

This section introduces my personal, educational, and professional experiences in order to help readers understand my motivation and experience related to the research. After that, I describe the research site and research participants I chose to study.

3.2.1 Profile of the Researcher

My educational and cultural background related to linguistic minority students are closely related to the current research site and the research topic for the study. I share my linguistic and cultural experiences in various countries and contexts to describe my awareness of the linguistic and cultural diversities regarding supporting international students in U.S. classroom contexts. I was born in a very small farming town in the southern part of South Korea. My father tremendously affected my early literacy and worldview development. Unlike most farmers in the remote rural area, he was fortunate to expose himself to the world beyond the area, through several years’ work experience in a U.S. army base in South Korea and as the town representative for many years in the mid-1900s. He liked reading news articles about current world events and sharing his opinions with me. Even as little as a six year-old girl, I felt like I was a serious conversational partner of his concerning politics and international affairs. Consequently, I became interested in reading newspapers and other available reading materials to be a good conversational partner for him. The early childhood literacy experiences with my father led me to see what was going on beyond the small town in which I grew up.
My first-hand experience in a different world started when, at nine, my parents made a big decision to move to Seoul, the capital city of South Korea, for their five children’s better education and opportunities. Making the transition from a small rural school to a big school in the metropolitan city, I experienced tremendous culture shock, prejudice and discrimination. My classmates in Seoul didn’t seem to be interested in knowing me and my intellectual ability. The students and even the teachers laughed at my southern Korean accent. Even my room teacher frequently told me to correct my accent in front of other classmates and then again in the school final report: “Correct your accent.” Like this, my first classroom experiences at the new school in Seoul for several weeks were not positive, but the culture shock and my agony did not last long. I was determined to adjust myself to a new environment in a short period. I learned how to speak the standard Korean like other Seoul kids when conversing with them, while still maintaining my southern Korean accent when I spoke with my family.

My journey to exposure to different cultures and interacting with diverse people beyond South Korea, and resolving possible conflicts, continued as a senior university student in South Korea. In 1994, I had an opportunity to meet some Japanese university students and discuss the relationship between Korea and Japan when I was selected as one of the student representatives to attend a one-week conference at a sister university in Japan. In the beginning of the conference, I sensed some tensions and discomfort among the participants and within myself. For example, we, as Korean students who had heard so many bad things the Japanese government did to Koreans during Japan’s colonization
of Korea, had deep-seated feelings of being victimized. However, shockingly, the Japanese university students had very little knowledge about Japan’s colonization of Korea for so many years. The unspoken but existing initial discomfort among us because of our different educational experiences and views related to the unfortunate past history were lessened through open discussions and the process to find constructive ways to understand each other’s points of view about the historical events.

Another opportunity to expose myself to other cultures and people began in 1997 when I finally made the decision to quit my job and started a backpacking trip to Canada and the U.S. by myself with the purpose of seeing the bigger world than South Korea. I met many people from different countries during the one month trip. It was an eye-opening experience, in that, despite our many language differences, we were able to get along well because everybody was genuinely interested in knowing other cultures and had a willingness to listen to each other and to learn from it.

In 1998, my first academic journey in the U.S. started at a small university in Kentucky. There, I was positioned as a linguistic minority as well as a racial and ethnic minority. Especially when I went beyond the college town, I seemed to be seen as a total stranger in the area and sometimes I found myself exposed to racism and xenophobia. However, it could not stop my curiosity about people who are different from myself. I was driven to experience the diversities and differences around me. Less than one month after stepping into the U.S., I was presenting at a panel discussion organized by the community and the university about women’s role in Korean society. This first
experience led me to many other relevant experiences. As examples, I was actively involved in an international student organization as a treasurer at the university. I hosted an international buffet for the entire community. I helped many international students’ adjustments to the university. I initiated and published a bi-weekly electronic newspaper for them.

Also, my work experience teaching Korean to Americans at universities and teaching English to ESL students at public schools in the city and surrounding cities increased my interaction with diverse groups of both American and international students. Through the interaction, I learned how various the educational, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds are that the students bring to class and how important it is to assist their learning, considering their backgrounds, rather than imposing only one’s belief or the dominant style of teaching and learning.

Such a strong desire to explore various cultures has continued through my schooling to pursue my doctoral degree. My understanding of diversity issues, especially cultural and linguistic diversities, has been broadened and deepened through my transition from a small-college town in Kentucky to one of the largest universities in the U.S. located in the mid-West (hereafter the University). Frequent discussions and self-reflection in many graduate-level courses allowed me to discover my conscious and unconscious biases against groups different from myself and to be warned about them. As an international graduate student at the University, I have led a weekly international graduate student support group meeting since 2001. I have conducted several relevant
studies at the same research site, and it has helped me to be familiar with the site and the topic (e.g., Cetinka, Smith, & Kim, 2002; Kim, 1999, 2001, 2002, 2004)

In addition to my academic and personal growth, my understanding and development in diversity issues has been enhanced through my professional work and teaching experiences at the University. Working at the minority support office as the coordinator of the Asian-American mentoring program at the University in 2000-2001 expanded my realm to Asian-American students, a racial and ethnic minority in the U.S., beyond international students, a linguistic minority.

My five years’ work experience at the university teaching center at the University in 2001-2006, focusing on supporting international instructors and in assisting all mainstream instructors to create inclusive classroom environments for international students, allowed me to better understand American classroom environments and to explore how American classrooms can incorporate linguistic minority students’ needs into the curriculum. I developed and presented teaching workshops, seminars, and discussion groups to promote the linguistic and cultural diversity that international teaching assistants (ITAs) and international students bring to U.S. higher education (Kim, 2003, 2005a, 2005b, 2005c). Also, I served as leading editor and an author of a new chapter on second language anxiety and coping strategies in the University publication, Teaching in the United States: A Handbook for International Faculty & TAs (http://ftad.osu.edu/Publications/InternationalHandbook/TitlePage.html) (Kim, 2002).
Most recently, I co-developed the two language-focused graduate seminars which address NNES graduate students at the University: TESOL graduate students (Samimy & Kim, 2006; Samimy, Kim, & Sarwark, 2006; Samimy, Kim, Benedicto, Ghoris, & Yu, 2007) and discipline-specific language needs of ITAs who are supervising student-teachers in the college of education. Thus, I was in a good position to conduct the current study because I was already familiar with the campus climate and the research topic, through my personal, academic, and professional backgrounds.

3.2.2 Research Site

The research site for this study is a large research-extensive, mid-Western state university in the United States of America (the University). The University is one of the largest U.S. universities in terms of students’ enrollment in Autumn. The University is culturally and linguistically diverse and, accordingly, concerns and interest in diversity are growing around the campus. The University ranked ninth nationally among public research institutions in terms of international students enrolled, and tenth among all research institutions, according to Open Doors 2006 report, the most up-to-date annual report on international education, published by the Institute of International Education (IIE) with support from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

International students are an important component of campus diversification and internationalization at the University. As of Autumn Quarter 2006, they represent 7.0%
of the total student body, with approximately 3,683 international students currently enrolled (only the main-campus), representing approximately 120 different countries.

Many international students are members of racial and ethnic minorities as well as being linguistic and cultural minorities: The total number of international students exceeds African American students, the largest group of U.S. minority students at the University (see Table 3.1 for details). Among the international students, 67.3% (2,567) are graduate students. They consist of 26.1% of the total graduate students. Hence, the international graduate students at the University play a vital role in campus diversity, creating cross-cultural, educational benefits for all students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Enrollment</td>
<td>51,818</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total minorities</td>
<td>7,686</td>
<td>14.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African Americans</td>
<td>3,495</td>
<td>6.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Americans</td>
<td>2,754</td>
<td>5.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanics</td>
<td>1,225</td>
<td>2.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American Indians</td>
<td>212</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Foreign Students</strong></td>
<td><strong>3,638</strong></td>
<td><strong>7.0</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* According to the University statistics, international students are not classified as one of the minority groups. Instead, they are separately listed as non-resident aliens.

Table 3.1: Enrollment of Minority at the University (Autumn 2006)
East Asian international students are the biggest international student group at the University. Of the international students, 1839 out of 3638 are East Asian students from China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, the four East Asian countries on which this study focuses. These four East Asian countries account for more than half (50.4%) of the total foreign student population at the University. Students from China (784) are the largest international student population; students from South Korea (709), the second; students from Taiwan (228), the fourth; and students from Japan (118), the sixth. Among the East Asian international students, 72.1%, 1,325 are currently studying at the graduate level. This figure represents 25.7% of the total graduate students at the University; hence EAGS’s impact on graduate education at the University is significant.

3.2.3 Research Participants

3.2.3.1 Survey Participants

In order to gather a large amount of data to examine EAGS’s perceptions of academic oral communication needs across the curriculum, the survey was sent out to all EAGS at the University. It was census research by surveying the entire EAGS population at the University because the population (630 students) was small enough to conduct a survey. Therefore, no sampling process was conducted. A total of 150 out of the 630 EAGS responded to the survey, a 24% response rate. The usable data for the data analysis

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4 The actual total number of EAGS at the time of the data collection was 632, but Masa and I were excluded from the study.
was 139. The detailed descriptions of the survey respondents will be provided in detail later in this chapter.

3.2.3.2 Focus Group Interview Participants

The two focus group interviews with a total of 15 participants was conducted to gain deeper understanding of EAGS’s perceptions and experiences concerning their verbal classroom participations in graduate courses across the curriculum. The participants were recruited through multiple sources to diversify the participants. Refer to 3.3 data collection and procedures for the participant selection process and 4.2 for the profile of the participants in detail.

3.3 Data Collection Methods and Procedures

This section reports the data collection methods and procedures of the questionnaire survey and the two focus group interviews.

3.3.1 Survey

The questionnaire survey was the data collection method in Phase I to grasp overall views of EAGS across various academic disciplines in a short time with extensive data by sending out the questionnaire to the entire 630 EAGS population at the University. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. I chose the survey
method to collect a large amount of data in a short time to understand the overall picture of the topic I was studying (Dillman, 2000; Ferris, 1998).

Table 3.2 provides a brief summary of the questionnaire content with the type of questions (See Appendix I for the entire copy of the survey).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questionnaire Content</th>
<th>Type of Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Part A (1-11):</td>
<td>6 short answer type questions (open-ended one-line)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demographic and linguistic background information</td>
<td>3 choice one answer questions (bullet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5 questions (rating scale)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part B (12-14):</td>
<td>1 short answer type questions (open-ended one-line)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific course information</td>
<td>2 choice one answer (bullet)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part C (15-16):</td>
<td>11 questions (rating scale)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructors’ expectations of academic oral communication tasks</td>
<td>1 question for other comments (open-ended)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part D (17-18):</td>
<td>11 questions (rating scale)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concerns EAGS have with academic oral communication tasks</td>
<td>1 question for other comments (open-ended)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part E (19-20):</td>
<td>8 questions (rating scale)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic oral communication skills needed for academic success</td>
<td>1 question for other comments (open-ended)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part F (21):</td>
<td>1 open-ended question with prompt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions for course instructors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part G (22):</td>
<td>1 open-ended question with prompt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions for American classmates</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part H (23):</td>
<td>1 open-ended question with prompt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions for other international students</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Part I (24):</td>
<td>For information for a follow-up interview</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. See Appendix I for the whole copy of the instrument.

Table 3.2: Summary of the Questionnaire Items
As Table 3.2 illustrates, the survey asked (a) EAGS’s own views about academic oral communication activities required and/or expected by content-area university instructors in academic settings; (b) their own difficulties in meeting those requirements/expectations; (c) their perceptions of important academic oral communication skills needed for their academic success; and (d) their suggestions for subject-matter university instructors, American classmates, and other international students in order to facilitate active verbal classroom participation of international students.

3.3.1.1 Survey Questionnaire Development

Content of the Questionnaire

The questionnaire survey largely consisted of the following three parts: (a) survey respondent background and course information; (b) academic oral communication needs in graduate courses; and (c) EAGS’s suggestions for university instructors, American classmates, and other international students to facilitate active oral classroom participation of international students.

The questionnaire contained five types of items with a total of 42 items: (a) seven short answer type open-ended one line questions; (b) five choice one answer; (c) 24 questions using a rating scale; (d) three open-ended questions for other comments; and (e) three open-ended questions with writing prompts (See Table 3.2 for more details and Appendix A for the entire copy of the questionnaire survey).
1. The first part of the questionnaire survey asked questions to obtain demographic and linguistic background information of survey respondents (Part A, Item 1 to 11). The questions asked concerned academic program, academic level, resident status, gender, age, nationality, first languages, duration in the U.S., period of English study, and English oral proficiency.

2. Part B of the survey asked specific course information (e.g., course number, participation graded or not, number of NNES in the class) in order to understand respondents and general classroom contexts in which EAGS chose to answer.

3. Part C, D, and E of the questionnaire intended to answer Research Questions 1, 2, and 3 (See Table 3.3). I asked questions to identify (a) EAGS’s perceptions of common academic oral communication activities expected by their instructors, (b) their difficulties in meeting these expectations, and (c) their self-identified important academic oral communication skills for their academic success in graduate courses in U.S. classrooms. The data in these parts were mainly quantitative in nature with the opportunity to comment, following each closed question with a rating scale. The open-ended questions after the quantitative items gave respondents an opportunity to write their own opinions they may have not been able to express in the quantitative format (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1996; Dillman, 2000; Ferris, 1998).

The 11 Academic listening and speaking activities used to examine EAGS’s perceptions of their instructors’ expectations (Research Question 1) and their difficulties
in meeting these expectations (Research Question 2) in this study were:

- strong listening skills
- questions during class
- whole-class discussions
- small-group discussions
- questions before/after class
- questions during office hours
- strong note-taking skills
- formal oral presentations
- student-led discussions
- outside of class group projects
- interview with NESs

The six academic listening and speaking skills used to identify EAGS’s perceptions of the most important skills for their academic success in the graduate courses were the following:

- formal lecture understanding
- class discussion participation
- communication with professors
- formal oral presentation skills
- note-taking skills
- pronunciation

4. Parts F, G, and H of the questionnaire designed to answer Research Question 7 ("What do EAGS suggest instructors, American classmates, and EAGS themselves can
that could help EAGS become more verbally active in class?”). Unlike Ferris’s (1998) study, the three open-ended questions with writing prompts were added to call attention to the need to share communication responsibility of classroom interactions among all of the three-related parties in class (university instructors, NES classmates, NNES international students) (Items 21, 22, and 23).

The reason I added these questions was to address shared communication responsibilities among U.S. instructors, NNES international students and American students in culturally and linguistically diverse U.S. university classrooms. Traditionally, international students in native English-speaking mainstream classrooms have been pushed to continue to improve their English communicative competence and cross-cultural awareness in order to develop intercultural communication skills; however, mainstream teachers and NES peers’ communication responsibility seems to be overlooked (Kubota, 2000, 2001a, 2001b; Morita, 2004). Consequently, NNES international students’ lack of cross-cultural communication skills appears to be blamed for miscommunication between international students and mainstream NES classmates and teachers. Morita (2004) well described the shared communication responsibilities of university instructors and NES classmates when they interact with international students as follows:

[S]ome argue that disciplinary socialization needs to be viewed as a two-way negotiation rather than a unidirectional enculturation (e.g., Casanave, 1995; Prior, 1998; Zamel, 1997): Not only do learners from diverse backgrounds negotiate academic discourse, but discourse communities can change as newcomers join them.” (Morita, 2004, p. 575)
Considering the already existing and expanding diversities, it is not realistic or fair to impose a one-way burden on international students for problems in intercultural communication in U.S. mainstream classrooms (Lippi-Green, 1997). All of them should make an effort to understand each other and to be understood. Given that rationale, I added one open-ended question with a writing prompt asking EAGS’s suggestions for subject-matter instructors, to highlight that university instructors should be responsible for improving international students’ oral classroom participatory skills (Item 21). Two other questions regarding EAGS’s suggestions for both NES classmates and international students were to call domestic peers’ attention to the concept of sharing communication responsibility while international students continue to work on improving their communication skills (Item 22 & 23).

The current survey is a modified and extended version of FerrIS’Ss study in 1998. The modification and addition were made in consideration of different research participants, research purposes, and survey distribution methods. Table 3.3 summarizes the comparison between Ferris (1998) and the current questionnaire survey.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ferris’s Questionnaire</th>
<th>Current Questionnaire</th>
<th>Rationale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One-shot survey</td>
<td>Baseline data for group participant selection</td>
<td>To examine issues in-depth with a hybrid approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper-version</td>
<td>Web-version</td>
<td>To make it more respondent-friendly with different structure, language and visual design</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-administered during class</td>
<td>Self-administered via web</td>
<td>To respond at their own speed and time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Both undergraduate and graduate students</td>
<td>Only graduate students</td>
<td>To reflect on different study goals and patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ESL university students, including both immigrants and international students</td>
<td>Only East Asian, non-native English-speaking, international students</td>
<td>To examine a focused subset of NNES students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No question about listening skills</td>
<td>Addition of listening skills for both lecture and general discussion understanding</td>
<td>To consider close relationship between listening and speaking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suggestions to ESL teachers</td>
<td>Suggestions to subject-matter course instructors</td>
<td>To identify important skills needed in their current content classrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No question about suggestions to university instructors, American classmates and other international students</td>
<td>Addition of their suggestions to the three groups</td>
<td>To highlight shared communication responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondents’ choice of any class other than an ESL class</td>
<td>Respondents’ choice of a class with a lot of verbal interaction</td>
<td>To focus on their academic oral communication skills in a class with lots of verbal engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primarily quantitative data with open-ended comments</td>
<td>Equal weight between quantitative and qualitative data by adding three open-ended questions with prompt</td>
<td>To provide chances to use their own words</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3 Comparison Table of Ferris (1998) and the Current Questionnaire Survey
Differences between Ferris’s and the Current Survey

Considering that few surveys were conducted with the given topic and I modified and extended Ferris’s (1998) questionnaire, a detailed explanation of the differences between Ferris and my questionnaire is as follows:

1. While Ferris (1998) designed a paper-version questionnaire and administered the survey during class time by asking classroom teachers, the current survey was designed and administered via Zoomerang, an on-line survey engine (www.zoomerang.com), at their own time and speed. Therefore, different structure, language, and visual design were considered in order that the design be more respondent friendly on the web (Dillman, 2000). I chose to administer the survey with the on-line method because research evidence shows that people tend to give more trustful answers when they respond to on-line questionnaires than self-administered paper-version questionnaires (Turner, Ku, & Rogers, 1998). The on-line survey using Zoomerang is also a convenient and efficient way for me as the researcher to collect and manage the data since I was already experienced and familiar with on-line survey data management through pilot studies and previous work in on-line data management.

2. I examined perspectives of only East Asian, non-native English-speaking (NNES), international graduate students, while Ferris (1998) distributed her survey to ESL university students and both immigrants and international students participated in her survey. By only focusing on the views of a specific subset group of international students I was able to explore perceptions of East Asian students, the largest international student
group who is traditionally considered to be relatively passive in terms of oral classroom participation.

3. While Ferris’s (1998) and my survey were similar, in that both of them asked respondents to choose any non-ESL classes, they were different in terms of respondents’ choice of classes. Whereas Ferris (1998) had respondents choose any class other than an ESL class, I asked EAGS to choose a class which required a significant amount of verbal interaction in graduate-level content courses.

4. Considering these different population and classroom environments, I added several items to include other possible academic oral classroom communication-related activities. For example, in addition to questions concerning note-taking skills, I added questions concerning listening skills for both lecture understanding and general discussion understanding, considering the close relationship between listening and speaking skills and differences of understanding of lecture and general classroom discussion.

5. While Ferris asked the survey respondents to provide advice for the English language teachers who have taught their ESL classes (or who teach them now), I asked them to make suggestions to their current regular university classrooms. I decided to change the questions this way because this research is concerned about EAGS’s perspectives in their regular university classrooms, so the survey was distributed to the EAGS in regular graduate courses; whereas, Ferris surveyed ESL students who were currently taking ESL classes while taking some courses in regular university courses.
Therefore, giving suggestions to ESL teachers may have been difficult to answer for EAGS who were admitted to their degree program without receiving prior formal ESL instruction.

6. Another major difference between Ferris’s (1998) and the current study was that this survey added three primary open-ended questions with writing prompts in order to collect qualitative data to highlight the shared communication responsibility between EAGS and American students and instructors, as I explained earlier in this section. Last, while the survey was the only data for Ferris’s (1998) study, I utilized the survey method and data to recruit focus group interview participants and to formulate focus group interview questions in order to understand the issues deeper by critically mixing the two different data collection methods (Creswell, 1994; 2005).

Table 3.4 summarizes data sources by research questions.
Research Questions | Data Collected
--- | ---
1. What are EAGS’s perceptions of instructors’ expectations of them concerning oral communication needs in graduate courses? | **Quantitative Data**
   - Questionnaire close-ended questions in Parts C, D, and E
2. What are EAGS’s perceptions of the importance of specific academic oral communication skills for their academic success in graduate courses? | 
3. What are EAGS’s self-identified difficulties in meeting these perceived expectations? | 
4. What are EAGS’s definitions of active classroom participation in graduate courses? | **Qualitative Data**
   - 2 focus group interviews concerning Questions 1, 2, and 3
5. What are EAGS’s perceptions of the importance of active verbal classroom participation in graduate courses? | 
6. What are EAGS’s thoughts, perspectives, and feelings when EAGS remain silent in the classroom? | 
7. What do EAGS suggest instructors, American classmates, and EAGS themselves can do that could help EAGS to be more verbally active in class? | **Qualitative Data**
   - 2 focus group interviews concerning Questions 4, 5, and 6
   - Questionnaire open-ended questions in Parts F, G, and H

Table 3.4: Rationale for Data Sources
3.3.1.2 Field Testing

Before finalizing and administering the questionnaire, “it is essential that the researcher test the instrument in order to identify ambiguities, misunderstandings, or other inadequacies” (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1996, p. 453). To ensure that I followed the appropriate steps, I employed the four sequential stage approaches Dillman (2000) proposed: (a) expert review, (b) potential survey respondent interview, (c) pilot study, and (d) final check-up by non-experts. The following illustrates his four stage approach I applied in this study.

Stage 1: Review by Knowledgeable Colleagues and Analysts

The first stage of the field testing or pre-testing was to “elicit suggestions based on experience with previous surveys and knowledge of study objectives” (p.141) to obtain feedback from people with diverse expertise. I asked several colleagues who were familiar with the study to examine a draft of my questionnaire and to give their opinions on whether the instrument would attain the desired data (validity) and whether they saw any problems that may have been overlooked.

Specifically, a content expert, who is an instructional consultant and director of the teaching center at the University, played a significant role in the questionnaire development process by reviewing multiple drafts and making suggestions to ensure that the questionnaire included all of the necessary questions and did not contain unnecessary items and repetitions. For instance, I was uncertain whether to keep interviewing native
English speakers as one of the academic oral communication skills in graduate courses or not (as Ferris (1998) did in her survey).

He mentioned that it may not be common in many fields or courses, but there may be a certain field or course in which instructors may require students to interview non-classmates to complete out-of-class assignments (e.g., interviews, surveys, etc.). Therefore, I decided to keep the item (See 15h & 17h for the two related items). Along with the content expert, I also consulted with the two survey research experts, a professor teaching survey research methods and a graduate statistical consultant at the University, to see if my questionnaire design was favorably comparable with Ferris’s (1998).

Stage 2: Interviews to Evaluate Cognitive and Motivational Qualities

The second stage of the field testing or pre-testing was to ascertain whether the questions are interpreted in the same way by all respondents by administering personally and individually to a small group of potential survey respondents. Both of the concurrent and retrospective techniques were used to evaluate the questionnaire and make revision decisions.

First, I utilized a “cognitive interviewing technique” (Dillman, 2000, p. 142) to “determine whether respondents comprehend questions as intended by the survey sponsor, and whether questions can be answered accurately (Forsyth & Lessler, 1991, cited in Dillman, 2000, p. 142).” This field test technique was applied to one potential survey respondent: Masa, a doctoral student from Japan in Social Studies and Global
Education at the University and my long-term friend and collaborator at the University. I worked with him several times through our regular dissertation support group meetings to respond to individual parts of the questionnaire in front of me and he told me what he was thinking while doing so. During the “think-aloud interview” (Dillman, 2000, p. 142), I asked (a) if he understood all of the words or items; (b) if the instructions were clear, and (c) if certain items were confusing. This was effective in knowing if he understood all of the words or individual items the way I intended. However, as Dillman (2000) pointed out, this technique did not seem to allow the potential survey respondents to focus fully on the questionnaire because their attention was divided by the researcher and the questions. Another shortcoming of the technique was that I not able to obtain potential respondents’ feedback on the overall design of the questionnaire and the ease of navigation in a web-survey because our focus was on individual items and we used a paper printed draft for the interview.

To complement with the cognitive interviewing, as the second step, “retrospective interviewing” (Dillman, 2000, p.142) were taken. Masa, who also participated in the first step, and another friend of mine, who was in an MBA program at another university, were personally and individually invited to participate in the interview. Both of them, individually, were asked to log in a commercial on-line chat program, to exchange opinions during the mock survey administration and to be interviewed. I instructed them to click the questionnaire URL I sent via the chatting program and then asked them to complete a questionnaire as if they actually participated in a survey. Meanwhile, I
checked how long it took for them to complete the survey in order to estimate average response time. When they finished the survey, I asked the same questions I asked earlier in the cognitive interviewing process.

Through the two concurrent and retrospective interviews, both of the field-test participants in the second stage mentioned that they were not sure if interviewing with native English-speaking speakers as a course requirement (Item 15h and Item 17h) was an essential item to include. Both of them reported that they did not have experience with that speaking activity because it had not been assigned by their regular university course instructors. Despite their opinion, I decided to keep the item because it is possible that it may be used in some fields or courses, as the content expert mentioned earlier.
Stage 3: a Final Check of the Questionnaire

Even though Dillman proposed the final check as the last stage, I applied it as the third stage to check if I made a silly mistake that I and the other people who participated in the earlier stages may have missed. I asked the two of my friends and a professional proofreader, who were not in my field or familiar with the content of my research or my research methods, to look for any mistakes I made.

Stage 4: Pilot Study

While the purposes of Stages 1, 2, and 3 were to improve the questionnaire, doing a pilot study, following Dillman’s (2000) approach, in the final stage was to emulate procedures proposed for the study in order to estimate response rates, high item non-response, and the usefulness of open-ended questions, and so forth.

An earlier version of the questionnaire was distributed to all undergraduate international students in February 2004 to check both content and readability through the listserv of the international student support office at the University. Zoomerang on-line survey tool was used for the questionnaire. The reason I conducted a pilot study with them was that, if the survey was understood by the NNES undergraduate international students, it was likely to be clear for NNES graduate students.

The main revision based on the pilot study was “Academic Listening/Speaking Skills Needed for Academic Success” (Part E). Originally I asked the survey participants to rank the importance of the eight academic listening and speaking skills like this:
Please RANK the items below in order of importance. For example, the value 1 for what you believe is “Most Important”, and the value 7 for the “Least Important.” Please note that you can only use each value ONLY ONCE.

In spite of my effort to have them rank the order by capitalizing “RANK” and “ONLY ONCE” and giving an example, many respondents did not quite respond the way I intended. About a half simply ranked the importance of each item, and did not do the cross-comparison I designed. This may have occurred because the instruction is quite long and survey respondents tend to respond without carefully reading instructions. Another important possible factor affecting their confusion was related to the survey design. Ranking the eight items at once with a web survey could have been challenging; it is possible that it may not appear even in one screen depending on the format of respondents’ individual computer screen layout.

Therefore, I made the decision as the researcher to have my survey respondents choose the degree of the importance of each item, rather than rank them in order, to avoid possible misunderstanding of the direction and to avoid receiving unusable data. Here is the revised final version for this study based on the pilot study:

Below is a list of eight academic listening and speaking skills needed for academic success in graduate courses. Please rate the degree of importance of the following skills. As described earlier, the final version of the survey was revised and improved to ensure the validity and readability of the questionnaire by taking the aforementioned steps.
### 3.3.1.3 Survey Administration Procedure

Table 3.5 summarizes the procedure of the survey administration.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Timeline</th>
<th>Procedures</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 5, 2004</td>
<td>Launched on-line Survey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase I: Listserv</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 7, 2004</td>
<td>sent out to all international graduate students via the international student support office (2771 international graduate students, 630 EAGS)</td>
<td>62 EAGS-completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Spring WK6)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase II: On-Line Survey Tool</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 12-15, 2004</td>
<td>Sent out to 630 1) EGAS by nationalities via Zoomerang</td>
<td>23-completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Spring WK7)</td>
<td></td>
<td>*11 – partially completed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 22, 2004</td>
<td>The first reminder to non-respondents</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Summer WK1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 22, 2004</td>
<td>The second reminder to non-respondents</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Summer WK5)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total n=150</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5: Survey Administration Procedure and Timeline
The followings are the description of the two-phrase survey administration procedure.

Phase I: Survey Administration through a Listserv

In April 2004, upon the institutional review board approval, I contacted the Office of the Registrar at the University and obtained a list of international students who registered in Spring Quarter 2004. On May 5, 2004, a web-format questionnaire using the Zoomerang survey tool was launched utilizing the account of the university-wide teaching center at the University.

In Week 6 of Spring Quarter 2004, the survey was forwarded to all 2,771 international graduate students via a listserv of the campus-wide international student support office with the cover letter and the hyperlink with the name of the teaching center at the University (See Appendix B for the cover letter). The reason I utilized the listserv through the international student support office was that international students tended to put more weight on E-mails from that office than other E-mails because that office sent out important information every international student should know about. I was not able to send out a pre-reminder through the office listserv because the office wanted to limit the number of E-mails they sent out. A total of 62 EAGS responded to the survey.
Phase II: Web Survey System

After the first phrase of survey administration via the listserv of the international student support office, I contacted potential survey respondents via the Zoomerang E-mail system (Phase II) to provide more individual and personalized contact to increase response rates. There was no way to identify who responded to the first survey with the system using listserv, so the approach using the web survey went to everybody. It was possible to have some overlap, but I made the decision to choose listserv through the international student support office and then web survey because it is not likely any individual would respond twice with the same content in one week. As an effort to avoid duplicate responses, I added a statement in the cover letter: “*P.S.: The original survey was distributed to all international students via the international student support office listserv last May, so please disregard this message if you already responded (and thanks!!).”

All EAGS’s E-mail addresses were entered into the web survey system to administer the survey through the Zoomerang on-line survey engine. In Week 9, Spring Quarter 2004, one week after the survey distribution through the listserv, I sent groups E-mails by different nationalities and academic levels. I chose not to send out a pre-notification E-mail because mails through the international student support office functioned as a pre-notification. A total of 23 EAGS completed the survey and 11 EAGS partially completed it.

I chose to send another reminder E-mail through the web survey system one week
later because people tend to not respond or forget if they do not respond within a week. Two reminders were sent out in June and July receiving in 15 responses after the first reminder and 39 responses after the second reminder.

In sum, 630 graduate students who came from China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan were invited to participate in the survey. A total of four E-mails were sent out through the listserv of the international student support office and the E-mail list for the students from these four places to recruit volunteers to fill the on-line survey. A total of 150 survey responses were collected within six weeks.

Response Rate

I chose to do census research by surveying the entire EAGS population at the University because the population (630 students) was small enough to make conducting a survey possible. The total response rate was 24%: Among all of the 630 EAGS at the University, a total of 150 students responded to the survey. After excluding those 11 respondents who completed only partially, 139 usable data sets were used for data analysis. The 24% response rate with the on-line survey which took approximately 20 minutes was relatively high without any monetary incentive or other departmental pressure.
3.3.1.4 Overall Profile of EAGS Survey Participants

This part presents the background information of EAGS who participated in the questionnaire survey. I report demographic and linguistic information of the survey participants and then introduce information of the items which the survey respondents chose to answer.

Demographic Information

The largest academic discipline area represented was STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) with 34%, 47 out of 139 respondents. Social science (21%), education (19%), and business (16%) were the next largest groups. Arts and humanities (10%) was the smallest academic area represented in this study.

The vast majority of the respondents were doctoral students (72%) and 28% were master’s students. About 57% of the respondents were male and 43% were female. The average age of the survey respondents was 29 and the average duration of stay in the U.S. was 3 years. The largest country represented was China with 53%. South Korea was the second at 27%, Taiwan, the third at 12%, and Japan, the last at 9%. Table 3.6 summarizes the demographic information of the 139 students who responded to the survey (see Parts A, B, and C in the questionnaire in Appendix A for the complete questions).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Discipline</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts &amp; Humanities</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>10.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>19.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Science</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic Level</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>28.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctoral</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>71.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sex</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>56.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>43.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Country</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>52.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Time variables (years)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>29.0</td>
<td>3.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duration of Stay in the U.S.</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period of Studying English</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>3.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.6: Summary of Demographic Information: Survey Participants
Linguistic Background Information

I asked questions about the survey respondents’ linguistic background: first language (L1), duration of English study, and self-perceived language proficiency levels of various language skills (see Items 7, 8, 11 in Appendix A for the complete questions). The largest L1 group represented was Chinese (64%), followed by Korean (27%) and Japanese (9%). The average period of learning English was about 12 years. Table 3.7 provides the summary of the self-reported proficiency levels of the survey participants by the four language skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skill</th>
<th>Proficiency Level</th>
<th>Proficiency Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>VL (1) L (2) M (3) H (4) VH (5)</td>
<td>4.0 ±0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- (0.7%) 26 (18.7%) 80 (57.6%) 32 (23.0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
<td>2 (1.4%) 8 (5.8%) 46 (33.1%) 66 (47.5%) 17 (12.2%)</td>
<td>3.6 ±0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>2 (1.4%) 8 (5.8%) 70 (50.4%) 50 (36.0%) 9 (6.5%)</td>
<td>3.4 ±0.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>4 (2.9%) 12 (8.6%) 68 (48.9%) 46 (33.1%) 9 (6.5%)</td>
<td>3.3 ±0.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: VL (Very Low), L(Low), M(Moderate), H(High), and VH(Very High). Each individual score is based on the proficiency level: VL (1), L(2), M(3), H(4), and VH(5). The proficiency score is the average of all participants.

Table 3.7: Summary of Proficiency Levels of Four Language Skills: Survey Participants
EAGS reported that productive language skills (e.g., speaking and writing) are weaker than receptive language skills (e.g., listening and reading). EAGS rated both reading and listening as high ($M=4.0$, $M=3.6$, respectively) and they felt their speaking and writing were moderate ($M=3.3$, $M=3.4$). Whereas 81% respondents self-evaluated their reading ability as high (58%) or very high (23%) and 60% students evaluated their listening ability as high or very high, only 40% rated their speaking ability as high (33%) or very high (7%) and 45% students rated their writing ability as high or very high.

Course Information

I asked the EAGS to report percentages of international students in their classes (Item 13). The following table 3.8 summarizes the percentage of NNES international students in their classes and whether participation is graded or not.
### Characteristics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NNES Ratio</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 10%</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>27.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10%-25%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>24.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25%-50%</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 50%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation Graded or Not</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: NNES: Non-Native English-speaking. NNES ratio refers to the percentage of NNES international students in the class.*

Table 3.8: Summary of Class Information: Survey

NNES international students did not always constitute a minority in the classrooms EAGS attended. About 22% students reported that the percentage of NNES international students in their identified classes were over 50%. Approximately 21% students reported that between 25% and 50% students of the class were NNES international students (See Table 3.8). The result may be due to the fact that almost half of the participants in this survey came from STEM, where international students were not minorities in their major.
Participation is considered important in the graduate courses they identified and their academic performance is assessed by verbal participation. In the question asking whether classroom participation is graded or not (Item 14), about 66% (91 out of 139) respondents reported that their participation was counted as a part of the course grade. Another possible factor affecting the result is that the survey respondents were asked to identify a class out of all the classes they attended (Item 13).

3.3.2 Group Interview

3.3.2.1 Group Interview Question Development

Content of the Group Interview Questions

The five questions asked were (a) EAGS’s definitions of active classroom participation; (b) their perceived importance of active oral classroom participation; (c) their classroom experiences with oral classroom participation; (d) their suggestions to other international students to become more active class participants; and (e) suggestions for course instructors and American classmates to help international students more actively and comfortably engage in oral classroom participation (See Appendix C for the interview protocol).
3.3.2.2 Pilot and Field Test

The questions were originally developed based on the earlier survey findings in the current study and then refined based on the results of pilot and field tests (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 1996). I asked several colleagues who were either familiar with the method or content of the study to read early drafts and give their opinions on whether the questions would obtain the desired data and whether they saw any potential problems that may have been overlooked. I also administered field tests to six potential EAGS on an individual basis to improve the guiding interview questions.

3.3.2.3 Group Interview Participant Selection

Purposeful sampling with the combination of maximum variation sampling and network sampling strategies (Glesne, 1999; Patton, 1990) was applied. Steps were taken to recruit enough numbers of participants while diversifying them according to nationalities, gender, academic disciplines, and academic levels. First, via E-mail, I individually contacted the 35 EAGS who expressed their interest in participating in a follow-up interview in the survey conducted in Spring-Summer 2004. I chose to contact them because they were most likely to be interested in participating in focus group interviews. Four EAGS responded to the initial contact. It was not a sufficient number to organize two focus group interviews with about eight participants per session. It is possible that some of them may have already graduated due to almost one year’s gap and others may have forgotten the research project. Second, I sent a group E-mail to all 139 EAGS who responded to the survey. I chose to contact them because they were most
likely to be interested in participating in focus group interviews. Nine EAGS agreed to participate in focus group interviews.

After reviewing the profiles of the participants at the first stage of recruitment, I compared their academic backgrounds. In spite of my effort, I did not have enough participants and, moreover, the majority of the potential interviewees were female from non-STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields.

As the next recruitment strategy, I utilized my own personal network: I, via E-mail, by phone, or in person, contacted my friends and faculty in STEM asking if they could identify a specific person in a specific discipline to be a potential participant by giving them a specific description of an ideal potential participant. I was able to recruit two more female volunteers from STEM. As a result, 15 participants with various backgrounds were recruited.

3.3.2.4 Overall Profile of EAGS Group Interview Participants

Table 3.9 summarizes the overview of focus group interview participants. Among the 15 focus group interview participants, there was six students from China, four students from South Korea, three students from Taiwan, and two students from Japan. In terms of academic discipline, education majors were the dominant group in both sessions with 8 participants (4 in each session), and the rest majored in the fields of STEM (3), business (2), arts and humanities (1), and social science (1). The majority of them were female (twelve female and three male students). Despite my effort to diversify the
participants significant numbers came from education and most of them were female participants. This seems to be affected by my academic major (education) and gender (female).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wen</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>AH</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jihoon</td>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>BUS</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Naoko</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>EDU</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>4th year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fay</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yana</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>EDU</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ching</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>EDU</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>1st year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mei</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>3rd year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Group Interview II**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Discipline</th>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Heejoon</td>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>BUS</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>4th year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dongmin</td>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>EDU</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hana</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>EDU</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>4th year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jena</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>EDU</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>1st year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jiwoo</td>
<td>S. Korea</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>EDU</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>1st year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jia</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>SS</td>
<td>M.A.</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tia</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>3rd year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ming</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>STEM</td>
<td>Ph.D.</td>
<td>2nd year</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note*: Pseudonyms were used for each participant.


Table 3.9: Overview of Group Interview Participants
3.3.2.5 Group Interview Administration Procedure

The sessions were led by a faculty moderator who was formally trained and experienced in leading focus group interviews, and I, the researcher, acted as assistant moderator. I chose to have a neutral third party who was not too familiar with the content but was skillful in facilitating group interviews. The moderator was selected from several focus group interview moderators referred to me by a faculty who trains focus group moderators at the University.

Two one and a half hour focus group interviews with the total number of 15 EAGS were conducted. The first session had seven participants and the second one had eight participants, both of which were small enough to allow each participant to share insights and large enough to provide diverse perceptions (Ary, Jacobs & Razavieh, 1996).

The moderator asked questions and each participant had at least once response to each question. I, as the researcher and assistant moderator, took extensive field notes including both verbal and non-verbal behaviors during the sessions. The sessions were audio-taped.
3.4 Data Analysis

3.4.1 Survey

The various academic programs EAGS reported in the questionnaire (Question 1) were clustered into the five following categories: arts and humanities (AH); education (EDU); social science (SS); business (BUS); and science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). The decision was made mainly based on the classification of different academic disciplines published by the Registrar office at the University, with several exceptions.

The statistical software package SPSS for Windows (Version 12.5) was used for all data analysis. The quantitative data from the survey was coded for statistical analysis, downloaded from the Zoomerang on-line survey engine into a database, and analyzed. Statistical procedures employed included descriptive statistics for the various items on the survey to examine overall frequencies (totals, percentages, means, and standard deviations). One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to examine whether significant mean differences existed across different demographic factors such as academic discipline, academic level, gender, age, duration in the U.S, self-reported language proficiency, and so forth.

As the initial step of the data analysis, I applied a weighting technique to examine if the collected data were representative, by comparing respondents and non-respondents. In general, publicly accessible information (e.g., demographic information) was used for this technique to determine representativeness of the collected data for further analysis.
Therefore, I chose several key demographic variables to test gender, age, discipline, and academic rank. I treated the first respondents as respondents and treated the rest of them as non-respondents. The decision was made because late respondents were likely to be closer to the non-respondents and if I had not sent out reminders in the second phrase, respondents from Phase I would have been true non-respondents.

The three open-ended questions with the writing prompts to give suggestions for university instructors, American classmates, and other international students were read multiple times to find key themes and patterns in the data by constantly categorizing, grouping, and clustering the data. The data were later compared with the same questions addressed through the two focus group interviews in Phase II.

The categories I used to analyze the data and report findings to answer Research Questions 1, 2, and 3 were the followings: (a) EAGS’s perceptions of instructors’ requirements and expectations; (b) EAGS’s difficulties in meeting instructors’ requirements and expectations; (c) EAGS’s perceptions of skills for academic success in a graduate course; and (d) EAGS’s suggestions for university instructors, American classmates, and other international students.

3.4.2. Group Interview

The data from the two focus group interviews were used to examine perceptions of the selected 15 EAGS participants across the curriculum related to their classroom participation. The audio-taped data were transcribed. During the transcription process,
when I was not clear about something from the tape, I individually and personally contacted several research participants via E-mail or phone to clarify or fill any gap I was not able to hear.

The transcribed interview data were reviewed to find key themes and patterns in the data by constantly categorizing, grouping, and clustering the data to explore EAGS’s perceptions of verbal classroom participation. And then, they were compared with general themes derived from the extant literature related to classroom participation (Creswell, 2005; Marshall & Rossman, 1998).

The following themes were used as a starting point to answer research questions related to active classroom participation: (a) definition of active classroom participation; (b) importance of active verbal classroom participation; and (c) factors affecting verbal classroom participation. Several salient themes emerged through the constant data analysis, including silent active participation of EAGS and shared communication responsibilities in culturally and linguistically diverse U.S. university classrooms.

3.5 Verifications and Validity

3.5.1 Survey

Several steps were taken to ensure that the instrument would attain the desired data (validity) and the instrument would be consistent in measuring whatever it measures (reliability) (Ary, Jacobs, & Razavieh, 1996). The three standardized categories prepared by a joint committee of three research organizations to gather validity evidence were
content-related, criterion-related, and construct-related validity (American Psychological Association, 1985). To have content validity, the questionnaire was carefully reviewed by a content expert. The director of the university-wide teaching center at the University reviewed multiple drafts several times and made suggestions to ensure that the questionnaire included all of the necessary questions and did not contain unnecessary items and repetitions. To gather evidence of criterion validity, two survey research experts, a professor teaching survey research methods and a graduate statistical consultant at the University, examined versions of the questionnaire to see if my questionnaire design was favorably comparable to other surveys. I conducted cognitive interviewing and retrospective interviewing with the potential survey participants and a pilot study with undergraduate international students to check both content and reliability of the instrument.

3.5.2 Group Interview

In order to enhance the trustworthiness of the study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; see also Creswell, 1994, 2005; Guba & Lincoln, 1989; Janesick, 2000), I utilized multiple levels of member checks and multiple perspective triangulation during both the data analysis and writing stages (for a detailed discussion of triangulation, see Denzin, 1978; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Janesick, 2000; Marshall & Rossman, 1998).

For member checks, I exchanged multiple E-mails with the participants while transcribing and analyzing the draft to elicit their feedback regarding my analysis and
interpretation of the data. Based on their feedback, I revisited the data and my writing many times to convey their own perceptions while keeping my own interpretation to a minimum. This approach was chosen because the role I took as the researcher in the present study was as mediator, to deliver voices of EAGS for university instructors to better understand EAGS’s feelings, perceptions, and thoughts about their classroom participation, which otherwise is hard to obtain because they may be hesitant to share them in front of their instructors.

For multiple perspective triangulations, I worked with people with various backgrounds at different stages to ensure the trustworthiness of the study. First, Masa, another researcher, was actively involved in the data analysis by confirming or challenging themes or patterns I identified. He was in a good position to do so: (a) he was familiar with the topic through our weekly support and research meetings via on-line or face-to-face for more than five years; (b) he had first-hand experience being an EAGS graduate student from Japan for the past six years at the University; and (c) his going through the same stage of his own dissertation work made his insight helped my study. Second, I had a university faculty member who has little experience in working with international students and a faculty developer working at the university-wide teaching center at the University, both read my data and interpretation and gave me feedback. Last, two EAGS peer-debriefers read my multiple drafts and gave their feedback on my interpretation on a regular basis through our weekly research meetings.
This chapter described methodological approaches, data collection methods and procedures, data analyses, and reliability and validity issues. The following three chapters will present findings of EAGS’s perceptions of academic oral communication needs and active verbal classroom participation in U.S. graduate-level university classrooms.
CHAPTER 4

ACADEMIC ORAL COMMUNICATION NEEDS
IN U.S. GRADUATE CLASSROOMS

This chapter presents the research findings of East Asian international graduate students (EAGS)’ perceptions of their instructors’ requirements or expectations in terms of academic listening and speaking activities or skills used in graduate-level courses, as revealed through a questionnaire survey. It answers Research Questions 1, 2, and 3:

1. What are EAGS’s perceptions of instructors’ expectations of them concerning academic oral communication needs in graduate courses?

2. What are EAGS’s self-identified difficulties in meeting these perceived expectations?

3. What are EAGS’s perceptions of the importance of specific academic oral communication skills for their academic success in graduate courses?

The data came from a questionnaire sent out to all 630 East Asian international graduate students, specifically students from China, Japan, South Korea, and Taiwan, at a
large mid-Western research-extensive university in the U.S. The following three sections present the survey findings in the order of the three research questions.

4.1 EAGS’s Perceptions of Instructors’ Requirements and Expectations

This section reports research findings with respect to the answers to Research Question 1: “What are EAGS’s perceptions of instructors’ expectations of them concerning academic oral communication needs in graduate courses?” This section, first, reports the overall frequency of academic oral communication activities to examine EAGS’s views of which oral communication activities are more common than others in U.S. graduate classrooms. Second, I present the findings of statistically significant differences across different demographic and class characteristics. Last, I conclude the section by summarizing the research findings.

To report overall frequency, I used descriptive statistics, such as mean, number, and percentage. To see if statistically significant mean differences existed across different characteristics, I applied Analysis of One-Way Variance (ANOVA). Further, to determine where and to what extent the statistically significant mean differences existed, a Post Hoc Test was applied for multiple comparisons. The demographic and class characteristics used for comparisons were (1) academic discipline, (2) academic level, (3) participation graded or not, and (4) the percentage of NNES international students in class.
4.1.1 Frequencies of Various Oral Communication Activities in Graduate Courses

Part C in the survey asked EAGS to respond with reference to the instructor’s expectations/requirements of academic listening/speaking skills in the courses they identified in Part B (See Appendix I for the entire copy of the questionnaire). Table 4.1 summarizes overall frequencies of EAGS’s perceptions of instructors’ expectations on academic oral communication skills or tasks in graduate courses. Skills or activities were ranked based on their mean scores. The mean scores were calculated based on their responses: Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Frequently (4), Always (5).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>R</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No. (%)</td>
<td>No.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong listening skills</td>
<td>2 (1.5)</td>
<td>10 (7.4)</td>
<td>25 (18.5)</td>
<td>46 (34.1)</td>
<td>52 (38.5)</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions during class</td>
<td>2 (1.5)</td>
<td>6 (4.5)</td>
<td>38 (28.4)</td>
<td>51 (38.1)</td>
<td>37 (27.6)</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class discussions</td>
<td>10 (7.4)</td>
<td>14 (10.4)</td>
<td>17 (12.6)</td>
<td>40 (29.6)</td>
<td>54 (40.0)</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-group discussions</td>
<td>13 (9.6)</td>
<td>23 (17.0)</td>
<td>17 (12.6)</td>
<td>39 (28.9)</td>
<td>43 (31.9)</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions before/after class</td>
<td>5 (3.6)</td>
<td>23 (17.0)</td>
<td>47 (34.8)</td>
<td>43 (31.9)</td>
<td>17 (12.6)</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions in office hours</td>
<td>7 (5.2)</td>
<td>26 (19.4)</td>
<td>46 (34.3)</td>
<td>38 (28.4)</td>
<td>17 (12.7)</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong note-taking skills</td>
<td>8 (6.0)</td>
<td>33 (24.6)</td>
<td>37 (27.6)</td>
<td>37 (26.7)</td>
<td>19 (14.2)</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentations</td>
<td>23 (17.4)</td>
<td>17 (12.9)</td>
<td>38 (28.8)</td>
<td>32 (24.2)</td>
<td>22 (16.7)</td>
<td>132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-led discussions</td>
<td>25 (18.8)</td>
<td>26 (19.5)</td>
<td>41 (30.8)</td>
<td>28 (21.1)</td>
<td>13 (9.8)</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of class group projects</td>
<td>33 (24.4)</td>
<td>32 (23.7)</td>
<td>27 (20.0)</td>
<td>24 (17.8)</td>
<td>19 (14.1)</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with NESs</td>
<td>60 (44.4)</td>
<td>24 (17.8)</td>
<td>23 (17.0)</td>
<td>20 (14.8)</td>
<td>8 (5.9)</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Survey Part C, Items 15a.-15k. NESs: Native English-Speaking Speakers. N: Never, R: Rarely, S: Sometimes, F: Frequently, A: Always. The listed order is from the most frequent to the least frequent skills or activities. Each response was assigned a score from Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Frequently (4), and Always (5). Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

Table 4.1: EAGS’s Views of Instructors’ Expectations on Academic Oral Communication Skills or Tasks in Graduate Courses: Summary of Survey Quantitative Result
The researcher presents several interesting findings related to frequencies of various academic oral communication activities in graduate courses by the combination of the frequency (e.g., the most frequent to the least frequent) and common themes (e.g., in-class vs. outside-of-class activities).

EAGS respondents in the survey identified having strong listening skills as the most frequently expected skills by their course instructors among all academic oral communication skills or activities, with the overall mean of 4.01. As shown in Table 4.1, over 73% (98 out of 135) students reported that having good listening skills was always or frequently expected by their course instructors and 34% responded sometimes. Only 9% answered that they were seldom expected to do so.

In general, EAGS considered that their course instructors required or expected them to actively engage in most in-class speaking activities. They reported that asking questions during class was the most common speaking activity in graduate courses \((M=3.86)\). More than 66% students reported that they were often expected to ask questions during class sessions (28% always and 38% frequently) and 28% students responded that they were sometimes asked to do so. Only 5% (8 out of 134) students reported that they were rarely expected to do so.

The second common speaking activity after asking questions during class sessions was participating in whole-class discussions \((M=3.84)\). Approximately 70% (94 out of 135) students reported that they were often expected to participate in whole-class discussions (40% always and 30% frequently). Engaging in small-group discussions was
also fairly common in graduate courses ($M=3.56$), following engaging in large-group discussions. Approximately 61% (82 out of 135) students reported that their instructors often expected or required them to engage in small-group discussions (32% always and 29% frequently). On the other hand, EAGS identified giving oral presentations and leading discussions in class as occasionally required in graduate courses ($M=3.10$, $M=2.83$, respectively).

As opposed to the high expectation by instructors for students to verbally engage in class, when it comes to outside of classrooms, EAGS viewed that they were not frequently expected to interact with instructors, classmates, or non-classmates. EAGS reported that they were sometimes expected to ask questions during non-class hours such as before/after class ($M=3.33$) or during office hours ($M=3.24$). EAGS responded that participating in a group project outside of class with classmates and interviewing native English speakers as a course requirement were not common tasks in graduate courses ($M=2.73$, $M=2.20$, correspondingly) (See Table 4.1). Also, EAGS viewed that their instructors only occasionally expected them to have strong note-taking skills ($M=3.19$), while having strong listening skills was identified as the most frequently expected skills among all academic listening/speaking skills ($M=4.01$).

### 4.1.2 Differences by Various Demographic and Class Characteristics

Following the overall frequency, I examined to see if statistically significant differences existed in various academic communication skills or activities according to
different demographic and class characteristics. Analysis of One-Way Variance (ANOVA) was used to see if statistically significant differences existed across different characteristics. Further, a Post Hoc Test was applied for comparisons to determine where and to what extent the differences existed. The demographic and class characteristics used for comparisons were (a) academic discipline, (b) academic level, (c) participation graded or not, and (d) the percentage of NNES international students in class. This section presents the findings according to the characteristics, while complementing the findings from the survey’s open-ended responses and focus group interview comments.

Academic Discipline

The largest academic discipline represented was STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) (34%, 47 out of 139). Social science (21%), education (19%), and business (16%) were the next largest groups. Arts and humanities (10%) was the smallest academic discipline represented in this study.

The ANOVA results showed that, in general, different academic disciplines showed various degrees of requirements or expectations in terms of academic listening and speaking skills or activities. In particular, expectations of STEM were significantly different from the rest in listening skills and most in-class oral activities (see Table 4.2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>AH</th>
<th>BUS</th>
<th>EDU</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>STEM</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong listening skills</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions during class</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class discussions</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>4.44</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-group discussions</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions before/after class</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions in office hours</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong note-taking skills</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentations</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-led discussions</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>3.48</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside-of-group projects</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with NESs</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Academic Disciplines: AH: Arts and Humanities, BUS: Business, EDU: Education, SS: Social Science, STEM: Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics. The number (   ) is the number of people in this category: AH (14) means there are 14 students from arts and humanities. *p < .05.

Table 4.2: EAGS’s Views of Instructors’ Expectations on Academic Oral Communication Skills or Tasks in Graduate Courses: Total Summary of Mean, Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by Academic Discipline
Overall, highly significant differences existed across academic disciplines with most in-class oral communication activities, except asking questions during class. For example, with regard to EAGS’s perceptions of instructors’ expectation of participating in whole-class discussions, highly significant differences were found across academic disciplines ($p=.01$). Students of STEM were significantly different from the rest. While students of STEM reported it was sometimes required ($M=2.87$), the majority of students in education, social science, arts and humanities, and business responded that their instructors always or frequently expected them to participate in whole-class discussions ($M=4.44, M=4.31, M=4.50, M=4.19$, correspondingly). In terms of giving oral presentations as a course requirement, EAGS thought that it was pretty common in arts and humanities and social science ($M=3.93, M=3.54$), but it was not common in STEM ($M=2.51$).

When it comes to instructors’ expectations of asking questions during class or non-class hours, EAGS reported that not much difference existed across various academic disciplines. That is, EAGS thought that they were highly expected to ask questions during class sessions ($M=3.86$), but they were occasionally expected to ask instructors questions before or after class ($M=3.33$) or during office hours ($M=3.24$) throughout all academic majors.

With regard to instructors’ expectation of strong listening skills, STEM fields were considerably different from the education field and somewhat different from the social science field. While students in education and social science reported strong
listening skills were often expected ($M=4.48$, $M=4.21$), students in STEM responded that they were only sometimes expected ($M=3.54$). Unlike listening skills, no significant differences found across various majors related to instructors’ expectation of note-taking skills.

**Academic Level**

The vast majority of the survey respondents were doctoral students (72%) and 28% were master’s students. Table 4.3 summarizes the means and mean differences of masters and doctoral students.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>Academic Level</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MA (39)</td>
<td>PhD (100)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong listening skills</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions during class</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class discussions</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>3.71</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-group discussions</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions before/after class</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions in office hours</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong note-taking skills</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentations</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-led discussions</td>
<td>2.97</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of class group projects</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with NESs</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *p < .05.

Table 4.3: EAGS’s Views of Instructors’ Expectations on Academic Oral Communication Skills or Tasks in Graduate Courses: Summary of Mean, Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by Academic Level
In general, the differences by academic level were insignificant across various activities. Participating in whole-class discussions was the only item showing statistically significant differences, but the differences were also very marginal ($p=.05$). However, overall, masters’ students claimed that their instructors expected or required them to actively engage in all in-class or outside oral communication activities more than doctoral students did. Asking questions during office hours was the only item doctoral students identified as required or expected more frequently than did masters’ students, but the difference was slight ($M=3.25, M=3.22$, respectively, $p=.05$).

**Participation Graded or Not**

In the question asking whether classroom verbal participation was graded or not (Survey Item 14), about 66% (91 out of 139) respondents reported that their participation was counted as a part of the course grade in the course they chose to respond about. Table 4.4 summarizes mean and mean differences by participation graded or not.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>Participation Graded or Not</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yes (91)</td>
<td>No (45)</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>p</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong listening skills</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions during class</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class discussions</td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-group discussions</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>2.59</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions before/after class</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>3.18</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions in office hours</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong note-taking skills</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentations</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-led discussions</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>2.18</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of class group projects</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with NESs</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>.44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

_Note. N=139. Three people were not identifiable in the table with missing respondents. *p < .05._

Table 4.4: EAGS’s Views of Instructors’ Expectations on Academic Oral Communication Skills or Tasks in Graduate Courses: Summary of Mean, Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by Participation Graded or Not
Significant differences in participation in graded courses and non-graded courses existed in all in-class oral classroom activities (i.e., whole-class discussions, small-group discussions, formal oral presentations, student-led discussions) and outside of class group projects. EAGS who reported their participation was counted toward a course grade believed that they were more frequently expected to engage in speaking activities in class and outside of class group projects than those who said their participation was not graded.

In addition to the ANOVA results, I also found that overall, when participation was counted as a part of the course grade, students believe that they were more likely to be expected to engage in oral communication activities and have stronger listening skills than when it was not graded. The only exception was note-taking skills, but the differences is not statistically significant ($p=.18$).

Portion of NNES International Students in Class

About 22% students reported that the percentage of NNES international students in their identified classes were over 50% (Survey Item 13). Approximately 21% students reported that 25%-50% students of the class were NNES international students. Table 4.5 summarizes means and mean differences according to the NNES Ratio in class.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>NNES Ratio</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>P</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strong listening skills</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.32</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions during class</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class discussions</td>
<td></td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.50</td>
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<td>.02*</td>
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<tr>
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<td>3.33</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions in office hours</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.06</td>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.62</td>
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<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>.67</td>
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<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>.30</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student-led discussions</td>
<td></td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside class group projects</td>
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<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>2.66</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with NESs</td>
<td></td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.77</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. NNES percentage refers to the percentage of non-native English-speaking international students in the class EAGS chose to respond about. 1: less than 10% NNES international students, 2: 10%-25%, 3: 25%-50%, 4: Over 50%.

Table 4.5: EAGS’s Views of Instructors’ Expectations of Academic Oral Communication Skills or Tasks in Graduate Courses: Summary of Mean, Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by NNES Ratio in Class
Participating in small-group discussions and having strong listening skills were the two items showing significant differences according to the percentage of NNES international students in class. For example, when it comes to instructors’ expectation of listening skills, classes with over 50% NNES were greatly different from classes with less than 10% NNESs ($M=4.32$, $M=3.5$, correspondingly). EAGS responded that, as the number of international students was higher, their instructors did not expect them to have strong listening skills. Other than those, no significant differences were found across different academic oral communication skills or activities.

Along with the ANOVA results, overall mean distribution showed that generally, EAGS believed that, as more NNES international students were in class, there was less expectation from instructors that students engage in any oral communication activities in and outside of class. For instance, EAGS who identified NNES percentage was higher reported less expectation from their instructors to participate in whole-class discussions or to give formal oral presentations in class as a course requirement, as shown in Table 4.5.

4.1.3 Section Summary

Research Question 1 asked for EAGS’s perceptions of instructors’ expectations of them concerning academic oral communication needs in U.S. graduate courses. EAGS, through the questionnaire, reported that strong listening skills, question-raising during class, whole-class discussions, and small-group discussions were the four most frequently
required listening-/speaking-related classroom tasks by instructors in their graduate courses. EAGS respondents in the survey identified having strong listening skills as the most frequently expected skills by their course instructors among all academic oral communication skills or activities. In general, EAGS considered that their course instructors expected them to actively engage in speaking activities in class, such as asking questions and participating in whole-class and small-group discussions. As opposed to instructors’ high expectations for students to verbally engage in class, EAGS believed that they were not frequently expected to interact with instructors, classmates, or non-classmates outside of classrooms.

Overall, no significant mean differences were found in academic level (master’s and doctoral students) or in the percentage of NNES international students in class. However, statistically significant differences existed in academic discipline and participation grading policy with most in-class oral communication activities. Expectations of STEM were significantly different from the rest of the academic majors in listening skills and most in-class oral activities and the differences by academic level were insignificant. When participation was counted as a part of the course grade, students were more likely to be expected to engage in oral communication activities and to have stronger listening skills than when it was not graded. The more NNES international students were in class, the less expectation from instructors that students engage in any oral communication activities in and outside of class were reported. Participating in small-group discussions and having strong listening skills were the only two items
showing significant differences according to the percentage of NNES international students in class.

4.2 EAGS’s Difficulties in Meeting Instructors’ Requirements and Expectations

These section reports research findings to answer Research Question 2: “What are EAGS’s self-identified difficulties in meeting these perceived expectations related to academic oral communication in U.S. graduate courses?” This part presents EAGS’s perceptions of their own difficulties in meeting course instructors’ requirements and/or expectations in terms of academic oral communication skills or activities or skills in U.S. graduate courses.

First, this section reports the overall frequency of the total items, to examine EAGS’s perceptions of which oral communication-related skills or activities are more difficult than others, using descriptive statistics (e.g., mean, number, and percentage). Second, I report if statistically significant differences across different characteristics existed and if so, where and to what extent the differences existed. I used Analysis of One-Way Variance (ANOVA) to examine if statistically significant mean differences existed across different characteristics and a Post Hoc Test to determine where and to what extent statistically significant mean differences existed. The demographic and class characteristics used for comparisons were (a) academic discipline, (b) academic level, (c) age, (d) gender, (e) the duration of stay in the U.S., (f) length of English study, and (g)
proficiency level of listening and speaking. Finally, I summarize the research findings and discuss several important findings.

4.2.1 Overall Degree of Difficulties across Various Oral Communication Activities

Part D in the survey asked EAGS to report their degrees of difficulty in meeting their university instructors’ expectations or requirements concerning oral communication skills or activities in class. Table 4.6 summarizes EAGS’s views of the degrees of difficulty in participating in different oral communication activities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>N (%)</th>
<th>R (%)</th>
<th>S (%)</th>
<th>F (%)</th>
<th>A (%)</th>
<th>N.A. (%)</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student-led discussions</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class discussions</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentations</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-group discussions</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong listening skills</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong note-taking skills</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions during class</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of class group projects</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with NESs</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions before/after class</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>134</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions in office hours</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Survey Part D, Items 15a.-15k. N: Never, R: Rarely, S: Sometimes, F: Frequently, A: Always. N.A. (Not Applicable) means certain skills or activities were used in the specific course they identified to answer the survey. The listed order is from the most difficult to the least difficult skills or activities. Each response was assigned a score from Never (1), Rarely (2), Sometimes (3), Frequently (4), and Always (5). Percentages may not total 100 because of rounding.

Table 4.6: EAGS’s Views of Difficulties in Meeting Instructors’ Requirements and Expectations in Graduate Courses: Total Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation

103
In general, EAGS in this study reported little difficulty in engaging in various listening-/speaking-related academic tasks in graduate courses, ranging from rarely to sometimes. Among academic speaking-related academic tasks, students reported that they were most concerned about leading class discussions ($M=2.77$) and participating in whole-class discussions ($M=2.71$). About 21% EAGS responded that they were frequently or always concerned with leading class discussions and 22% felt it sometimes difficult. Approximately 22% students reported that they frequently or always struggled with whole-class discussions and 30% said they sometimes did. EAGS reported that giving formal oral presentations was the third most difficult task ($M=2.52$), followed by participating in small-group discussions ($M=2.48$).

While they were somewhat concerned with in-class oral classroom tasks, EAGS expressed little concern with outside of class communication tasks. They were hardly ever concerned about asking questions during class, before/after class or during office hours ($M=2.12$, $M=1.88$, $M=1.83$, respectively). Merely 8% (11 out of 134) students said that they often struggled with asking questions in class and only 4% said that they often felt difficulty in asking questions to instructors before or after class or during office hours.

Similar to asking questions outside of classes, EAGS reported very little difficulty in interacting with classmates or non-classmates outside of class through participating in group projects with other classmates ($M=2.06$) or interviewing other native English speakers as a part of course requirement ($M=2.02$). Only 6% said that they often
struggled with group projects outside of class. Very few respondents (4%) said that they were frequently concerned about interviewing native English speakers as a course requirement and none of them reported it always difficult.

In addition, EAGS were rarely concerned about their listening and note-taking skills ($M=2.30$, $M=2.26$). Only 9% EAGS said they frequently felt difficulty in understanding instructors and other students in class and about 11% said that they regularly struggle with taking notes during class. None of them felt listening and note-taking skills always difficult.

4.2.2 Differences by Various Demographic and Class Characteristics

Following the overall frequency, I examined to see if statistically significant differences existed in various academic communication skills or activities according to different demographic and class characteristics. ANOVA was used to see if statistically significant differences existed across different characteristics. Further, a Post Hoc Test was applied for comparisons to determine where and to what extent the differences existed. The demographic and class characteristics used for comparisons were (a) academic discipline, (b) academic level, (c) duration of stay in the U.S., (d) length of English study, (e) self-evaluated proficiency level of listening and speaking, (f) age, and (g) gender.
Academic Discipline

The Table 4.7 summarizes overall means and mean differences concerning EAGS’s difficulty in meeting oral communication expectation by academic majors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>AH (13)</th>
<th>BUS (19)</th>
<th>EDU (25)</th>
<th>SS (28)</th>
<th>STEM (41)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student-led discussions</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class discussions</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>2.72</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentations</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-group discussions</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>2.32</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>.75</td>
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<tr>
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<td>2.23</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2.35</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.69</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strong note-taking skills</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>1.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions during class</td>
<td>1.85</td>
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<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Outside-of-group projects</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>2.19</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>.82</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interviews with NESs</td>
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<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>2.02</td>
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<td>.74</td>
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<tr>
<td>Questions before/after class</td>
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<td>2.15</td>
<td>1.65</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions in office hours</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.36</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *p < .05.

Table 4.7: EAGS’s Views of Difficulties in Meeting Instructors’ Requirements and Expectations in Graduate Courses: Summary of Mean, Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by Academic Discipline
EAGS across different academic majors shared similar degrees of difficulty with various oral communication activities. The ANOVA results revealed that overall, there was no statistically significant differences across various academic disciplines in EAGS’s self-perceived difficulties in engaging in oral communication activities.

Leading class discussions was the only item showing statistically significant differences across academic disciplines, at .05 alpha level ($p=.05$). The ANOVA result showed that only marginally significant differences existed between education majors and STEM majors ($p=.05$): students in education felt leading class discussions were somewhat more difficult than those in STEM did ($M=3.28$, $M=2.36$, each) (See Table 4.7). The different degrees of difficulty may be caused by the frequency of student-led discussions; education majors identified them as more difficult than STEM majors did because leading class discussions is more frequently required in education than STEM.

**Academic Level**

In general, master’s students reported engaging in oral communication activities in graduate courses more difficult than doctoral students did, but the difference was not significant. As Table 4.8 shows, no statistically significant differences were found between master’s students and doctoral students, except leading discussions. Master’s students felt that leading discussion in class was more difficult than did doctoral students ($M=3.22$, $M=2.57$, $p=.01$).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>MA (39)</th>
<th>PhD (100)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student-led discussions</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class discussions</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentations</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.44</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-group discussions</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong listening skills</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong note-taking skills</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions during class</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of group projects</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with NESs</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
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<td>Questions before/after class</td>
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<td>1.88</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions in office hours</td>
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<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < .05.

Table 4.8: EAGS’s Views of Difficulties in Meeting Instructors’ Requirements and Expectations in Graduate Courses: Summary of Mean, Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by Academic Level
Age

Age significantly affected the degrees of difficulty in understanding lectures or class discussions and taking notes ($p=.01$). Table 4.9 summarizes the $M$, $SD$ and $p$ values of different academic communication activities or skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$r$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student-led discussions</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class discussions</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentations</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-group discussions</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong listening skills</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong note-taking skills</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.26</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions during class</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of group projects</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td>.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with NESs</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>.22</td>
<td>.04*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions before/after class</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions in office hours</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.16</td>
<td>.08</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* $*p < .05$.

Table 4.9: EAGS’s Views of Difficulties in Meeting Instructors’ Requirements and Expectations in Graduate Courses: Correlation between Oral Communication Activities or Skills and Age
A direct correlation existed between age and the degrees of difficulty in listening and note-taking skills: The older students reported more concerns with understanding lectures or class discussion or taking notes than did the younger students. EAGS also reported different degrees of difficulty in participating in whole-class discussions, outside group projects, and interviews with NESs, but the differences were marginal ($p=.05$, $p=.05$, $p=.04$) (See Table 4.9). Age positively correlated with the degrees of difficulty in participating in whole-class discussion, indicating that the older students felt engaging in whole-class discussions more difficult than did the younger students. The older the student, the more difficulty was experienced with outside-of-group work and interviewing native English speakers as a course requirement.
Gender

Overall, male students identified meeting oral communication expectations in class more difficult than female students did, but EAGS’s degrees of difficulties of various academic oral communication activities were not much different according to gender, except asking questions during non-class hours (See Table 4.10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-led discussions</td>
<td>2.82</td>
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<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class discussions</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentations</td>
<td>2.53</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-group discussions</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>.19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong listening skills</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.73</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong note-taking skills</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.48</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions during class</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>2.20</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of group projects</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with NESs</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>.64</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions before/after class</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.01*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions during office hours</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.01*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *$p <.05$.  

Table 4.10: EAGS’s Views of Difficulties in Meeting Instructors’ Requirements and Expectations in Graduate Courses: Summary of Mean, Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by Gender
Overall, there were no statistically significant differences found by gender in terms of the degrees of difficulty of academic oral communication skills or activities. The ANOVA results revealed that there were no statistically significant differences in all in-class and outside oral communication activities related to gender differences. On the other hand, statistically significant differences were found by gender with asking questions during non-class hours such as asking questions before/after class or during office hours ($p=.01$, both): female students felt more comfortable asking questions during non-class hours than male students did.

Duration of Stay in the U.S.

Regardless of length of U.S. residence, EAGS reported similar degrees of difficulties in participating in oral communication activities related to course work. The ANOVA results revealed that, no significant differences across various activities found in period of residence in the U.S. in relation to their self-identified difficulties, except student-led discussions (see Table 4.11). Leading discussions was the only item showing statistically significant differences ($p=.03$): EAGS reported that, as they stayed longer, they felt less difficulty in leading class discussions.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student-led discussions</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class discussions</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentations</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-group discussions</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong listening skills</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong note-taking skills</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions during class</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside group projects</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with NESs</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions before/after class</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions during office hours</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. US duration refers to the length of study in the U.S.  *p < .05

Table 4.11: EAGS’s Views of Difficulties in Meeting Instructors’ Requirements and Expectations in Graduate Courses: Summary of Mean, Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by Duration of Stay in the U.S.

Length of English Study

Depending on how long they have studied English, students reported different degrees of difficulties when they participated in most in- and outside speaking-related activities and listening skills (See Table 4.12).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Small-group discussions</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class discussions</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student-led discussions</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentations</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong listening skills</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong note-taking skills</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside group projects</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with NESs</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions during class</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions before/after class</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions during office hours</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.36</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. English Study refers to the length of the respondents’ formal English education.  
*p < .05

Table 4.12: EAGS’s Views of Difficulties in Meeting Instructors’ Requirements and Expectations in Graduate Courses: Summary of Mean, Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by Length of English Study

Length of English study significantly affected their degrees of difficulty in engaging in whole-class discussions, leading discussions in class, giving oral presentations in class ($p=.01$ each) and marginal differences found in small-group
discussions and outside group projects ($p=.05$). As the period of English study was longer, students were less concerned about participating in these activities.

On the other hand, length of English study did not affect their perceived degrees of difficulty with asking questions during class, before/after, or during office hours ($M=.11$, $M=.54$, $M=.36$, each). No significant difference existed in asking questions.
Self-Perceived Listening Proficiency Level

Table 4.13 illustrates means and ANOVA results of EAGS’s self-identified degrees of difficulty related to their self-reported listening proficiency level.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student-led discussions</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class discussions</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentations</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.43</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>2.37</td>
<td>2.14</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-group discussions</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong listening skills</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.94</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong note-taking skills</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.49</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.03*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions during class</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.21</td>
<td>1.98</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of group projects</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>1.79</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with NESs</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions before/after class</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions in office hours</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.66</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. *p < .05

Table 4.13: EAGS’s Views of Difficulties in Meeting Instructors’ Requirements and Expectations in Graduate Courses: Summary of Mean, Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by Listening Skills
Across all activities, EAGS exhibited various degrees of difficulties in engaging in verbal communication activities, depending on their self-perceived listening proficiency levels. According to the ANOVA, very significant differences existed between degrees of difficulty and self-evaluated listening level in all items \( (p = .01, \text{ except } p = .03 \text{ with note-taking skills}) \): As the students’ self-reported listening abilities were higher, they were less concerned about participating in any listening-related communication activities.

**Self-Perceived Speaking Proficiency Level**

Speaking ability greatly affected students’ comfort level with all oral communication activities. The ANOVA results revealed that statistically highly significant differences existed in all oral communication-related skills or activities by EAGS’s self-evaluated speaking ability (Refer to Table 4.14).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student-led discussions</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>1.16</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-class discussions</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td>2.62</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentations</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small-group discussions</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.10</td>
<td>2.58</td>
<td>2.36</td>
<td>1.67</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong listening skills</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strong note-taking skills</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.30</td>
<td>2.22</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions during class</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.07</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>2.12</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outside of group projects</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>2.90</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews with NESs</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>2.02</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions before/after class</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Questions in office hours</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>1.82</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.22</td>
<td>1.83</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *p < .05

Table 4.14: EAGS’s Views of Difficulties in Meeting Instructors’ Requirements and Expectations in Graduate Courses: Summary of Mean, Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by Speaking Skills

A negative correlation existed between the students’ level of competence in speaking and the degrees of students’ reported difficulties in engaging in speaking activities in and outside of class: As the students’ self-reported speaking abilities were higher, they were less concerned about participating in academic oral communication activities.
4.2.3 Section Summary

Research Question 2 asked EAGS’s for their perceptions of their own difficulties in meeting instructors’ expectations concerning academic oral communication needs in graduate courses, following Research Question 1 concerning EAGS’s views of their university instructors’ expectations or requirements.

Overall, EAGS reported similar degrees of difficulties in participating in oral communication activities related to course work, regardless of academic disciplines, academic levels, gender, and length of U.S. residence. Students reported different degrees of difficulties when they participated in most in- and outside speaking-related activities according to the length of English study. Age greatly affected the degrees of difficulty in understanding lectures or class discussions and taking notes; the older students reported more concerns with understanding lectures or class discussion or taking notes than did the younger students. Speaking and listening abilities greatly affected students’ comfort levels with all oral communication activities: As the students’ self-reported speaking and listening abilities were higher, they were less concerned about participating in academic oral communication activities.
4.3 EAGS’s Views on Essential Skills for Academic Success in U.S. Graduate Classes

This section, based on the survey, presents EAGS’s perceptions of important academic listening and skills for their academic success in U.S. graduate courses, in response to Research Question 3: “What are EAGS’s perceptions of the importance of specific academic oral communication skills for their academic success in graduate courses?”

This section, first, reports overall rank of importance of various oral communication activities to examine EAGS’s overall perceptions of which oral communication activities are more important than others in order to succeed in U.S. graduate courses. Second, I present overall significant differences according to different characteristics. Last, I summarize the important findings. The demographic and class characteristics used for comparisons were (a) academic discipline, (b) academic level, (c) age, (d) gender, (e) duration of stay in the U.S., (f) period of English study, and (g) EAGS’s self-perceived proficiency of listening and speaking.

4.3.1 Overall Degree of Importance across Various Oral Communication Activities

In this section, EAGS were asked to rate the degrees of importance of the eight essential oral communication activities or skills needed for academic success (see Appendix I for the entire copy of the questionnaire, Part E). Table 4.15 summarizes EAGS’s perceptions of essential skills for their academic success in graduate courses.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>1 (%)</th>
<th>2 (%)</th>
<th>3 (%)</th>
<th>4 (%)</th>
<th>5 (%)</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal lecture understanding</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class discussion participation strategy</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General listening comprehension</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication strategy with professors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>0.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentation skills</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication strategy with peers</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note-taking skills</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* Students rated the degrees of importance from 1 (Not Important) to 5 (Extremely Important). Degree of Importance: *Not Important* (1), *Important* (2), *Somewhat Important* (3), *Very Important* (4), and *Extremely Important* (5). The listed order is from the most important to the least important skills or activities.

Table 4.15.: EAGS’s Views of Essential Skills for Academic Success in U.S.

Graduate Courses: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation
Overall, the respondents rated most oral communication skills as very important for their academic success in U.S. graduate courses, except note-taking skills and pronunciation. Students ranked having strong listening skills to understand formal lectures and participating in classroom discussions the most essential skills ($M=4.08$, $M=4.07$) and note-taking skills and good pronunciation the least important skills ($M=3.35$, $M=3.28$, respectively). Listening skills to understanding formal lectures were considered the most critical for their academic success in graduate courses ($M=4.08$). About 81% EAGS rated it extraordinarily important (32% extremely important and 49% very important). Following understanding formal lectures, approximately 78% students said having good strategies to engage in classroom discussions was extremely important and 42%, very important ($M=4.07$). Besides understanding formal lectures, EAGS rated general listening comprehension skills to understand peers and class discussions as one of the highly important academic listening/speaking tasks for their academic success ($M=3.99$). Over 75% reported them to be very or extremely important.

Along with listening skills, students very highly rated having good communication strategies with professors and peers in or outside of class and having effective discussion strategies in class. About 29% respondents said communication skills with professors were extremely important and 47% very important ($M=3.96$). Also, approximately 25% reported good communication skills with peers in or outside of class extremely important and 49% very important ($M=3.90$). Students rated having effective presentation skills highly in order to succeed in their graduate courses ($M=3.94$), as well.
Over 75% responded that having them was very critical (30% extremely and 46% very important).

EAGS reported that they needed to have strong listening skills, effective class discussion participation strategies, and effective communication strategies with professors and peers to be successful in graduate courses, rating them within the range of very important. On the other hand, EAGS reported note-taking skills ($M=3.35$) and having good pronunciation ($M=3.28$) less important than other listening and speaking skills, rating them in the range of important, compared to the very important range for other skills.

4.3.2 Differences by Various Demographic and Class Characteristics

Academic Discipline

EAGS across all academic majors shared similar views in terms of essential academic oral communication skills or activities for their academic success in graduate courses. As Table 4.18 shows, no statistically significant differences were found across various academic majors, except for class discussion participation strategies, and the differences were insignificant ($p=.05$).
### Table 4.16: EAGS’s Views of Essential Skills for Academic Success in U.S. Graduate Courses: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by Academic Discipline

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities or Skills</th>
<th>AH</th>
<th>BUS</th>
<th>EDU</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>STEM</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal lecture understanding</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class discussion participation</td>
<td>4.43</td>
<td>4.09</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>.05*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General listening comprehension</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with professors</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentation skills</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>4.12</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.64</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with peers</td>
<td>4.14</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note-taking skills</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>2.86</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.49</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *p < .05

In general, master’s students and doctoral students were not much different, but in terms of the importance of communicating with peers and listening skills, master’s and doctoral students perceived significantly different degrees of importance (See Table 4.17). The ANOVA results showed that significant differences existed in communication...
strategy with peers and general listening comprehension by academic level ($p=.01$, $p=.02$, respectively). Master’s students were more inclined to give more importance to general listening skills than did doctoral students and master’s students also considered effectively communicating with classmates to be more important than did doctoral students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>Academic Level</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MA</td>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$p$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal lecture understanding</td>
<td>4.23</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class discussion participation</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General listening comprehension</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with professors</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentation skills</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with peers</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note-taking skills</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *$p < .05$

Table 4.17: EAGS’s Views of Essential Skills for Academic Success in U.S. Graduate Courses: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by Academic Level
Age

Regardless of age, EAGS revealed similar degrees of importance with various academic oral communication skills or activities. No statistically significant differences found in all items (See Table 4.18).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>r</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal lecture understanding</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class discussion participation</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>0.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General listening comprehension</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>0.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with professors</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>0.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentation skills</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>0.99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with peers</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note-taking skills</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>0.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *p < .05

Table 4.18: EAGS’s Views of Essential Skills for Academic Success in U.S. Graduate Courses: Correlation between Oral Communication Activities or Skills and Age
Gender

Gender did not affect the degrees of importance of oral communication activities.

As shown in Table 4.19, EAGS revealed no differences by gender in relation to the importance of various academic oral communication skills.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal lecture understanding</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class discussion participation</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General listening comprehension</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with professors</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentation skills</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with peers</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note-taking skills</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.31</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *p < .05

Table 4.19: EAGS’s Views of Essential Skills for Academic Success in U.S. Graduate Courses: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by Gender
Duration of Stay in the U.S.

Despite length of U.S. residence, EAGS reported similar degrees of importance in participating in various oral communication activities. No significant differences were found by period of residence in the U.S. (See Table 4.20).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal lecture understanding</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class discussion participation</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General listening comprehension</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with professors</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentation skills</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with peers</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note-taking skills</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *p < .05

Table 4.20: EAGS’s Views of Essential Skills for Academic Success in U.S. Graduate Courses: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by Duration of Stay in the U.S.
Length of English Study

Period of English study has no effect on students’ perceptions of the importance of participating in various oral communication activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Skills or Activities</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal lecture understanding</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class discussion participation</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General listening comprehension</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with professors</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentation skills</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with peers</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>0.9</td>
<td>.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note-taking skills</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *p < .05  

Table 4.21: EAGS’s Views of Essential Skills for Academic Success in U.S. Graduate Courses: Total Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by Duration of English Study
Self-Perceived Listening and Speaking Proficiency Level

Regardless of their self-perceived listening and speaking skills, EAGS showed similar views of the importance of essential academic oral communication success to succeed in U.S. graduate courses, except communication skills with peers ($p=.02$, $p=.01$).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Speaking Skills</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal lecture understanding</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class discussion participation</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General listening comprehension</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with professors</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>3.33</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentation skills</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>4.20</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with peers</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>.01*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note-taking skills</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.27</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>3.39</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. $*p < .05

Table 4.22: EAGS’s Views of Essential Skills for Academic Success in U.S. Graduate Courses: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by Speaking Skills
Table 4.23: EAGS’s Views of Essential Skills for Academic Success in U.S. Graduate Courses: Summary of Mean and Standard Deviation, and Mean Differences by Listening Skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities or Skills</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal lecture understanding</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>4.19</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>4.08</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class discussion participation</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General listening comprehension</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>4.11</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with professors</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal oral presentation skills</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>4.03</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>0.96</td>
<td>.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication with peers</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>4.24</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>.02*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note-taking skills</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.375</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>3.28</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.81</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. *p < .05

Research Question 3 asked for EAGS’s views of important academic oral communication skills in their graduate courses. Overall, the respondents rated most oral communication skills as *very important* for their academic success in U.S. graduate courses, except note-taking skills and pronunciation. Students ranked having strong listening skills to understand formal lectures and participating in classroom discussions.
the most essential skills and note-taking skills and good pronunciation and as the least important skills.

In spite of various academic majors, age, gender, U.S. duration, and length of English study, EAGS exhibited similar views in terms of essential academic oral communication skills or activities for their academic success in graduate courses. In general, masters’ students reported engaging in oral communication activities in graduate courses more difficult than doctoral students did, but differences were not significant. Regardless of their self-perceived listening and speaking skills, EAGS showed similar views of the importance of essential academic oral communication success to succeed in U.S. graduate courses, except communication skills with peers. Overall, male students identified meeting oral communication expectations in class more difficult than female students did, but EAGS’s degrees of difficulties of various academic oral communication activities were not statistically significant according to gender, except asking questions during non-class hours.
CHAPTER 5

VERBAL PARTICIPATION

IN U.S. GRADUATE CLASSROOMS FROM EAGS’s PERSPECTIVES

This chapter reports overall perceptions of East Asian international graduate students (EAGS) concerning active verbal classroom participation in their graduate-level university classrooms, as revealed through two focus group interviews with a total of 15 EAGS from various academic disciplines. It answers Research Questions 4 and 5 as follows:

4. What are EAGS’s definitions of active classroom participation in graduate courses?

5. What are EAGS’s perceptions of importance of active verbal classroom participation in graduate courses?

The data came from two one-hour focus group interviews with a total of 15 EAGS from various academic disciplines at a large mid-Western research-extensive university in the U.S. I present the findings by the research questions based on the two focus group interviews and conclude the section with the overall summary of findings.
5.1 EAGS’s Views on Definition of Active Classroom Participation

This section illustrates the definition of active classroom participation from the viewpoints of EAGS. The data came from two one-hour focus group interviews with the total of fifteen EAGS from various academic disciplines at a large mid-Western research-extensive university in the U.S.

Questions asked of the EAGS in the focus group interviews concerned (a) EAGS’s own definition of active classroom participation; (b) their perceived importance of active verbal classroom participation; and (c) their classroom experiences with verbal classroom participation (See Appendix C for the interview protocol).

Most studies about classroom participation in general and ESL students’ classroom participation, in particular, seem to assume that classroom participation refers to verbal participation (e.g., Duff, 2000). I, however, purposefully did not suggest this common belief, in order to examine active classroom participation from EAGS’s own perspectives.

The analysis was based on the first focus group interview question: “What does active classroom participation mean to you?” to answer Research Question 4: “What are EAGS’s definitions of active classroom participation in graduate courses?”

The focus group interview participants’ responses consist largely of two general types: active engagement through verbal participation and active engagement through non-verbal participation. I describe the findings by verbal and non-verbal classroom participation, from the most frequent to the least frequently mentioned items, and summarize the findings at the end of the section.
5.1.1 Being Active through Verbal Engagement

As illustrated in Table 5.1, a majority of EAGS in the group interviews (24 out of 30 comments) described active classroom participation as being related to verbal engagement with instructors and/or classmates.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>No. of comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Verbal engagement in discussions with instructors and/or classmates</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exchanging opinions</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Voluntarily initiating conversation</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bringing up own experiences and knowledge relative to assigned readings</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking and answering questions</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking with confidence and a loud tone</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completely expressing oneself, even if not in fluent English</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-verbal engagement in class</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening/thinking/reflecting</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Using gestures such as nodding, making a good eye contact, etc.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subtotal</strong></td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Number of Comments</strong></td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* The comments were sorted by the comments made, but not by the number of the participants; therefore, the total number of comments exceeds the total 15 of the focus group interview participants.

Table 5.1: Summary of EAGS’s Definition of Active Classroom Participation
The most frequent comment made by EAGS (8 comments) was that they believed that they are active when they verbally exchange opinions with instructors and/or classmates, by agreeing or disagreeing, for example:

In some sense, exchange, like responding to questions, or if you respond to a person’s idea, whether you agree or disagree, that is what active classroom participation is about.
(Jiwoo, a doctoral student from South Korea in education)

This comment reveals that many EAGS share similar perspectives with domestic classmates by viewing active participation in class as being verbally active through sharing opinions with classmates and instructors.

The second most frequent response (6 comments) was that EAGS thought that they are active when they initiate conversations, even without being asked, implicitly or explicitly, to do so. The following excerpts from two students clearly show the views:

Tell what you think and ask questions without being asked to share. I think that is active in all classrooms.
(Tia, a doctoral student from China in engineering)

Active participation is basically a verbal behavior. It is not pushed by other people.
(Jena, a doctoral student from Taiwan in education)

This statement indicates that some EAGS see themselves actively engaging in class when they voluntarily choose to speak up, rather than being invited to or directly being called upon.

The third most frequent response made by EAGS (5 comments) was that they see themselves as active in class when they share stories, thoughts, or information about their
backgrounds or personal expertise and experiences in the discussions, beyond the assigned readings. A student stated this view, directly:

> You raise questions based on your background or based on your experience and elicit the discussion.
> (Jas, a doctoral student from Taiwan in education)

Like Jas, some EAGS did not consider their participation active when their comments are based strictly on class reading material by repeating what textbooks say. Instead, they perceived that they are active when they initiate conversations or respond to a question, in light of their own background knowledge or personal experiences in order to bring fresh or new perspectives.

On the other hand, a Korean student made an intriguing comment related to active classroom participation. He associated active classroom participation with speaking confidently in a loud tone and completing sentences even if not fluently in English:

> Speak with strong confidence, or speak louder sometimes….Maintain what we want to say even though we are not fluent. Finish what we are going to say.
> (Dongmin, a master’s student from South Korea in education)

Dongmin’s comment is interesting in that he included speaking loudly as a part of active classroom participation even though loud speech is not necessarily indicative of active participation. His statement also stands out because he associated his active classroom participation as completely expressing his opinions even if he is not fluent in English. He may be concerned that his voice would be lost or ignored in native English-speakers-(NES) dominant U.S. classrooms, so he states his opinion strongly in a commanding tone and continues delivering his message even with imperfect English. He seems to exhibit
his “strong desire to participate as a competent and responsible member” (Morita, 2004, p. 584) in a new academic community, whilst suffering from a lack of L2 confidence.

5.1.2 Being Active through Non-Verbal Engagement

A fair number of EAGS (6 out of 30 comments) associated active classroom participation as non-verbal participation, whereas the majority of EAGS defined active classroom participation as verbal participation (Refer to Table 4.24). Some students (4 comments) said that they actively and meaningfully engage in class, even when they are silent, because they viewed non-verbal participation as equally important as verbal participation. Participant Hana strongly voiced that verbal participation is not the only way to actively engage in class:

You don’t have to be physically, verbally active. I think you can be active even without saying anything, if you come to class well motivated, well prepared, and if you listen to instructors or other people.
( Hana, a doctoral student from Japan in education)

Her statement seems to exhibit her resistance to the notion that speaking is the only means to show active engagement in class. Indeed, she views silence as another way of actively engaging in class. Rather than forcing herself or being forced by instructors or peers to speak up in class all the time, she seems to prefer to remain “silent, attentive” (Duff, 2002, p. 313), by carefully listening to others. In other words, she appears to position herself as “a quiet but legitimate member” (Morita, 2004, p. 589) in a classroom community.
Hana’s strong wish to validate her reticence as a sign of active engagement in class was echoed by Jiwoo’s comment. She agreed with Hana that active listening can be a way of being active in class. However, Jiwoo expanded her definition of active participation by including both listening and speaking:

I agree with Hana. You actively respond to the flow even though you don’t say it. And then, when you think it is time to jump in, just add some points or raise some questions with different perspectives. That is, to me, active participation.

(Jiwoo, a doctoral student from South Korea in education)

This comment illustrates that some EAGS believe that active classroom participation is verbally responding after maintaining some stage of being verbally inactive while mentally processing information through active listening and careful self-reflection, rather than rushing to speak whatever comes to mind. It is also noteworthy that some EAGS argued that, if there is nothing new to add or no different perspectives to add, it is reasonable to remain verbally inactive while still actively engaging in class through attentive listening and self-reflection.

A few EAGS (2 comments) mentioned that they are active in class when they use non-verbal, non-vocal forms, such as nodding or making good eye contact.

I think oral participation is not to produce some fear. In some case, it can be by nodding, or “good”, “did you?” like thing, few words, that is what I am talking about. (Dongmin)

This reveals that some EAGS may signal their active engagement in class in a non-verbal form, using gestures.
5.1.3 Section Summary

This section answers Research Question 4: “What are EAGS’s definitions of active classroom participation in graduate courses?” To summarize, most EAGS (80%) in the two focus groups defined active class participation as verbal participation. They considered themselves as active when they verbally engage with the class by asking or answering questions, exchanging opinions, initiating conversations, or sharing their own personal backgrounds relative to the discussion topic. On the other hand, several EAGS (20%) considered themselves as actively engaged in class even when they are verbally inactive, through listening to others and reflecting on the statements made by others, or using body gestures. Several EAGS also maintained that it is reasonable to remain silent when they cannot think of any more new or valuable points to contribute to the class.

5.2 EAGS Views on Importance of Active Verbal Classroom Participation in U.S. Classrooms

This section reports EAGS’s perceptions of the importance of active verbal classroom participation in U.S. university classrooms. The data analysis was based on the data from the second focus group interview question: “Is being engaged actively in class important? If so, why?” This part is based upon Research Question 5: “What are EAGS’s perceptions of importance of active verbal classroom participation in graduate courses?”
In response to the focus group interview question “Is being engaged actively in class important?” the results were equally distributed between EAGS who claimed actively engaging in class by speaking up is important and ones who argued that the importance depends on certain factors or situations. About a half of the EAGS (6 students) reported verbal classroom participation as important and another seven students claimed it varied depending on contexts\(^5\).

5.2.1 Importance of Active Verbal Participation: Context-Bound

Many EAGS perceived that engaging in class by speaking up is context-dependent. More than a half of the group interview participants among the EAGS who made comments on the question (7 out of 13) reported that the importance of active verbal classroom participation depends on certain class characteristics (e.g., content, level of students, class size, or course goal of study) or student characteristics (e.g., personality, comfort level of speaking).

The following two sub-sections explain context-dependency of the importance of active verbal participation perceived by EAGS according to certain class characteristics and student characteristics.

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\(^5\) Two students were excluded here because they did not make any comments concerning the question throughout the sessions.
Class Characteristics

Analysis suggested that importance of verbal classroom participation varies by certain class characteristics. The following excerpt well illustrates that some EAGS believe that active verbal classroom participation is not suitable and should not be emphasized in certain courses:

I think in some classes, for example, the freshmen classes which teach some basic, fundamental knowledge of mathematics. I think instructors need to give more knowledge, instead of [encouraging] students to be more active in oral communication. So I think it depends [on] the areas of your study and goal of your study.
(Mei, a doctoral student from China in STEM)

Fay, another participant from STEM, agreed with Mei, based on her own teaching experience in lower-level undergraduate elementary mathematics classes as an international teaching assistant:

I can actually give you an example of what she [Mei] said about algebra. To what extent oral participation is important is very dependent on kinds of classroom that the students are in. I happened to teach pre-college algebra this quarter. In that kind of situations, it is very, very not suitable for students to jump in [to speak].((laughter)) because they don’t know a lot about mathematics and they might have misconceptions. If they do a lot of that, it is very likely that they confuse each other. In this case, teachers have to stand in and do more talking and students have to listen carefully to what teachers have to say, and then after, what is that, insightful questions. I think that is the situation in that kind of class.
(Fay, a doctoral student from Taiwan in STEM)

Jena, who had many years’ university teaching experience in Taiwan, gave another teacher’s perspective supporting context-dependency of verbal classroom participation. She argued that, in general, teachers want their students to be verbally active in their classes, but students are not expected to actively engage in class by
speaking in certain classroom situations or courses, for example, when instructors have a lot of contents to cover in a day:

My response is yes or no. It depends on….In many cases, teachers would like students to open classroom [by actively participating in class by speaking up]. However, like the teacher in a context he or she has a lot of materials to cover in the day, then, the teacher doesn’t want people to respond to in class. ((everybody laughs.)) I used to be a teacher. ((everybody laughs again.)) I think it is a hard question to answer. Yes or no depends on contexts of the class and situation. (Jena, a doctoral student from Taiwan in education)

The analysis indicates that some EAGS think that students are not expected to be verbally active in lower-level undergraduate fundamental courses. Classes are more likely to be lecture-type class in lower-level courses; therefore, instructors need to take more active roles in leading classes to deliver essential knowledge that students need to know in order to gain knowledge of basic concepts.

While some EAGS reported that it is not important to be verbally active in lower-level fundamental courses, as stated above, they thought that active verbal participation is critical in some academic majors and/or upper-level undergraduate or graduate courses. Mei, who commented on the unsuitability of active verbal participation in lower-level courses, illustrated the importance of active verbal participation in certain courses as follows:

I think it [the importance of active oral classroom participation] depends. For example, business school in the US or even China…active oral communication is very important in classroom to communicate and preparing for their future career. (Mei, a doctoral student from China in STEM)

This suggested that some EAGS believe that in an academic area which needs strong oral communication skills for their future career goals, for instance, MBA (Master of
Business Administration) majors, actively participating in oral communication activities is always important, regardless of the country where the school is located.

Student Characteristics

Along with the aforementioned class characteristics, certain student characteristics, for instance, personality and speaking comfort levels, seemed to affect EAGS’s perceptions of the importance of active verbal classroom participation in regular U.S. university classrooms.

A student expressed that it is not necessary for introverted students to be verbally active in class; instead, they can use other signals of active engagement in class:

I think it depends on characters of students. Sometimes introverted students express by using some body languages. In that case, that kind of behavior….sometimes participation by responding. I think oral participation is not to produce some fear. In some case, it can be by nodding, or “good”, “did you?” like things, few words, that is what I am talking about. (Dongmin, a master’s students from South Korea in education)

This analysis showed that some EAGS consider that, depending on their personalities, it is reasonable not to be verbally active in class, but still actively engage in class in different ways. Therefore, the finding suggests that instructors do not have to encourage students to be verbally more active with shy students as long as these students show other signals of active engagement in class, such as body language.

Some EAGS thought that it is not important for international students to actively engage in class when they are not quite comfortable with U.S. academic oral classroom discourse yet because they are new to U.S. academia. The following excerpt shows that:
It is important to be verbally active, but for international students, initial time, we would like to listen first. If you have a very, very good oral communication technique, I think it is also O.K. You can communicate with instructor in the class. Or you can ask questions after class [without being verbally active in class]. Otherwise, it is O.K. not to be verbally active. (Mei, a doctoral student from China in STEM)

The findings indicate that some EAGS want to remain silent but attentive, especially when they are not comfortable with their oral communication skills or not familiar with new U.S. classroom discourses. EAGS believed that, in this case, it is good for instructors to allow them to be a peripheral but legitimate observer in the class, rather than force them to speak up from the beginning. They may want to take some time to observe others’ participation to learn appropriate academic oral classroom discourse in the U.S. and to feel comfortable with their L2.

5.2.2 Importance of Active Verbal Participation: Important

While some viewed active classroom participation as context-bounded, most EAGS in the focus group interview seemed to agree that actively engaging in class by speaking up is important in U.S. graduate courses. Almost all participants reported that active verbal participation in class is either always important or important in certain contexts. Table 5.2 summarizes EAGS’s views on reasons for active verbal participation.
Various reasons emerged to show the importance of active verbal classroom participation in U.S. classrooms. EAGS reported that active verbal participation is important as an effective learning mode, to demonstrate content knowledge, to display language ability, to improve oral communication, and accommodate U.S. classroom expectations. Each of these reasons will be discussed in detail in this section.

Active Verbal Participation as a Way to Demonstrate Content Knowledge

As shown in Table 5.2, the most frequently mentioned reason for active verbal classroom participation was related to demonstrating content knowledge. Seven EAGS thought that active classroom participation is a way to show their content knowledge in
order to be recognized or accepted as valuable, full participants in their academic classroom communities.

The EAGS in the focus group interviews shared their views of the importance of active classroom participation to both teachers and students. That is, active verbal engagement helps instructors assess students’ understanding so that they can better plan their instruction. At the same time, active verbal participation is important for students to demonstrate their content knowledge in order to be recognized by their instructors and American students as contributing members in the classroom community.

Three EAGS participants (Fay, Tia, and Jia) reported that students need to actively engage in class by verbally responding so as to help teachers assess students’ learning. Even though I expected to hear their views as students, interestingly, several participants discussed them based on their identities as teachers. I suspect that it is because many of them were experienced classroom teachers back in their home country or currently as ITAs at the University. An excerpt from Tia, an international teaching assistant in engineering, clearly illustrates the significance of students’ verbal participation from an instructor’s perspective:

I know we are talking from students’ perspectives. But I just want to add one point from instructors’ points. It is very important for instructors to get feedback from students, very honest feedback from students. [So, I think it is important for students to be verbally active in class].

(Tia, a doctoral student from China in STEM)
Another excerpt from Jia, who has lots of university teaching experience back from Taiwan, also well summarizes the importance of students’ active verbal participation in class as an effective assessment tool for instructors:

I think, first of all, it [active verbal classroom participation] helps the teacher, kind of know how much students [understand], what they have teach, which points students might not understand enough, or which points teachers say more or emphasize more on.
(Jia, a master’s student from Taiwan in social science)

The analysis shows that EAGS think that students’ active verbal engagement in class helps instructors check students’ understanding and accordingly modify the class based on students’ degrees of comprehension. This EAGS preference of active verbal engagement as teachers’ identity is reasonable because verbal engagement of students can be the clearest and most immediate way for instructors to assess students’ comprehension of content during class, as opposed to other formal assessment tools such as tests or writing or non-verbal signals of active engagement. Otherwise, instructors may have difficulty knowing if students are following the class discussion or not. They have difficulty immediately adjusting the class unless students respond to the class by asking or answering questions or sharing their opinions during class.

Some EAGS (e.g., Hana, Dongmin, Jiwoo, and Heejoon) reported that active verbal participation is important to show one’s content knowledge in order to get recognition from other class members as valuable class members. Hana from Japan, for example, expressed her effort to accommodate herself to American classroom contexts by pushing herself to speak up in class:
I am very shy. I usually don’t like to speak in front of other people. But when I came here [U.S.], if I don’t say anything in class, people tend to assume that I don’t know anything. So, I think that is American culture. I think it is o.k. to [not speak up in class] in my country…. But here if you don’t speak up, you don’t say anything, people think you don’t know anything, or, yah, so I am trying to accommodate myself to [American culture].

(Hana, a doctoral student from Japan in education)

Her perspective exhibits her willingness to speak up in class to demonstrate her content knowledge in spite of her unease or unwillingness to speak up as a consequence of multiple factors. Hana tries to speak up in class to let other students know that she is not ignorant of topics, even though the data clearly showed that she experiences some discomfort speaking up in class, maybe partially due to her personality, preferred learning style, or her perceived expectation of teachers and/or students based on her educational experiences in Japan. For example, she thinks that she was not expected to be verbally active in Japanese classroom contexts and she preferred to stay silent there, but nobody in Japan questioned her content ability. She also made a similar comment in the previous section: She claimed that she actively engages in class even when she is not verbally active. However, she seemed to be aware that her silent active participation can be mistaken as ignorance of the topic or lack of language ability in U.S. classroom contexts. Therefore, she “reluctantly” speaks up in class to show her content and language knowledge and hopes to be accepted as a valuable member in the classroom.

Resembling Hana, Dongmin from South Korea also considered active verbal participation as a means to be recognized as a valuable class member in American classrooms, despite his discomfort or unwillingness to speak up:
I think that is another way to show, “I am also here in classroom, like you American students here,” but because of the different cultures, I mean, I heard American people get used to express what they think in public from early childhood, but, in my country, culture is different. Silence is another way to express my opinion, but I think American people don’t know about them. So, sometimes, I feel I am isolated, marginalized in the class when don’t say something.

(Dongmin, master’s student from South Korea in education)

Dongmin’s comment shows his sense of isolation and marginalization in American classrooms because of his difficulties speaking up in class. The data reveals his unease or unwillingness to be verbally active by speaking up may come from cultural differences and different expectations of students, resulting from his prior education in South Korea, among many other reasons. Like Hana, he believes “silence is another way to express my opinion,” based on his educational experiences in South Korea, but he seems to frequently encounter situations in which his belief conflicts with reality in U.S. classrooms and consequently he feels marginalized. The data illustrates Dongmin’s unease or unwillingness to speak up and his belief that active verbal participation is not always important. However, he seems to utilize speaking up in class as a means to overcome the feeling of isolation and marginalization in American classrooms in order to show his presence in class to American classmates while still having the discomfort of speaking up in class, as Hana did. His point is also supported by the earlier comment he made concerning the definition of active classroom participation in the earlier section; he defined active classroom participation as speaking in a loud tone and completely expressing oneself even in “not fluent English”.

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The following excerpt is another example of utilizing active verbal participation as a way to be accepted as a legitimate, valuable class member in U.S. classrooms:

I think through active verbal participation, I may show something to add, there are positive attitude, I study very hard, and I commit myself to my major. I just defend myself against anyone who may use it against me. From this perspective, it [active verbal participation] is important.
(Heejoon, a doctoral student from South Korea in business)

He perceived active verbal participation as critical to demonstrate his strong commitment to learn content and to belong to his academic community in the class. His comment shows his strong sense of belongings in the community and his strong desire to be accepted as a legitimate class member by speaking up.

Active Verbal Participation as a Way to Contribute to Learning of All Students

Following demonstration of knowledge, the next frequent reason of active verbal participation identified by the EAGS was related to facilitation of one’s and others’ learning by sharing ideas with the class. Some EAGS thought that active verbal participation promotes active learning by encouraging themselves to process the information in order to share with the class:

[K]ind of two-way learning instead of one-way. I think it [two-way learning] is better than that [one-way learning]. I think [verbal participation] motivates you because you have to think about it first to have your opinions either yes or no before you speak up. I think it is very good in terms of small group of students in the classroom.
(Jia, a master’s student from Taiwan in social science)
Jia’s comment well shows why it is important to be verbally active to enhance one’s learning. Speaking opportunities in class facilitate learning by pushing them to mentally process the information in order to generate ideas to share with the class.

Not only promoting one’s own learning, active verbal participation motivates students to actively engage in class to benefit learning by others, as well. Naoko’s comment well captures the point:

You can get all the knowledge from textbooks or other sources, but when you are in a classroom, that [oral classroom participation] is the really, strong, most strongest, and convenient tool to exchange knowledge with other students and instructors.
(Naoko, doctoral student from Japan in education)

While acknowledging that verbal classroom participation is not the only way, Naoko exhibited her strong belief that, once students are in a classroom, actively engaging in class by exchanging knowledge with other students and instructors is the “most strongest and convenient tool” to facilitate both one’s own and others’ learning. Naoko’s belief is also echoed by Wen:

After all the reading or lecturing maybe, you will have some thoughts and maybe problems in mind. If there is a chance to speak and to talk about it, that is good to solve your own problem, and maybe others’ problem as well.
(Wen, a master’s student from China in arts and humanities)

This comment indicates that students are required or expected to actively share their opinions from their readings or through lectures with other students, and it is an effective learning way to facilitate their own learning and others’ learning, as well.

Several other comments showed EAGS’ s belief of shared responsibility in class to deepen knowledge among classmates by sharing ones’ knowledge and views. Ching’s
example clearly illustrates the importance of active verbal classroom participation as a responsible class member:

Why it is important for me is that we are here not just for the reputation of the school or professor but also reputation of other students, no matter what it is international students or other students. They bring a lot of their own interpretations of readings and their knowledge. I think this is more than just a school or the reading materials. (Ching, a master’s student from Taiwan in education)

The analysis indicates that some EAGS are aware of the importance of co-constructing knowledge and sharing responsibility as a valuable class member to promote learning by all students.

**Active Verbal Participation as a Way to Demonstrate Language Ability**

Some comments about the importance of being verbally active in class were related to their being second language speakers. Two students (Dongmin and Heejoon) believed that speaking up in class is important to demonstrate that they have sufficient English ability to function well in and outside of class. Dongmin viewed speaking up in class “even if not a fluent English” as important to show his communication ability in the midst of native English-speaking classmates. Otherwise, he is afraid that his classmates would see that he has a language problem:

One way to show them I am here like you American students. I think that is another way to show I am also here in classroom, you American students here. (Dongmin, a master’s student from South Korea in education)
Dongmin seemed to be afraid that, without speaking up, his presence might not be visible in the dominant native English-speaking U.S. classroom, so he states his opinion strongly in a commanding tone and continues delivering his message even with imperfect English. He seems to exhibit his “strong desire to participate as a competent and responsible member” (Morita, 2004, p. 584) in a new academic community, whilst suffering from lack of L2 confidence.

While Dongmin regarded his verbal classroom participation a way to show his commitment to study as a student in order to get recognized by course instructors and classmates, Heejoon associated his active verbal participation as a means to secure his teaching job by demonstrating his communication ability to teach in English as a TA to his department chair:

I am teaching a class right now. In this case, just remaining calm [in classes as a student] indicates, teacher think that I am not ready to teach a class. In this case, I need to be actively involved in class discussions, especially when the department chair is there because he decides who is teaching and who is not teaching. (Heejoon, a doctoral student from South Korea in business)

Heejoon, a doctoral student from Business, seemed to be concerned about a possible negative consequence of not being verbally active as affecting his chances of getting a job as a TA. As earlier mentioned, even though he is an introverted person and he does not like to speak up in class, he forces himself to speak up to demonstrate his content knowledge and to show his commitment to study in order to be accepted as a legitimate, valuable classmate. The analysis here stands out that he associates the importance of his active classroom participation with a means to demonstrate his language ability for his other role in addition to a graduate student, that is, as an ITA.
Active Verbal Participation as a Way to Get a Good Grade

Receiving a good grade, when participation is graded, is another reason that EAGS reported verbal participation to be important. Two students commented that the importance of active participation related to their course grade. Wen mentioned the importance of active engagement in different oral communication activities in class to receive a good grade:

Yes, [it is important to be verbally active in class.] Participation is a requirement of many classes. We need to talk, we need to ask questions, answer questions, give oral presentations, and maybe lead class discussion. We need to do it. It is important so that you can get good grades.
(Wen, a master’s student from China in arts and humanities)

As opposed to Wen’s general statement, Jihoon, an MBA student, stressed the importance of active verbal participation to the consequence they may suffer when they do not verbally express in class:

In my case, I rather say that well, you think about the money you pay. International students usually pay twice as much as instate students. And if you don’t get actively involved in class participation, you will certainly get C or D+ in certain courses, and that will put you in a very serious condition. In one sense, in fact, it doesn’t matter, and the other sense, well, you don’t always get as much as you should due to poor class participation. I think business school enforcing factors make students get involved in class participation. Oh, well, I rather focus on the practical aspects of classroom participation to international students.
(Jihoon, master’s student from South Korea in business)

Jihoon well illustrates his point of view from “the practical aspects of classroom participation to international students” and the negative consequence of not speaking in class related to their course grades. This data indicates that EAGS think students are
motivated to speak up in class when verbal participation is required to receive a good grade and that verbal participation is considered important at the graduate level, especially when their academic performance is assessed by participation in speaking-related activities like in Jihoon’s class.

5.2.3 Section Summary

This section answers Research Question 5: “What are EAGS’s perceptions of importance of active verbal classroom participation in graduate courses?” based on the data from the second focus group interview question: “Is being engaged actively in class important? If so, why?” Overall, most EAGS in the focus group interview seemed to agree that actively engaging in class by speaking up is important in U.S. graduate courses. About a half of EAGS reported that the importance of active verbal classroom participation depends on certain class characteristics (e.g., content, level of students, class size, or goal of study) or student characteristics (e.g., personality, comfort level of speaking). Various reasons emerged to illustrate the importance of active verbal classroom participation in U.S. classrooms, such as its being as effective learning mode, a way to demonstrate content knowledge, a way to display language ability, a way to improve oral communication skills, and to receive a high grade.
CHAPTER 6

FACILITATING VERBAL CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION
OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

This chapter reports EAGS’s suggestions to university instructors, American classmates, and international students (IS) themselves to promote active verbal classroom participation of international students. It answers Research Question 6:

6. What do EAGS suggest instructors, American classmates, and EAGS themselves can do could help EAGS to be more verbally active in class?

I asked the question to highlight the shared communication responsibility of classroom interaction among all of the three-related parties in class – university instructors, NES classmates, and NNES international students. The data came from the three open-ended questions with writing prompts in the questionnaire survey (Items 21, 22, and 23) and a focus group interview question. I present the findings by instructors, American classmates, and other international students, based on the survey and group interviews and conclude the section with the overall summary of findings.

6.1 EAGS’s Suggestions for Content-Area University Instructors

This section summarizes EAGS’s suggestions for university instructors to help them be more verbally active in class. The survey participants were asked to respond to a
question to make suggestions to their content-area course instructors to facilitate their classroom participation:

If you could talk to your INSTRUCTOR of the class you described, what suggestions might you give him or her to help you more comfortably participate in classroom activities which require academic listening/speaking skills, such as classroom discussions? (Item 21, see Appendix I for the survey).

Table 6.1 provides the summary of EAGS’s suggestions to university instructors by frequency, based on the data from the survey. The selected 15 EAGS group interview participants were asked to answer the same questions. Table 6.2 summarizes the two group interview participants’ suggestions to university instructors. EAGS’s suggestions to university instructors divided largely into two categories: instructors’ overall perceptions/consciousness awareness and teaching practice. Here I report some of the key points by combining the findings from the survey and group interviews.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be aware that communication is two-way</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be aware of L2 acquisition process</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be sensitive to the needs of international students</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have and show sincere interests in IS</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall Perceptions/Consciousness Awareness</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Teaching Practice</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invite/Encourage IS to participate in discussions</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide positive and encouraging comments</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak clearly with the adequate volume</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use small-group discussion</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effective use of visual aids/board and lecture note</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be considerate of IS when using slang and idioms</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide clear instruction</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use well-structured discussion</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give enough waiting-time</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prepare for the class</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restate what students said</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation skills in general</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utilize on-line discussion</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase outside-of-class interaction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interesting content</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ask culturally relevant questions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give more homework to understand the material</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Help improving IS’ public speaking ability</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. IS: international students*

Table 6.1: EAGS’s Suggestions to University Instructors to Facilitate Verbal Participation of International Students: Survey
Suggestions

Overall Perceptions/Consciousness Awareness

Be aware that international students may bring different linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds and experiences
Recognize that communication is two-ways, involving both listeners and speakers.
Be aware of L2 acquisition process
Be sensitive to the needs of international students
Recognize unique perspectives and contributions of international students

Teaching Practice

Inclusive classroom environment for international students
   Invite international students to participate in class discussions
   Provide positive and encouraging comments

Teaching Methods
   More use of small-group discussion
   Well-structured discussion
   On-line discussion

Teaching Strategies
   Clear talk with adequate speed and volume
   Visual effect - writing on the board, OHP, Power Point, handout
   Be considerate when use idioms/slang/technical terms
   Explicit expectation and clear instruction
   Enough wait-time
   Restating
   Availability outside of class

Content
   More interesting content
   Culturally relevant content and questions

Table 6.2: EAGS’s Suggestions to University Instructors to Facilitate Verbal Participation of International Students: Group Interview

161
In general, EAGS in both the survey and the group interview emphasize the importance of instructors’ positive attitude towards IS and their interest in IS’s ideas in order to facilitate their classroom participation in U.S. classrooms. Fay’s statement well illustrates this point:

I think instructors’ attitude is very, very important and because attitude really can be manifested by what they are doing and what they are saying and facial expression. So, [If] they try to encourage international students to speak up, they must show that they are genuinely interested in listening to what international students want to say. Not only teacher observes students, but also students can sense, and they also observe teachers. We can tell whether or not teachers are interested in what we are saying.
(Fay, a doctoral student from China in STEM, group interview)

The most frequent suggestion made by the survey and group interview participants was that instructors be aware that communication is a two-way, involving both listeners and speakers. The eight survey participants directly mentioned that instructors should be aware of the two-way nature of communication, so instructors need to take their roles seriously as both listeners and speakers when they interact with IS.

Jena, a group interview participant, made a similar comment:

Both instructors and domestic students should have some notion there is a gap between real international students are intended to say and what they hear. So, I think, both instructors and [American] students can have active role to break down what they international students are saying, and what they intended to say. The role of active listeners is critical.
(Jena, a doctoral student from Taiwan in education, group interview)

The analysis indicates that instructors need to make an extra effort in order get the meaning of international students beyond their words, by actively listening.
Several participants raised the issue of accent. They suggested that instructors be more open-minded towards international students and their accents:

Be familiar with different accents of students from different countries... I see instructors having difficulties in understanding what international students are saying in class (even though it is clear to other international students). (Survey, #58)

The response suggests that instructors be more open to linguistic diversities and be willing to try to understand varieties of accents surrounding them, rather than blaming international students’ accents as the reason for their miscommunication.

EAGS suggested that instructors be aware of the L2 acquisition process to better understand international students’ classroom participation patterns and thus encourage them to speak up in class. EAGS provided several practical strategies instructors can utilize to facilitate L2 university students’ verbal classroom participation. For example, Fay’s comment well describes a possible discouraging factor when content-area university instructors are too critical of IS’s linguistic mistakes:

It is not unusual that international [students] make grammatical mistakes, and pronunciation sometimes is not so standard. That is understandable. Please do not too critical on that and do not embarrass students because of that. (Tia, a doctoral student from China, STEM, group interview)

The analysis indicates that instructors need to focus on understanding content rather than pointing out linguistic mistakes L2 students make in order to encourage IS’s classroom participation. Making grammatical mistakes is common process in the L2 acquisition process. It is detrimental to IS’s learning and to all classroom participants when instructors focus on IS’s linguistic mistakes rather than ideas.
Another suggestion made by EAGS, related to the L2 acquisition process, was to recognize that IS need a process stage during which they primarily just observe:

For international students, initial time, it is better just [to remain silent]. Initial time, we would like to listen first. …If you have a very, very good oral communication technique, I think it is also O.K. you can communicate with instructor in the class.
(Fay, a doctoral student from China, group interview)

The excerpt indicates that it takes some time for a newcomer to be familiar with L2 new academic discourse patterns. Therefore, it would be reasonable to allow ISs to legitimately remain silent and observe classroom interactions, instead of forcing them to speak from the beginning when they are not ready.

EAGS suggested that instructors lead well-structured class discussions in order to create a classroom environment in which IS feel comfortable talking. Instructors sometimes invite international students to share their perspectives and then give them longer-wait time to help IS process both the language and content at the same time:

Try to guide the discussion and give some opportunities to international students, because some American students talk all the time and international students with language barriers can't be quick enough to talk without organizing the speeches ahead.
(Survey #51)

EAGS suggested instructors be patient, and be sensitive to the needs of IS, and have and show sincere interest in IS, “you [instructors] really pay attention, you might see when they have something they really want to say” (Survey #14). This comment suggests that international students feel more comfortable participating in class when instructors catch their non-verbal signals of active classroom participation and invite
them to share their opinions. Another way EAGS identified to promote IS’s verbal participation in class was to recognize unique perspectives and contributions of international students by “[giving] them due credit for the comments they make” (Survey #14).

In summary, EAGS made several suggestions to raise instructors’ awareness and improve their teaching practices to create comfortable classroom environments for international students to become actively engaged in class discussions.

6.2 EAGS’s Suggestions for American Students

This section reports what EAGS think American classmates could do to help them be more verbally active in class, based on the survey and focus group interviews. Through the questionnaire survey open-ended question with the writing prompt (Survey Item 22, see Appendix I) and group interviews, EAGS were asked what suggestions they would give to help them more comfortably participate in classroom activities which require academic listening/speaking skills, such as classroom discussions. Table 7.3 summarizes EAGS’s suggestions to university instructors to help them more actively engage in class discussion, by the order of frequency, based on the survey. The survey findings were the primary data for the summary and comments were added from the group interviews whenever appropriate.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slowing down</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being considerate of IS when you use slang, humor, or idioms</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening attentively or carefully</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting and Respecting of cultural differences</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accepting and Respecting of linguistic differences</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking clearly or distinctively</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being tolerant of linguistic mistakes IS make</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping my English</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking to repeat when you don’t understand</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being friendly</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Initiate conversation after or outside of class</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be aware that communication is two-way</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being patient</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Having international experiences</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not avoiding grouping with IS</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inviting IS into the discussion by asking IS if they have any opinions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening patiently until IS finish sentences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking to paraphrase when you don’t understand</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asking to clarify when you don’t understand</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>71</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.3: EAGS’s Suggestions to American Students to Facilitate Verbal Participation of International Students: Survey
In this section, I summarize several salient findings primarily from the survey and then add group interview findings whenever available and appropriate. Overall, EAGS suggested that, in order to encourage IS’s oral classroom participation, NES domestic students share communication responsibilities in culturally and linguistically diverse U.S. classrooms and show their interest in and respect for cultural and linguistic diversities that IS bring to the U.S. classroom. They also pointed out that American classmates are open, accepting, respectful of international students for their positive classroom contributions to verbal classroom participation.

Sharing communication responsibilities

Comments related to sharing communication responsibilities between listeners and speakers were the most frequent comments made in the survey, as suggestions to university instructors. One student pointed out the problem of imposing the entire communication burden exclusively on IS when conversing with domestic students in class (“I think the international student is the one expected to make efforts,” Survey #13). In response, another student called for domestic students’ awareness in terms of sharing communication responsibility, stating, “[B]e aware of the two-way characteristic of communication, that is mutual responsibilities of both speakers and listeners” (Survey #62).
Good Speakers

EAGS in the survey frequently commented on sharing communication responsibility as speakers. Asking NES domestic peers to slow down a little bit to give IS time to process language and content was the most frequent response (n=14). Some advised domestic students to speak clearly or distinctively (n=5). Tia also made the same point in the group interview:

Speak slowly and distinctively. Teacher, for example, ask Americans to read a paragraph. Students rush through so fast. I just thought, ‘you know well that we can hear it but we don’t understand what you are just reading’ ((haha)). It is just very important not only for international students but also true for all the students overall. If you can slow down and speak distinctively, that will benefit listeners. (Tia, a doctoral student from China in STEM, group interview)

The second most frequent suggestion made by EAGS in the survey was that domestic students should be considerate of IS when they use slang, humor, idioms, or American culture-specific terms in class. Some students asked domestic students not to use slang or idioms at all in class (n=5). Others asked them to try to use fewer (n=3), or, when using them, to explain the meaning of the slang or idioms again in easy and formal language (n=7). In contrast, one student did not agree with many other students, arguing, “I think they [domestic peers] have to just talk to international students like they would to other native speakers. I don’t think they need to talk to international students in a “different” way” (Survey #28).
Active Listeners

While EAGS advised NES peers to share their communication responsibility as speakers, for example, by speaking slowly and distinctively, and to be cautious of using slang, another majority of EAGS (12) in the survey made comments on the importance of active listening by domestic students as a way to share communication responsibility as listeners. They asked NES domestic peers to listen attentively or carefully (n=6) or listen until IS finish sentences (n=1) in order to understand IS’s points. Further, as a part of the process of active listening, some EAGS recommended that domestic students ask IS to repeat (n=3), clarify (n=1), or paraphrase (n=1), rather than pretending to understand, when they do not understand what IS say. One respondent encouraged domestic students to be more explicit about their willingness to listen to IS voice, by stopping conversation and explicitly inviting IS into the discussions by asking them whether they have any opinions or not. A similar point was made in the focus group interview:

I think active listeners’ role is very important. And when there is a group discussion, they sometimes check if I follow or not, whether I have some questions or not. That is kind of mutual interactions in a small group discussion atmosphere.
(Fay, a doctoral student from Taiwan in STEM, group interview)

This analysis indicates that EAGS believe that IS can be encouraged to speak more frequently and comfortably when American classmates show their interest in understanding their points by paying attention to what they say, and sometimes by asking clarifying questions.
Openness, Acceptance, and Respect of International Students

In addition to American students’ sharing communication responsibility as listeners, the next most frequently mentioned suggestions in the survey were that domestic students have more positive attitudes towards IS by being more open to, accepting of, and respectful for linguistic and cultural diversities that IS bring to the U.S. classroom. Some comments were about negative attitudes of domestic students towards NNS IS. A survey respondent reported feeling left out in NES-dominant classrooms (“Don’t let us feel like outsiders,” survey #80). Another student was concerned about domestic students’ negative stereotypes against Asian students and the negative impact they felt (“Please do not have any negative feelings about Asian students….The attitude that is displayed towards us is more often one of contempt,” survey #43). Two respondents said that IS tend to group with other IS because some domestic students avoid grouping with IS.

Awareness of Linguistic Diversity

EAGS urged domestic NES students to be aware of linguistic diversities in their classroom and to show their acceptance of and respect for them. Survey respondents emphasized that domestic students should not judge their intelligence or language ability by the way IS speak or sound. For example, one student in the survey said, “Don’t assume your mates are stupid or impaired in certain ways because they are non-native speakers of English. Very often they are very talented students with a lot of good work
done in their home countries” (Survey #5). A similar comment was made in the group interview:

Most important thing is that for them [American classmates] to know is that we are not, I don’t know the right words, we are not that stupid. ((haha)). I am sorry I don’t know what is the best word in this case. But… we wanted to say, but sometimes because the atmosphere of the classroom, because of some sort of pressure, language pressure or culture, I don’t know, sometimes, something there is a moment we can’t talk. I hope they don’t judge us as being not a knowledgeable person because we are quiet.
(Naoko, doctoral student from Japan in education, group interview)

This excerpt and the survey comments illustrate that American classmates’ negative attitudes or stereotypes due to IS language differences can be discouraging factors of IS classroom participation.

Two students reported that they noticed that domestic students laugh or scoff secretly when IS talk. Believing this laughter to be a disrespectful response to second language issues, they suggested that, rather than laughing at IS’s linguistic mistakes, NESs should be more tolerant. Further, NES students should accept and respect IS because it is not uncommon for L2 speakers to make grammatical errors or not to be fluent, but still be understandable. Domestic students need to accept the linguistic differences and then to see beyond the language differences to understand IS and what IS are trying to say, the same point that was addressed to university instructors.

On the other hand, four students expected domestic NES students to take active roles to be their language coaches in order to improve their English. This point is well supported by a group interview participant:

Most classmates I have had, have been very good at helping me if I needed to be corrected in terms of grammar and expressions etc. I believe that is the best way
to learn to communicate better in English. To let your peers know that you would like for them to help you, to correct you when you make a mistake. Because they might feel bad correcting you, like they are insulting you. So the best thing to tell your peers is to please let me know if you make a mistake when communicating in English.
(Mei, a doctoral student from China in STEM, group interview)

It is generally known that one’s attempt to correct linguistic mistakes during speech is a discouraging factor rather than an encouraging factor to oral classroom participation, but some EAGS wanted domestic peers to correct their pronunciation or incorrect expressions to improve their English. It indicates that some EAGS students believe that it is important for them to improve their communication skills to eventually participate actively in class, so they actively search for their NES peers’ help to improve their English.

Awareness of Cultural Diversity

In addition to linguistic diversity, some EAGS suggested that domestic students respect the cultural diversity IS bring to U.S. content classrooms and that they show sincere interest in IS’s cultural background, rather than ignore them. Some students in the survey mentioned that domestic students should not assume that everybody shares the same cultural background. Some students in the group interview urged domestic students’ genuine interest and willingness to understand cultural and educational background of IS to create positive communication environments in class:

It would help me more engaged in class if they tried to understand my cultural background, or educational background. If they don’t, If they are not willing to understand that, I don’t think there is any positive communication.
(Ching, a master’s student from Taiwan in education, group interview)
One student urged domestic students to be more considerate of cultural differences which may affect IS’s classroom participation, saying, “Do not assume that an international student does not know anything or is not interested in the topic when they do not speak up” (survey #62). Some IS may feel uncomfortable actively engaging in class by speaking up because of their different educational and cultural backgrounds. Also, three survey respondents pointed out that cultural unfamiliarity, not necessarily because of lack of language ability, may affect IS’s understanding of a class discussion. A respondent described such a situation:

The context of the topic sometimes is very American. Hence, though I understand what is being said, I sometimes miss out on the context. This may be due to the fact that I have not grown up in US, so it’s kinda difficult to understand. (Survey #41)

Two students in the survey suggested that domestic students go abroad to have some international experiences, as a long-term solution, to raise domestic students’ awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity. Jihoon, in one group interview, shared his observation about some American students’ lack of awareness of cultural diversity as follows:

Americans are sometimes too patriotic. ((Participants laugh.)) I think it is really true. It is true, personally. There are just few students who have some sort of international experiences in my classes. Patriotic and Anglo-American set mind. That prevails. It is really tough for THEM [American students] to understand us and all of us understand as well because we are working on very different mindset. So, I think, having multicultural mind-set is really important. (Jihoon, a master’s student from South Korea in business, interview)

The analysis indicates that some American students may have “narrow-minded thinking system” (Leki, 2001) because of their lack of willingness or exposure to different worlds
and views, so he urged American students to broaden their multicultural perspectives, for example, by having international experiences.

**Friendliness**

Three EAGS in the survey suggested domestic students be friendly to IS to help them feel comfortable about participating in class discussions. One student felt ignored when some NES peers did not initiate conversation (“When we say ‘hi’ after class, do not pretend to ignore it. Some native English speakers are really rude when we meet. I do not want to talk with them in class,” Survey #42). Three students pointed out that little communication between classmates occurs in general in class and outside of class and asked that domestic students initiate conversations with IS during and after class. One students commented that some communication barriers between them can be reduced by increasing their outside-of-class interactions to establish social academic relationships and to get to know each other better (“Sometimes the difficulty is not only the language but also the cultural background, so maybe we could talk about that more after class,” #21).

In brief, EAGS suggested that American students be active speakers and listeners by being aware of the nature of two-way communication and that they have sincere interest in and respect for international students, in order to promote their active classroom participation.
6.3 EAGS’s Suggestions for International Students

This section reports what EAGS think international students could do to help them be more verbally active in class, based on the survey and focus group interviews. Through the questionnaire survey open-ended question with the writing prompt, EAGS were asked what suggestions they would give to help them more comfortably participate in classroom activities which require academic listening/speaking skills, such as classroom discussions:

If you could talk to your NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKER CLASSMATES of the class you described, what suggestions might you give them if you experience difficulties participating in classroom activities which require academic listening/speaking skills, such as classroom discussions.
(Survey Item #23)

A similar question was asked during the two group interviews. Table 6.3 summarizes EAGS’s suggestions to university instructors to help them more actively engage in class discussions, by the order of frequency, based on the survey. The survey findings are the primary data for the summary and, whenever needed, comments are added from the group interviews.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suggestions</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Practice more speaking in English outside of classes</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ More practice in speaking outside of class (15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>➢ Increase interaction with NESs and/or in English (6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not afraid of making a mistake, no shyness</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Just speak up in class</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be confident</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Be prepared</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak slowly, clearly, loudly</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pronunciation</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch movies</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use simple words and expressions</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State key words clearly</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You are not the only one</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patience</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attentiveness</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not talking before thinking</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Correct accent/ grammar errors</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sit closer to instructor</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer support</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say things in long sentences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Say things in short sentences</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>106</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.4: EAGS’s Suggestions to Other International Students to Become More Active

Classroom Participants: Survey
Practicing speaking more outside of classes was the most frequently mentioned comments EAGS survey respondents made to other international students to increase their verbal classroom participation. Twenty-one EAGS survey respondents advised other IS who have difficulty participating in class to improve their speaking by increasing their interactions with native English speakers or even interact in English among the same nationality students.

One focus group interview participant recommended making personal approaches to instructors on an individual basis, outside of class, to become familiar with the instructor’s expectations and to get to know the instructors:

International students who just began their academic life in the U.S. approach instructors individually first. I think they need to make sure that their understanding about the course and also the instructors’ expectations and syllabus. We can probably start from that point. If they find some kind of discrepancies between instructors’ expectations and their expectations, they need to negotiate.

(Jiwoo, a doctoral student from South Korea in education, group interview)

Another group interview participant advised other IS to take every moment to increase interaction with instructors outside of class. For example, they can share their personal matters with instructors in person to get to know them personally better or if ISs “feel really hard to open their mouth, then, they can “try to write e-mails” to instructors.

(Survey #32).

This comment suggests that international students, especially those who experienced difficulties in understanding U.S. classroom expectations, do not easily feel comfortable actively engaging in class, so it would be helpful to them to utilize outside-
of-contacts with instructors, either face-to-face or on-line, to better understand classroom expectations and to feel comfortable with the instructors. This personal interaction with the instructors outside of class before/after class, during office hours, or via e-mail can eventually help their classroom participation, as their understanding about the course and their comfort level with the instructors increase.

The second most frequent suggestion made by EAGS to other international students was not to be afraid of making mistakes in speaking (13 comments) and to just try to speak up in class to express oneself (10 comments). Ching in one group interview made this point:

To have American students understand us more, I think it is OUR responsibility to express ourselves, even though you think that ‘no, it may not be important. It is just only my opinion, or I don’t think it will make difference. You express yourself you have in mind. Don’t get afraid of making grammatical mistake. Like Chinese, not every Chinese person speaks perfect Chinese. ((haha)), for me. At least I am not a perfect Chinese speaker. So, don’t be afraid of that and don’t look down on yourself. (Ching, a master’s student from Taiwan in education, group interview)

This analysis indicates that EAGS take an active as speakers in classrooms by making their best efforts to express themselves even if not in a fluent English, to get the message through.

Related to this, building confidence and preparing for speaking (8 comments, each) were the other two most frequently mentioned suggestions by EAGS in the survey. Dongmin in the group interview participant also urged other IS to have confidence in their language to become active in classroom participation, saying:
Use your language with ownership. Your language is very good. Don’t lose your confidence in language.
(Dongmin, a master’s students from South Korea in education, group interview)

While building L2 confidence, EAGS in the group interview and survey suggested that it is important to actively search for opportunities to ask questions and to practice classroom participation. For example, Tia, in the group interview, suggested that other IS should prepare at least one question to ask in class, especially at the initial stage:

  I recommend that for starting point, pretty difficulty for international students to begin to speak, actively participate, so I would recommend that for one class, particularly prepare yourself for that class discussion. Once you speak up, just once, after that one time, you feel much better. And also it is good for other students to recognize you. I think that will be a good starting point.
(Tia, a doctoral student from China in STEM, group interview)

This analysis indicates that preparing for one question to ask in advance and having an opportunity to raise the question in class can help some international students build confidence in speaking up in class by being able to “open mouth” in class.

6.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter answers Research Question 6 to present EAGS’s suggestions for university instructors, American classmates, and other international students, to increase verbal classroom participation of international students. The data came from the three open-ended questions of the questionnaire survey and the two focus group interviews. EAGS suggested instructors raise their awareness of shared communication responsibility, be aware of the linguistic and cultural diversity IS bring to the classrooms, and improve their teaching practices to create comfortable classroom environments for
international students to actively engage in class discussions. EAGS urged American students to be active speakers and active listeners with genuine interest in and respect for international students to facilitate international students’ verbal classroom participation. EAGS suggested other international students take every possible moment to practice speaking in and outside of classrooms, by individually approaching instructors and increasing interaction with peers outside of class to become more confident speakers in class. Simultaneously, EAGS advised other international students to have confidence in their L2 achievement and to try to speak up in class without being afraid of linguistic errors they may make.
Non-native English-speaking (NNES) international students are required to develop and hone their “speaking-to-learning abilities” (Murphy, 2006, p. 31) in English in order to succeed in American classrooms. Verbal classroom participation is an important area of concern particularly in graduate courses. East Asian international graduate students (EAGS) in English-speaking countries report concerns about their interactions with instructors and domestic classmates in class (e.g., Leki, 2001; Liu, 1996, 2001; Morita, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2004). In spite of the growing expectations for verbal classroom participation in U.S. higher education and concerns and difficulties of EAGS in content classrooms, not much research attention has been paid to matriculated ESL students beyond the language classroom. Furthermore, most previous studies of ESL students in the ESL field have focused heavily on reading and writing.

The purpose of this study was to examine EAGS’s perceptions of academic oral communication needs and active verbal classroom participation in U.S. graduate-level university classrooms. Eclectic methods (Greene, 2000) were applied to attain more comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the research context with “the two-phase design approach” (Creswell, 1994, p. 177): phase I: questionnaire survey and phase II:
focus-group interviews. The first stage was designed to examine overall perceptions of EAGS concerning academic oral communication needs in U.S. graduate courses in general by surveying the entire population of 630 EAGS across the curriculum. And the second stage, with the qualitative approach through the two group interviews, was intended to explore perceptions and experiences of the 15 selected EAGS concerning active verbal classroom participation in their graduate courses in depth.

In the following sections, I summarize key research findings and discuss several salient discussion points by referring to the findings and other relevant studies, including literature reviewed in Chapter 2. This section is organized according to my six research questions. Then, I provide implications for content-area university classrooms and English for Academic Purpose (EAP) classrooms to facilitate verbal classroom participation of L2 university students. I conclude the chapter with suggestions and recommendations for future research in conjunction with the limitations of this study.
7.1 Findings Summary and Discussion

7.1.1 Survey Finding Summary

This section first summarizes the survey findings to examine EAGS’s perception of academic oral communication needs in U.S. graduate classrooms by the order to the three research questions.

Research Question 1:

“What are EAGS’s perceptions of instructors’ expectations of them concerning academic oral communication needs in graduate courses?”

Research Question 1 asked EAGS’s perceptions of instructors’ expectations of them related to their academic oral communication needs in U.S. graduate courses. EAGS, through the survey questionnaire, reported that strong listening skills, question-raising during class, whole-class discussions, and small-group discussions were the four most frequently required listening-/speaking-related classroom tasks by instructors in their graduate courses. EAGS respondents in the survey identified having strong listening skills as the most frequently expected skills by their course instructors among all academic oral communication skills or activities. In general, EAGS considered that their course instructors expected them to actively engage in speaking activities in class, such as asking questions and participating in whole-class and small-group discussions.

As opposed to instructors’ high expectations for students to verbally engage in class, EAGS believed that they were not frequently expected to interact with instructors, classmates, or non-classmates outside of classrooms. EAGS reported that they were
sometimes expected to ask questions during non-class hours such as before/after class or during office hours. EAGS responded that participating in a group project outside of the class with classmates and interviewing native English speakers as a course requirement were not common tasks in graduate courses. Also, EAGS viewed that their instructors only occasionally expect them to have strong note-taking skills while having strong listening skills was identified as the most frequently expected skills among all academic listening/speaking skills.

As more NNES international students were in classes, less expectation from instructors students engage in any oral communication activities in and outside of class was reported, but the differences were not significant. On the other hand, significant differences existed across academic disciplines and participation grading policy with instructors’ expectation of most in-class oral communication activities: Perceived expectations of EAGS STEM were significantly different from the rest academic majors in listening skills and most in-class oral activities, and when participation was counted as a part of the course grade, students were more likely to be expected to engage in oral communication activities and have stronger listening skills than when it was not graded.

Research Question 2:

“What are EAGS’s self-identified difficulties in meeting these perceived expectations?”

Research Question 2 asked EAGS’s perceptions of their own difficulties in meeting instructors’ expectations concerning academic oral communication needs in
graduate courses, following EAGS’s views of their university instructors’ expectation or requirement in Research Question 1. The survey questionnaire was utilized to answer this question.

Generally, EAGS in this study reported little difficulty in engaging in various listening-/speaking-related academic tasks in graduate courses, ranging from rarely to sometimes. Among academic speaking-related academic tasks, students reported that they were most concerned about leading class discussions and participating in whole-class discussions. EAGS reported giving formal oral presentations was the third most difficult task, followed by participating in small-group discussions.

While they were somewhat concerned with in-class oral classroom tasks, EAGS expressed little concern with outside of class communication tasks. They were hardly ever concerned about asking questions during class, before or after class, or in office hours. Similar to asking questions outside of classes, EAGS reported very little difficulty in interacting with classmates or non-classmates outside of class through participating in group projects with other classmates and interviewing other native English speakers as a part of course requirement. Very few respondents said that they were frequently concerned about their listening and note-taking skills and interviewing native English speakers as a course requirement.

EAGS reported different degrees of difficulty according to the length of English study when they participated in most in-class and outside of class speaking-related activities. Age greatly affected the degrees of difficulty in understanding lectures or class discussions and taking notes: The older students reported more concerns with
understanding lectures or class discussion or taking notes than did the younger students.
Self-evaluated speaking and listening proficiencies greatly affected students’ comfort
level with all oral communication activities: As the students’ self-reported speaking and
listening abilities were higher, they were less concerned about participating in academic
oral communication activities. In contrast, EAGS reported similar degrees of difficulty in
participating in oral communication activities, regardless of academic disciplines,
academic levels, gender, and length of U.S. residence.

**Research Question 3:**

“What are EAGS’s perceptions of the importance of specific academic oral
communication skills for their academic success in graduate courses?”

Research Question 3 asked EAGS’s views of important academic oral
communication skills in their graduate courses. According to the survey, EAGS rated
most oral communication skills as *very important* for their academic success in U.S.
graduate courses, except note-taking skills and pronunciation. EAGS ranked having
strong listening skills to understand formal lecture and participating in classroom
discussions as the most essential skills and note-taking skills and good pronunciation as
the least important skills.

EAGS exhibited similar views in terms of essential academic oral communication
skills or activities for their academic success in graduate courses, regardless of various
academic majors, age, gender, self-perceived speaking and listening proficiency levels,
U.S. duration, and length of English study. In general, the masters’ students reported
engaging in oral communication activities in graduate courses more difficult than did the
doctoral students, but differences were not significant. Overall, the male students
identified participating in oral communication activities in class more difficult than did
the female students, but EAGS’s degrees of difficulty of various academic oral
communication activities were not statistically significant according to gender, except
asking questions during non-class hours.

7.1.2 Discussion of Survey Findings

After a brief summary of the survey findings by the three research questions, this
section discusses several important research findings. First it discusses research findings
according to some essential academic listening- and speaking-related classroom skills or
activities that this study found to be useful to highlight. Next, it discusses the findings by
demographic and class information.

Listening Skills

It is noteworthy in that EAGS rated the two listening-related skills (lecture
understanding and general listening comprehension) as relatively of high importance,
compared to other speaking-related skills (class participation, communication with peers,
and communication with professors) in U.S. graduate classrooms. Lecture understanding
was reported as the most important skill for academic success, and general listening
comprehension skills, the third. At first, these results may seem surprising, in that overall,
EAGS were rarely concerned about their listening skills, and they expressed more
difficulty with speaking skills than listening skills. However, it is also an understandable inconsistency because EAGS respondents in the survey identified having strong listening skills as the most frequently expected skill by their course instructors among all academic aural/oral communication skills or activities. It is possible that students feel more comfortable with listening than speaking because, unlike speaking which needs immediate response and requires interpersonal skills, listening is independent individual process (for a similar argument, see Murphy, 2006).

These findings indicate that EAGS believe that listening comprehension ability is critical to understanding a lecture and/or participating in class discussion, which confirms Flowerdew and Peacock’s (2001) point. My findings also imply that EAGS think in-class verbal participation as not being as important for their academic success in graduate courses as understanding instructors and class discussions is, even though they feel that speaking is relatively more difficult than listening.

**Asking Questions**

The survey findings revealed that EAGS believed that asking questions during class was the most common speaking activity in graduate courses. The survey ANOVA results showed that there were no statistically significant differences across academic disciplines, academic levels, participation graded or not, and percentage of NNES international students in class. The findings indicate that students in U.S. graduate classrooms across the curriculum are required or expected to actively engage in class by raising questions.
While students are frequently expected to actively engage in class by raising questions during class, students are not as often expected to ask questions outside of the classroom during non-class hours, such as before/after class or during office hours. EAGS in the survey identified that they were sometimes expected to ask questions during non-class hours, such as before/after class or during office hours. The results indicate that students are not given enough opportunity to interact with their instructors outside of the classroom.

Large-Group Discussions

The results of the survey also showed that participating in whole-class discussions is perceived as the second common speaking activity that the instructors required. In contrast, the EAGS identified whole-class discussions as the most important speaking activity needed for their academic success. At the same time, the EAGS identified whole-class discussions as the second most challenging speaking activity after discussion leading. Most importantly, the results of this study showed that EAGS find it difficult to interact with classmates and instructors in large group discussions, which confirms the findings of Kim (2006), Liu (1996, 2000), Morita (2002, 2004), and Robinson et al. (2001). These results imply that having a good communication strategy to engage in large group discussions is the most important academic oral communication skill in order to succeed in U.S. graduate classrooms. This requires students to actively engage in whole-class discussions.
With regard to EAGS’s perception of instructors’ expectation of participating in whole-class discussions, this study identified different expectations/requirements across the curriculum. Especially students of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) were significantly different from the rest. They reported that their instructors sometimes required engaging in whole-class discussions. A majority of students in education, social science, arts and humanities, and business reported that their instructors always or frequently expected them to participate in class discussions.

Small-Group Discussions

Engaging in small-group discussions is regarded as fairly common in U.S. graduate courses. The survey findings showed that the classroom activity of small-group discussions was the third most common oral classroom task, following asking questions during class and engaging in large-group discussions. This study’s findings are not consistent with Ferris’s (1998) findings. Ferris reported that students, a majority of whom were undergraduates, were rarely asked to participate in small-group activities, whereas the current study identified small-group discussions as one of the most frequently required oral classroom tasks at the graduate level.

The difference between my findings and Ferris’s findings may be due to the fact that graduate-level classes tend to be smaller than undergraduate classes, making it easier for graduate course instructors to set up discussions in small groups followed by group reports to the whole class. This difference may also result from the nature of the question: Whereas Ferris asked respondents to choose any course other than an ESL course, the
current study asked students to select any course that requires a significant amount of verbal participation. Another possible explanation may have to do with university instructors’ changing instructional preferences. The importance of active oral participation in US higher education has increased with the shift in university practice in the early 1980s from a lecture format to an interactive discussion format (Lucas & Murray, 2002; McKeachie, 2002; Mason, 1994; Meyers & Jones, 1993). That is, as U.S. classrooms become informal and more interactive, students are expected to be more actively involved in class discussions in large- or small-group settings.

Strong Note-Taking Skills

The findings in this study that note-taking skills were not frequently expected by their instructors and EAGS had little difficulty contradicted Ferris’s (1998) findings. Whereas Ferris reported note-taking skills a highly expected skill, EAGS in this study reported that their course instructors in graduate courses occasionally expected them to have strong note-taking skills. As opposed to approximately 80% of university ESL students reported problems with note-taking skills in Ferris’s (1998) study, only approximately 31% of respondents in the present study claimed to have difficulty. The results of this study imply that graduate students are not expected or required to have strong note-taking skills for their academic success and they have little concern with note-taking skills.

The contradiction between the findings of the current study and Ferris’s findings may result from different demographic profiles. While the present study surveyed
graduate-level students, majority of Ferris’s study respondents were undergraduate ESL students in lower-division or general education courses. The difference in the results may also indicate that undergraduate students need strong note-taking skills to do well in class; they tend to be evaluated by in-class written tests, which depend heavily on lecture notes, as opposed to graduate students, who are usually assessed using written research papers. Another possible reason for the contradiction in the findings is that the EAGS may have already acquired note-taking skills through their undergraduate work, while undergraduate students, like the majority of Ferris’s participants, are developing note-taking skills.

Academic Discipline
Regardless of academic majors, students who participated in the current study reported that they were expected to ask questions during class. However, in terms of EAGS’s perception of instructors’ academic listening and speaking skills or activities, they felt a difference in the degrees of requirements or expectations in different academic disciplines, as Ferris (1998) found in her study. In particular, EAGS’s perceived instructors’ expectation of STEM is significantly different from other academic majors. For example, this study found that, when it comes to university instructors’ expectation of strong listening skills, STEM fields were considerably different from education and somewhat different from social science fields: While students in education and social science reported that strong listening skills were often expected, students in STEM responded that they were only sometimes expected.
EAGS across all academic majors share similar views in terms of essential academic oral communication skills or activities for their academic success in graduate courses. EAGS across different academic majors share similar degrees of difficulty with various oral communication activities. Leading class discussion was the only item that showed statistically significant differences across academic disciplines: Students in education found leading class discussion somewhat more difficult than did those in STEM. The varying degrees of difficulty may be caused by the frequency of student-led discussions: Education majors identified leading discussions as more difficult than did STEM majors because leading class discussions is more frequently required in education than STEM, according to the survey findings.

**Academic Level**

Overall, students in master’s and doctoral programs are not much different in terms of their perceived expectations of their instructors, their own difficulties in meeting the expectations, and the importance of academic listening and speaking skills or activities for their academic success. The differences by academic level, when it comes to instructors’ requirements, were insignificant. This findings makes sense because both master’s and doctoral students at the university where I collected the data often take classes together. The results might have been different if I had surveyed undergraduate students.
Participation Graded or Not

About 66% of the survey respondents reported that their participation was counted as part of the course grade in the course in which they chose to respond to the questions. According to the ANOVA results, when participation was counted as part of the course grade, students were more likely to be expected to engage in oral communication activities and to have stronger listening skills than when it was not graded. These findings indicate that EAGS are highly expected to engage with their classmates and instructors through various oral classroom activities in U.S. graduate courses and their participation in class is counted as a part of the course grade. However, these results might have been somewhat different if I had them choose any class, rather than asking them to choose a class requiring much verbal interaction.

Percentage of NNES International Students in Class

EAGS believe that their instructors may not greatly change their instructional modes because of the percentage of NNES international students in class, while instructors seem to have less expectation of students to engage in oral classroom activities when there are a greater number of international students. It is noteworthy that EAGS believed their instructors may require less small-group discussions when the percentage of international students is higher. This seems to contradict EAGS’s suggestions for university instructors to facilitate their classroom participation. The survey participants and group interview participants suggested small-group discussions as an effective strategy to increase their frequency of verbal classroom participation and felt
more comfortable sharing their thoughts in small-group-, rather than in whole-class discussions. This contraction may be due to instructors’ lack of trust in NNES international students’ language ability to effectively participate in small-group discussions so instructors may be hesitant to put international students in a smaller group, which usually requires individual group members to share their thought.

**Age**

According to the survey findings, age significantly affected the degrees of difficulty in understanding lectures or class discussions and taking notes. The older students reported more concern with these than did the younger students. It is also worthwhile to mention that EAGS reported different degrees of difficulty in participating in whole-class discussions, outside group projects, and interviews with NESs, even though the differences were only marginal. The older students felt that engaging in whole-class discussions was more difficult than did the younger students. As they were older, they had more difficulty with group work outside of class and interviewing native English speakers as a course requirement. On the other hand, EAGS revealed similar degrees of importance with various academic oral communication skills or activities. These findings indicates that older students have more difficulties in interacting instructors and classmates than do younger students, possibly because of face issues, risk-taking, and their prior English education.
Gender

Female EAGS tended to feel more comfortable than male students in interacting with instructors and classmates, especially asking questions outside of the classroom setting. The overall mean distribution of the survey showed that male students felt more difficulty than female students in engaging in oral communication activities. While overall, the degrees of difficulty of various academic oral communication activities was not significantly different according to gender, female students felt more comfortable asking questions during non-class hours, such as office hours or before/after class, than did male students. On the other hand, gender had no effect on different degrees of importance of oral communication activities in graduate courses.

Duration of Stay in the U.S. and Length of English Study

The length of U.S. residence did not appear to affect EAGS’s degrees of difficulty in participating in oral communication activities related to course work, but the period of English study greatly affected EAGS’s perception. The survey findings showed that EAGS did not report any different degrees of difficulty according to the duration of stay in the U.S. This finding is counter-intuitive because usually we think that students will gradually feel more comfortable over time. While the length of stay in the U.S. did not affect EAGS’s degrees of difficulty in any oral communication activities, the length of English study did. The survey identified that, as EAGS studied English longer, they felt less concerned about engaging in whole-class discussions, small-group discussions, leading discussions in class, giving oral presentations in class, and outside group projects.
Self-Perceived Listening and Speaking Proficiency Level

The proficiency levels of listening and speaking *significantly* affected EAGS’s views of difficulty in interacting with instructors and classmates. As EAGS’s self-reported listening and speaking proficiency levels were higher, they were less concerned about participating in any listening-/speaking-related communication activities. The survey findings revealed that, depending on their self-perceived listening and speaking proficiency levels, EAGS have different degrees of difficulty in engaging in verbal communication activities. As opposed to the significant effect of listening and speaking ability with EAGS’s perceived degrees of difficulty, their self-perceived listening and speaking skills did not influence their views of the importance of essential academic oral communication skills needed to succeed in U.S. graduate courses.
7.1.3 Group Interview Findings

This section presents a summary of the group interview findings to explore EAGS’s definition of active classroom participation and the importance of verbal classroom participation, based on the two research questions.

Research Question 4:

“What are EAGS’s definitions of active classroom participation in graduate courses?”

Research Question 4 examined EAGS’s own definitions of active classroom participation. The data came from the two one-hour group interviews with a total of 15 EAGS from various academic disciplines at a large mid-Western research university in the U.S. Most EAGS in the two group interviews related active class participation to verbal participation. They considered themselves as active when they verbally engaged with the class by asking or answering questions, exchanging opinions, initiating conversations, or sharing their own personal background relative to the discussion topic. On the other hand, several EAGS considered themselves as actively engaged in class through listening to others and reflecting on the statements made by others, or using body gestures, even when they were verbally inactive. Several EAGS also maintained that it was reasonable to remain silent when they could not think of any new or valuable points to contribute to the class.
Research Question 5:

“What are EAGS’s perceptions of the importance of active verbal classroom participation in graduate courses?”

Research Question 5 asked EAGS’s perceptions of the importance of active verbal classroom participation, based on the data from the two group interviews. Overall, most EAGS in the group interviews seemed to agree that actively engaging in class by speaking up is important in U.S. graduate classes. Various reasons emerged to report the importance of active verbal classroom participation in U.S. classrooms: effective learning mode, demonstration of content knowledge, display of language ability, oral communication improvement, or course requirements. On the other hand, about half of the EAGS reported that the importance of active verbal classroom participation depends on certain class characteristics (e.g., content, level of students, class size, or goal of study) or student characteristics (e.g., personality, comfort level of speaking).
7.1.4 Discussion of Group Interview Findings

After a brief summary of the focus-group interview findings, I discuss several points from the findings below.

**Shared Expectations of EAGS and Their Domestic Peers and Instructors**

Based on the group interview findings, it may be safe to assume that most EAGS share a common belief with their native English-speaking counterparts when it comes to active classroom participation. The majority of EAGS in the focus-group interviews connected active classroom participation with “vocal verbal form (spoken language)” (Saville-Troike, 1989, cited in Duff, 2002, p. 291), such as asking or answering questions, sharing opinions and agreeing or disagreeing, or voluntarily offering a comment. The group interview analysis also showed that some EAGS are aware of the importance of co-construction of knowledge and shared responsibility in a valuable class member so as to promote learning of all students. They believe that active verbal engagement in class is suitable and important in small-size classes, mostly likely seminar-type or lecture-discussion type classes, in upper-level undergraduate- or graduate courses, as opposed to lecture-type, fundamental lower-level undergraduate courses.

This finding reveals that EAGS are not much different from domestic students in terms of their perception of being active participants in class. Their views also match the general expectations of university instructors in contemporary U.S. graduate-level classrooms. Graduate students in the U.S., especially in seminar- or lecture-discussion-type classes, are expected to actively interact with other students and instructors to co-
construct knowledge through their active verbal interactions (Hollander, 2002; Lucas & Murry, 2002; McKeachie, 2002; Myers & Jones, 1993).

This analysis is also supported by the survey findings. According the survey findings, EAGS perceived that their instructors in graduate-level courses expected them to be verbally active by participating in various oral classroom activities. They also believed that effectively communicating with instructors and classmates is an essential element for their academic success in graduate courses in the U.S. This finding is also consistent with the researcher’s (Kim, 2006) previous survey research findings with EAGS in non-science and engineering fields. These findings were also echoed by other research findings in a similar study, like Ferris’s study in 1998 (see also Ferris, 1996a and 1996b for instructors’ views).

This is interesting, in that mostly East Asian students are stereotypically known to be passive, as they are accustomed to and prefer passive listening. However, the data from the current study showed that EAGS also apply the active learning concept for learning in the U.S. Yet it is uncertain whether their perceptions came from their classroom experience in the U.S. or whether they already had this belief and experience in their home country, which needs to be explored in the future.

Positive L2 Identity Construction through Active Verbal Participation Utilizing Their Own Educational and Cultural Backgrounds and Experience

While a majority of EAGS’s comments regarding verbal participation are in agreement with perceptions of domestic peers and instructors, two somewhat unique
aspects of EAGS’s verbal engagement-related comments merit extended discussion. Some EAGS in this study argued that they are active when they are able to bring their own background knowledge and personal experiences into class, related to course content. This insight has a significant impact on EAGS’s perception of their contribution in U.S. classrooms. This perception can be liberating for EAGS. Oftentimes EAGS, an ethnic, linguistic, and socio-cultural minority in American classrooms, feel marginalized and feel silenced, partially because of a lack of “cultural capital” (Bourdieu, 1973, 1986), which is a certain form of knowledge, skills, and education that lends itself to an automatic valuable contribution to class (for a similar argument, see Duff, 2002; Leki, 2001; Morita, 2004). Recognizing themselves as legitimate members in a classroom community while being able to share their own unique, different personal background and experiences related to course content, however, can liberate them from the feelings of being marginalized. In other words, EAGS “[foreground] a positive role that newcomers could play” (Morita, 2004, p. 590) by introducing fresh perspectives to American classrooms, which can help them construct positive identities as competent and valued members.

Another noteworthy point is that EAGS can consider “marginality as an asset” (Kubota, 2002, p.293) or “being an outsider in a given culture” as “an advantage” (Morita, 2004, p. 584), rather than a disadvantage. Similar points have been made in the recent literature of non-native English-speaking English teaching professionals in the ESL field (Braine, 1999, 2005; Kamhi-Stein, 2004; Llurda, 2005; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999) and minority faculty in higher education (Li & Beckett, 2006; Vargas,
The contribution of East Asian graduate students in U.S. higher education, the largest international student group, deserves at least the same level of, if not more, attention.

**Active Verbal Engagement as a Means to Display L2 Confidence to be Accepted as a Legitimate Class Member**

Another intriguing remark in the group interview findings is that participating verbally in class could be a way for some EAGS to be accepted as a legitimate member in the classroom community. For example, one EAGS in this study reported that he sees himself as active when he speaks in a confident, even louder voice, even if his sentences are “not fluent.” He seems to be conscious of his “apparent status as [an] accented, not-fully proficient English [speaker]” (Duff, 2002, p.311) in the dominance of native speakers in U.S. classrooms. Rather than being discouraged by his linguistic weakness, however, he appears to make concerted efforts to gain access to the classroom community as a genuine participant, by raising the volume of his voice in an assured and controlled manner and doing his best to express what he intends to say. He seems to utilize speaking up in class as a means to overcome the feeling of isolation and marginalization in American classrooms and to show his presence in class to American classmates in spite of feeling uncomfortable with speaking up in class.
Silent Participation through Attentive Listening and Careful Reflection

Some EAGS argue that they are active, even when they are not verbally active. Some participants in the current study reported listening to other classmates and internally reflecting on what they say, using body gestures, or even complete silence, as part of active participation behaviors. These responses are not dominant, but their voices are significant, in that the findings explain complex and multiple meanings of silence from so-called passive EAGS (Morita, 2002, 2004). For example, in this study, a female EAGS (Hana) reported that she sometimes wanted to stay legitimately silent in a classroom community. She argued that she does not have to be “verbally, physically active,” if she is well-prepared and attentive in class. She seemed to reveal her resistance to the common belief in the U.S. classroom that active participation is carried out through active oral engagement (Lucas & Murry, 2002; McKeachie, 2002; Myers & Jones, 1993). Rather, she insisted that verbal inactiveness but attentive listening is another way to actively engage in class, besides speaking. Her perception and preference may not match the common expectations in contemporary U.S. classrooms. Thus, regardless of her chosen preference to stay silent, her and others’ reticence has been interpreted as a lack of interest in content or a lack of linguistic ability to understand and express her opinion or a lack of willingness to be a competent, legitimate class member (Duff, 2002; Morita, 2004).

A male EAGS, Dongmin, also believes in silent active participation through attentive listening and reflection. Like Hana, he believes that “silence is another way to
express [his] opinion.” His unease or unwillingness to speak up may come from his prior educational experience in South Korea, where teachers had different expectations of students. His silence in class could also be due to his lack of L2 confidence.

Some other EAGS argued that sometimes it is reasonable to remain silent while listening to, and reflecting on others’ ideas before responding. Some EAGS may on occasion deliberately choose to remain silent, like Jiwoo, a female Korean student, in this study, if they do not feel they have a new, special, or outstanding perspective to contribute to the class. They may keep silent, borrowing Jiwoo’s phrase, “better to shut up” when they think it is not appropriate to offer comments. In this case, they may choose not to speak up but actively engage in class by processing already said information, instead of pushing themselves to be verbally active. In other words, some EAGS may be “actively negotiating their multiple roles and identities in the classroom even when they [appear] passive or withdrawn,” as Morita (2004) found in her study (p.586-587).

In summary, EAGS in this study share similarities with and differences from their domestic peers and instructors with respect to their perceived definition of active classroom participation and the importance of active verbal participation. EAGS are similar, in that the majority of EAGS believe themselves to be active when they are verbally active. At the same time, they have different views from domestic students: They are active when they bring their unique, sometimes different educational and cultural background; and active verbal participation is a way for them to display their L2 confidence to be accepted as competent class members. Finally, some EAGS argue that silence is another means of active participation in addition to speaking, and that it is
reasonable to remain silent when/if necessary, instead of forcing themselves, for no legitimate reason, to speak up all the time.

7.1.5 Findings Summary and Discussion of EAGS Suggestions for Active Verbal Participation

This section summarizes the research findings and discusses several important points to answer Research Question 6. The data came from the three open-ended questions of the survey and the two group interviews.

Research Question 6:

“What do EAGS suggest instructors, American classmates, and international students themselves can do that could help international students to be more verbally active in class?”

Research Question 6 asked EAGS’s suggestions for their university instructors, American classmates, and international students to promote international students’ active verbal participation. EAGS suggested that for international students to actively engage in class discussions, it would help if instructors became aware of linguistic and cultural diversity that international students bring to the classroom, shared communication responsibility, and improved their teaching practice to create comfortable classroom environments. EAGS also urged American students to share communication responsibility by becoming active speakers and listeners with genuine interest in and respect of international students’ contributions to facilitate their verbal classroom
participation. EAGS suggested that other international students take every possible opportunity to practice speaking in and outside of the classroom, by individually approaching instructors and by increasing their interaction with their peers outside of class, so that they can become more confident speakers in class. At the same time, EAGS advised other international students to be confident in their L2 and do their best to speak up in class without being afraid of making mistakes.

The suggestions made by EAGS highlight two essential perception-related elements all classroom parties—content-area university instructors, domestic students, and international students—in linguistically and culturally diverse U.S. classrooms should know: being willing to share communication responsibility and being aware of linguistic and cultural diversity. Growing numbers of various forms of English speakers from all over the world in mainstream U.S. university classrooms could cause some miscommunication between NNES- and mainstream NES students. International students are likely to be blamed for most intercultural communication problems. These study findings strongly support that, as Lippi-Green (1997) and Kubota (2001b, 2001c) posit, it is not appropriate to impose a one-way burden on non-native English speakers for problems in intercultural communication in mainstream U.S. classrooms. Communication is always a two-way street: Both NNES and NES peers should come halfway to create an optimal intercultural communication environment.

For American instructors and domestic NES students, it is important to learn the concepts of World Englishes (WE) and English as an International Language (EIL) to be aware of the linguistic diversity and varieties of Englishes they often encounter in their
classrooms. WE or EIL concepts help them understand English users who are different from themselves, identify their own conscious or unconscious biases against different varieties of English users, and realize NES’s linguistic privilege over NNES who use other forms of Englishes. As EAGS in this study pointed out, university instructors and NES students’ awareness of linguistic diversity in the classroom can help them realize their shared communicative responsibility in intercultural communication settings.

For NNES students, this study revealed that NNES students can enhance their intercultural communication skills when they see themselves as successful second language speakers, and not as failed native speakers (Cook, 1998; McCarthy, 2001), while continuing to practice to improve their speaking abilities.
7.2 Pedagogical Implications

7.2.1 Implications for Content-Area University Instructors

The present study provides instructional strategies for all instructors to create a more inclusive classroom environment, where linguistic and cultural diversity of EAGS is appreciated. Following are several pedagogical suggestions for university instructors from the study.

Being Aware of the Complexity and Multiple Meanings of EAGS’s Silence

Instructors should be cautious of interpreting some EAGS’s “seemingly” passive class participation and further understand their silence. EAGS’s reticence has been traditionally interpreted as a lack of language ability or attributed to their culture without much empirical research evidence. However, multiple, interrelated issues, as well as linguistic issues, may be behind their silence, such as personality, preferred learning strategies, culture, identity, curriculum, pedagogy, and power, as this study and other studies have found (e.g., Duff, 2002; Liu, 1996, 2000; Morita, 2000, 2004). The findings of the current study suggest that it is presumptuous of instructors to label EAGS as inactive participants because they appear to be quiet. As some group interview participants in this study reported, as a matter of fact, they may be actively engaging in class while maintaining silence. Or, they may not see the necessity of being verbally active in class when they have no new or alternative perspectives to add or they do not see the value of sharing their opinions. It is critical for instructors to be aware of multiple
meanings of EAGS’s silence along with the significance, complexity, and situated nature of that silence, which also confirms Morita’s (2002, 2004) findings.

Paying Attention to Non-Verbal Signs of Active Engagement

Instructors should try to be accommodating of some EAGS’s wish to be verbally inactive, while still actively engaging in class. For example, they can seek other signs of active engagement aside from the spoken word. By paying more attention to students’ non-verbal signs of active participation, such as nodding or making eye contact, they can distinguish “silent but attentive students” from “silent and apathetic students.” In this study, some EAGS identified their non-verbal engagement in class as listening and reflecting and using body gestures as ways to actively engage in class, in addition to verbal engagement.

Acknowledging Silent Participation through Observation

University instructors can value some EAGS’s silence while encouraging them to be verbally active, by letting them legitimately remain silent. Most instructors are perceived to prefer their students to speak up, but it is also true that some students need to go through an observation stage before they begin to contribute to class discussion. As this study revealed that some EAGS may feel nervous and may have difficulty being verbally active, especially in the beginning of the class or during the early stages of their academic life in the U.S. This could be partially due to their unfamiliarity with the U.S. classroom discourse patterns or a lack of L2 confidence. Some EAGS may require a
silent stage, “peripheral participation through observation” (Duff, 2002, p. 290), before they become more inclined to speak and feel at ease with being verbally active. As some EAGS in this study suggested, the silent observation stage would give EAGS some time to adjust to many classroom commonalities and the new academic environment, while they remain legitimately silent, rather than feeling forced to be verbally active when they are not ready.

Encouraging EAGS’s Unique Personal Experiences

Lastly, in addition to allowing EAGS’s peripheral participation through observation and paying more attention to non-verbal signals of active engagement, instructors can encourage EAGS to be verbally active by giving them the opportunity to speak and share their background knowledge, culture, experiences, and opinions. This can be an effective strategy for some EAGS, who may have difficulty in participating in class because of a lack of specific knowledge in the target culture. Some EAGS in this study believe themselves to be active when they are able to bring their personal experiences into the classroom. EAGS can establish positive L2 identities and become verbally more active, when they recognize that their different and unique backgrounds and experiences are appreciated by their instructors and domestic peers. In other words, in spite of their linguistic and cultural differences, they may perceive themselves to be legitimate participants in a class (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), and not “strangers in academia” (Li & Beckett, 2006; Zamel, 1995). To do so, instructors can ask culturally relevant questions that encourage international students to utilize their
educational and cultural background and personal experiences. At the same time, the findings of this study indicate that instructors should be cautious about putting somebody on the spot to represent a certain culture or country, as this can lead to stereotyping or over-generalizing. Putting students into small discussion groups in well-structured way is another effective way of promoting EAGS’s classroom participation and increasing (Soter & Rudge, 2005, Soter, Wilkinson, & Murphy, 2005).

7.2.2 Implications for Teachers of English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

Several important issues and specific pedagogical suggestions for EAP course planning and material development have emerged from the current study. These suggestions will help EAP teachers better prepare ESL students with oral communication skills that they will need in university content classrooms they may attend during or after completion of an ESL program.

Stimulating Academic Oral Communication Tasks Frequently Used in University Content Courses

As the current study and previous studies demonstrated, students in U.S. higher education are expected to be actively engaged in class discussions (e.g., Ferris, 1996a; 1996b; 1998, Hollander, 2002; Kim, 2006; Lucas & Murry, 2002; McKeachie, 2002; Myers & Jones, 1993). The findings of this study confirm Murphy’s (2006) recommendation that EAP teachers need to apply diverse oral classroom activities in language classrooms in order to give ESL students opportunities to practice various
listening and speaking activities that will be expected in content courses. Prior to and/or during the implementation of each oral communication skill or activity, EAP teachers also need to explicitly teach meta-knowledge—i.e., what each task is about. As this study revealed, there may be many international students who may not be familiar with teaching methodologies and academic oral classroom discourse patterns in the U.S. because of their different prior educational experiences in their home countries (for a similar argument, see also Liu & Littlewood, 1997).

In particular, ESL students need to practice participating in whole-class discussions. The present study found that a whole-class discussion was the most common academic speaking task in graduate courses, and students reported it to be one of the most challenging classroom activities. It is not easy for instructors to lead large-group discussions with language learners who are hesitant to speak up. Indeed, many ESL teachers expressed their difficulties in getting their ESL students involved in discussions. Some teachers even reported avoiding such discussions simply because of these difficulties (Ferris, 1998). However, it is imperative that EAP teachers frequently use such activities to prepare their students for active engagement in large-group discussions in regular university classes. EAP teachers should explicitly teach ESL students how to raise questions, when and how to interrupt others to express their own opinions, and how to effectively use non-verbal communication (for a similar argument, see also Murphy, 2006). By practicing these skills in language classrooms, international students may be able to comfortably transfer them to other university classes.
Helping ESL Students Understand the Value of Active Oral Participation

ESL students need to understand the value of, and need for, active oral classroom participation in content classrooms. Regardless of language issues, all students, not only NNES students, tend to avoid participating in class discussions when they do not see the value of the discussion (McKeachie, 2002). As this study revealed through the group interviews, participation may be more problematic with international students who have different educational backgrounds, where less emphasis may have been placed on oral participation (for a similar argument, see Cheng, 2000; Jones, 1999; Liu & Littlewood, 1997). A majority of the EAGS survey respondents and group interview participants in this study reported they believed that actively engaging in oral communication activities are often required by their university instructors and active verbal classroom participation is an essential skill for their academic success in regular university graduate-level classrooms. Therefore, to help ESL students succeed in U.S. universities, EAP teachers need to raise their awareness of the value of active oral participation.

To help ESL students understand the concept of active oral classroom participation, university instructors’ expectations, and students’ responsibilities as active participants, I offer several specific classroom activities that EAP teachers can implement in the classroom. Providing an opportunity for ESL students to discuss the nature of the regular content classroom and university instructors’ expectations can be an effective way for students to realize the importance of active classroom participation in university classes. EAP teachers can do this in several ways.
First, it can be extremely beneficial to have an experienced NNES international student who is already in a content course share her or his experiences with ESL students in language classes. Students are likely to be persuaded about the demands and needs of active oral classroom participation in content courses when they hear about it from their peers who have had these experiences more than when they hear about it from EAP teachers.

Second, university course instructors can be invited to language classrooms as guest speakers, so that ESL students have opportunities to hear university instructors’ points of view of classroom participation. This opportunity would also help ESL students become familiar with the voices and speech patterns of native English speakers.

Third, as Murphy et al. (2005) also suggested, another effective way to give ESL students firsthand experience would be to arrange fieldtrips to university classrooms, specifically focusing on observing oral classroom interaction. If this is not possible, an adequate alternative could be viewing a videotape of a regular class session.

Providing Content-Based Instruction and Tasks Whenever Possible

As Ferris and Tagg (1996a) and Murphy (2006) also recommended, EAP teachers should attempt to engage in content-based instruction (CBI) whenever feasible. To achieve academic success, ESL students need to be proficient in academic English and the discourse of specific disciplines, as I argued in a previous study (Kim, 2006). ESL students need to practice their listening and speaking skills in an academic context to achieve a high enough level of academic and disciplinary English in order to be able to
effectively lead or become actively involved in class discussions in content-area university classrooms. As found in this and other studies (e.g., Johns, 1981; Kao & Gansneder, 1995; Leki, 2001; Liu, 1996, 2001; Morita, 1996, 2000, 2002, 2004; Ostler, 1980), although they appear to function well with informal, casual conversations in everyday life, many international students have difficulty with formal or academic language communications, such as leading class discussion and participating in whole-class discussions. Therefore, it is recommended that ESL material for EAP learners should emphasize academic subject matters, rather than casual, conversational English.

Learning about Evolving Content Classroom Formats and Teaching Methods

Lastly, EAP teachers need to make constant efforts to keep up to date with evolving university classroom formats and teaching methods. This allows them to better serve ESL students who must make the transition from being English language learners to being subject-specific English users in university content classrooms. Having regular conversations with university teachers and matriculated ESL students and observing subject-matter classes are effective ways of making ESL students understand the particular challenges and needs of content-area classrooms (Murphy, 2006; Murphy et al., 2005; Parkhurst & Bodwell, 2005). For EAP teachers to appreciate the particular challenges that confront ESL students in content-area classrooms, it would help them to engage in regular conversations with university teachers and matriculated ESL students and to observe subject-matter classes. This was also recommended by Murphy (2006), Murphy et al. (2005), and Parkhurst and Bodwell (2005). In order to learn to facilitate
interactive classrooms, EAP teachers can participate in workshops on various teaching strategies, such as facilitating classroom discussion, and using student groups effectively. Hollander (2002), Kalish and Middendorf (1996), and Kim and Kalish (2004) provide specific examples for some of these strategies. However, it may not be fair to pressure already overloaded EAP teachers to comply with these recommendations without appropriate institutional support. As Parkhurst and Bodwell (2005) also suggested, schools can provide release time, credit, and funds for teachers to perform these tasks. At the same time, however, all EAP teachers need to take the initiative to start doing what they can at the individual level to meet their ESL students’ more immediate needs.

7.3 Recommendations and Suggestions for Future Research

Several possible future research topics emerged through this study: (1) actual classroom experiences of EAGS; (2) comparative analysis of perceptions and classroom experiences of East Asian graduate students in U.S.- and East Asian classrooms; (3) voices of all three parties in the classroom; and (4) oral academic discussion. In this section, under each of these topics, I provide a brief description of the limitations of the current study and recommendations for future research.
Actual Classroom Experiences of EAGS

The current study examined EAGS’s perceived experiences rather than actual classroom experiences related to verbal classroom participation. Future studies can examine EAGS’s real classroom interactions with their domestic peers and teachers through persistent long-term observation in real classroom settings in the U.S. Long-term engagement with EAGS would help researchers understand their actual classroom experiences and how their perceptions change as they become better acquainted with the academic discourse culture in their major. This would allow researchers to comprehend a fuller picture of EAGS’s actual classroom experiences with respect to oral classroom participation in a U.S. mainstream content class.

Voices of All Three Parties in the Classroom

Another limitation of this study is that even though I emphasized sharing communication burdens among, and provided suggestions for, all three parties—university instructors, American students, and international students—I only surveyed and interviewed the EAGS. Consequently, the conclusions and recommendations in this dissertation are based on only the perceptions of EAGS.

Therefore, it would be useful for future studies to conduct a comparative analysis of the views of all three parties' voices in the classroom. Triangulated perspectives from the related parties would make it possible to provide a more comprehensive understanding of EAGS’s educational experiences in mainstream U.S. university content classes. Without such research, it would not be possible to provide a complete picture of
EAGS’s classroom experiences. As Lincoln and Denzin (2000) emphasized,

[M]any social scientists now recognize that no picture is ever complete—that we need to employ many perspectives, hear many voices, before we can achieve deep understanding of social phenomena and before we can assert that a narrative is complete. (p. 1055)

Therefore, such triangulated perspectives with comparative analysis enable us to better understand the nature of classroom participation of EAGS in a content class where interaction occurs between teachers and students.

*Oral Academic Discussion*

To my knowledge, even among limited studies on L2 students' oral classroom participation in higher education, none of the ESL research in higher education focused on examining oral academic discussion separately from other classroom speech activities. Morita (1996, 2000) examined NNES TESOL graduate students’ experiences in oral academic presentations and Leki (2001) explored NNES international students’ interactions with American classmates in a course-sponsored group work. Some researchers, such as Liu (1996, 2001) and Morita (2002, 2004), focused on L2 university students’ academic oral participation at the university level, specifically graduate-level. However, rather than specifying a particular classroom speaking-related task, they explored overall oral classroom speech activities. The current study also examined EAGS’s overall perceptions of academic oral communication needs and classroom participation in U.S. graduate-level classrooms.

As revealed in this and other needs analysis survey research (Ferris & Tagg,
1996a; 1996b; Ferris 1998; Kim, 2006) on speaking and listening requirements of university ESL students across the curriculum, participating in oral academic discussion has been the most frequent mode of teaching in higher education, especially at the graduate level. Also, research has demonstrated that engaging in oral classroom participation in a content class, especially engaging in whole-class discussions, is one of the most problematic areas for NNES students identified by both teachers and the students themselves (Ferris, 1993; Ferris & Tagg, 1996b; Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001; Kim, 2006). Although this and the aforementioned studies are valuable to our understanding of international students’ perceptions and communication patterns in general, these studies did not address the specific crucial behavior of oral academic discussion. Therefore, future studies can focus on EAGS’s performance in and perceptions of whole-class discussions.

*East Asian Graduate Students in U.S.- and Asian Classrooms*

It is noteworthy that, while most East Asian students are perceived to be passive and accustomed to passive listening, most EAGS in the current study reported that they apply active learning concepts to their learning in U.S. classrooms. However, this study did not investigate whether the students’ perceptions came from their classroom experiences in the U.S. or their home country. It would be beneficial to explore and compare perceptions and actual classroom experiences of East Asian students both in the U.S. and East Asian countries.
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Kim, S. (2005d, June). What academic oral communication skills are important to succeed in the U.S. university? Proceedings of *Korean Association of Teachers of English Conference, South Korea*


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Survey: Academic Listening/Speaking Skills for International Students

A. Demographic and Linguistic Background Information

1. What is your academic program or major?

2. What is your academic level?
   - Masters
   - Doctoral
   - Graduate Professional
   - Other, Please Specify

3. What is your current residence status?
   - International (Visa)
   - Other, Please Specify

4. What is your sex?
   - Female
Male

5. How old are you?  

6. What country were you born in?  

7. What is your first language? Please list all, if more than one.  

8. How long have you been in the United States?  
   Years  
   Months  

9. How long have you been learning English? (Only refer to your formal English education at school.)  
   Years  

10. How would you rate your overall English proficiency? (English proficiency refers to your ability in using your English knowledge in a real context.)  
   Very Low  Low  Moderate  High  Very High  
   1  2  3  4  5
11

How would you rate your English proficiency in the following?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Very Low</th>
<th>Low</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Very High</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>Listening</td>
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<tr>
<td>Speaking</td>
<td>1</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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</table>

B. Specific Course Information

Please choose ONE course (NOT an ESL course) that you have taken (a course you are taking now is OK, too), and answer the questions. PREFERABLY SELECT A COURSE THAT requires a significant amount of VERBAL participation.

12

Name/Number of course

13

Approximately how many students are non-native English speaking international students?

- Less than 10%
14
Is participation in class discussions counted as a part of the course grade?

YES  NO

15
C. Instructors' Expectations on Academic Listening/Speaking Skills in Graduate Courses

Please answer the following questions by recalling THE SAME CLASS which you referred to in Part B. Please respond with reference to the INSTRUCTOR'S EXPECTATIONS/REQUIREMENTS of academic listening/speaking skills in the course.

<table>
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<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Frequently</td>
<td>Always</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

a. Students are expected to discuss class reading materials or do activities in small-groups during class time.

b. Students are expected to participate in whole-class discussions in the class.

c. Students are expected to lead whole-class discussions or activities in the class.

d. Students are expected to give formal oral presentations in
front of the class.

e. Students are expected to have strong listening skills to do well in the class.

f. Students are expected to have strong note-taking skills to do well in the class.

g. Students are expected to work with other classmates outside of class to complete group projects.

h. Students are expected to complete out-of-class assignments which require talking with non-classmate native English speakers (e.g., interviews, surveys, etc.).

i. Students are expected to ask the instructor questions during class.

j. Students are expected to ask the instructor questions before or after class.

k. Students are expected to talk to the instructor in her/his office about questions they have about the class.

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Other Comments: Please describe, if you have any other comments about instructors’ expectations of academic listening/speaking skills in your graduate courses.
D. Concerns You Have with Academic Listening/Speaking Skills in Graduate Courses

Again, please respond to the following question by referring to THE SAME COURSE you described in Section B and C; however, this time focus on YOUR OWN EXPERIENCE as a non-native English speaking student.

If you never need the specific classroom activities in a particular question, click N/A (Not Applicable).

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Frequently</th>
<th>Always</th>
<th>N/A</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. I have difficulty discussing class reading materials or doing activities in small-groups during class time.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>b. I have difficulty participating in whole-class discussions in the class.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c. I have difficulty leading whole-class discussions or activities in the class.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>d. I have difficulty giving formal oral presentations in front of the class.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>e. I have difficulty listening and understanding the instuctor and other students in the class.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>f. I have difficulty taking notes during the class.</td>
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<tr>
<td>g. I have difficulty working with other classmates outside of class to complete group projects.</td>
<td>1</td>
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</table>
h. I have difficulty completing out-of-class assignments which require talking with non-classmate native English speakers (e.g., interviews, surveys, etc.).

i. I have difficulty asking the instructor questions during class.

j. I have difficulty asking the instructor questions before or after class.

k. I have difficulty talking to the instructor in her/his office about questions I have about the class.

18

Other Comments: Please describe, if you have any other comments about your own problems/difficulties/concerns with class activities which require academic listening/speaking skills in your graduate courses.

E. Academic Listening/Speaking Skills Needed for Academic Success

Below is a list of eight academic listening and speaking skills needed for academic success in graduate courses. Please rate the degree of importance of the following skills.
a. Pronunciation of English

b. Understanding formal lectures

c. General listening comprehension (besides formal lectures)

c. Note-taking skills

d. Strategies to give formal speeches/presentations

f. Strategies to participate effectively in class discussions

g. Strategies to communicate effectively with other students in small-group discussions, group projects, or out-of-class study groups

h. Strategies to communicate effectively with professors in or out of class

20

Other. Please describe if there are any other academic listening/speaking skills needed for your academic success, but not listed above.

F. Suggestions for Course Instructors in Graduate Courses
If you could talk to your INSTRUCTOR of the class you described, what suggestions might you give him or her to help you more comfortably participate in classroom activities which require academic listening/speaking skills, such as classroom discussions?

G. Suggestions for Native English Speaking Peers in Graduate Courses

If you could talk to your NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKER CLASSMATES of the class you described, what suggestions might you give them to help you more comfortably participate in classroom activities which require academic listening/speaking skills, such as classroom discussions.

H. Suggestions for Non-Native English Speaking Peers

If you could talk to your NON-NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKER CLASSMATES, what suggestions might you give them if they experience difficulties participating in classroom activities which require academic listening/speaking skills, such as classroom discussions?
I. Assistance with future research and sharing of research findings

24

If you are interested in continuing to assist this research by participating in an approximately 15-minute interview, please provide your contact information, along with your preferred interview mode. The interview could be done via face-to-face, telephone, or e-mail at your convenience and/or preference.

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<tr>
<th>First Name</th>
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<td>Last Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>E-mail Address</td>
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<tr>
<td>Telephone Number</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interview Mode</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

If you would like a copy of our findings, send an e-mail request to Soonhyang Kim at kim.1259@osu.edu.
APPENDIX B

SURVEY COVERLETTER
We would like to invite you to participate in a survey of international students at The Ohio State University. We want to know about your experiences with required academic oral communication skills in U.S. mainstream content university classes.

The data will be used by Faculty and TA Development to support development of recommendations for instructors encouraging effective oral participation of students. You can find out more about FTAD at <http://www.osu.edu/education/ftad>. Responses will be also be used by Soonhyang Kim, the co-investigator and a research associate for the office, as part of the data for her dissertation work. This project meets Ohio State’s rules for research with people and has been approved by the Institutional Review Board.

All responses to this web-based survey are completely anonymous. Results will be compiled and summarized; in no instance will individual responses be reported. You will complete the survey on a web site that is not affiliated with Ohio State. We will only receive data from this site, not names or e-mail addresses of respondents, unless if you expressed your willingness to participate in a 15-minute phone or telephone interview with the researchers.

Your perspective as a language minority student is important in order to create an open, welcoming classroom environment. We appreciate your willingness to complete the following anonymous survey, which should take approximately ten-minutes to complete the survey.

To access this survey, please go to the website below: http://www.zoomerang.com/recipient/survey.zgi?ID=L222Z4KS3RMG&PIN=EV0271TK1HJH

If you have any questions or comments about this study, please feel free to contact Soonhyang Kim (kim.1259@osu.edu).

Thank you all in advance for your time and cooperation.

Sincerely,

Alan Kalish, Ph.D
Director, Faculty and TA Development
292-3644
kalish.3@osu.edu

Soonhyang Kim
Graduate Research Associate, Faculty and TA Development
Ph.D. candidate, Foreign and Second Language Education
292-3644
kim.1259@osu.edu
APPENDIX C

GROUP INTERVIEW PROTOCOL
Researcher: SOONHYANG KIM

“Active oral classroom participation” of international students at The Ohio State University – (frequently participating in class by speaking up).

Question1: What does “active classroom participation” mean to you?

Question2: Is “active oral classroom participation” important? Why or why not?

Question 3: Please share an experience in terms of “active oral classroom participation” at Ohio State.

Probing: Any insights about ‘speaking up’ in a class?

Question 4: What suggestions would you give to course instructors regarding international students and “active oral classroom participation”?

Question 5: What suggestions would you give to your American peers to help you be more engaged in “active oral classroom participation”?

Question 6: What suggestions would you give to other international students to become more actively engaged in “active oral classroom participation”?

Closing:

Question 7: Final thoughts, or suggestions for the moderator and assistant moderator?