

Foreign High School Students in the United States:  
A replication study of adjustment to total English Immersion.  
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“We need more living English.... We have a lot of books to learn how to read, write and speak English. But, there is no slang.”\*\*\* “That’s big trouble to every student who wants to learn.” \*\*\* I think Japanese people is (sic) shy and does (sic) not say things straight.” \*\*\* “To my opinion, half of Japanese students are not interested in speaking English. We study very difficult English grammar... Many students study English just as tool for examination.” \*\*\* “I had studied English for about 5 years in Japan. So, I know English grammar much better than 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in America. But when I came here, I really could not talk in English enough. I found the reason. When I was in Japan, I had 6 English classes a week in senior high school, then pronunciation of my English was same as what we use for Japanese speaking.” \*\*\* “...I just wanted to tell you how difficult for us (sic) understanding English. Also, I want to say that listening to someone’s talking is really hard. Because American people talk English all together. I can’t explain very well, I mean 1word1word1word. Not like this: 1 word 1 word 1 word.”

These comments were made by Japanese high school students in the United States during the 1983-84 academic year sponsored by the youth for Understanding organization. They were responding to a survey conducted under YFU sponsorship in its interest to determine the timeliness and interface of linguistic and cross-cultural adjustment experienced by these students during total English immersion in the United States. At the end of their study in the United States, exchange students generally achieve a generally high level of proficiency in English. Some do not or, during their linguistic adjustment, seem to experience a particularly difficult transition from limited to almost bilingual English proficiency. Among several countries with a marked percentage of students whose transitions difficult, seemingly due in part to limited English fluency, is Japan. The YFU organization was interested in examining Japanese students’ adjustment in order to derive insights which could point to ways to improve participant selection and orientation, training, materials development and support services of the organization. The ultimate goal was to ensure a more satisfactory exchange experience for Japanese students in the future.

The study was a modified replication of research on the linguistic adjustment of American Field Service foreign high school students in the United States for the 1969-70 academic year (Gurney, 1970). In that study, we found that the AFS students from Japan and Thailand experienced the greatest difficulty adjusting to using English in total immersion. Other findings from the 1970 research report are reviewed below as a background to the study of the Japanese YFU students' linguistic adjustment.

1. Immersion adjustment\* was significantly associated ( $p = .05$ ) with length of English study for those who experienced least difficulties of understanding, speaking, reading and writing \*(length of adjustment = able, by student estimate to use English comfortably during their first 5 months in the United States).
2. Immersion adjustment\* was even more significantly associated ( $p = .001$ ) with the study of another foreign language in addition to English language study.
3. Linguistic difficulties (understanding, speaking, reading, and writing English) were significantly correlated with adjustment length. Such difficulties were common to the foreign students but were highly differential depending upon language preparation in the home country.
4. Students experiencing greatest English difficulties and slowest adjustment generally had fewest years of prior English study or of other foreign languages, more indigenous teachers of English, less instruction involving conversation and less contact with English outside of school.
5. No combination of language preparation factors significantly was related to a short period of adjustment. However, in various analyses, the study of other foreign languages consistently revealed significant inverse relationship with the period of adjustment and the areas of difficulty experienced by the students.

6. During total immersion, students received help more consistently from host families—primarily from “mother” and “father” – than from teachers and students in the American host schools.
7. The sample population represented 5 world areas: Black Africa Europe, Latin America, Middle East, and Far East.
8. Nineteen of 39 students (48.7%) identified as having the poorest adjustment\* were from Thailand and Japan. \*(not able to use English comfortably within their first 22 weeks in the United States).

These and other findings on foreign high school students in the United States reinforce various research reports on foreign students in U.S. colleges. For example, Hoag (1966) found that the study of another foreign language related strongly with English vocabulary scores (inversely), although the length of English study did not. The linguistic deficiencies of the AFS non-adjusters reflected the inadequate English instruction in Egypt, Afghanistan, and Pakistan reported by El Laissi (1961), Cannon (1963) and Usmani (1965), respectively. Cieslak (1955) indicated that a large percentage of foreign college students in his samples needed remedial training in spite of an average of more than three years of English study in the home country. This finding was confirmed by Pavri (1965) in his study of scholastic achievement of foreign graduate student at the University of Virginia. Pavri also noted that Far Eastern, as well as Latin American, students experienced greater difficulties in adjustment to their new challenges than other foreign students. Vocabulary size for non-Indo-European students in Hoag’s study (1966) was the lowest of all scores when arranged by region. Spanish-speakers’ scores were next lowest.

A corollary to vocabulary is linguistic control, and Cannon (1963) found that students in Afghanistan spent so many years with Afghan natives as teachers that they developed linguistic habits with potentially permanent in comprehensiveness to native speakers of English. This phenomenon has been noticed fairly frequently by the writer in college students and other adults from Far Eastern and Middle Eastern countries, and is not uncommon in Latin American students.

At the University of Central Florida, a study of foreign college students confirmed the findings of the earlier study of high school students (Gurney, 1977, Unpublished). In addition, Roland (1980) did a modified

replication of Gurney' study with closely similar findings of linguistic adjustment difficulties experienced by university foreign students. Also, Suwanee Manacharsen (1984) found that South East Asian students' linguistic difficulties at UCF were primarily noticed in giving oral presentations and engaging in large group discussion, writing (assigned papers, themes, research papers, etc), note-taking, understanding class discussion, and reading test questions or directions. There were fewest problems reading than with the other language skills. These findings reflect conclusions reached by Zain (1965) and Payind (1979) in their studies of foreign college students.

The problems of Asians or non-western foreign students as a distinct area of research are seen, as well, in studies by Porter (1963), and Stafford (1978), who found that students differed significantly by world region in linguistic adjustments to college life.

The previous study of foreign high school students and the other citations are indications of the level of English proficiency achieved by students in vastly differing countries but under fairly similar teaching situations. These studies have not appeared in the national research reviews on a matter of increasing professional attention, foreign language proficiency (testing, teaching, curriculum, etc.). Yet, as James (1985) indicates, proficiency implies control of one's "personal and social environments by means of language...." Instruction is geared, James seems to remark, to helping others get "the greatest benefit from interaction with those environments, such as the school and street, the classroom and the boardroom, the casual conversation and the prepared speech, wherever it is possible to acquire to learn the skills of the language." (p.3) Since the development of the ACTFL/ETS Proficiency Guidelines, foreign students' proficiency in English may, eventually, be measured and compared with American students' scores on similar instruments.

The general research problem in this study was included the following sub-problems regarding YFU concerns:

1. Adjustment difficulty with regard to specific length of time, and areas of linguistic problems.
2. Adjustment difficulty within the context and effectiveness of help received from hosts.
3. Types of English preparation in Japan related to levels of difficulty and length of adjustment.
4. Cultural context of adjustment.
5. Comparisons of teacher and student perceptions regarding linguistic adjustment and context of help, and host competencies.

The concerns were reflective of the findings reported in the AFS study. In addition, we wanted to validate the instrumentation used in the prior study as well as to develop a broader perspective on the specific aspects of linguistic difficulty during adjustment to total English immersion.

Definitions:

1. The period of adjustment in total English immersion was defined as the number of weeks required by the student to feel at ease, in his'/her own judgement, in most English-speaking situations.
2. Linguistic preparation in English is defined as:
  - a. The length and intensity of English study in Japan.
  - b. The types of English language instruction in home schools.
  - c. The linguistic orientation of English language teachers.

## Methodology

### Sample

1. Students The entire group of 448 YFU Japanese students in the United States during the 1983-84 academic year were selected for the survey. With 29 percent males and 71 percent females, this constituted a stratified non-random sample. Selection bias was offset by the large number expected to respond to the survey. Due to the close relationship between the sponsoring organization and the students, no questionnaires were expected to go to incorrect addresses or persons.
2. Teachers Students were asked to give a separate survey instrument to a teacher in their high schools. No measures were taken to ensure randomness due to the need to select teachers who would be aware of the Japanese student's adjustment situation without conducting extensive communication with the schools. Total teachers: 448.

For the replication study, we revised the questionnaire from the AFS survey (Gurney, 1970) in a number of ways: Japan was the home country, and additional requirements were added (consistent with the replication study ) concerning linguistic difficulties, language backgrounds, help and cultural competencies of teachers, as well as those needed to satisfy YFU concerns. These included adding references to: (1) language background—the use of computers for CAI in English, attending an English language institute, and contact with English-speaking military or diplomatic personnel; (2) experience in the United States—specific identification of hosts, courses taken in U.S. high schools, cultural as well as English difficulties with specific hosts, experience with English tutors, reluctance to use English/comfort with asking help from specific hosts, as well as others; and (3) a teacher instrument for cross-referencing purposes.

The student questionnaire contained questions mostly answered on a 4 point scale relative to the degree to which students had experienced certain types of English instruction in Japan, linguistic difficulty in the U.S., requested/received help, etc., as described in the questions. (Scale: 1 = Never, 2 = Sometimes, 3 = Often, 4 = Most of time). There were, also, affirmation/negative questions. The teacher questionnaire generally matched the categories on the student form; i.e., level of difficulty in speaking, understanding, reading, etc. Responses were the same type except that Unknown (= 5) was added to the teacher instrument because teachers were undoubtedly not aware of students' entire linguistic situation.

The questionnaires were mailed late in February 1984. Instructions and research explanations were written in both English and Japanese. Students were asked to complete the survey instrument on their own, distribute a teacher form, and return both completed questionnaires by the middle of March 1984. The research period was set at 45 weeks of total English immersion beginning in September 1983.

Of the 484 questionnaires mailed out, 302 (64.4%) usable student forms and 282 teacher forms (62.9% were received.) This constituted a viable statistical sample for analysis.

The major results of the study are detailed first in terms of the YFU areas of concern. Subsequently, comparisons are made between the YFU and AFS studies. On general length of adjustment, sixty-three percent (63%) of the students reported a specific number of weeks for adjustment with 91 (30%) indicating they had not yet adjusted to daily use of English (22/7.3% did not answer the question.) Teachers identified almost as many adjusters, 167 (59.2%) and reported 115 as non-adjusters, or did not specify a number of weeks. In general, the two sets of responses were very close (see lack of correlation, later.) However, they differed on the length of adjustment: students' mean = 12.45 weeks vs 8.64 (teachers' estimate).

Regarding linguistic difficulties, also, teachers and students differed in terms of the rank order. Students had most difficulty in reading, then writing, understanding and speaking. Teachers's responses were a mirror image: speaking, understanding, writing and reading. In addition, students reported 77% more reading difficulty and 41% more writing difficulty than teachers noted. Students and teachers diverged, similarly, on their perceptions of difficulty on individual tasks of reading (textbooks, magazines, etc.) and writing (tests, term papers, etc.)

Oral difficulties were consistent with levels of familiarity, or role relationships. Students had less difficulty with host "parents" and siblings than with teachers, and more difficulty was experienced with American teenagers, especially understanding them. Students indicated that they had more difficulty because of the Americans' use of slang. YFU students interviewed, subsequently, in Japan revealed that teachers often modified their language or speed of delivery whereas teenagers just spoke normally—"fast"). American students' vocabulary levels were closer to that used by host "mothers" and children, but that of teachers and host "fathers" was higher. Overall, speech in the home was perceived to be slower than in the school. Taking all factors of understanding difficulty together (comprehension, vocabulary, speed and slang), teenagers were ranked first, followed by teachers (approximately 10% less difficulty), host children, "fathers" and "mothers". Teachers' perceptions of students' school difficulties differed dramatically. They reported that the foreign students has less difficulty understanding and speaking with teenagers than with teachers.

However, students indicated they had fewer cultural problems with teachers than with American teenagers and least with host "parents," Individual responses on specific cultural difficulties supported the low level of difficulty experienced with teachers that was revealed in the means of responses. Of fifty-eight (58) responding, no valid response level was indicated for cultural difficulty with teachers. Responses on various categories of cultural interaction provide some sense of the cultural context on the following: (1) way of life + ways of thinking, (2) home: food/meals + chores + ways of life, and 3 + habits + ways of life + ways of thinking + manners + personality.



Combined responses on “ways” (#1) were almost identical for all hosts except teachers. Not much difference was seen on chores, except that “mothers” were more difficult. On the combined item of cultural attributes (#3), children stood out from a similarity of response noted for “mothers”, “fathers” and teenagers. The highest response on all categories was difficulty with host children’s personalities. This is reflected in a few comments made in Japan by YFU students that suggested a degree of sibling rivalry and jealousy (for example, a host “sister” refused to help a Japanese girl choose appropriate clothes for an American school who was accustomed to wearing uniforms to school in Japan! The problem was partially alleviated by the host “mother.”)

This sociolinguistic differentiation is reflected in the context for help: requested and received. Help with linguistic (and cultural) difficulties was requested, and received, most often from host “mothers.” Students requested help almost equally from American teenagers, host children, host “fathers” and teachers (mean range: 2.75 - 2.62.) The range was also close (M=2.88 - 2.78) on help received from all of the latter except teachers, who ranked lowest. The students reported that they felt most comfortable requesting help from host “mothers,” children, teenagers, “fathers” and teachers, in that order. Oral comments in Japan repeatedly indicated that host “parents” took more time to understand the Japanese students’ communications. This was apparent mainly from close friends in school (and not as much from teachers.)

A different perception of the sociolinguistic context for help is seen in responses concerning just whom was asked to give help on which linguistic or cultural problem. Whereas students sought help directly from host “parents” when they had difficulty communicating with these adults, they usually asked someone else about difficulties experienced with other American hosts; i.e., asking “parents” for help on communication difficulties with host children, host children concerning teenagers, teenagers concerning teachers, and teachers concerning other adults. With reading and writing difficulties, and help requested, “parents” ranked second to teachers on problems with textbooks and assignments (first about newspapers and magazines) and teenagers ranked third (first about general reading materials and writing letters to friends.)

The help received was reported roughly in the same order except that host “parents” gave less help on assignments (second on themes) than teenagers, and, host children give the most help on letters and were second in help given for tests. Teenagers, other than any host children, gave only infrequent help on tests and themes.

Correlations between adjustment difficulties and the length of adjustment, as well as language preparation in Japan, were studied with regard to the benefits of total English immersion vs English preparation in the home country (or a combination of both.) Most of the correlations were not statistically significant. Whereas the mean for English study in Japan was just over 5 years, length of adjustment was not significantly correlated to English preparation. However, it was inverse (longer years of English related to shorter period of adjustment.) A highly significant relationship ( $p=.001$ ) was found between speaking difficulty and length of adjustment and on the adjustment period and a sum of responses on all difficulty areas: understanding, speaking, reading and writing ( $p=.009$ ). Conversely, writing difficulty was the only other single variable approximating a statistically significant correlation with the length of adjustment ( $p=.07$ ). In Japan, English was taught primarily by native speakers of Japanese who used English only sporadically for instruction (54%-Sometimes, 16%-Never, and they seldom encouraged its use by students in order to talk about, or among, themselves (54%-Never). Translation from English to Japanese was the most consistent form of instruction. Although not significant, correlations between adjustment period and translation methods, and Japanese natives as teachers were positive rather than inverse. The combined mean on all types of English preparation in Japan was significantly related to length of adjustment ( $p=.05$ ). Inverse relationships, although not significant, were revealed between adjustment and English-speaking natives as teachers, “fluent” teachers and conversation in class, as well as the sum of responses on audio-lingual type methods.

Interestingly, students’ preferred preparations in English (extensive English practice, extensive vocabulary and learning from active speakers of English) were not significant in relation to length of adjustment, but they were inverse. A very significant inverse relationship with the adjustment period was found regarding a high

level of reading ( $p = .019$ ). Also, significant was the length of adjustment related to the variable, general skills of reading, speaking and writing ( $p = .028$ ). The highest rated preference was instruction by native speakers of English. American teachers generally agreed that a high level of reading, an extensive vocabulary and extensive conversation practice were preferred instructional preparations, but they reported, also, that a high degree of grammar knowledge was essential.

Teachers and their foreign students tended to agree and disagree, it seemed, within the same categories of questions (such as on preferred preparation, above.) This was quite apparent from their perceptions of adjustment difficulties, as mentioned, but also on the length of adjustment. Since student and teacher forms were coded, we were able to correlate responses by matched cases. On the main variable, adjustment period, we found 120 matched cases (60%) out of those reporting a specific period of weeks, (S:189 and T:167). The percentage is lower if the entire set of forms is used (SN=302/TN=282; average N=292, 41%). Follow-up interviews indicated that students may have differed seriously on just when they felt at ease. Some interviewees stated that it was Christmas when they finally felt comfortable with English, yet they had reported less than three months for adjustment (12-13) weeks). Others had judged the time very accurately, on retrospect.

Cross-referencing was not done with the American Field Service students. However, the general accuracy of their responses was probably similar to that of the YFU students. Given that assumption, and recognizing that the AFS included both Asian and non-Asian students, we offer the following comparison of similar questions on linguistic preparation, adjustment and areas of difficulty between the two studies.

A. The AFS study had responses from 250 students, 17% less than the YFU group.

B. Findings

- 1) AFS students studied English for a shorter period of time ( $M = 6$  years) than the YFU students, but had a smaller percentage of natives as English teachers. (Asian students had more years of English than non-Asian ones.)

- 2) AFS students studied an average of 3 years of a foreign language other than English. YFU students reported very little study of other foreign languages.
- 3) The period of adjustment was 6.9 weeks for 211 AFS students when we held out the 39 students who answered, NOT Yet, to the adjustment question. For the total group, the mean was still less than that for the YFU students, 9.4 vs 12.6 weeks.
- 4) The rank order of difficulties was speaking, understanding reading and writing, a reverse of the YFU findings (reading, writing, understanding and speaking).
- 5) The AFS period of adjustment correlated significantly with the sum of responses on linguistic difficulties ( $p=-.05$ ). (Similar to FYU responses).
- 6) Length of adjustment was not significantly correlated with English study except for the 211 adjusters ( $p=.05$ ), not so with YFU adjusters.
- 7) The context for help with AFS and YFU students' English difficulties was similar. Help was received mostly from host "parents" of AFS students, then from host children, teenagers and teachers.
- 8) AFS students felt better prepared for total use of English in the United States than did YFU students (75% vs 25+%).
- 9) Preferred types of preparation, were the same: extensive conversation, followed by extensive vocabulary and a combination of skills: reading, vocabulary and speaking.

- 10) The backgrounds of the quickest and slowest adjusters were similar in both studies, and overall data revealed that AFS and YFU adjusters had more years of English, more hours of weekly instruction, a higher degree of instruction in speaking English and more contact with English outside of school than the non-adjusters. Also, the non-adjusters had a higher exposure to English instruction by natives of their home region.

On the matter of the possible advantage of total immersion relative to various types of English preparation in the home country, we reported student and teacher preferences concerning certain types of instruction. The advantage has to be judged on the basis of a combination of our findings and correlations. This and other discussion follows.

## **DISCUSSION**

Consistent with the report of the findings, we will discuss the results of the study first in light of the Youth For Understanding areas of concern: the overall nature of adjustment (length, difficulty areas, context of help and adequacy of preparation prior to coming to the United States), cultural interactions among Japanese students and members of the host community, and the relative degree of advantage of total immersion conditions for linguistic adjustment. The separate perceptions by teachers will be included along with these topics. Then, we will indicate our reactions to the similarities and differences between the American Field Service and Youth for Understanding studies, as well as concerning validation of the previous study.

The length of adjustment was moderate for the majority of the students. However, almost one third were having major problems. Length of adjustment was strongly reflected in the degree of difficulty using oral skills but not the graphic ones. The students seemed to have fairly accurate perceptions about the amount of time it took them to adjust to total immersion, as measured by their estimate of adjustment difficulties. Correlations with their teachers' estimate indicated that 60% of them matched up.

Although correlations between adjustment length and difficulties in reading and writing were not significant, these difficulties received the highest ratings, and the correlations were positive. Students' perceptions of their language problems contrasted with their teacher's mirror image of the students' ranking. This contrast appeared, as well, in the high degree of variance between the teachers' low perception of students' difficulties in reading and that actually reported by the students (the variance on writing was moderate).

The difficulty areas, as well as the context of help, can be viewed relative to the role relationships influencing linguistic conditions and competence. Students had less difficulties with, and received most help from host "parents." But, they had most listening difficulty with American teenagers, primarily because of their use of slang and "fast" talking. Somewhat expectedly, the Japanese teenagers had the most cultural difficulties, as well, with their American counterparts, and the least with teachers, who seemed to offset cultural differences with a general empathy for cultures. Interestingly, when they had difficulties in oral communication, the students sought help from other hosts rather than from those with whom the difficulty arose. The exception was with host "parents," whom they asked for help directly when problems occurred. With good friends, they were probably more likely to get help directly with immediate misunderstanding. Role relationships, again, seemed to influence the help context regarding students asking for help from American students concerning language difficulties experienced with teachers. Teachers seemed not to recognize the level of difficulty the Japanese students had with them or with the American students. Perhaps, they attributed a peer group commonality to the foreign - American interactions which might override problems.

Certainly, teachers differed with the YFU students on the importance of certain kinds of prior preparation although both groups agreed that the Japanese students were not well prepared for total immersion. Almost one half of the teachers considered a high level of reading essential compared to less than six percent of the students (note that a high level of reading correlated inversely with the length of adjustment at a very significant level). Extensive prior conversation practice was preferred more by teachers than the students, but the latter emphasized instruction by native or near-native speakers of English more than teachers did by 15%. (Unfortunately, the suggested training is not typical of instructional procedures in Japan).

This difference highlights the assessment of total immersion benefits relative to, or in opposition to, a combination of certain types of English preparation in Japan, or before placement in the host community. As reported, Japanese instruction in English is characterized by a high level of memorization of grammatical forms and vocabulary, translation from English to Japanese, and is based on reading rather than communicative uses of language. Yet, our correlations on length of adjustment went in the right direction (inversely) for three variables, reflecting oral skills: English-speaking natives as teachers, “fluent” teachers, and conversation in class. Conversely, the correlations were going the other way on translation methods and Japanese natives as teachers (high level of frequency related to longer adjustment).

Total immersion is reported to have overarching benefits for achievement in a second language. Indeed, foreign high school students personally observed by the researcher have demonstrated almost total command of English after the typical academic year in the United States. Unfortunately, not all achieve such an enviable state of bilingualism. Others suffer through the experience with small gains, in silence or, in a very positive sense, benefit from the enormous human goodness which lies at the base of this sort of cultural interaction. Host teachers and foreign students differ substantially on the length of the adjustment period, on the percentages of who adjusted and the relative importance, or degree, of difficulty in using various English skills. If people in critical roles, exchange students and host teachers, differ dramatically on essential aspects of adjustment, who is right; who has the most accurate perception of proficiency? Also, what is the best preparation if the adjustment cannot be specified more accurately?

Although no teacher data were solicited for the AFS study, similar differences in perceptions about linguistic adjustment must have been apparent. Some trends were consistent with the attempt to validate this methodology:

- A. length of adjustment and types of difficulties in oral language proficiency in both studies were significantly correlated beyond the .01 level;
- B. adjustment length and oral difficulties showed consistency - although not equally significant

correlations - with common factors: natives as English teachers, translation methods and little practical conversation practice. (This was particularly pertinent with the non-adjusters in both studies);

- C. both groups experienced similar difficulty with reading and writing tasks;
- D. role relationships influenced the context of help similarly in both studies, particularly in terms of the low degree of difficulty and high degree of help, perceived the students in their interactions with host “parents;” and,
- E. preferred preparation by both groups was almost identical.

### Conclusions and Implications

The investigation of Japanese high school students’ adjustment to total English immersion continues an initiative begun in 1969 to study foreign high school students’ linguistic preparation relative to the perceived proficiency they develop during their stay in the United States. As high school students, they have not been subjects of any other previous research studies on foreign students in this country. The concerns of the sponsoring organization, Youth for Understanding, that many Japanese students (as well as participants from several other countries) were having a difficult transition to total immersion, partly due to limited English skills, prompted this investigation. It coincided with similar adjustment difficulties experienced by Far Eastern students in the United States as reported by Gurney (1970), and others in subsequent follow-up studies. The AFS study involved over 300 American Field Service students from 13 countries. We attempted, in the present study, to provide insights for YFU relative to improvements in their participant selection, materials development and support services of the organization. At the same time, we hoped to validate our instrumentation and methodology used in the AFS study in 1970.



We found consistency between the two studies in the relationship between speaking and understanding difficulty and length of adjustment. This consistency was generally, supported by perceptions by host teachers in the YFU study. However, length of adjustment by YFU students related to their oral difficulties was not consistent in relation to reading and writing difficulties, a contradiction of the perception that language skills are interdependent. Also linguistic adjustment is influenced by sociolinguistic conditions and cannot be judged on language competencies related to difficulties alone. The high level of help received indicates such difficulty can be overcome in the interest of communication between hosts and guests alike.

Perceptions by teachers and the foreign students concerning adjustment length and degree of difficulty differ importantly enough to warrant further investigation. A good bit of this variance may well be due to different cultural expectations or standards of performance between students and teachers. However, the favorable percentage of student-teacher matched pairs on the length of adjustment (60%) give credence to participants' perspicacity/judgement on this question. Missing 40%, however, tempers this favorable outcome because 2 students are going through a difficult transition from native speaker to limited speaker (especially in the case of the Japanese). In Japan, we noted that people with more than eight years of English study were very reluctant to converse in the language! (Again, self-evaluation of linguistic competence may override actual ability with a second language.)

During adjustment, more help was given than requested, and sociolinguistic relationships seemed to influence both the willingness to request help and to give it. Particularly, host "parents" gave most help, and foreign students did not always request help from the person(s) with whom the difficulty arose. These role relationship effects are consistent with the background factors of the slowest adjusters in the AFS study: natives (Japanese) of the home country as English teachers, translation from English to the native language, and almost non-existent practice for actual communication in the classroom.

The native English speech model seems to be the key to adjustment (and actual proficiency?) regardless the kind of instructional technique. This reflects, in part, Krashen's input hypothesis (1977) based on the comprehensibility of second language models as appropriate acquisition devices. In other words, foreign students who consistently receive meaningful models of English speech by natives, or near-native speakers, of English, along with ample opportunities to use English in the onset of communication (in/out of class, out of school, in varied natural settings) are likely to experience less speaking and understanding difficulties regardless the length of adjustment.

Related to this is the condition of total immersion placement. Potential benefits to English proficiency may hinge on instructional methods in host schools and opportunities for getting help. The low teacher perception of students' reading difficulties, contrasted with the students' perception of major difficulty, reveals a need for each to become more aware of individual teaching/learning sets and the importance of real relationships as they, potentially, affect the climate of language use, communicative facilitation and linguistic and/or cultural help. Teachers should, also, be sensitive to students' self-evaluation criteria which may be culturally influenced.

Providing native models during total immersion has a potential benefit, especially for those whose pattern of linguistic preparation is consistent with the AFS non-adjuster characteristics we reported in the 1970 study. Further study may refine our perceptions about actual, rather than global, language backgrounds related to specific aspects of adjustment to total English immersion. The top adjusters should be separately studied, as well. We conclude that the methodology used in both the AFS and YFU studies will serve future investigations.

How does one evaluate adjustment/proficiency? Is apparent linguistic difficulty/proficiency based on syntactic, lexical or articulatory weaknesses/competencies, general competency levels of active or passive skill, willingness to ask for help; or, even the ability to interpret and learn from help when given? How important, indeed, as non-linguistic factors, such as motivation, attitude of cultural tolerance with regard to exchange students' perceptions of the hosts' demonstrated cultural flexibility/awareness versus the students' expectation or preferences? How important are counseling procedures for foreign students regarding both ease of adjustment (linguistic and cultural) and academic achievement during the year-long stay in the United States?

These questions provide a context for the following recommendations for exchange program sponsors/hosts, second language educators, and regarding future research on language acquisition and proficiency.

A. Program sponsors and hosts

- 1) Select students with a minimum of 3 years of recent English study with evidence of conversation practice (in or out of school), reading of contemporary American materials, and ample exposure to native or near-native models of English speech (especially from teachers or by frequent use of multi-media);
- 2) provide native models for frequent, direct, planned, foreign-American student interactions as well as assisted excursions to places where language exchange is constant: shopping, movies, small group meetings, etc.;
- 3) conduct workshops/group sessions on cross-cultural understanding involving other culturally/ethnically different groups represented in the schools;
- 4) enroll students in a foreign language at the host school; and
- 5) focus activities on conversation exposure during the first 5-10 weeks of the immersion experience in order to provide ample comprehensive input and exposure to the melodies of English speech.

B. Second language teachers

- 1) Relative to #'s 1,2, & 5: heighten the potential for meaningful use of the second language in the classroom, and expand students' exposure to the patterns of native sounds without the immediate obligation to respond with recitation on answers to meaningless questions;
- 2) explore ways to involve students in the use of language outside of school in areas where the language is likely to be spoken or seen regularly; and,
- 3) encourage the study of another foreign language or, at least in the classroom, use other languages frequently in dealing with everyday directions. If teachers cannot speak any other foreign language, allow students who can to use them, in order to broaden the context in order broaden the context of second language competency/proficiency which may broaden their perspectives about language in general.

C. Research implications

- 1) A separate analysis of fastest and slowest adjusters is needed;
- 2) examine specific components of language proficiency - syntax, lexical aspects, phonetic and sociolinguistic - relative to language difficulty areas and length of adjustment.
- 3) include host family members for cross-referencing;
- 4) compare students from all areas of the world hosted by separate organizations;

- 5) examine foreign high school students' adjustment compared to college students from the same countries; and,
- 6) compare American and foreign exchange students' adjustment to total immersion and performance on the appropriate ACTFL proficiency tests.

### **ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT**

The following are comments made at the conclusion of a study of Chinese graduate students in the United States (1989-1990). The abstract appears on the web site:

<http://pegasus.cc.ucf.edu/~gurney/UCFCHNESres.htm>

Based on the findings from this study, we offer a few suggestions with regard to English instruction in China (reflecting the conditions for such instruction described by the Chinese scholar cooperating with this study.

1. Include authentic English models and meaningful use of language as essential parts of all instruction;
2. Reading instruction should concentrate on contemporary materials from countries where English is a native language;
3. Since there are few native speakers of English giving instruction in the language in Chinese schools and college, Chinese instructors of English could allow for maximum exposure to English speaking persons through the following: use of mass media and tapes, English radio broadcasts, interviews with English speaking visitors, English language movies, etc. In addition, students could be encouraged to utilize good English sentences (as contained in standard textbooks and other

reading materials) as examples on which to build incipient communication competence by making statements about their own lives as variation of such basis sentences. Improvement can come as teachers and students alike experiment with communicating orally while increasing their exposure to native English models such as on television, radio, in films and on tapes, etc.

4. Vocabulary words should be defined in English as often as possible to avoid matching English words with Chinese meanings. Once students gain control of a fairly consistent level of vocabulary, they can be encouraged to use those words in order to associate new words when they have to look up the English definition, not the Chinese translation. For this, they should use a standard, English only, dictionary. Chinese translation should be used to gain the meaning of the definition if unknown English words are used to define the new words. In this way, English will be mastered in terms of English contexts, not in terms of Chinese meanings. The solution to vocabulary is to provide for maximum association between the new word and the learner's unique sets of experiences and the mental images associated with those experiences in the way that Chinese words reflect, automatically, the unique experience of each Chinese person.

In essence, more valuable use could be made of all of the human effort, motivation and intelligence that is spent on teaching and learning how English makes sense in terms of the grammatical rules and meanings of Chinese. One could use this energy to develop a viable, meaningful, competence in English. This is necessary for people who plan to study and work in the United States. Adjustment to conditions of total immersion should take place much earlier for students who have been trained in such a way that those who have not.

The key to using the language for communication is to have practice with the structures in which actual information about the speaker/writer and his/her world is being transmitted.