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ABSTRACT

Excerpts from interviews with 30 Asian high school students concerning their acculturation to the American classroom are presented and discussed. The students had been in the United States for no more than 2 years, and were here for a variety of reasons, including extended visits with relatives to temporary appointments of their parents to U.S. employment. Seven were exchange students. The subjects came from Hong Kong, mainland China, Taiwan, Japan, and Korea, and were enrolled in both public and private schools in the Boston (Massachusetts) area. Interviews were conducted in the native language in all but one case, and lasted about an hour. Some were conducted with pairs of students. Students were encouraged to speak openly about their experiences in classrooms, with teachers, and with other students. Topics discussed include classroom communication, English proficiency, confusion and lack of comprehension of subject matter, subject difficulty and substance, dynamics of classroom participation, the teacher-student relationship, teacher expectations, favorite aspects of the school culture, feelings about English-as-a-Second-Language class, instructional materials, and students' suggestions for improving classroom learning for foreigners. A brief profile of each interviewee is appended. (MSE)

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# Adapting to the U.S. Classroom: Problems and Strategies of Asian High School Students in Boston Area Schools

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Harvard Graduate School of Education

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# ADAPTING TO THE U.S. CLASSROOM: PROBLEMS AND STRATEGIES OF ASIAN HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS IN BOSTON AREA SCHOOLS

## Foreword

Thanks to a grant from the American Institute for Foreign Study Scholarship Foundation, we have been able to pursue research into the experiences of adolescents from East Asian countries in American high schools. After a preliminary bibliographic search turned up little information in this area, we decided to open a window in order to peer into some of the students' own experiences in the hopes that such authentic expressions of "lived experience" might spawn thinking about how to make schools valuable to students from a diversity of backgrounds.

We originally intended to concentrate on "exchange" students whose intentions were to spend a year or two in an American school, glean as much as possible from the experience, and then return home. However, the number of actual exchange students from Asia in public and private schools in the Boston area was surprisingly small, so we decided to broaden the scope of our inquiry to include *any* Asian student who had been in this

country for no more than two years. To discover a dearth of exchange student programs was disheartening, since we assumed that exchange programs add value to lives by enhancing cross-cultural understanding in the formative adolescent years. We especially regret that these programs are sometimes held hostage to the darker side of world affairs. For example, we were told by one "international" school in Boston that a rash of airplane hijacking incidents had prevented several groups of students from risking the international flight.

Our student sample contains young people who were in U.S. schools for a variety of reasons, ranging from extended visits to the families of relatives, to temporary academic or occupational appointments of parents in American universities or corporations. Only seven out of thirty in our sample were actually exchange students whose excursions to the United States were planned and arranged by education officials in the two countries. Altogether there were two students from Hong Kong, twelve from mainland China, two from Taiwan, fourteen from Japan, and one from Korea. Nineteen students attended public schools and eleven attended private high schools in the greater metropolitan Boston area.

Interviews lasted up to two hours and usually took place in a quiet classroom of the school attended by the particular student. Sometimes, but not often, students were interviewed in pairs. Interviewers communicated with students in their native languages (Japanese or Chinese) except in the case of the 1 Korean student, who was interviewed in English, since none of our interviewers spoke Korean. The fact that our researchers were able to conduct interviews in the interviewees' own language, combined with the fact that they are trained in a school of education and have experience interviewing teenagers, helped facilitate open and honest discussion.

We believe that the dynamics of relationships in schools sometimes silence students on precisely the issues that most need airing (this goes for non-foreign students as well) and for this reason we decided to feature the verbatim responses of students, "in their own words," in this report. We wanted the students' own experiences and perspectives to be known. We also felt a need to be conservative in offering interpretations and solutions to perceived problems. We feel that experienced teachers and administrators know best anyway just what it takes to incorporate creatively this sort of "experiential" data into their classrooms and curricula.

Our team consisted of one Harvard Graduate School of Education faculty member, Thomas Shaw, one administrator, Rosalind Michahelles, and three graduate students: Xiangming Chen from the People's Republic of China; Masahiko Minami from Japan; and Rachel Sing, an Asian-American fluent in Mandarin. The other members of the "team" are the students who were generously willing to give time for the interviews and the school personnel who helped make the needful arrangements.

The interviews were based on a loosely structured set of questions designed to encourage students to speak openly about their experiences in classrooms, with teachers, and with other students. A preliminary pilot study of ten interviews helped define which questions would be most productive. The average interview lasted about one hour. Each was tape recorded. The responses of students were then coded, using text analysis software.

We have not intended here to contrast the experiences of students from different national or cultural backgrounds. We are aware, however, that such differences exist, including differences between students from different nations within the same culture area

(i.e., Hong Kong, Taiwan, China). Some of these differences are significant enough to have emerged in some of the comments of our students, even though we chose not to highlight them in our own commentary. Also, personal and linguistic differences among the interviewers may have affected the responses to some questions. Translating into English from two different languages produces some distortion, but we do not feel it was significant in terms of the underlying themes expressed by the students.

Finally, we hope that the perspectives of the Asian students expressed here will have some value to teachers and administrators as they think about and design learning environments within their schools.

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# "IN OUR OWN WORDS"

## Part I. In the classroom

### It takes a long time to answer

*Although I like history class, I'm not sure whether I understand even fifty percent or not.* (Yukiko, Japan)

Language for most of the students is a great divide that some cross more easily than others. A number of language issues emerged from our conversations. Some of these issues extend beyond the domain of linguistic differences into cultural differences and interpersonal relations. At times, students' language concerns seem to imply, or serve as a metaphor for, some of those cultural and interpersonal issues. Nevertheless, language for these students is very much a concern in its own right.

What are some of the language issues for these students? There are broad, general concerns -- understanding others, responding to others and being understood by others. Other concerns are specific -- the challenge of coping with slang, humor, small talk, technical vocabulary, or organizing a written essay or report.

Many students are aware of being slow to respond to questions, and therefore of missing opportunities to participate in discussions:

*I haven't reached the level that I can speak before others.* (Eiko, Japan)

*I cannot ask questions until I have thought out how to weigh them in English because my English is not good. There are many times when I am thinking that what I want to ask is such-and-such, but (by the time I am ready) the topic has already changed.* (Masayo, Japan)

*Everyone speaks very fast. It's very difficult for me as a foreigner to cut in with nonstandard English. I used to be very active in China, but now I lost my initiative.* (Hongying, China)

*I was not trained to answer as soon as you are questioned.* (Keiko, Japan)

*Sometimes I know the question. I know what they mean, but I can't be quick with the answer. When the teachers ask a question, maybe I know the answer in thirty seconds while the other students take a minute, yet I still am last because by the time I've thought out the answer in my mind and I explain it, it takes a long time. (What takes long?) When I speak English, I make a complete sentence in my mind and then, I think, it will be easier for some people to understand. I think that's the reason why.* (Fred, China)

For other students it isn't so much a slowness to respond as it is a fear of not being understood that inhibits their participation in class discussions. Being asked to repeat themselves over and over makes them question whether they are using, as one following

Korean student put it, the "wrong words." Embarrassed because attention is focused on them, they may question the value of their entire experience:

> *Even if I know what they are doing, I fear to talk. Because sometimes the other people don't understand what I'm saying. I say the wrong words. ("How do you know they don't understand?") They ask me to say it again. They say, "What?" or "Pardon?" So I have to say it again or think about other words. I feel badly and when that kind of thing happens I wonder why I am doing this, why I am studying here, why do I have to study English? . . . Even if I know what they are doing in biology lab, I'm afraid to talk. Sometimes the other people don't understand what I'm saying. I say the wrong words. . . . For me, the problem is English. I understand the lecture but everything is difficult. Because of the language, it's difficult to get together with other students and to participate.* (Tae Son, Korea)

> *Even after I've thought about what I would like to say, I cannot express it because my vocabulary is limited, especially when I want to talk about something specific. I can't talk about world events in social studies, for example.* (Setsuko, Japan)

> *Sometimes I want to argue with some of my classmates, but because of the language I can't express what I want to say clearly. So, language hinders me from participating in class. I think that all the foreign students have this problem.* (Anshan, China)

The flip side of not being understood is, of course not understanding what is being said. For some students it is such a struggle to grasp the meaning of what is being said to them in their classes that it leaves them feeling upset, and isolated. This is even more true when students try to negotiate phone calls and the use of slang in the common discourse among peers:

> *I can't understand what people say and my studies are hard for me, so I feel upset. My first two months here, I was miserable all the time. I had an unhappy face all day long.* (Gaoxin, China)

> *There are too many times when I don't understand ordinary U.S. people -- like too many phone calls I don't understand or during class when they ask me something and I don't understand. They say words I don't know, both slang and standard words.* (Tae Son, Korea)

**The English I learned before was not practical or useful**

Many students mention that the English they learned in their home country is academic English, or "textbook English," or British English, or "limited English" -- in any event, English that is not sufficiently functional or colloquial for the language used in the classroom and among their peers in the United States.

> *I learned English for three or four years in China and I was very good in English*

*then. But when I came here, I could hardly speak because the English I had learned was not practical or useful.* (Shishi, China)

*In Japan, you don't have English conversation practice very often. When I was a freshman in high school in Japan, I took a conversation course from a British teacher. It was compulsory. The students in the class would play games together and there was no opportunity to talk to the teacher personally. Even in the conversation class, you had to consider the sentence structure before you said anything.* (Keiko, Japan)

*I had studied English in China, but we didn't cover much material and we focused on English grammar. The emphasis wasn't on listening comprehension, it was on grammar. Now I remember many words that I learned in China, but before I came here I seldom used them, so I didn't know how to use them.* (Hepin, China)

*I didn't understand anything. It was like reading a book that had fallen out of the sky -- impossible to understand. Both my listening and speaking ability was very poor. I could write a sentence, but I couldn't say it. I didn't have enough vocabulary.* (Lingzi, China)

**I've been in a state of confusion because I don't understand**

Aside from the more obvious problems of sharing knowledge and participating in

class discussions, there are emotional consequences of being out of the loop of understanding. Students described feeling isolated and excluded from the day-to-day life of their peers. Their dispirited attitudes often have a direct effect on their performance in school. Below, Gaoxin (China) speaks about the frustration of doing the wrong homework assignment due to not clearly understanding "what the teacher is saying," whereas Yoshio (Japan) describes feeling like he is in a "state of confusion." Amanda (Taiwan) just cannot keep up in chemistry, not because the material is too difficult, but because the language barrier is much to scale in the course of the class lecture.

> *The problem with me is that I don't know what homework is assigned by the teacher because I can't understand what the teacher is saying. I have to ask my classmates about the homework. One time, the teacher asked us to write about a novel. Some of us were assigned to write about the plot, some about the setting and some about the characters. I was assigned to write about the plot but I didn't know it. When I asked a classmate, he told me to write about the characters because that was his assignment. As a result, I did the wrong assignment. So the main problem is not that I cannot finish the homework, it's that I can't understand what's assigned.* (Gaoxin, China)

> *I have been in a state of confusion because I don't understand anything. For example, I don't understand science, English or history. Since I don't understand, I just sit there taking notes. Sometimes I hand in the homework, but I'm in a state of*

*confusion. Science, especially, is so difficult that it is hopeless. I don't understand English very well.* (Yoshio, Japan)

*I can't keep up in Chemistry class. It's too hard. The speaking, I mean. Chemistry is not hard to learn but I can't understand what people are saying.* (Amanda, Taiwan)

**Some subjects are harder than others**

For some students, language difficulties vary by subject. For example, for some students, mathematics is less difficult because numbers are, as Yukiko (Japan) put it, universal; they are not bound to the confines of any particular language or cultural construction. Also, most of the Asian students made reference to the fact that they came with prior knowledge of mathematics and so felt more comfortable in these classes than they did, for example, in humanities classes.

*In mathematics, you don't have to check the dictionary. You can study it like the other U.S. students. But in history and subjects like that, you must study more than the other students.* (Keiko, Japan)

*Because I learned math in Japan and also because numbers are universal, I can somewhat understand math class when I look at the blackboard.* (Yukiko, Japan)

*Mathematics is the easiest to understand, because what I am studying now is similar to what I already learned in Japan. They use symbols rather than words and there is less vocabulary. But math is not my favorite subject.* (Masayo, Japan)

Sometimes the basic terminology in science class posed a problem right from the beginning and impeded progress for the rest of the year:

*During my first year, I had a lot of trouble with vocabulary, especially in biology and other science classes. For example, I didn't know what "protein" was.* (Xiangli, China)

Amanda (Taiwan), however, points out that for her, at least, the difficulty is due to a combination of language and her poor foundation in the subject.

*Part of the problem is my foundation in math and part of the problem is language -- my English isn't very good. If I had the background, even if I didn't understand the English, I'd be able to manage. Or if I understood the English, I would be able to learn the stuff. (Before), I could understand the written questions, even though there were words that I didn't understand. But now we're learning roots and I have no idea what the teacher is talking about.* (Amanda, Taiwan)

Many students agree that humanities courses are more difficult than science or math

because these subjects involve cultural knowledge and background that students from Asia do not usually possess. Even if students have learned about American history and culture in their home countries, they are still faced with the obstacle of how to communicate what they know, or learn what they don't know, in a language different from the one in which they originally learned.

> *(There's not much difference in the way math is taught.) Well, in terms of culture there may be a difference, but not in terms of academics. 1 + 1 = 2. It's the same everywhere. In liberal arts we have more difficulty because of the language and culture.* (Shishi, China)

> *Like last year, I couldn't believe how they concentrated on symbolism. To me, it felt like they were sitting there blabbing on and on about symbolism and nothing substantial and I just couldn't be creative in that way. And the teacher would be like, "Write a paper," and I would be like, "Symbolism, what's symbolism?" And it's usually stuff like that. Maybe I wasn't brought up to focus on stuff like that. I think it's also my lack of knowledge of English.* (Clarissa, Hong Kong)

Some students, although they claim to understand a lecture or discussion in class, nevertheless suffer from not having the language proficiency to participate in class, or to discuss issues amongst their peers. Feeling isolated and embarrassed when they use words they discover are "wrong," or when they cannot respond to questions whose answers are

clear enough in their own minds, and in their own language but cannot be "translated" quickly, students develop defeatist feelings. When broad "existential" questions are raised, like "why did I ever want to come here," a cycle of depression may already have begun.

## Part II. The dynamics of classroom participation

There was not one reason but a variety of reasons offered by students to explain why they often did not feel much like speaking in class -- from not understanding the lecture, topics changing too quickly, not wanting to cut in before their responses were correctly "translated" into English, or simply not liking the class. But if lack of language competence was working in one direction to inhibit participation in school, the typical social dynamics of the American high school classroom typically worked the other way to encourage students to participate in class where they might otherwise have chosen to stay one step removed from the action.

### Everyone can speak in class

Some students, like Shishi (China), have positive feelings about the classroom dynamics at their particular school because they get the impression that it doesn't matter how much you know, you still can speak up in class. This helps some students overcome the fear of speaking.

> *When I first came, I was afraid to talk because I was new and I didn't know people and the environment was unfamiliar. But now I'm very active in class. I speak a lot. In China, only the good students speak in class. Students who don't do well are under a lot of pressure and they don't dare to speak in class. Here, there is more equality, there is not pressure for students who are slow. Here, even though*

*you say something silly, no one will laugh at you. I never had anyone laugh at me here.* (Shishi, China)

**More discussion and less emphasis on right answers**

Another major pedagogical difference articulated by the students we interviewed is that classes tended to be more discussion-oriented, where teachers teach to discuss, not "teach to test." The students related that there was much less emphasis placed on the memorization of facts than they were accustomed to in their own countries:

*The teaching is really different. In English class, for example, there's a lot of discussion about the implications of the text, rather than just sticking to the text. Here, it's a more flexible approach, while at home it's more rigid.* (Ming, China)

*In the U.S., the purpose is to teach you how to understand, whereas in China it is to memorize the facts. After the exam in China, you forget everything, even though you reiterated every point from the textbook and you got a score of 100.* (Hepin, China)

*For example, in a Japanese social science class, they only study who did what. They memorize. In the U.S., they discuss what happened and what went on behind the scenes, and what you think. Since they discuss their opinions here, U.S. classrooms are very different from classrooms in Japan.* (Yoshio, Japan)

*U. S. classes emphasize interest, while Chinese emphasize basic knowledge. In U.S. education the emphasis is on comprehensiveness, while in China it's on depth.* (Shishi, China)

For some, the discussion-orientation leaves something to be desired:

*Chinese way of teaching and learning is very deep and detailed, but the American's is very comprehensive and broad. So they don't have such a good foundation as us.* (Lizhi, China)

Feeling on an equal footing with other students in class, for whatever reason, is usually conducive to greater participation:

*I really like French because in class we're all equals. The teacher speaks French and I can participate as well as anyone else.* (Ming, China)

*Because my English is not good and other ESL students are the same, I don't feel embarrassed I can talk freely. If you go to a regular class, they will laugh at your bad English.* (Yuying, China)

For a number of students, there is a desire to respond to others in class, but certain factors related to experience in their home schools limit their inclination or ability to

participate. Education in most Asian countries is a very competitive system where those who do well are rewarded with further education. The standards for performance in school are quite high and it is not uncommon for the students to adopt these standards as their own. For some students in this study, their experiences in classrooms at home enforced a certain personal standard that they have trouble maintaining in their new environments:

> *I'm the kind of person who doesn't say much. But I don't think that I'm not active. If I know the answer, I'll speak. Sometimes I don't speak because I'm afraid of making mistakes. I don't feel it's good to make mistakes. I'm a little shy.* (Mingming, China)

> *I speak in the classes I'm doing well in. If I know the answer, I'll speak in class. In the classes I'm not good at, I'm not active.* (Gaoxin, China)

Educators in this country assume that their primary responsibility is to the learner. Maintaining a focus on how students learn, rather than how *much* they learn is understood as an essential ingredient for improving their chances for productivity and achievement. Inherent in this understanding is the "two-way street" as a metaphor for learning. Learning is held to be reciprocal, not based on a relationship in which the teacher possesses all the knowledge and the students possess none.

Given that there are numerous ways to approach learning, it is a continual challenge for teachers to discover how best to tap the strengths of the various students in their

classes. For foreign students and the teachers who teach them, discovering these facts about each other poses an even greater challenge. It is a challenging task for most teachers to anticipate the learning styles and needs of students entrusted to their care and to create a learning environment that is best suited to these needs. Add to this the particular set of needs that a foreign student brings to the classroom and it can easily turn the challenging task into a daunting one.

## Part III. Relationships

### Teachers always explain

Teachers often held a special place in the hearts of foreign students who were not accustomed to being singled out for special treatment.

> *The teacher realizes that you are a foreign student. If there's something you don't understand because of language or cultural background, they always explain it to you.* (Ming, China)

Establishing good rapport with students is a priority for many teachers. Despite differences in teaching styles and philosophies, it is clear that the relationship between teachers and students is an important part of the learning process. This relationship becomes even more central when the familiarity of language and cultural customs cannot be assumed. For students entering American classrooms from another culture, the teacher often tries to signal that the student is welcome and appreciated. How this hand of welcome is extended may have a great deal of bearing on these students' perceptions of American culture and their experience of American education. In a variety of schools, students identified the teacher as reaching out more and being more accessible than their American classmates.

*It is easier to deal with teachers than with other students.* (Hongying, China)

*Generally, my relationship with my teachers, well, I feel it's always better than with my classmates.* (Ming, China)

While the language barrier presents an obvious challenge to foreign students, the way American teachers interact with students is a radical departure from what many Asian students are used to in their countries and, as such, presents a challenge of a different sort.

*In China, the distinction between the teacher and the student is very clear. The teacher is always above you. You have to greet the teachers whenever you run into them. Here, the relationship is more casual. In China, I was afraid of teachers, because they always tried to catch you -- here you don't have to worry about the teacher asking if you finished your homework today, or if you will do a good job on the exam tomorrow.* (Hepin, China)

*Relationships with teachers are very different here as compared to China. In China, teachers are always above us. U.S. teachers are more equal with students, so it's easier to get along with them. Also, classes in China are very large. There are too many students and one teacher teaches many classes. Maybe because this is a private school, the classes here are pretty small.* (Shishi, China)

American teachers' classroom and teaching styles differ from those the students recall in Asian classrooms, and thus their initial reaction may be one of alienation and disbelief:

> *In the beginning, I found classes difficult. First of all, the teaching style here is very different. In Japanese classrooms, for example, in Japanese language class or in social studies, the teacher gives a lecture and writes on the blackboard. Students listen to the teacher and copy what the teacher writes on the blackboard. Here, though, the teacher doesn't use the blackboard as often. The teacher gives a theme and students simply talk with the teacher. I thought, "This is not a classroom!"* (Yoko, Japan)

Some eventually came to see their American teachers as significantly more caring and involved, and "easier to get along with."

> *At first, I didn't like that class because it seemed that students were "cool" and a bit naughty, that kind. And I didn't dislike the teacher, but I didn't like him. either. Now I love that class. That class, I discovered, is so funny. Because the teacher makes it so funny. Like, he always pretends to scold some students, especially that kind of boy. And then everyone will laugh. It's very relaxed, that class, and I like the teacher more and more every day.* (Emilia, Hong Kong)

Some perceive advantages and disadvantages, compared with the teaching style and culture of the classroom in their home country:

> *In China, teachers are responsible for everything -- your academics, your relationships with other classmates, and other things. The teachers here don't care about your personal life, only your academics. They are responsible for less than teachers in China. This is both good and bad. Teachers in China care about every student. If you don't do well, they will give you help right away. The bad thing is that they control too much. Here, students who don't do well may get neglected by the teacher because the teachers don't take notice of much. So, these students get a raw deal.* (Mingming, China)

There was a common feeling among most students, however, that American teachers are more accessible and approachable than the teachers they knew at home:

> *My first few weeks here, I was a bit afraid of the teachers. But, I had to go to them for help if I didn't understand something. Generally, teachers here are more casual than teachers in China. When I was in China, I didn't go to the teacher very often. Here, I don't usually initiate conversation with the teacher after class. If they start talking about something, I'll chat with them for a few minutes. Some students like to be close to the teachers. They usually are white. This school is mostly white.* (Xiangli, China)

*I didn't say Chinese teachers are bad. Teachers here are not like teachers. You can touch their hair. They are very casual. Students can say outright to a teacher, "I don't like you!"* (Yuying, China)

A final, important factor to mention regarding the relationship between teachers and students is the difference in teacher expectations. As was illuminated in the above excerpts, the contrasts between teaching styles in some Asian schools and American schools is quite startling. A critical part of learning how to relate to a new teacher is getting to know, as quickly as possible, what the teacher expects of his/her students. With all of the myriad obstacles facing the non-English speaking student in an American school, this task is not as simple as it may seem.

Many of the Asian students indicated that they expect teachers in the U.S. to be like the ones at home, and they bring these expectations into their American classrooms. As indicated above, however, American teachers have somewhat different styles and hold different expectations for their students than do Asian teachers, and this can be confounding to the newcomer. Take, for example, the issue of speaking up in class:

*In schools in Japan, you are supposed to be quiet. Here, in contrast it seems that teachers believe that students should speak up.* (Setsuko, Japan)

*There is a clearer border between teachers and students in Japan than here. I think the classroom style here is something like classmates confront others and*

*develop their opinions. This also exists in Japan, too, but it is mostly controlled by the teacher.* (Noriko, Japan)

Students are faced with having to discover how to participate in their new teachers' classroom, how to be part of the group and show interest in "the American way." When they finally learn how to navigate in their new environment, or at least understand what the rules are, they usually feel more comfortable and seem to enjoy participating according to the norms and expectations of their "host" setting.

**Part IV. Favorite aspects of their new school culture**

From the time children first enter the classroom, their individual gifts and talents begin to make themselves known. As they discover new things about the world around them, they also learn something about themselves as learners -- what subjects they like and don't like, which ones come easy to them, which are more difficult, what motivates them, and what turns them off to learning.

> *I like American history. The teacher is very good. He is a very knowledgeable person. It's good to learn American culture, country, people, and history. I also like mathematics. Both the students and teacher are very good. English is also good. To learn a language from literature.* (Shishi, China)

Clearly, the Asian students who are new to American classrooms are not new to school and have amassed quite a bit of knowledge about themselves as learners and their competence in, and preference for, individual subject areas. As was pointed out earlier in this report, however, entering the classroom without proficiency in the dominant language, and having to adjust to a whole new set of dynamics and the relationship between teachers and students place these students in a position similar to a child starting school for the first time.

One subject that seemed to be a favorite of many of the students who were interviewed was the ESL class. Among other reasons for its popularity was the fact that

this class offered much greater possibilities for more active participation by students who lacked proficiency in English.

> *I like ESL. I have friends there. I can talk to people from a variety of countries.* (Noriko, Japan)

> *Since in the ESL class, we are all foreigners. We do not hesitate to talk, and it has a warm atmosphere. Also, it is in the ESL class that I can actively participate. Since there are many Americans in other classes, I feel that I am not considered important, you know. In the ESL class, on the other hand, I can actively participate. Since members are different class to class here, we can interact with a variety of people.* (Kyoko, Japan)

> *What is interesting in the ESL class is that although we may know much about America even if you are in Japan, we do not know much about the Philippines, Portugal, and Korea. When I came here, I first understood how Brazilians think. That's very interesting.* (Ayumi, Japan)

Being understood is very important to foreign students. Taken in its broadest context this means understanding and accepting their experience and not just the meanings of their words. Not surprisingly for some students, their favorite class is the one where they feel the least embarrassed by their limited proficiency with English.

*I like the English [ESL] class best, because there are many foreigners, and, even if my English is terrible, when I speak English, they do not laugh at me, and they listen to me earnestly.* (Midori, Japan)

*I like ESL, because my English is not good and other students are the same. I don't feel embarrassed. I can talk freely. If I go to a regular class, they will laugh at my bad English.* (Yuying, China)

*ESL is my favorite subject. In the ESL class I have a chance to learn English and I can speak up without any hesitation. In other classes all students speak English properly. I am somewhat shy and retiring in my ways. I feel at ease in the ESL class since students who do not speak English well come to that (ESL) class . . . . As for the ESL class, I try to speak up. As for the other classes, I do not try to speak up.* (Sachiko, Japan)

*Of course, I like ESL best. I feel a sense of security. In other places, I need to keep being tense. Otherwise, English does not come to me. When staying here in the ESL class, since every one is learning English now, I feel secured.* (Ayumi, Japan)

ESL classes offer a haven for foreign students in which they can relax a bit and relieve some of the tension they feel in other classes. Thus, in ESL or bilingual

programs, where there is less pressure of language, students tend to increase their classroom participation. Addressing these students' need to feel some sense of grounding, the ESL class provides not only academic support but helps them to feel less like strangers in a strange land:

> *The ESL program's very good. It's like our foreign students' home. Whenever we are free, we will come here. We are all foreign students. We understand each other better than we do Americans. American students look very happy every day. They don't understand our problems. So, I like to come to ESL class. The teachers are very helpful. The school cannot force American students to talk with us more. If they don't like to talk to us, the school cannot force them to. I think American students have some prejudice against Chinese students. Asians are not considered very important here.* (Gaoxin, China)

> *The ESL program is excellent. It's like a bridge that connects us between China and the United States. It introduces us to the logic of Americans. We have learned American way of thinking, which may be different from our own. In addition, my ESL teacher helped me with all my application forms and letters (to colleges).* (Lingzi, China)

> *The ESL class is my favorite class, even though I was told it's really hard and I was scared when I first started it. There are other people who help me but,*

*they're from other countries, not the United States.* (Amanda, Taiwan)

*I have lunch in the ESL room. It's good. Because if you go to the cafeteria, nobody is there. You feel lonely. But in the ESL room, it's different. You can't talk about everything--what happened (in class). . . .*
*(ESL teacher) always helps us and talks to us, so I think that is the most wonderful part.* (Emilia, Hong Kong)

Not all students share the same positive feelings about ESL classes. As with many of their other classes, the degree of popularity of ESL and bilingual classes depends largely on the quality of the learning, instruction, and interaction that takes place in these classrooms:

*I don't like ESL, or bilingual programs. I don't think it challenging enough. There is no stimulation at all. It makes you feel that you are still a foreigner. You don't have to study very well. But if you study with Americans, you feel pressure, and you want to be as good as them. In ESL, you don't have an objective and aspiration.* (Shishi, China)

*I don't think that the bilingual program is good. You do not learn much. Later on, you may enter ESL, which may be different from the bilingual program. But the bilingual program is really not good. There is no pressure at all. Only those*

*who didn't pass the placement test went to the bilingual program, and they do not learn much.* (Mingming, China)

*Bilingual classes are very helpful for new comers. Teachers are very patient. They repeat again and again what they teach to you. But most of the students are Hispanic, so the bilingual program is in Spanish and English. Many teachers speak Spanish. Asians are very few; there are only three. There is no Chinese bilingual program here.* (Yuying, China)

There are distinct differences between bilingual programs and ESL classes which all three Chinese students in the above excerpts make clear. In the bilingual program the students' first language is used as a medium as well as an object of instruction. This means that the curriculum of this program may vary from that of ESL classes where the medium of instruction is English. To put it another way, teachers in bilingual programs present the content material of the standard curriculum using the native language of the students. In the ESL program, the emphasis is on helping students acquire enough proficiency in English, so that students will be able to function well in the mainstream/regular classroom. From the above comments, it seems that all Asian students do not necessarily participate more actively in either the ESL or the bilingual classroom simply because they are designed to assist foreign students. The fact is that Asian students' active participation in class is more likely to increase in a class where the teacher provides good, solid instruction, is sensitive to their needs, and tries hard to

engage them in the ongoing life and development of the classroom, school, and culture. The following excerpts from three Japanese students make this point quite clear:

> *There are two ESL teachers. One teacher has been teaching for decades and he is very good. That teacher gives his class only once a week, but it is very interesting. The other teacher uses a workbook. We do the workbook. When we have finished certain pages, the teacher checks them. And we do again and the teacher checks what we have done.* (Eiko, Japan)

> *My school has only one ESL class, and beginners and advanced speakers of English share the same class. In the class you are given a workbook and do it by yourself, you know. There are not many opportunities to talk to the teacher and in my case there was a lot of time to do a workbook, you know.... I thought that it was a waste of time to continue to do that for year and that I could do something else, and that's why I stopped.* (Masayo, Japan)

> *Since our school has a small number of ESL students, there is only one ESL class and there is only one rank and so everyone is doing the same thing and the material is too easy for some people and too difficult for others. And recently... the teacher has stopped teaching and started what they call own work. The teacher gives a book to each individual student and instructs him or her only a little bit and so the real situation is that, even if you try, you will not gain*

*anything.... The level of the ESL is low. And once you have gone out of ESL, you are in trouble.* (Ayumi, Japan)

Though ESL is, by far, the favorite class of many of the students interviewed in this study, it was not the only subject to achieve top choice status. Again, a variety of factors influenced their choices, which ranged in scope from personal interest or natural talent, to the enjoyable atmosphere created by teachers and students in the classroom. In conducting this study we were curious to know which specific courses piqued their interests the most and why. Discovering what is of particular interest to particular students and whether they are proficient in particular subject areas is one way for students and teachers to meet and begin a dialogue.

As might be expected, the Asian students' preferences for subjects are as rich and diverse as they are -- one likes physics, another likes painting; one student is fascinated with photography and still others express keen interest in history, especially American history:

*I like the American history. Particularly from President Lincoln onward, the history is written based on the Presidents. For example, the history is written in such a way that because President so and so did something the society has become like this. The Japanese history textbook is summarized in a very simple way.* (Keiko, Japan)

*I am taking science, and probably I like physics. Because we are allowed to conduct experiments, I am happy. Here, I am allowed to conduct experiments that we are not allowed to conduct in Japanese classrooms. In Japan we use experiments in the way that we memorize a formula first and then conduct an experiment to confirm the formula that we have learned. Here, we first conduct an experiment and see the results and then study the formula. That's fun. In Japan we sometimes conduct experiments to confirm what we have learned. But here without learning anything first we try to find some answer by conducting an experiment and then study the formula that is related to the experiment conducted. It is more fun to have experiments. The teacher is also very good.* (Ayumi, Japan)

*I like painting, because there is no problem of language for me there.* (Yuying, China)

*As a subject, I like photography. I had never done other than taking pictures and having a photography shop develop those pictures. Although this is my first experience, it is very interesting for me to think about many things such as taking pictures by myself, developing them, and printing them out.... Also, I like the world history class in terms of atmosphere. The students in the world history class are one year younger than me, but the class is very active. They say a lot voluntarily, and I learn a lot. Although the class is about the history of the world,*

*they do not stick to the textbook but they take up current issues such as the presidential election campaign and ask who supports whom. Because of that, I learn a lot. And the atmosphere is good.* (Masayo, Japan)

*In China, we have to study the history of five thousand years, whereas here we are told what happened yesterday, what happened this morning. In China, we can only get an outline of the history, but here we get much more detailed information. They have only 200 years, so it's easier to study. Besides, American politics and history are taught together, so you learn both at the same time.* (Hepin, China)

And of course what is food for some is invariably going to be perceived as poison for others:

*The textbooks are not very good here. First, the books are too thick. It's impossible to cover all the contents in the book in a term. What is taught in class is only a small part, and we have no time to read the rest. Second, there is a lot of nonsense in the book. You spend a lot of time looking up the words in the dictionary, but they do not make much sense to your understanding.... There is not much homework here. The thing I don't like is that you have to do a lot of assignment that is useless, repetitive, like copying the book. Many things you know already, but you have to do them. It's foolish.* (Hepin, China)

*Since we came here, all that is taught is familiar to us. We have learned everything. Whatever they say, we know already. We are just idling around here. Now, it seems OK, but after we grow up, we will feel we have wasted a lot of time now. We have been chatting all the time, just idling away. We will feel sorry in the future, after we grow up.* (Anshan, China)

*I learned everything in China, so I have no problems with study here. I feel extremely grateful to my Chinese teachers. They have taught me everything. The most difficult problem here would not be considered difficult at all in China.* (Lingzi, China)

Students from Asian countries are accustomed to being held strictly accountable for their academic work and sometimes feel that American schools simply don't demand enough from students. Whether the pace of teaching is perceived to be slow, or the homework assignments are not checked by teachers in as painstaking a fashion as they are used to, the impression is left that American students have no incentives to do homework seriously, or to prepare their work before class. Some students remain confident in what they know, in any case, and use their previously-acquired knowledge positively and effectively.

*Mathematics is good, because I can follow. That is because I was taking mathematics in Japan. Also, since numbers are universal, I can somewhat*

*understand the class when looking at the blackboard.* (Yukiko, Japan)

*Mathematics is a subject that I like. Algebra II includes what I have already studied in Japan and new concepts, you know. I can do mathematics rather easily. As for analysis, I have to study entirely new things in English, and this is very difficult.* (Eiko, Japan)

*I like the mathematics class. I like the teacher and students who are there. They are all very active and there are funny jokes, too. In addition to these things mathematics is the subject the content of which I know best among the subjects I am taking. I have already studied in Japan what I am studying here.* (Sachiko, Japan)

*I didn't have many problems with mathematics, because I like mathematics since I was a child. I leaned mathematics very well in China, and the language used in mathematics is not as much as in other subjects.* (Xiangli, China)

Previous knowledge in a given subject area contributes in a number of ways. First, it helps support an on-going positive sense of self as a learner; second, it allows these students to compete intellectually in an English-speaking setting that more typically taxes their abilities as learners.

*The classes I like best are mathematics and computer. As for mathematics, (in Japan) I have already covered more than half of what I am studying here, but it is still difficult. But I like mathematics, because (in Japan) I have finished almost all of what I am now studying here. But as for subjects that require memorization such as history and anatomy compared to Americans, I am weak. So I feel that there are no other subjects other than mathematics and computer in which I can compete with American students. In the case of mathematics, for example, you don't have to look into the dictionary, but what you need to do is just to study like others. But in the case of history and other such subjects, you are required to study more than others. Because of that, as far as mathematics is concerned, I do not want to fall behind others. Personally, I like mathematics, too.* (Keiko, Japan)

Prior knowledge in a subject like mathematics also places a certain demand on the student -- "I do not want to fall behind others" -- especially in a subject in which she feels competent.

**Part V. Suggestions and strategies**

Students sometimes offered suggestions on ways to help teachers and students improve learning in a classroom with foreigners. Coverage of their points of view would not be complete without mentioning these:

> *I feel terrible when I have to ask the teacher. It would help if they wrote things on the board.* (Tae Son, Korea)

Students found a variety of ways of coping with the difficulties of learning in a foreign language and setting. Most strategies required extra effort on their parts, including studying harder, reading more, or producing better written work to compensate for their inability to participate in class. Some sought help from peers, tutors, and teachers, but many were reluctant to "bother" others and emphasized solving problems on their own.

Fortunately, the students found ways to suggest some simple ways in which teachers can make learning easier for these students. Speaking slowly and paying careful, friendly attention to them as students and as people, can go a long way to smoothing their educational journey. Teachers can also take extra care to be sure that Asian students understand exam questions and homework assignments, even advising which material is most important to cover and ensuring that they have adequate time omplete assignments. Handouts, in the form of either text or video, can be a

tremendous help, allowing the student to review course work on their own.

One other important suggestion had to do with how teachers might prepare for receiving foreign students before their arrival in American classrooms. Having some basic knowledge or facts about the particular cultures from which these students are coming would go a long way toward helping foreign students feel welcome and less isolated. Some students in this study felt very strongly about the fact that many of their American teachers are uninformed about basic information regarding the homelands of exchange students:

> *Although they are accepting students from Japan, they don't know anything about the Japanese. For example, an English teacher asked me to write an essay about the differences between the U.S. and Japan. She was surprised by what I wrote. She said, "Oh! I didn't know there were things like this in Japan!" They don't know anything about Japan at all. They should know. Since they are accepting many students from abroad each year, teachers should be prepared in some way.* (Yoko, Japan)

A number of the students we interviewed spoke of some of the frustrations of representing their country to curious American citizens. They are sometimes challenged to speak about or represent aspects of Asian culture which they may not know. This can create a tension between the students' sense of personal integrity and what they believe to be their responsibility to represent Asian culture:

*Yes, I am asked questions about Japan. Of course, I become somewhat nervous. When I am not sure whether what I am saying is correct or not, I ask myself, "Is it okay to answer whatever I like?"* (Sachiko, Japan)

*I feel a strong responsibility. When I am asked a question about Japan, and I do not understand what I am being asked, I get angry at myself: "Why can't I understand?"* (Yukiko, Japan)

*I am afraid that they may blindly accept my opinions, you know. There is my way of viewing Japan and there are other ways of viewing Japan. I explain in my poor English, but later I feel that I might have said something incorrect.* (Kyoko, Japan)

As they worry about whether or not they are representing Asian culture in the best way, many students feel a compelling responsibility to represent their homelands. Some found creative ways to respond to questions they were not sure how to answer, or felt uncomfortable answering.

*I had difficulty when I was asked whether Koreans and Japanese are on bad terms with each other. Rather than asked to represent Japan, I am asked questions about daily life in Japan. So, rather than presenting opinions that represent Japan, I introduce Japanese life.* (Keiko, Japan)

*Sometimes, if I feel that if I am different from them, I should tell them. If they like something that I don't like, I'll tell them. If we have different opinions, it's my responsibility to let them know. I feel the need to introduce my culture to them. I participated in the Asian Club this year. I wrote some expressions in Chinese for them. Mainly my purpose is.... because our school talks about diversity a lot, I realize that we are really different, so I should let them know.* (Xiangli, China)

Quite a number of the students interviewed for this study complained of what they perceived as Americans' ignorance and lack of genuine interest in Asian culture:

*No one here is really interested in Chinese culture. Even though some people seem interested, it's very superficial, like the skin and hair of things, far from the essence. In any case, I feel I am too, too far away from them.* (Lingzi, China)

*Americans like Chinese food best. All they know that's good about China is the food. They often say how good Chinese food is.* (Yuying, China)

*I feel very proud (to be Chinese), but I also feel that people here know too little about China.* (Anshan, China)

*When they ask what people in Japan think, I try to arrange my words carefully. If feel sad if they do not seem interested in what I say. When they show some interest, I feel very happy.* (Eiko, Japan)

*When I am asked some question that students from other countries are also asked, I do not feel anything special. Although I do not think that I represent my country, I feel something.* (Noriko, Japan)

In some cases, the students experienced a lack of understanding or appreciation for their culture as outright discrimination. Their analyses are rather sophisticated assessments of what it is like to be an outsider, and their frustrations are clearly expressed:

*I feel very proud as a Chinese. I don't feel Chinese culture is inferior to American culture. I think there is some discrimination in this country. Sometimes, people will ask me, "Where are your from?" and before I reply, they will say, "Are you from Japan?" When I tell them I am from China, they say, "Oh!" like this. This makes me very angry. Just because there are a lot of Japanese goods in this country, they think that every Asian is Japanese. Things like this are difficult to understand here. Even Taiwan has a higher position than China here. They take Taiwan as an independent country. The maps that teachers use in China have no Taiwan on it.* (Gaoxin, China)

*Basically, Europeans are all sophisticated. They come from a rich culture. They think that Asians are from just poor countries and uneducated. I feel it. I feel something, some responsibility. Because I guess that most Asians, or most Koreans, don't know about this and I'm here so I think I'll change it. I have to change it -- both the people here and the people there. First, I have to get people here to know more about our culture or understand it. And our people, Koreans, have to know about this. I think there should be more interchange, more intermingling of cultures with each other.* (Tae Son, Korea)

The realization that so many others in one's environment don't understand the culture one comes from is sometimes balanced by the excitement of being able to "enlighten" the others:

*Sometimes when American friends ask me something about China, I like to tell them, but not necessarily as a representative of the country. I feel happy and proud to tell them something they don't know. In doing this, I have a feeling of experience. I have lived for sixteen years!* (Shishi, China)

## Part VI. Adjusting to life in America

Sociologists have long described America as melting pot, wherein a variety of cultural experiences and backgrounds merge into something entirely new. Although the accuracy of this view is questionable, there is little doubt that few settings provide a better environment for studying processes of cultural assimilation and accommodation than a school. The re-orientation of foreign-born students, however, is not limited to the classroom. For these students, first contact with a new society provides an opportunity for revelations that can alter forever their perspectives on their respective homelands, themselves, and the world.

Students feel it is important to take advantage of their time in the United States to learn as much as they can about this new culture and wish not to be seen simply as international students:

> *Coming to the U.S. changes your life. I will need courage to go back to Japan because I now know that things are different in Japan. I am afraid that I won't be able to adapt myself to the Japanese way of life when I go back. So, I don't want to go back to Japan. I may not be able to adapt to the Japanese way of life, but I cannot become (like) an American, either.* (Kyoko, Japan)

> *My thing is that being an international student I especially wanted not to make friends with only people from Hong Kong. Because I know that there is that tendency at*

*colleges and at other prep schools and that really bothers me because as an international student, you're not taking advantage of the fact that you're in the States. So I thought that I didn't only want to make friends with people from Hong Kong and I wanted to make friends with Americans and other people. And the funny thing is that I have acquaintances from Hong Kong but I don't know any of them well compared to the people that I know.* (Clarissa, Hong Kong)

Not all students, however, are quite so serious about immersing themselves in American lifestyles. Some view their stay here primarily as temporary and choose to dissociate themselves from experiences that might distract from their sense of national or cultural identity:

*Since I am Japanese, after all, I will not become American and I don't think I would be able to become American. After all, I want to live my life as a Japanese in Japan. Since I will be staying here for only a year, I do not think about this too seriously.* (Yukiko, Japan)

Still others manage to integrate successfully with their new-found culture without submerging their own rich and unique heritage:

*Since you were born and grew up in Chinese culture, you definitely want to keep that tradition. But since you now are living in American society, you also want to melt*

*into it.* (Yuying, China)

Exposure to a new country, new culture, new relationships, and a new way of life contribute substantially to the students' developing world-view and, at the same time, offer a keen sense of perspective that can foster a renewed pride in their native lands:

> *Since I came here, my sense of cultural identity has become much stronger. I attended the China conference and felt proud to explain to Americans some phenomena which can not be conveyed only in academic terms.... I like to tell them what I know about China from a native's perspective.* (Hongying, China)

For most students, their time spent in the United States offers them an opportunity for gaining invaluable insights into their new environments, into themselves as individuals, as representatives of their homeland, and as citizens of the world. Such gains are arguably worthy goals for any educator to uphold for his or her students, both foreign as well as American.

## PROFILES OF THE INTERVIEWEES

**Anshan** (17-year-old):

Anshan came from Beijing to join her parents one and a half years ago. Her father was an engineer in China and now works as a chemist in the United States. Her mother is now a housewife. She didn't mention her mother's previous occupation in the interview. Studying in the 12th grade of a public school in the Boston area, she felt rather lonely because most of the students are Hispanic and only four are Asian.

**Fred** (21-years-old):

From a major metropolis in South China, Fred had been in the United States for two years at the time of our conversation. He lives with his family in a large affluent suburb of Boston and attends the large public high school there. His father, formerly a high level administrator in a national agency in China, is now a farm hand and his mother works seven days a week in a rural area west of Boston. Neither parent speaks English, and Fred has assumed responsibility for the family. He works in a 24-hour store 40 hours a week and has bought a car so that he can take his parents where they need to go. He has been accepted to a commuter college in the Boston area for next year.

**Gaoxin** (19-year-old):

Gaoxin had been in the United States for only three months when he was interviewed. He came form Shenyian, a northern city in China, to join his father, who is a doctoral student in a university in Boston. The public school he is going to is located in an affluent suburb near Boston.

**Hepin** (17-year-old):

Hepin came from Beijing to the United States for the first time in his life one year ago. He came to join his parents, who had been here for two years before he came. He is now studying in the 11th grade of a public school in a suburb of Boston, where there are quite a few international students.

**Hongying** (21-year-old):

Hongying is in the twelfth grade in a private school in an affluent suburb north of Boston. He was placed in a high school to study English even though he had already attended one year of college in Haerbing, a northern industrial city in China. He will return to his college to teach English in one year. He had been in the U.S for six months by the time of the interview.

**Lingzi** (19-year-old):

Lingzi came from Beijing nine months before the interview. She came to join her mother, who is a researcher at a university near Boston, and her father, who has no job right now. She is in the 12th grade in a public school near Boston, and this is the first time for her to be out of China.

**Lizhi** (19-year-old):

Lizhi is also in the 12th grade in the same school as Hongying. He came form the same college and will return to it to teach English after graduation. Both of them are in an exchange program between the American high school and the Chinese college. The purpose

for their stay here is to learn English so as to become English teachers in China. Like Hongying, this is the first time for him to go abroad and he had stayed here for six months too. Both of them are living in the school dorms.

**Ming** (22-years-old):

A college student at a technical institute in North China, Ming is an exchange student at a prestigious private boarding school outside Boston. He will return to China at the end of the academic year, eventually to become and English teacher. He considers the opportunity to live and study in the United States to be invaluable preparation for his future career. He had been in the United States for six months at the time of our conversation.

**Mingming** (14-year-old):

Mingming is the sister of Shishi and had the same family background. She had been in the United States. also for one and a half years by the time of the interview. Unlike her brother, however, she went first to a public school, where she had some negative experiences as a foreign student, before she joined her brother in the private school near Boston. Both she and her brother live with their parents in a city near Boston.

**Shishi** (18-year-old):

Shishi is in the 12th grade of a private school in an urban area near Boston. He came from Beijing one and a half years before the interview to join his parents, who are both visiting scholars at a prestigious university in Boston. It is the first time for him to study abroad.

**Xiangli** (16-year-old):

Xiangli came from Shanghai to join her parents in September of 1989. Both of her parents are doctors in the United States. At the time of the interview, she had been studying in a private school near Boston for two years. There are international students in the school. This is her first time living outside China. She lives with her parents in Boston.

**Yuying** (16-year-old):

Yuying came here one year ago from Beijing to join her parents. Her father was an engineer before coming to the United States and now is a doctoral student at a university in Boston. Her mother was a doctor in China, but Yuying did not mention her mother's current profession. Yuying is now in the 11th grade in a public school in Boston, where she is one of the only two Chinese students from Mainland China.

**Clarissa** (17-years-old):

The daughter of the owner of an international firm in Hong King, Clarissa is in her second year at a prestigious private boarding school outside Boston. She attended a private girls school in Hong Kong. She hopes to attend college in the United States like her older sister, and is beginning to consider the choices. She shared the fact that her father hopes that since there are no sons, she eventually will take over the leadership of his firm.

**Emilia** (18-years-old):

Living in an affluent suburb of Boston with an uncle and his European-American wife, Emilia attend the town's large public high school. She arrived in the United States in the summer of 1991 and spent some time with relatives in Canada. She attended a private girls'

school in Hong King, where she grew up and her family still lives. She hopes to attend college in the United States or Canada.

**Amanda** (15-years-old):

An only child, Amanda attended a private girls school in Taipei. Her family hopes to immigrate to the United States. At the time of our conversation, Amanda had been in the United States for eight months, coming to the Boston area from New York late in the fall. Her father hopes to open a restaurant and had scouted possibilities in Boston before deciding on Long Island, where they will move in the spring. Amanda's mother returned to Taiwan to finalize their move to the United States, and Amanda currently lives with her father in a working class suburb of Boston. She travels more than an hour each way by public transportation to attend an ESL program at a large, diverse, public urban high school.

**Tae Son** (19-years-old):

From an industrial city in South Korea, he lives with his mother and siblings in an affluent suburb of Boston, where he attends public school. His family has close relatives in the same town. His father, in the medical profession, is still in Korea and travels back and forth occasionally until he can find employment in the Boston area. His mother does not speak English, so he and his older brother are responsible for taking care of family matters outside the home. His mother is not happy here, but believes that there will be more opportunities for her children.

**Ayumi** (16-years-old):

She came with her family to live in an affluent suburb of Boston in the summer of 1991

while her father studies at a major university in the Boston area. An only child, she attended a well-known all-girls school in the well-known port city in Japan where she is from. Unlike many Japanese students who are in the United States with their families, Ayumi does not attend Japanese Saturday School. Instead, her friends in Japan send her books and notes so that she can keep up with her Japanese classmates.

**Eiko** (16-years-old):

Keiko's younger sister attends the same school. She attends Japanese Saturday School in a nearby suburb. Eiko has never experienced high school in Japan, but recalls feeling tremendous pressure as a junior high school student there.

**Junko** (18-years-old):

From Tokyo, she attended a private school in Tokyo and now attends a private school with Yoko (see Yoko's biographgical sketch) as an exchange students. She has been in the United States for five and a half months at the time of our conversation. Technically a senior, she is enrolled as a junior and will enter her senior year in Japan next year. Junko's host sister attends the same school in a suburb about an hour from the school.

**Kazuko** (15-years-old):

From a small, well-known industrial city in Japan, Kazuko attends a public high school in a small affluent suburb of Boston. Her family is in the Boston area while her father, a highly specialized doctor, works in a Boston hospital. She has not decided whether to return to Japan in the spring or to stay for another year.

**Keiko** (18-years-old):

From a city outside Tokyo, now living in an affluent suburb with her family, Keiko came to the United States once before when she was in kindergarten. She now attends public school in the town where she lives. Her father currently is a visiting professor at a major university in the Boston area and will be teaching at a major university on the West Coast next year, when Keiko will be attending college in the United States.

**Kyoko** (17-years-old):

From Tokyo, Kyoko arrived with her brother in the summer before the interview. He has since returned to Japan to attend school. Her family is in Japan; her father lives in the Boston area. She is staying with her host family while she attends public school in a large, diverse suburb of Boston. She hopes to graduate from high school in the United States.

**Masayo** (16-years-old):

From a city in central Japan, she is not an exchange student but is here in the United States alone. Although she has an aunt in Boston, she is staying with an American family. She attends a local public high school. She plans to return to Japan at the end of the school year.

**Midori** (14-years-old):

At the time of our conversation, she had been staying in the United States for four months with her parents and several siblings. From an historic, cultural city in Japan, Midori is living in an historic, cultural city in the Boston area. She attends the large racially/ethnically diverse public high school in the city.

**Noriko** (16-years-old):

From a city near Tokyo, she came a year ago after completing junior high school in Japan. She is staying with a family (mother and daughter) in a large, diverse suburb of Boston where she attends public school. She does not attend Japanese Saturday School because she does not intend to return to school in Japan.

**Sachiko** (17-years-old):

Attending public school in an affluent suburb of Boston, she is from the suburbs of a major city in Japan. Like all the other students from Japan, except Eiko and Keiko, this is her first experience living abroad. Her family is still in Japan. She is staying with a family (mother and son) that she met while they were in Japan. Her host sister lives at college.

**Setsuko** (17-years-old):

From Tokyo, she arrived as an exchange student in the United States in the summer of 1991 and lived with a couple in a working class suburb of Boston. She moved to an affluent suburb of Boston in December, 1991, and now attends school there. Her host mother is Southern European and her host sister is a senior at the same school as Setsuko.

**Yoko** (17-years-old):

She attended a private school in Tokyo, and is now attending a well-established private school in an affluent suburb of Boston where she and Junko (see Junko's biographical sketch) are exchange students. Yoko had been in the United States for five and a half months at the time of our conversation. Coming to the United States has been her dream since she was in junior high school.

**Yoshio** (14-years-old):

Now attending a well-established private school in an affluent suburb of Boston, Yoshio attended a public school in Tokyo. He is staying with a friend of his father (and the family) in a large, affluent suburb of Boston. His older brother has been attending high school in France for the past several years.

**Yukiko** (18-years-old):

A senior exchange student at a prestigious private boarding school outside the Boston area, Yukiko is from a small city near Tokyo. She arrived in the summer to attend summer school. She hopes to earn a high school diploma from her school in the United States so that she will not have to repeat her senior year in Japan.

| Name | Age | Grade | School | Gender | Country |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Anshan | 17 | Senior | Public | Female | China |
| Fred | 21 | Senior | Public | Male | China |
| Gaoxin | 19 | Junior | Public | Male | China |
| Hepin | 17 | Junior | Public | Male | China |
| Hongying | 21 | Senior | Private | Male | China |
| Lingzi | 19 | Senior | Public | Female | China |
| Lizhi | 19 | Senior | Private | Male | China |
| Ming | 22 | Senior | Private | Male | China |
| Mingming | 14 | Freshman | Private | Female | China |
| Shishi | 18 | Senior | Private | Male | China |
| Xiangli | 16 | Junior | Private | Female | China |
| Yuying | 16 | Junior | Public | Female | China |
| Clarrisa | 17 | Junior | Private | Female | HongKong |
| Emilia | 18 | Senior | Public | Female | HongKong |
| Amanda | 15 | Sophomore | Public | Female | Taiwan |
| Tae Son | 19 | Sophomore | Public | Male | Korea |
| Ayumi | 16 | Sophomore | Public | Female | Japan |
| Eiko | 16 | Sophomore | Public | Female | Japan |
| Junko | 18 | Junior | Private | Female | Japan |
| Kazuko | 15 | Freshman | Public | Female | Japan |
| Keiko | 18 | Senior | Public | Female | Japan |
| Kyoko | 17 | Junior | Public | Female | Japan |
| Masayo | 16 | Sophomore | Public | Female | Japan |
| Midori | 14 | Freshman | Public | Female | Japan |
| Noriko | 16 | Sophomore | Public | Female | Japan |
| Sachiko | 17 | Junior | Public | Female | Japan |
| Setsuko | 17 | Junior | Public | Female | Japan |
| Yoko | 17 | Senior | Private | Female | Japan |
| Yoshio | 14 | 8th grade | Private | Male | Japan |
| Yukiko | 18 | Senior | Private | Female | Japan |