<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NOMBRE DEL BECARIO</th>
<th>Pozo Andrade, María Laura</th>
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<tr>
<td>UNIVERSIDAD</td>
<td>New York University</td>
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<td>TITULO OBTENIDO</td>
<td>Maestría en Enseñanza de Inglés a Nivel Universitario</td>
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<td>TEMA DEL TRABAJO FINAL</td>
<td>Métodos que pueden emplearse a nivel universitario para ayudar a los estudiantes internacionales a participar en el aula.</td>
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Speakeasy New York: Helping International Students Participate in the Classroom

María Laura Pozo
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Dr. Heather Homonoff Woodley
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1. Introduction

I was starting college in France: I felt foreign and out of place, I had no friends, and I was dreading having to produce college-level work in a language I did not master. Although a year of language courses had served me well, I quickly realized it would be quite another matter to understand the verbose professors and the slang and verlan\textsuperscript{1} spoken by my classmates. The process of integrating myself was not an easy one, and in retrospect, I see it was made harder by the university environment, where we were expected to sink or swim with little assistance from professors or administrators.

Now several years later, as a graduate student at NYU, it has been gratifying to be in an atmosphere where university personnel are genuinely interested in helping students succeed on a personal and academic level. While I am not an international student, it's great to see that these students have orientation sessions, events, advisors, and many other resources to help them make the incredibly tough transition into a new country and university. However, over the past few months, I have noticed one area where I believe some improvement could be made in the integration of international students. I have noticed that in all of my classes, international students are very reluctant to participate in class discussions. This results in many silences, awkward and paused class discussions, and at times, discussions that are dominated by domestic students.

I believe that addressing this issue would be hugely beneficial to both international students and domestic students, as well as professors looking to enrich their classes with thoughtful student participation. I also believe that this research will aid me as a teacher. After graduation I will be working in a country where the power distance between teacher

\textsuperscript{1}French slang consisting in reordering the syllables in a word. For instance, the word for “fou” (crazy) will become “ouf”.
and students is considerable. This discourages students from avid participation, preferring to let the teacher lecture rather than speaking up and participating in a class discussion. This is why I believe that the strategies I uncover in this research are likely to aid me in my work.

Of course, I recognize that there are many biases behind my wish to help international students participate in class. First, I believe that sharing with fellow students is a way of learning new things and hearing new points of view, and is thus hugely beneficial in the classroom. I also come from a Western educational tradition, where class participation is viewed positively and encouraged, whereas many other cultures emphasize deep and quiet reflection, and a teacher-centered view of education. For example, many of my Chinese classmates tell me that in their country, talkative students are perceived as braggarts, while quiet people are more likely to be perceived as wise. I also believe that every student in a classroom has something unique to contribute, and that his culture and linguistic background add to the interest of the class.

Thus, I would be very interested to know what can be done to encourage more dynamic and spontaneous class participation within the Harding University TESOL graduate program, which has a large international student contingent (predominantly Chinese and East Asian). Thus, my research question is the following:

How can the TESOL Department at Harding University (NYC) encourage dynamic and avid class participation from the international students in their program?

Because this is a fairly broad question, I will be focusing on the following sub-questions:

1. What are techniques that professors can use to encourage international
students to participate in class discussions?

2. What are ways in which other students can help their international student classmates feel more comfortable when speaking and sharing in the classroom environment?

By “dynamic” class participation, I am referring to students eagerly and thoughtfully giving their opinion and input, listening to the opinions of others, and discussing their similarities and differences in a constructive manner. I am also referring to students being able to link their readings to their own experiences, and share their thoughts in class.

Additionally, in my view, class participation includes other more mundane tasks, such as reading aloud when a volunteer is needed, or raising one’s hand to answer a simple question. “International students” are all of the students who have grown up and attended college in another country, and have come to the U.S. for their graduate coursework. At Harding University, the majority of these students are Asian (mostly Chinese and East Asian.) By “comfortable”, I mean that students feel compelled to share their thoughts and opinions through their own free will and without any sense of shame or self-consciousness. This would naturally mean that these students have internalized that having a unique point of view is acceptable and encouraged in their new environment.

2. Literature Review

Before conducting my research, it seems logical to first explore some of the main differences between the way Americans and the Chinese view education. In a brilliantly insightful article, Watkins (2000) explains that “in-depth research on Chinese students questions the validity of a number of basic Western notions of educational psychology” (p.
161). So before we find ways to help our international students participate in class, we must be cognizant of the fact that they may not view many of the West’s educational methods in the same light as American students.

In his research, Watkins provides a number of examples of this disparity. He first questions the findings of much of the traditional research done on education, arguing that it has mostly used white American male subjects and has been based on the values of Western culture, such as the importance of individualism. He argues that not only should we take this research with a grain of salt, we should also endeavor to understand other cultures’ education practices in order to improve our own.

One of the East/West divides discussed by Watkins is the conception of memorization in each culture. Where in the West memorization is seen as superficial learning, many Eastern cultures view memorization and understanding as interlocking processes. The differences do not stop there, of course. The Chinese are “more likely to attribute academic success primarily to effort” (Watkins, 2000, p. 166) rather than ability, as we do in the West. Additionally, the Chinese tend not to make such a sharp distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, as these factors are intertwined both in their lives and in their minds. Their idea of success has much to do with how they are viewed by their social circle and how well they maintain “face”. The Chinese teacher, too, occupies a distinctly different role that does the Western teacher. The teacher is not just a moderator, but a source of knowledge and a moral paradigm to follow.

Finally, and most germane to the topic at hand, Watkins argues that unlike the West, the Chinese approach to group work and class participation is more cognitive-centered and less hands-on. For instance, it is not unusual for two students to stand up in front of the
class and model a dialogue. This approach, which would likely be unfruitful in the American classroom, works well in a Chinese context because the students really listen attentively and learn from the exchange. Similarly, while Western teachers and students expect questions to be asked throughout the learning process, the Chinese view this practice as disrespectful, and ask few questions only after they feel they have gathered knowledge on the subject. So already we see that the Chinese do not necessarily equate copious speech with learning.

In the next sections we will continue to explore the culturally specific ways in which Chinese participants view class participation and in-class conversation. We will then explore some strategies that teachers can employ to help students participate in class.

2.1. Class Participation from an Asian perspective

Researchers Ellwood and Nakane (2009) contend that in Western education, classroom speech is taken for granted as an indicator of functionality, knowledge of a subject, and the capacity to think critically. However, this emphasis on class participation and speech is not present in Asian cultures. In their study on Japanese students in Australian classrooms, the researchers note that the Asian context rewards students for being silent and attentive recipients of information. But the reasoning is more nuanced. Asian students view excessive asking of questions as disrespectful towards the teacher and other students, or as face threatening to either the student or teacher who is unable to adequately provide an answer. This might explain the results obtained by Georgakopoulos and Guerrero (2010) when researching students’ perceptions of best and worst professors across six countries. Their findings showed that students from the U.S., Australia, and Sweden perceived their best professors to use more in-class conversation than the
students from Taiwan or Japan. In fact, East Asian students’ favorite professors used low levels of in-class conversation.

But the situation is not completely black and white. Research shows that Asian international students are not opposed to participating in classroom discussions, but that they prefer to do so on their own terms. The East Asian participants in the study conducted by Ellwood and Nakane (2009) stated their preference for being called on to participate rather than volunteering. They also discussed having difficulty timing turn taking and being hampered by a need to reflect before speaking, where native speakers would react much more quickly. Finally, the researchers caution that many other factors, such as gender, sexuality, topic, personality, and discussion theme, may also affect the students’ desire to participate.

While both of these studies proved interesting and informative, they each had limitations. Georgakopoulos and Guerrero (2010) drew a fascinating inter-cultural comparison of what may be considered good teaching across different countries, but they did not dig deeper into the reasons behind the students like or dislike of in-class discussion. Ellwood and Nakane (2009) were much more nuanced and detailed in explaining the reasons for lack of classroom participation, but their study was conducted in the Australian classroom, with Japanese participants. Harding University is located in the U.S., and the international students that will be studied are mostly Chinese. Therefore, a study by Xuan Zheng (2010) at the University of Washington with Chinese international students as participants proved to be very insightful and relevant to this paper.

First off, Zheng explains that what may look like student passivity to the American observer may just be a different type of engagement. She provides an example: “For
instance, Fang sat at the edge of the chair, listened to the teacher attentively, looked through the readings frequently, wrote down notes fairly often, and responded to the teacher and students by nodding, laughing and using minimal responses like uh-mhm.” (Zheng, 2010, p. 455) Zheng acknowledges that some of the cultural factors we have already discussed affect the students’ reluctance to participate, but through her research, she discovers other reasons for this silence.

Zheng states that contrary to popular belief; low English proficiency is not the main obstacle to classroom participation. The students in her study identified this as a minor concern, one that is only relevant towards the beginning of their stay in the U.S. Rather, she finds that Chinese international students are often put off by cultural references that native professors take for granted, but that the international students might not understand. This could be a reference to a landmark or a popular song or film. She also finds that her participants see class participation as a way to show competency and knowledge, so they like to have a good handle on the subject before speaking up. Finally, Zheng’s participants show a tendency to steer clear of conversations touching upon “sensitive” topics, such as race. Although this study is fascinating and pertinent, it should be noted that it included only four participants and that it was set in a university located in the Northwest U.S., which is a very different context from that of New York City.

2.2. Strategies that can be employed to encourage international students to participate in class

Although the Chinese international students interviewed by Zheng (2010) did not express a desire to receive aid with class participation, she believes that this support can and should be provided. She believes that “the curriculum should help new-comers to be aware of the evolving process of adapting to U.S. classroom culture as a multicultural
student, and provide concrete strategies of adaptation” (Zheng, 2010, p. 460). She also mentions the importance of the Professor maintaining equality amongst the students, and encouraging the international students to speak by calling on them. She suggests that Professors provide more background information about cultural references, rather than assuming the students will be in the know. Lastly, she supports the use of small-group discussions to make it easier for more reluctant students to speak up.

While valuable, these recommendations seem to be very general in nature. To obtain more specific information, I looked at a study conducted in 2004 by Dallimore, Hertenstein and Platt. The study explores how to engage students who are less inclined to participate in quality classroom discussion. The research is conducted from the students’ perspective, not the instructors’. The researchers found the following strategies to encourage student participation:

1. Using cold calling
2. Making class participation a significant part of the grade
3. Using interesting topics that are relevant to the students for class discussion (“real-world” content). Making sure the students have prepared for class so they can participate productively.
4. Playing devil’s advocate: getting the students to debate and give their opinion.
5. Challenging the students to provide in-depth answers.
6. Moderating the conversation to keep certain students from dominating the conversation.
7. Creating a supportive classroom environment, where the professor is patient with students and builds trust with them.
8. Having the professor show the students he is listening by giving positive affirmation and constructive feedback.

The great limitation this research presents is that the participants are not international students, but native language users in MBA classes.

In the search for an article having more to do with international students with East Asian backgrounds, I found an interesting piece of research by Lee (2009). His article deals
with the ways in which Korean students make the transition into graduate level classes in the U.S., with particular emphasis on how they learn to participate orally in the classroom. The researcher acknowledges that many U.S. universities provide international students with classes on speaking, writing, or culture. However, he adds that there should be courses to “address typical classroom objectives, expected participant roles, and classroom discourse strategies, such as turn-taking rules or paraphrasing techniques” (Lee, 2009, p. 154). He adds that the students should be explicitly taught about the anxiety induced by a foreign language context. Lee adds that the professors can do many things to encourage international students to participate. First and foremost, it is important for the instructor to show appreciation and respect of the different languages and cultures of the students. They may also use scaffolding techniques to help students participate, such as making the students aware beforehand of the discussion topics that will be raised, and in fact, selecting topics that are not uniquely suited to an American audience. The use of small-group discussions is also a plus, as it allows more reticent students to speak up in a less threatening context. Once more, though Lee provides some powerful insights, we should keep in mind that the research comprised only 6 participants and that they represented only one Asian country (Korea).

All of this research provides me with valuable background information on both the differing East/West perspectives on the value on class discussion, as well as some useful strategies to help international students feel more at ease and participate in the classroom. I will use this as a base to conduct my research to find specific ways to promote classroom participation amongst international students at Harding University. The
research I have reviewed will help me formulate more effective and informed interview and survey questions. I also think that it will be beneficial to be aware of this background information when conducting the interviews, as I will be able to ask more relevant follow-up questions and have a more thorough awareness of the some of the issues surrounding class participation of international students.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1. Setting

The setting for my research will be Harding University: a large private university in New York City. New York is a cosmopolitan city where about 36% of the population is foreign-born, and much of remaining population has migrated from other cities. This, in addition to its unique position as a financial and cultural center, makes NY a uniquely cosmopolitan, multi-ethnic city with vibrant neighborhoods and an international feel. Not surprisingly, the student body at Harding University is similarly diverse. In 2013, international students made up 18% of the incoming freshmen undergraduates, comprising students from 87 different countries. At the graduate level, the particular school I am targeting has an international student contingent of 15%. And finally, the Multilingual Multicultural Studies program where I will be conducting my research showcases an extremely high percentage of international students at the graduate level; about 70% in any given class. The vast majority of these students are East Asian, with a predominance of Chinese students. The classes attended by graduate students at the Multilingual Multicultural Studies program tend to be small to medium-sized (rarely more
3.2. Participants

The participants in my study were students and professors at the TESOL Program at Harding University. I surveyed 12 international students on Monday, April 14, 2014. The students were predominantly from China and East Asia. On that same date, I also surveyed 10 domestic students (because they are less numerous in the program). I also interviewed 3 professors teaching in the program, which harbors a high percentage of international students. Please see Tables 1-3 below for comprehensive information on the participants.

Table 1: International Students - Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Country of Origin</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Time in U.S.</th>
<th>Time in current graduate program</th>
<th>Perception of program</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>1 yr. 2 mos.</td>
<td>7 mos.</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>8 mos. (SIC)</td>
<td>1 yr.</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8 mos.</td>
<td>8 mos.</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8 mos.</td>
<td>8 mos.</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Korea</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>7 mos.</td>
<td>7 mos.</td>
<td>Unsatisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Taiwan</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>9 mos.</td>
<td>9 mos.</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Saudi A.</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1 yr. 6 mos.</td>
<td>1 yr. 6 mos.</td>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8 mos.</td>
<td>8 mos.</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>6 mos.</td>
<td>6 mos.</td>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6 mos.</td>
<td>5 mos.</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>4 yrs. 8 mo.</td>
<td>7 mos.</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1 yr. 6 mos.</td>
<td>1 yr. 6 mos.</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Domestic Students - Survey

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Origins</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Time in NYC</th>
<th>Time in current graduate program</th>
<th>Perception of program</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>West Coast</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2 yrs.</td>
<td>3 semesters</td>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>NY</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>27 yrs.</td>
<td>6 mos.</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>NJ/NY</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>2 yrs.</td>
<td>2 yrs.</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>20 yrs. (on &amp; off)</td>
<td>2 semesters</td>
<td>Very satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Midwest</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5 yrs.</td>
<td>1 yr. 6 mos.</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>East Coast</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>8 yrs.</td>
<td>2 yrs.</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>NYC</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>25 yrs.</td>
<td>2 yrs.</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Portland, OR</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>8 mos.</td>
<td>8 mos.</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Long Island</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>4 yrs. 6 mos.</td>
<td>1 yr. 6 mos.</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Northeast</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2 yrs.</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
</tr>
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Table 3: Professors – Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Origins</th>
<th>Time teaching at Harding University</th>
<th>Date of Interview</th>
<th>Interview Medium and Venue</th>
<th>Recording of information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professor Anisa</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>1 yr.</td>
<td>4/9/14</td>
<td>In-person, Staff office at University</td>
<td>Audio recording</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Chomsky</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
<td>20 yrs.</td>
<td>4/15/14</td>
<td>Telephone</td>
<td>Typed notes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor Wiseman</td>
<td>New York</td>
<td>20 yrs.</td>
<td>4/16/14</td>
<td>In-person, Staff office at University</td>
<td>Audio recording</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3. Methods

Survey: I used open-ended, anonymous surveys because I believe it is the best way for respondents to be completely honest, as well as a good way to get nuanced answers that don’t need to be black and white. Some of the questions utilized a Likert Scale, and others did not. I used Survey Monkey to conduct my surveys, due to ease of use and because it is a tool that allows for anonymity. In the case of the international students, I asked them to explain how they feel about the emphasis placed on class participation in their program, whether or not they frequently participate in class discussions, and what conditions would need to be met for them to participate fully and willingly. With regards to domestic students, I also asked them to share their feelings on the prevalence of classroom participation in the program, whether or not they frequently participate in class
discussions, whether or the international students in their classes frequently participate in class discussions, and what strategies they as domestic students can employ to encourage their international student classmates to participate in class discussions.

**Interviews:** I used a semi-structured interview format to gather information from the professors. I looked to gain insights on how they perceive the class participation of the international students and domestic students in their classes, whether or not they find that international students are more hesitant to speak up in class, and if pertinent, what strategies they have successfully employed to encourage participation, or what solutions they can think of that might work in the future. I also enquired what changes they think international students and domestic students can make so that the classroom environment is more amenable to discussion. The two in-person interviews were conducted in staff offices on campus, while the remaining interview was conducted over the phone. The two professors I audiotaped signed consent forms allowing me to record their answers.

**4. Findings and Analysis**

When conducting the study, it was interesting to discover that 83% of international students were satisfied or very satisfied with their graduate experience at Harding University. Therefore, it became clear to me that any reticence to participate in class was probably not related to a general discomfort with the program or university. Instead, it seemed that these students just needed to adjust to the American classroom. 67% of the international students reported that class participation was not often a prominent part of the classroom in their home country, and 17% reported that it was never part of their classroom. It was not surprising, then, that 75% of international students reported having
lower class participation rates than domestic students. Similarly, 80% of domestic students believed international students participate less often in class. The international students identified a number of reasons for this: the need for wait time (25%), the language barrier (17%), a cultural bias towards silence and teacher-centeredness (42%) and other reasons (16%).

Interestingly however, like their domestic student counterparts, international students almost unanimously opined that class participation is valuable and worthwhile in the classroom, which led me to think that when placed in an American context, the participants could overcome ideological and/or cultural tendencies and participate in class if provided with the proper circumstances. My findings convey some of the ways in which international students might be assisted in participating in class more frequently and comfortably.

4.1. What professors can do

The perceptions on best practices to encourage student participation were different when coming from international students, domestic students, and professors. However, certain themes emerged that were common to all three stakeholder groups.

*Group work*

Many participants seemed to view group work as an effective way to encourage international students to participate. While this method was indeed favored by international students (50%) and domestic students (40%), 100% of the professors interviewed stressed this as a key technique. Professor Anisa, interviewed on 4/9/14, had the following to say:

I also like to, a lot of times, like, ok “everyone turn to your partner and share.” And then I ask for groups to share out. So if you get the chance to turn to your partner
and get your ideas out, and bounce your ideas off them, I think people are more apt to then share with the whole group ‘cuz they’ve already gotten the confirmation that what they had to say was good. Or they’ve already gotten to bounce an idea off, or even got to hear themselves say it in practice before sharing it to the whole group. So I do a lot of partner turn and talk or small group discussion, then to the whole group.

This professor views group work as a safe haven for international students to test the waters before having to go out into open sea, as sentiment that was echoed by the two other professors interviewed, as well as many of the students surveyed.

**Wait time**

All experienced teachers understand the importance of wait time, but the international students surveyed seem to feel that wait time is even more key in their case, and needs to be crafted to fit their particular needs. One student surveyed wrote: “I need much longer time to arrange my thought (sic.), but the domestic students are much quicker to speak up their idea” (International Student Survey, 4/14/14). Another student explains that international students need to mull over not just the content, but also the language, before answering.

**Relaxed environment and encouraging professors**

100% of professors interviewed, 50% of international students, and 30% of domestic students talked about the need to have a relaxed classroom in order to encourage international student participation. Some of the adjectives the international student respondents used to describe their ideal professors and classrooms were: “encouraging”, “comfortable”, “relaxed”, and “friendly” (International Student Survey, 4/14/14). The instructors seemed to agree. Professor Chomsky humorously said: “I find that most people like that the teacher is paying attention to them and not ignoring them. I am an equal opportunity pain in the neck” (Interview, 4/15/14).
4.2. What domestic students can do

During my research I realized that international students need to not only feel comfortable speaking in front of the professor, but also their domestic student classmates. Therefore, I have identified some strategies that domestic students can employ in order to encourage their international student classmates to boost their class participation rates.

Elicit conversation

One of the international student respondents in the study summed this up beautifully: “If native speakers could be more friendly, international students will be more willing to speak” (International Student Survey, 4/14/14). Interestingly, when asked to reflect, 50% of the domestic students in my study seemed to realize the importance of doing this. One participant ruefully wrote: “I should probably do a better job of asking more questions” (Domestic Student Survey, 4/14/14). Another student suggested that if domestic students get the conversation started, international students might pick up from there. Yet another stressed the importance of “asking genuine questions in which they possess some sort of knowledge” (Domestic Student Survey, 4/14/14).

Domestic and international student out of class socialization

I had not foreseen that this theme would come up, or that it would be perceived as important by the participants. However, 100% of the professors interviewed, and 30% of domestic students mentioned the need for international students and domestic students to socialize outside of class, which would in turn improve their interactions in the classroom. For instance, in our interview on 4/16/14, Professor Wiseman revealed that she purposely assigns group projects that require international and domestic students to meet outside of class with the intent of them becoming friendly and transcending cultural barriers.
It surprised me that the international students I surveyed did not mention this factor. During the Poster Session held on May 15th, I got into a conversation with an international student about precisely this topic. She explained that while she does not have anything against socializing with domestic students, she would not be the one to propose it, and she would also be afraid of certain cultural differences making it hard for students to be friendly. This point of view might help explain why no international students brought up this point.

**Others**

Although the previous findings had the most support, I don’t want to discard other strategies that came up during my research. Certain students and two professors stressed the importance of using culturally relevant activities to promote international student participation. A few students and two professors also mentioned that using cold calling is a great way to foster international student participation. An international student at the poster session echoed this sentiment, saying: “If the teacher calls on me, and I make a mistake, I feel like it is not really my fault, because after all, I did not volunteer” (Conversation at Poster Session, 5/15/14). Professor Wiseman (Interview, 4/16/14) said that through her own research on East Asian culture, she had discovered that for Asian students, the cultural inhibitions towards expressing themselves are removed when the teacher calls on them, because the teacher is in a way giving them permission to speak, which satisfies their cultural need for deference to the teacher while fulfilling the participation requirement in the American classroom. I should not omit, however, that Professor Anisa pronounced herself in opposition to the practice, and endeavors not to cold call in her class.
5. Conclusions and Implications

My findings did not clash with the information obtained in my Literature Review. Instead, many findings were confirmed and at times extended. For instance, in the study conducted by Ellwood and Nakane (2009), we saw that international students are greatly in need of wait time, because they need to reflect on what they will answer and how they will answer. From looking at my findings, I see not only is wait time necessary, it should probably be accompanied by related strategies. First off, the professor might convey to domestic students that wait time will be a little longer, in order to give international students a fair amount of time to reflect before domestic students jump in. Additionally, related to wait time is the idea of “knowing what is coming”. Professor Chomsky (Interview, 4/15/14) at one point said that it was vastly useful to tell students what would be discussed the following class. Not only does this put international student at ease (because they have had the chance to brush up on the content), it also gives them a chance to answer more promptly, with similar wait time to domestic students.

In Lee’s study (2009), we again spot some of the same themes identified during my research, such as the need to have an encouraging professor, and most especially, the use of small-group discussions or group work in order to lower the international students’ affective filter. Once again, I would recommend that professors at Harding University use group work with accompanying strategies. For instance, as suggested by Professor Anisa (Interview, 4/9/14), professors can broaden their definition of what class participation is, by counting small-group talk and sharing as class participation. This will reinforce the students’ perception that they can, in their own way, contribute to the class, and might at some point make it easier for them to venture to participate in front of the entire class.
Group work outside of class is also useful, and I will discuss this in more detail further ahead.

In addition, I think that even at the graduate level, having an easygoing and attentive professor who creates a relaxed environment is key in helping international students feel at ease. There are many ways to create such an environment at Harding University. Using humor is an effective tool (as stated by Professor Wiseman on 4/16/14). A related strategy, which also came up during my research, is the need to integrate content that is relevant to non-American students. As Zheng (2010) mentioned in her study, professors often assume that all the students in the class understand American cultural references. In fact, this is not often the case. At Harding University, many international students have been in the U.S. for only a few months, so cultural references may need to be explicitly explained to them. Even better, the professor can make sure to integrate some culturally relevant activities. When international students feel that they are the experts, or that they authentically have something to contribute, they are more likely to take part in the conversation. This also places the professor in a positive light, because he/she is perceived as encouraging and culturally sensitive. In conjunction, it is important for domestic students to also show interest in their international student classmates. They can do this by asking them direct questions, by starting a discussions that the international students can participate in, and, as my research showed, by becoming friends with them.

The utility of domestic students and international students socializing outside the classroom is twofold. First off, as two of my professor interviewees mentioned, international students can bounce their questions and language issues off domestic students, obtain corrections, and thus participate in class with a sense of confidence. More
importantly, however, if domestic students and international students become friends outside the classroom, they are more likely to speak up without trepidation in the classroom. It is easier to make a mistake in front of a friend. Not only is this helpful for international students to acquire the target language and culture, it is also great for domestic students to question their own cultural biases and pre-conceived notions. In our interview on 4/16/14, Professor Wiseman suggested that these issues of cultural difference be openly discussed in class, so that all students can explore their own culturally conditioned thinking. While this can be done as an in-class activity, it is also accomplished, though somewhat subconsciously, by befriending classmates from other cultures and language backgrounds.

While on the topic of having transparency in the classroom, a simple step professors at Harding University can take is to make sure international students know and understand that classroom participation is a significant part of their grade. One of the domestic students respondents in my study suggested that the university should organize a mandatory workshop for international students, where they can be explicitly informed of the main differences between the educational practices they have been exposed to in their home countries versus what they will encounter in the U.S. One of the points that should be stressed during such an event is how important class participation is in the American classroom and what the cultural reasoning is behind this fact (individualism, the importance of having an opinion, etc). If international students at Harding University are explicitly taught writing conventions, cultural practices and classroom behavior, it will make it that much easier for them to adapt without much head-scratching.

Finally, although it is a controversial practice, I think the use of cold calling cannot
be disregarded, as it comes up frequently in the literature (Dallimore, Hertenstein and Platt, 2004) as well as in some participant surveys and interview. I think this is a strategy that might work better with certain classes and personalities. It may even be worthwhile for the professor to ask the students directly, in a questionnaire, whether it is a practice they would be open to. As I mentioned before, cold calling in some cases makes it acceptable for East Asian students to speak up, as their participation is being requested directly by the professor. If the students have previous knowledge of what will be discussed in class, as previously suggested, then they may be less reluctant to be called on. Also, in a multicultural classroom, the professor may need to fine-tune his detection skills. When an East Asian student nods or smiles, it might be a good time to say to the student: “Yin, I see that you agree with what I just said...could you explain...” This involves the student while at the same time showing the other international students that their subtle behavioral cues denoting comprehension do not go unnoticed by their Western professor.

Because I think that these insights could truly be useful in improving the participation rates of international students at Harding University, I wish to share them with the TESOL Department at the University. One of the professors interviewed is a full-time professor within the department, so it is my wish that she might transmit these ideas to the head of the department, so that she may in turn inform all professors or these findings and hopefully organize an orientation session or workshop such as the one detailed above.
Works Cited


Appendix A: International student survey

1. Please provide the following information:
   a. Nationality:
   b. Age:
   c. Gender:

2. How long have you been in the U.S.?

3. How long have you been studying in your current program?

4. Using the following scale, please grade your overall experience as a graduate student at your current university:
   Very satisfied    Satisfied    Neutral    Unsatisfied    Very unsatisfied

5. How often was classroom participation and discussion a prominent part of the classroom in your home country? (select one)
   Very often    Often    Rarely    Never

6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following: Class participation and discussion are important components of your current graduate program. (select one)
   Totally agree    Agree    Disagree    Totally Disagree

7. How do you feel about this (presence or absence of class discussion)?

8. Per the following scale, how often do you participate in class discussions? (select one)
   Very often    Often    Rarely    Never

9. How often do you participate in class discussions, compared to domestic students?
   I participate in class discussions (select one)
   Much more often    More often    About the same    Less often    Much less often    than domestic students.

10. Explain why you think this is? (that you participate more or less often than domestic students)

11. How often do you feel most international students in your program participate in class discussions compared to domestic students?
   International students participate in class discussions: (select one)
   Much more often    More often    About the same    Less often    Much less often    than domestic students.

12. What would be the ideal classroom setting and environment for you to participate avidly and frequently in classroom discussions? (Think about activities, discussion topics, physical environment, the behavior of other students, the behavior of the professors, and any other factors).
Appendix B: Domestic student survey

1. Please provide the following information:
   a. What part of the U.S. are you from?:
   b. Age:
   c. Gender:

2. How long have you been in New York City?

3. How long have you been studying in your current program?

4. Using the following scale, please grade your overall experience as a graduate student at your current university:

   Very satisfied  Satisfied  Neutral  Unsatisfied  Very unsatisfied

5. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following: Class participation and discussion are important components of your current graduate program. (select one)

   Totally agree  Agree  Disagree  Totally Disagree

6. How do you feel about this? (presence or absence of class discussions)

7. Per the following scale, how often do you participate in class discussions?

   Very often  Often  Not often  Never

8. How often do you participate in class discussions, compared to international students?

   I participate in class discussions (select one)
   Much more often  More often  About the same  Less often  Much less often than international students.

9. Explain why you think this is. (that you participate more or less often than international students)

10. How often do you feel most domestic students in your program participate in class discussions compared to international students?

    Domestic students participate in class discussions:
    Much more often  More often  About the same  Less often  Much less often than international students.

11. In what ways do you think international students in your program could be encouraged to participate avidly and frequently in class discussions? (Think about activities, discussion topics, physical environment, the behavior of other students, the behavior of the professors, and any other factors).

12. In what ways do you think you could help the international students in your program participate in class discussions?
Appendix C: Interview-Professors

1. Where were you born and where did you grow up?

2. How long have you been a professor in this program?

3. Could you tell me what classes you have taught within the MMS program?

4. Overall, how would you describe your experience teaching in the MMS program at this university?

5. As you know, there is a high percentage of international students in the program. What would you say are the advantages and the challenges of working with such a large international student quotient?

6. Explain how you feel about the role of class participation within the educational process.

7. On the whole, do you feel that domestic students or international students have higher rates of classroom participation?

8. How do you feel about this?

   **If professor finds that international students have lower rates of participation:**

9. What strategies have you used to encourage international students to participate in class?

10. What other strategies do you think you could employ to encourage international students to participate in class? You could talk about methods, activities, discussion topics, alterations to the physical environment, student behavior, or any other factor.

11. In what ways do you think domestic students could aid their international student classmates to participate more in class?

12. What measures do you think international students could take to help them feel more confident to participate in class?
Appendix D: Interview-Professors-Consent Form for Audio Recording

New York University
Department of Teaching and Learning
“How to Increase the Class Participation Rates of International Students”

Name:
Phone:
Email:

I am a student at NYU conducting interviews for a research project. I am trying to find out how to increase the class participation rates of international students in our graduate program. During this interview, you will be asked to answer some questions about the class participation rates of your international and domestic students. You will also be asked about possible strategies to encourage such participation. You will be free to expand on any topic. Also, if there are any questions that you would rather not answer, please feel free to refrain from doing so. The interview has been designed to last no more than 20 minutes (probably less). With your permission, I will be audiotaping the interview so it can be consulted at a later time. All of the information gathered will be kept confidential. The data will be kept in a secure place, and will be accessed only by me and my faculty supervisor.

Participant’s Agreement:
I am aware that my participation in this interview is voluntary. I understand the purpose of this research. If, for any reason I wish to stop the interview, I know I may do so without having to provide an explanation.

I have the right to review, comment on, and/or withdraw information prior to the project being submitted.

I am aware that the data gathered in this study is confidential with respect to my personal identity.

I authorize the researcher to audiotape this interview.

I have been offered a copy of this consent form that I may keep for my own reference. I consent to participate in today’s interview.

____________________________________  ___________________
Participant’s signature                      Date

____________________________________  ___________________
Interviewer’s signature                     Date