

Cross Cultural Teaching in Piano Pedagogy from a Korean Perspective

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CONTENTS

RESEARCH OVERVIEW AND SUMMARY/ABSTRACT	ii
INTRODUCTION	1
LITERLATURE REVIEW	1
PURPOSE	5
METHOD AND DESIGN	7
PART I.	
Chapter 1. Negotiating Power in the Teacher-Student Relationship	10
Chapter 2. Conversational Style, Behaviors, and Verbal Interaction between Teachers and Students	19
Chapter 3. Discipline in Music Practice	31
Chapter 4. Asian/Korean Motherhood	35
PART II.	
Chapter 5. Inter-Linguistic Challenges	52
PART III.	
Chapter 6. Pedagogical Adaptions and Connections to Teaching Philosophies	57
Chapter 7. Participants' Concluding Observations	61
LIMITATIONS OF THE STYUDY	67
IMPLICATION FOR MUSIC TEACHING AND PRACTICE	68
IMPLICATION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH	70
CONCLUSION	71
REFERENCE	77
APPENDIX A	80
APPENDIX B	82
APPENDIX C	82

Research Overview and Summary/Abstract

The focus of this research is 1) to explore aspects of piano pedagogy and culture, 2) to invite greater reflection upon communicative engagement (situated in societal values, beliefs, traditions, and expectations) and 3) to cultivate more positive cross-cultural relationships with students and parents. More specifically, this project primarily analyzes a Korean-American milieu as an entry point to explore combining cross-cultural pedagogic interferences and teaching involving all three groups of parents, teachers, and students in piano studios. In addition to the inclusion of an examination of the teaching experiences of Korean and American graduate piano or piano pedagogy students at UW-Madison, other relevant scholarship and valuable characteristics within Korean culture will be presented and several future directions will be discussed.

Introduction

When I began to teach piano in the United States, I was surprised by the challenges that I encountered when working with American students. I noticed this was particularly evident during my interactions with pre-college students. Additionally, I have faced some unexpected reactions and misunderstandings with parents with whom I have worked. In all of these contexts, my sense was that these challenges were related to the cross-cultural dimensions of our teaching and learning relationships. This recognition both surprised and concerned me as I came to believe that few, if any, people I worked with seem to be aware of these issues.

In reflecting upon such matters, I began to realize that I had never been explicitly introduced and thoroughly exposed to aspects of cross-cultural teaching in my piano pedagogy coursework. I started to wonder whether more extensive discussions and in-depth study about cross-cultural teaching would have helped prepare me for more successful communication with students and parents during my initial teaching in the United States. As a result, I decided to begin looking into these issues in more detail.

Literature Review

Most music schools in North America continue to become more culturally and ethnically diverse than in years past. Kenneth Williams notes that “Although my university is situated in the heart of the American Midwest, none of the graduate students enrolled in the pedagogy class were Americans. They were from Malaysia, Korea, and Taiwan... it is especially true in higher

education that students are willing and even eager to cross cultural boundaries to pursue advanced studies with master teachers at prestigious institutions. Today, many pianists studying in American conservatories and university schools of music are international students, and a large percentage is from Asian countries.¹ This is no exception in my music school, UW-Madison. A large percentage of graduate students come from Asian countries in both my piano and pedagogy studio. Currently three students are Korean among five doctoral piano pedagogy students.

Amongst pre-college populations, Asian international students and Asian American students also comprise a large percentage of students in music schools in the United States. Grace Wang claims that Asians and Asian Americans constitute from thirty to fifty percent of the student population at leading music schools and departments in the United States. The numbers are often higher at the pre-college level where they constitute more than half of the student body. The two largest groups represented are students of Chinese and Korean descent studying the violin and/or piano².

This growing participation of pre-college Asians and Asian Americans, as well as Asian international students in higher education piano study suggests that an understanding of cross-cultural teaching and learning needs to be a component of current piano pedagogical practices. For Asian international student teachers in higher education, it is important to think about how to approach teaching with pre-college students from the United States, beyond simply the idea of “how to teach piano” that is addressed in pedagogy class. For the student teachers from the

¹ Kenneth Williams, “Cross-Cultural Communication in the Music studio,” *American Music Teacher* 52, no.1 (August-September 2002): 23-28.

² Grace Wang, “Interlopers in the Realm of High Culture: Music Mom and the Performance of Asian and Asian American Identities,” *American Quarterly* 61, no.4 (2009): 881-903.

United States, it is important to prepare and discuss how they can approach their initial cross-cultural teaching with pre-college Asian and Asian American students, which includes the triangular relationship with students and parents.

Namely, training the next generation of musicians and student teachers will require music educators to be well prepared with culturally diverse pedagogy. However, the extant literature lacks attention to the complex issues, challenges, and opportunities associated with cross-cultural approaches to teaching piano.

It is true that considerable research encompassing the fields of education and sociology has been conducted to address interaction between teachers, pre-college students, and parents in contemporary multicultural and cross-cultural realms. For example, some scholars have explored the pre-college level, identifying issues of cultural discontinuities between home and school³. Additional research has dealt with communications between teachers and students, explaining the necessity of understanding students' different cultural learning styles⁴. More recently, some scholarship has focused on the importance of teachers' cross-cultural skills to develop positive relationships with parents, especially immigrants^{5,6,7}. Cross-cultural research has also been

³ John. U. Ogbu, "Cultural Discontinuities and Schooling," *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 13, no.4 (1982): 290-307.

⁴ Lisa D. Delpit, "The Silenced Dialogue: Power and Pedagogy in Educating Other People's Children," *Harvard Educational Review* 58, no.3 (1988): 280-298.

⁵ An Ran, "Traveling on Parallel Tracks: Chinese Parents and English Teachers," *Educational Research* 43, no.3 (2001): 311-328.

⁶ A. Y. Ramirez and I. Soto-Hinman, "A Place for All Families: Building Bridges and Abandoning Misconceptions Is Key to Raising Family Involvement in Schools," in *Challenging the Whole Child: Reflections on Best Practices in Learning, Teaching, and Leadership*, ed. Marge Scherer (Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 2009).

⁷ Rachel Theilheimer, "Bi-directional Learning Through Relationship Building," *Childhood Education* 77, no. 5 (2001): 284-288.

conducted in order to demonstrate the difference between parental expectations and students learning styles^{8, 9, 10}.

However, most music education research addressing multiculturalism and cross-cultural realms still focuses primarily on philosophies of music, curriculum, materials, and programs^{11, 12, 13}. Such research does not, for example, adequately attend to relationships between teachers, students, and parents. Additionally, this music education scholarship is sometimes too general for application within the piano studio. This is because piano teaching often necessitates a more particularized curriculum and activities more appropriate to intimate one-on-one relationships.

While some research within the field of piano pedagogy has recently been undertaken to address more cross-cultural teaching and learning studies, such scholarship attends either to overly general cultural factors between “Easterners” and “Westerners” that affect communication and learning¹⁴, or it focuses on interaction between students and teachers who both belong to the same culture (Chinese in the case of Lin, 2002¹⁵ and Xu, 2001¹⁶ or Taiwanese in the case of Kou,

⁸ Robert D. Hess and Hiroshi Azuma, “Cultural Support for Schooling: Contrasts Between Japan and the United States,” *Educational Researcher* 20, no. 9 (2001): 2-8.

⁹ Geert Hofstede, “Cultural Differences in Teaching and Learning,” *International Journal of Intercultural Relations* 10, no.3 (1986): 301-320.

¹⁰ Eun-Young Kim, “Career Choice among Second-Generation Korean-Americans: Reflections of a Cultural Model of Success,” *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* 24, no.3 (1993): 224-248.

¹¹ Deborah Bradley, “Singing in the Dark: Choral Music Education and the Other,” *Fifth International Symposium for the Philosophy of Music Education*, Lake Forest, IL. (2003).

¹² Deborah Bradley, “The Sounds of Silence: Talking Race in Music Education,” *Action, Criticism, and Theory for Music Education* 6, no.4 (2007): 132-162.

¹³ Patricia S. Campbell, “Musica Exotica, Multiculturalism, and School Music,” *The Quarterly Journal of Music Teaching and Learning* 5, no. 2 (1994): 65-75.

¹⁴ Williams, 2002.

¹⁵ Chi Lin, “Piano teaching philosophies and influences on pianism at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing, China,” (PhD diss., Louisiana State University, 2002).

¹⁶ Keli Xu, “Piano teaching in China during the twentieth century,” (PhD. diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2001).

1985¹⁷; Li, 2001¹⁸ and Wang, 2002¹⁹). It is especially noteworthy to recognize the lack of studies that combine cross-cultural pedagogic interferences and teaching involving all three groups of parents, teachers, and students in piano studios.

Purpose

As I am primarily interested in exploring such issues more substantively, my dissertation will fill an important gap both by investigating the existing challenges and unexpected situations involving the triangular relationships of parents, students, and teachers within cross-cultural teaching (Korean-American setting), and by examining other relevant scholarship and aspects of Korean culture that relate to the challenges and unexpected situations to be successfully navigated within the realm of cross-cultural piano pedagogy. More specifically, I am interested in the following main research questions:

- Are there any linguistic or aforementioned cultural challenges involving the triangular relationships of parent, students, and teachers within the realm of cross-cultural piano pedagogy (primarily in a Korean-American milieu)?
- Other than using music materials and curricula from various cultures, how do we need to honor diverse teaching and learning cultures?

¹⁷ M.-L. L. Kou, "Secondary piano instruction in the colleges and universities of the Republic of China with recommendations for incorporating American group piano instructional methods into the curricula," (PhD diss., University of Oklahoma, 1985).

¹⁸ Chin-Wen Li, "The effect of Taiwanese piano education from the perspectives of college senior piano majors (China)," (PhD diss., University of Oklahoma, 2001).

¹⁹ Dennis P.-C. Wang, "A status study of piano education in public schools in Taiwan, Republic of China," (PhD diss., University of Miami, 2002).

- What are the principal beliefs and values that undergird and guide Korean educational culture? (Sub-questions: How does Confucian philosophy affect Korean students' learning and teaching styles? What are the cultural models of success from Korean parents and the Korean community as a whole? etc.)
- How do these beliefs and values manifest themselves in the context of music education, particularly as connected to piano learning and teaching? (Sub-questions: How do these systems of reasoning impact music educational relations between students, parents, and teachers? What are the potential misunderstandings when two cultures such as Korean and American meet in the piano studio, and why?)
- How can piano instructors better negotiate the cross-cultural dynamic of the teaching and learning process?

Method and Design

The research method for this study is based on the model in Bartel Lee and Leonid Sprikut's "Adapting Pedagogic Culture: The Experience of Four Immigrant Music Teachers in Canada."²⁰ My study examines participant opinions and perceptions related to cross-cultural teaching, particularly in a Korean-American setting. Before starting the project, I had prepared and submitted the human subjects protocol and obtain informed consent from human subjects (see Appendix A). Multiple data sources were used to accommodate language and expression

²⁰ Lee Bartel, "Music Pedagogy, Pedagogic Culture, and Pedagogic Multiculturalism," *Canadian Music Educator* 52, no.1 (2010): 21-25.

needs: observation of teaching to ascertain language proficiency and to provide context for interviews, written data to provide descriptive data, and individual semi-structured interviews.

Participants were selected from currently Korean and American graduate piano or piano pedagogy students at UW-Madison who have teaching experience with both a pre-college Korean student and a pre-college student from the United States. All Korean participants grew up in South Korea through age 17 and held at least a high school degree in their home country. The Korean students speak English as a second language and the U.S. students are native English speakers who do not speak Korean. Each participant was teaching in an English language setting.

Here is a brief description of each participant:

Bo Young was born in South Korea. After receiving a bachelor of arts in Korea, she earned a master's degree and is pursuing a doctorate in piano pedagogy and performance in the U.S. She has taught piano for a total of 11 years, 8 years in Korea and 3 years in the United States. In the U.S., Bo Young's piano students have included Asian Americans, Whites, African Americans, and international students from China, Vietnam, and Korea.

Bethany was born in the U.S. and has taught piano for a total of 5 years. She is pursuing a doctorate in piano pedagogy and performance. The majority of his students have been under 18 years, mostly ranging from 5 to 14. Bethany's has taught Korean-Americans, Chinese-Americans, Whites, and African Americans.

Min Young was born in South Korea and earned her bachelor's and master's in the U.S. She is currently pursuing a doctorate in piano performance in the U.S. She has been a piano

instructor for 7 years, mainly teaching students from 5 to 15 years of age. Her students are Korean-American, Chinese-American, Hispanic, Indian-American, White, African American, and Mexican.

Song was born in South Korea and received her bachelor's degree there. She received a master's degree in the U.S. and is pursuing a doctorate in piano performance and pedagogy in the U.S. She has taught piano for a total of 14 years, 7 years in Korea, 2 years in China, and 5 years in the U.S. Her students range from 7 to 18 years, and include Filipinos, Chinese, Europeans (especially from Germany), as well as White and African American students from the U.S.

Ally was born in the United States and is currently working toward a master's degree in piano performance and pedagogy. She has taught piano for 12 years, mainly students between 6 and 9 years of age. Her students are from China, Taiwan, Brazil, Korea, Japan, Turkey, and the U.S.

The initial interview protocols included open- and closed-ended questions relating to each participant's background and professional experience prior to and during the period after cross-cultural teaching experience (Koreans in the U.S. and Americans with Korean students) (See Appendix A). The initial interview included questions about pedagogical beliefs, teaching style, and how participants believe intercultural teaching might influence these. In the interviews, participants reflected on their experiences teaching students with the same background as theirs (i.e. Korean teachers teaching Korean students, or American teachers teaching American students), as well as teachings students with dissimilar backgrounds (i.e. Korean teachers teaching students from the U.S. and American teachers teaching students from Korean).

Each interview was audio-taped. The interviews were conducted in English with American participants and in Korean for the Korean participants, which were then translated into English. Interview transcriptions were given to the participants to verify accuracy. A third person who is bilingual in Korean and English was asked to read the quotes from interviews with Korean participants to ensure accuracy of translation.

Having obtained the participants' permission to monitor their lessons, lessons were observed only in cases of cross-cultural teaching (in a Korean-American setting). American participants' lessons were observed when they worked with pre-college Korean students. Korean participants' lessons were observed when they worked with pre-college students from the United States. Participants and piano students were observed twice to ensure accuracy in gathering pedagogical data and to provide context for the interviews. Teaching observation # 1 was followed up two weeks later with observation # 2, with the same teacher-student pairing. The teaching observation was focused on four areas related to the teacher-student dynamic: 1) conversational style, 2) authority, 3) linguistic challenges or unexpected situations, and 4) teacher decision-making process.

The final interview was conducted only for those whose lessons were observed. It also consisted of open-and closed-ended questions which differed from those in the initial interview (See Appendix B). The main purpose of the interview was to gather information on participants' experience in the lessons that were observed. Like the initial interview, it was audio-taped, transcribed, translated, and verified by the participants.

Once transcribed, the entire interview was analyzed using a qualitative research approach. Although each participant's experience of cross-cultural teaching and their adjustment to a new context was unique, common themes were evident in challenges involving the triangular relationship between parent, student, and teacher within the realm of cross-cultural piano pedagogy (primarily in a Korean-American milieu). Although parents were not directly involved in the interviews or observations, their role emerged as pivotal in understanding cross-cultural implications for this study.

Qualitative Findings and Analysis

In the following sections, I offer the qualitative results of the interviews and analyze several key areas of interest: negotiating power in the teacher-student relationship; conversational style, behaviors, and verbal interaction between teachers and students; discipline in music practice; and the influence of parents, particularly Asian/Korean mothers. This is followed by analysis of the teaching observations, which focuses on inter-linguistic challenges.

Negotiating Power in the Teacher-Student Relationship

The power relations between teachers and students manifest in different ways in different cultures. In both the initial interview and follow-up interview, participants discussed the power relations between teachers and students based on their upbringings and cultural experiences. In

the following, Korean participants comment on Korean students' perceptions of the role of the teacher:

I think the fundamental rule between teachers and students is that students have respect for teachers. It could be from Confucian philosophy which addresses the fact that younger people should respect elders including teachers, and teachers are authority figures. (Min Young)²¹

Students should respect the teachers.... The student's attitude toward teachers is very important.... The student should try to pay attention to the teacher's direction and have a positive attitude toward learning.... They should accept that teachers are respectful, worthy figures. (Song)

In my generation, most students [Korean] are extremely well disciplined and obey absolutely what teachers say.... My character or personality was such that when I was young, I did not even imagine changing private piano teachers even if lessons did not go well, because I believed that teachers are authority figures. (Min Young)

²¹ While the research is filtered through my perspective as a researcher, I have done my utmost to represent the voices of my participants as honestly as possible. Their words come directly from interviews with minimal intervention. Ellipses are used to indicate parts of the interviews that were not relevant to the study and brackets are used for clarification.

Since piano studies are based on a one-on-one teaching and learning style, I felt even more uneasy with my piano teachers than my schoolteachers when I was young. For instance, I would not talk back to my piano teachers, and when teachers gave instructions, I did not even think I could object or raise differences with them. (Min Young)

An elder is an elder.... Children should say hello to teachers first. (Bo Young)

My friends who went to arts middle school or high school told me that their teachers were very forceful.... They were usually afraid of their teachers and felt obligated to show their respect for their teachers.... If the teacher asked them to play Hanon no.1 one hundred times ...then they just did it. (Bo Young)

For Korean participants, respect from students was expected in large part because of embedded ideas of social hierarchy. Teachers are seen as elders and students are to respect their authority. Korean participants had given their own teachers the same kind of respect when they were students; as teachers, they expected the same from their students.

Like the Korean participants, American participants also noticed that Korean students respected the teacher's authority. As Bethany noted, "My Korean students were extremely

respectful and mature.” The American participants also gave insight into the attitudes of American students and teachers, and how these affect the student/teacher dynamic:

Teachers expect students to be prepared and respectful, but also curious, creative and willing to try new things. (Bethany)

In the U.S. it seems like the students are expected to respect the authority of a teacher; however, students seem more likely to challenge that authority when they have a question or concern or curiosity. Students understand that teachers are “in charge” but American students seem to place a higher value on their curiosity, often challenging the teacher’s authority with a question like “Why?” or “How?” They do not intend to be disrespectful, but instead express their desire to have ownership of the understanding. (Bethany)

There are many different ways to motivate students. Not just, I am the teacher and you do what I say, but because students want to please the teacher, or because they admire teachers, or are impressed by the way teachers play. (Ally)

As the quotes above show, a marked difference in the perception of the role of the teacher exists between Korea and America participants. Participants from the United States place a high

value on teacher quality but respect for the teacher's authority is not a primary concern, or even an expectation. In contrast, Korean teachers working with American students identified authority issues as a challenge:

If the students do not want to listen to or follow my directions, they do not feel like they have to.... Maybe [this is] because here [in the U.S], the society emphasizes keeping one's privacy or respecting one's uniqueness or personality.... In Korea, although not all students listen to and obey the teacher's direction, they believe that paying attention to and following the teacher's direction is moral behavior for them. I feel some students who I have worked with in the U.S. seem to have an attitude that the teacher's directions or advice are merely the teacher's, [and have] nothing to do with me.... If the student thinks my advice is not working for them or they do not like my advice, then they just don't follow it.... It really baffled me when my students did not even pretend to listen to or try my suggestions. (Song)

When the students say what they want to do or what they do not want to do for you.... [it is clear that] you do not have an absolute authority here [U.S.].... I mean, even if [as a teacher] you do not agree with their proposals, you have to consider it and sometimes need to follow their preferences—which does not happen in Korea. (Min Young)

For both Korean and American participants, another factor that affects the teacher-student dynamic is the parent-teacher relationship. Korean teachers identified this as a challenge in their work with students from the U.S.:

Often students get caught in the middle if the parent doesn't relinquish all teaching authority to the teacher. In my opinion, the teacher should be the expert and the parent should support the teacher's instruction. This, however, is not always the case. Often I tell students to practice a certain way and the students report that their parent told them to do it a different way. (Bethany)

I think, in the U.S., depending on race or class, educational background plays out differently in the lessons. Usually when the parents have a good attitude or are polite to me, the students are also are polite to me. These parents are white and educated people usually...However, when parents have been divorced or separated or have a low income, or are single moms, then I feel the parents' attitude toward me was often offensive and I feel these parents have a feeling of being victimized. . .then the students hardly show their respect to me. (Min Young)

Whenever I check the practice assignments, the student [from a low-income family] said he was busy with other activities or with school. So I told his mother to help him to prepare for the lesson. His mom said okay, but it happened four

times. Eventually, I had to talk to the student with a strict attitude and loud voice about his attitude toward practicing. The student suddenly cried during the lesson.... The mother met with my supervisor the next day and both my supervisor and his mother blamed my teaching style....

I mean, do you understand the situation? I do not get it.... He has not been practicing or paying attention to what I said for a month, and every time he came up with different unexcused reasons.... His mom did not even talk [to me] or ask what was going on ...because of their family situation.... When I made her son cry, I felt she took it personally and was very offended. She did not even try to solve the problem.... After I went through this conflict, I became very cautious when dealing with young students to avoid the complicated issues or the student's complaints.... I do not have the authority here [in the U.S.]. (Min Young)

In many cases, Korean teachers felt like they did not have authority when teaching students from the U.S.; they felt their authority was invisible to American students. Some participants described the issue of teacher authority as context-specific, dependent on the particular relationship between a specific teacher and parent. In other cases, teachers found that if parents respected the teacher's authority, students were more likely to respect the teacher.

Many of the responses above, particularly those that involve a negotiation of power between Korean teachers and American students can be understood through Confucian philosophy. To offer some context, let me introduce a brief history of Confucianism in Korea

and its teaching philosophy. Confucianism, which was derived from China, was accepted by the Korean government as its model for education in 372 A.D. According to Kwang-Kyu Lee, in the Silla kingdom (starting in 682 A.D.), it was customary to teach subjects related to the state examination, in addition to the Confucian classics; later Confucian scholars of the 16th century developed ethical and moral education²². Lee states that although Confucianism declined during industrialization and modernization, the Confucian influence in Korean society and culture is deeply ingrained and still exists in education today²³.

The practical ethics of Confucianism are defined by the five moral responsibilities in human relationships. One of the five moral rules is the relationship of respect between age groups. For this relationship, Confucianism teaches that there should be respect for seniority and that respect for elders should be revealed in all actions including greetings. For example, in Korea, young people still bow or tend to greet an elder before they are given a greeting. Also, in Confucianism, since younger and older generations must maintain distinctions in all actions, when a youth expresses his or her opinion to an elder, especially when it is a differing opinion, it can be regarded as exceptionally bad behavior^{24, 25}. Song-Ae Han states that these moral responsibilities can be seen in social settings such as school—especially in the relationship between a teacher and a student²⁶. According to Victor C. X. Wan and Lesley S. J. Farmer, Confucius developed his teaching philosophy as “let the teacher be a teacher, the student a

²² Kwang-Kyu Lee, *Korean traditional culture*, ed. Joseph P. Linskey (Seoul: Jimoondang International, 2003).

²³ Lee, 2003.

²⁴ Lee, 2003.

²⁵ Song-Ae Han, “Do South Korean Adult Learners Like Native English Speaking Teachers more than Korean Teachers of English?” *AARE Conference Papers* (2003), <http://www.aare.edu.au/03pap/han03087.pdf> (accessed March 9, 2009).

²⁶ Han, 2009.

student”²⁷. In Wan and Farmer’s analysis, this means that students are supposed to have respect for their teachers and not challenge their teachers as authority figures.

The Korean language has a built-in structure that reflects the social relationship between the speaker and the person being spoken to. As such it reinforces respect toward teachers and elders. According to Charles McBrian, “Language forms an integral component of stratification systems. While this may not be so obvious in societies such as the U.S., the possible relations between language and social stratification become much clearer when we examine a Confucian society such as Korea”²⁸. It is true that special features of the Korean language serve to create and reinforce categories in the social hierarchy.

McBrian explains the forms of address in Korean as opposed to English: “In English, the pronoun ‘you’ is used to refer to old and young.... In Korean, there are levels of politeness in personal pronouns and terms of address.”²⁹ In Korean, there are two common pronouns for “you”: one is used between friends, but only those who have known each other since childhood, or by adults to younger people. It is common for a teacher to call students by their given names or with the less formal “you.” People are also addressed in terms of social roles, such as “teacher.” The suffix, “-nim” is also always attached to these titles of address to indicate special deference. Thus, in Korea, students are not allowed to address their teacher as “you”; instead, both students and parents need to address teachers as “teachernim” which means “honored teacher.” This helps reinforce the playing out of teacher’s authority in piano studies.

²⁷ Victor C. X. Wan and Lesley S. J. Farmer, “From the Teachings of Confucius to Western Influences: How Adult Education is Shaped in Taiwan,” *International Journal of Adult Vocational Education and Technology* 1, no.2 (April-June 2010): 29-45.

²⁸ Charles D. McBrian, “Language and Social Stratification: The Case of a Confucian Society,” *Anthropological Linguistics* 20, no.7 (1978): 320-326.

²⁹ McBrian, 1978.

Conversational Style, Behaviors, and Verbal Interaction between Teachers and Students

In comparing the American and Korean participants' upbringings and personal experiences with communication styles, learning styles, and preferred teaching approaches, it is clear that the largest differences exist in the areas of communication style and behaviors of the teachers and students, as well as in verbal interactions between the teachers and their students. This includes forms of address:

The students never talk casually to teachers.... Parents should call me "teachernim." (Bo Young)

[Korean] students must use the honorific language when they talk with me. At first I also tried to use the honorific language to them, but it was not effective. I realized students became disrespectful ...so I decided not to use the honorific language [only] with my young Korean students. (Song)

The young Korean American students, their learning style is different than the students who are in Korea. They seem to participate more with the lesson and prefer individual learning styles...Still, most who I have met are very polite to me

and always call me “teachernim.” Even though they are not good at Korean, their mothers ask them to call me “teachernim.” (Min Young)

My students either call me Miss Ally, Ally, [or] Sister Jones. Some of them use an honorific, some of them do not. The ones that do use it go to my church, the ones that don't either don't call me anything (never address me particularly), or call me by my first name. I prefer some kind of differentiation between students and teachers, but I haven't asked to be called anything, so I can't expect a title. It is open and friendly. Most of them call me anything.... Parents call me just Ally... I sign my email, “Ally.” (Ally)

Most of my students refer to me by my first name. (Bethany)

These interviews indicate that young Korean piano students must use terms of honor in addressing a teacher, while American students and parents speak casually with their teachers.

Another aspect of the verbal relationship is preferred learning style. Participants reported that less verbal interaction seemed to be the preference in Korean educational culture, including piano lessons:

Most young Korean students are good at talking ...but not about things related to music. They do not talk about their musical ideas or ask questions such as, “Why do I need to practice this spot?” (Bo Young)

Asking the teacher questions is not a common thing in Korea. From the Confucian philosophy, we learned that pretending not to know in front of teachers or in a group conversation is virtuous and modest. (Min Young)

The Korean typically accepts the teacher’s directions without openly questioning. (Bethany)

I think most [Korean] students do not think that they can ask a question to their teachers ...even if they are not sure what they are doing.... They think they need to figure it out by themselves. (Bo Young)

I did not believe that the teacher and I could work together during the lesson. I believed that I was in a position to learn only when my teachers instructed.... When I was young, I wanted to have a teacher who could explain why I needed to play this way or that way...For instance, why I have to play this part forte ...but

no one really explained it to me, and I did not have the courage to ask since I was a student. (Min Young)

Mostly a performance-based style is preferred when I worked with Korean students, so most of them did not answer or were very shy or puzzled when I asked theory questions during the lesson. (Min Young)

[Korean students] were not as comfortable with my questioning approach in which I tried to ask a lot of questions and sort of help them to discover the concept on their own ...but I think they sometimes got frustrated with that approach, and they would rather have me tell them how it supposed to be: “This is a quarter note ...this is what it means.” I think they are very advanced intellectually, their reading skills are very advanced, and they are very good at mentally computing all this information at once.... But doing something like composing a song, or improvising, or getting really creative with something was not as satisfying to them.... “I want to learn the notes so I can play the song faster and better now.” (Bethany)

Asking or answering questions of the teacher does not seem to be a preferred style of learning for Korean students. Korean students seem to prefer a more directive, structuralistic

approach in which they were told what to do. Some participants related this issue to the more serious and formal (hierarchical) Korean relationship between students and teachers, Confucian philosophy, or the emphasis on performance in the piano studio. However, participants felt that verbal interaction between students and teachers is the learning style favored in the U.S.:

Maybe because of the culture, most American students answer well, and even if their answer is not quite right, they did not seem to be uncomfortable answering the questions. (Min Young)

I always try to communicate as much with the students directly as possible, even young ones. I feel that this helps them feel involved and responsible for their learning. (Bethany)

Most American students explain their situation well, and ask questions. (Bo Young)

Young American students do not wait to speak until spoken to.... Young American students often feel quite comfortable speaking when they feel like it.... Sometimes this adds great spontaneity to the lesson and the students love to answer teachers' questions. (Bethany)

Other results appeared to indicate that Korean students and parents tend to rely on teachers and prefer a direct teaching style:

I like the teacher who I can trust. For instance, when I was preparing for the piano competition with the pianist Hye-Sun Paik at Seoul National University, since I could trust her capacity and experiences and respect her personality, I could easily follow her suggestions about what I needed to do ...even her choice for my competition repertoire pieces.... I even felt better when she checked my dress before going on the competition. I did not want to look stupid in the competition by wearing a weird dress, so when she checked my dress before going on, I had confidence that I didn't look weird on the stage. (Song)

Parents also expect teachers to do everything for their child. (Bo Young)

I think most young Korean students do not know what to do, what they want to do, so I think young Korean kids and their parents prefer the teacher who can explain it in detail. It does not matter whether the teacher is strict or harsh. (Min Young)

I think [Korean] students are passive.... They just sit and expect teachers to do everything for them.... If they are not interested in playing or music, rather than finding their own interest in music, they will expect teachers to motivate their interest. (Bo Young)

I think the students and myself would rather have teachers who have a thorough grasp of the problems. It can be anything ...technical difficulties, understanding the music, musical expression ...and have a capacity to solve the problems with certainty. (Song)

[Korean] students seem to prefer cooperative learning. It seems to be more natural for the Korean students learning with a helper or a coach. They are not interested in independent or creative learning. And they prefer a teacher's direct teaching style. (Bethany)

Following this, Korean teachers seemed to be comfortable with a teacher-oriented teaching style:

Of course, teachers also should understand their students' learning style and prepare for the lesson, but I think in Korea, most piano teachers still teach with

their own ways; they only teach the way they learned, and they teach with their own preferred teaching style. It is pretty much a method of teacher-oriented teaching. It does not matter for them whether the students like their teaching style or not. (Bo Young)

When I was preparing for arts high school, I went to my piano teacher's house for lessons. Whenever I went, I felt unwelcomed. The place where I took the lesson was in the basement, and the teacher always came down to the lesson room late, so I had to wait for her.... The teacher did not seem to consider my feelings or situation, but I had to check my teacher's feelings or mood.... I think most peers who were preparing for arts high school had similar kinds of teachers as I had ...teacher-oriented ...strict. (Song)

In contrast, American participants indicated that American students and teachers think of teachers as being more of a facilitator for the student's learning:

The teacher is a facilitator for the students' learning. (Ally)

[American students want] a warm relationship where the student trusts the teacher and the teacher can motivate the students to learn well. There are many

different ways to motivate students. Not just, I am the teacher and you do what I say ...but because either students want to please the teacher, or because they admire teachers, or are impressed by the way teachers play.... The teacher has the responsibility to motivate students. (Ally)

I think they want someone who is nice and caring. Sort of another adult cheerleader who encourages them with positive motivation. I think they genuinely want to learn, so also are looking for someone who can help them to learn. (Bethany)

I expect that my students have a comprehensive piano education where they become self-sufficient pianists who can use their skills to help others. To do that I spend time helping them to learn to sight read and develop the ability to solve problems on their own. I expect my students to participate to that end. (Ally)

My American students seem to know very well what they do well and what they do not do well, and they want teachers to meet their expectations. For example, I do not want to do my theory homework; why can't you teach me without any theory homework? Maybe, they do not say exactly that, but they seem to be bolder in putting their own demands to teachers than Asian students [Korean or

Chinese American or immigrant students]. “Teach me, tell me what to do.” As a teacher, you have more controls versus American students who are a lot more demanding. (Bethany)

In the quotes above, the students seemed to be more independent than Korean students. Also, they felt that American students care about the relationship between students and teachers, as they seemed to prefer a teacher who is supportive and encouraging. American students also seemed to take ownership of their learning.

Significant differences were evident in the area of communication style, behavior, and verbal interaction between students and teachers. A divergence of learning styles, teaching styles, and verbal interactions has the potential to mislead both teachers and students. Participants agreed that these differences account for the challenges and frustrations in cross-cultural teaching:

Another challenging situation is that I need to always encourage the students and give frequent compliments as much as I can during the lesson. I remember I was not happy with my first American teacher in the U.S, because she always said good even if I felt my playing was not ready to deserve the compliment.... I felt the teacher’s compliment sounded insincere ...maybe because of the different cultural background; in Korea, as you know, teachers hardly encourage or give compliments to their students during the lesson. Since I grew up in these environments, when I worked with American students, it is very challenging.... You need to force yourself to try to give compliments.... Even when students play

well this much [*indicating a tiny amount with her fingers*], you should say “Wow!” or something like that. (Min Young)

I remember before coming to the U.S. to study one of my college friends talking. She told me that teaching young kids in the U.S. feels like doing baby-sitting.... She said if you have to teach piano to young kids in the U.S., first you have to be the best baby-sitter to the students ...even if they are not prepared for the lesson and their attitude is not respectful, you have to give lots of compliments and encourage the student.... Now I understand why she told me that. (Song)

My Asian American students often wait so much, or they feel uncomfortable when I ask questions. People who are afraid of speak; it is harder to draw them out.... Especially related to new concepts, the “discovery” style of teaching was confusing and seemed frustrating to the [Korean] students. (Bethany)

I believe that the above responses highlight cultural differences such as the influence of Confucian philosophy, in which formal and serious relationships between teachers (elders) and students (youth) are implicitly accepted. For instance, since Song’s friend grew up in a Confucian society, new teaching styles such as a student-oriented teaching approach, with lots of compliments and encouragement, might make her think that her authority was not being

respected and that her job had been reduced to pleasing young children (as Min Young implied). In addition, it is possible that the types of verbal interactions and the preferred teaching and learning styles in Korea can be traced to the Korean language. In Korea, inflections reflect degrees of deference in the relationship between speakers and listeners, and also toward persons being talked about. McBrian gives four levels of speech expressing degrees:³⁰

	Declarative	Interrogative
Level I	<u>Kamnida</u>	<u>Kamnikka</u> ?
Level II	<u>Kayo</u>	<u>Kayo</u> ?
Level III	Ka	Ka?
Level IV	Ka	<u>Kani</u> ?

Level I is the most formal and polite level, and Level II is less polite than Level I, but still formal. Both Levels I and II are used by children interacting with adults such as teachers and parents; depending on the nature of their relationship, some adults use formal address with each other³¹. Levels III and IV are used by adults to children, for example students. Specifically, since Korean piano students must use the formal and polite form of address with piano teachers, it is possible that it may naturally lead to the relationship between Korean teachers and students being more formal. Also, since teachers employ only Level III or Level IV in communications with students, both of which resemble commands and a more direct conversational style, this may naturally facilitate a more direct method of instruction. A direct method might allow students to participate less during lessons (such as asking the teacher a question).

³⁰ McBrian, 1978.

³¹ McBrian, 1978

The Korean word for education, “*Kyo-Youck*,” also implies the hierarchal relationship between teachers and students and might explain why teacher-oriented and direct methods of instruction have prevailed in Korea. The first syllable, “Kyo,” consists of three Chinese characters: Ho, Ja, and Bok. Ho implies “the world,” Ja implies “children,” and Bok implies “touch”³². According to Chang-ho Shin, “Kyo” describes the following images: young people getting to know or understand the ways of the world; the elders advising young people with a slight touch of their hands about what they need to be aware or cautious of; and the young people following the elder’s direction. According to Shuo-Wen-Chieh-Tzu, one of the oldest dictionary of classical Chinese language, “Kyo” as students facing a world that is very complicated; therefore they need to respectfully follow the example of their teacher³³. In this way the meaning of “Kyo” is a teacher who holds a disciplinary rod to lead the student to learning the right way of living. There is no empirical evidence, but I believe this data supports the view that elders (teachers) know better than younger people (students). They preserve and reinforce teacher-oriented or direct methods of instruction as well as dependent learning styles.

Discipline Issues -Practicing Behavior

The issue of discipline presents another philosophical distinction between teachers from the U.S. and Korea. Practicing behavior is one of the most important elements of discipline. It indicates a student’s level of responsibility toward preparing for lessons.

³² Chang-Ho Shin, *DaeHak – educational philosophy of Confucianism for leaders* (Seoul: Educational Science Publishing, 2010).

³³ Shin, 2010.

Most [Korean] students are extremely disciplined. (Bethany)

I would like to have students who are well disciplined. (Bo Young)

[Korean] teachers expect students to work sincerely. (Song)

I really did not have to do anything [to motivate Korean students].... Even though I think they do not like what I asked them to do as far as practicing is concerned, they still did it. They did all the theory homework, all the composition assignments. (Bethany)

I expect my students to work to achieve their goals and I hope that they enjoy lessons and playing the piano. (Ally)

I think that some students think piano is going to be very firm and disciplined, and other students think that piano should be really fun. So I kind of have to adjust to what their expectations are. If I see that they are willing to be disciplined, then I

have to set up lots of discipline and challenges for them. But if they only want to have fun, then I am going to have fun. (Ally)

Teachers have come to expect that American students will usually be very busy in many extracurricular activities, of which piano is just one.... I am more generous and I do not give them a hard time if they haven't practiced. Especially if it is just a studio recital, I guess that is not a competition, and if they explicitly say that they want to compete or they want to challenge themselves, then I will hold them to that goal and push them and let them know if they are or are not living up to their expectations.... But if they are just doing piano for fun, and it is one of many fun activities, if they have not practiced for a recital I do not really get mad at them. (Bethany)

Two of my students are very frustrating ... and I don't teach them privately, so it's not a discussion that can happen until the end of a semester, or the end of a contract, so that is the kind of thing that I am probably going to have to bring up to their parents but not the students....

I have a little motivational activity for them [two students who are not practicing] like a star or sticker charts, or something. When they don't practice they can see that they are not keeping up.... That way I do not have to say as much, they are

aware that they are falling behind their peers, but even with that, I've noticed this semester, that does not seem to bother them or their parents, and I am setting the expectation pretty low for them because they haven't even met any high expectations.... They just don't work during the week 'cause they are always so busy, like Karate, gymnastics, boy scouts or girl scouts, church, visiting people.... It's all good stuff.... They're not claiming to be a competitive pianist ...they just want their life to be full in that way. So ...if they are happy with moving with that pace, I guess that is okay with me for now. It's not the most fulfilling teaching for me at the moment. (Bethany)

I thought about setting a general expectation, because right now I have some students who really work hard and achieve a lot and other students who barely work at all. And I thought I should set a limit that if you are not practicing, you are not in my studio. But right now I need all the students I can get. (Ally)

For the American teachers, the qualities of discipline and hard work were not the teacher and students' primary concerns or expectations. They acknowledged that students can take lessons just for fun and seemed to be cautious in telling students they needed to practice more. Consequently, they were very flexible with discipline, and the teachers had a more generous attitude towards their students' practicing habits than the Koreans. However, since Korean private teachers seem to have much greater expectations of their students in the area of discipline,

such as preparing for lessons and being responsible for practicing assignments, most Korean participants expressed concern about the challenge of disciplining their students in the U.S.:

Most of students I met in the U.S. were pretty much taking piano lessons because of their interests.... I mean, they want to have fun ...so it's hard to challenge them or develop musicality or piano technique, and it is hard to give sincere advice or correct their behaviors compared to Korean students, so sometimes I feel less motivated as a teacher. (Song)

It also baffles me when students say they did not practice because the practicing assignments were not fun.... Even if practicing the piano is not fun, I believe if people start to practice, they will sometimes find interest which they do not expect at first.... However, I feel some students here do not even try to practice at first because it does not look fun, and tend to rationalize the reasons why they do not practice because of that ...which makes me think they are not well-disciplined.... I have realized that their attitudes are so different than Korean students I had worked with, and I am not confident in how to deal with these students. (Song)

In Korea, even if students find it stressful dealing with practicing assignments or challenging stuff, they somehow manage and are willing to try to do them ...even if they did not completely do what I said.... But here in the U.S., students easily

seem to refuse to do their practicing assignments for their teachers either when they feel the assignments are challenging or they are overwhelmed or they do not want to do them.... That is why I am still struggling when I give practicing assignments to young students here.... Some students really care when I write assignments in their notebooks.... Some of them just tell me ...that is too much. Or they are busy so they cannot do it ...or they are frowning without saying anything ...which is so frustrating.... And I am still not sure how I should respond to students who never have their assignments completed with inexcusable reasons. (Min Young)

When the students do not prepare for lessons, I am not sure how I should respond. I still think improving performance skills or helping to increase students' knowledge is a teacher's duty.... I feel guilty if I only have fun with them. (Min Young)

As the quotes above show, Korean participants seemed to believe that if the students are not practicing, but only looking to have fun, the students end up not being productive. This made some Korean teachers believe that they were not doing their job as a teacher. There were, however, exceptions to this. One Korean participant commented that she does not have concerns about her American students' discipline in practicing:

I do not have any practicing issues with my students here [in the U.S.] like some other Korean teachers.... I feel that it's even easier to have them practice the piano than the Korean students. As long as I explain why they [American students] need to practice and the students understand and agree, they are more responsible, and they take more initiative.... They ask more questions about practicing (how to practice and what they need to do) rather than just following what I assign without knowing the reasons behind it. (Bo Young)

While there are exceptions, most participants' responses above—regarding differences in discipline issues between the two cultures—also seem to be recognized by current Korean piano pedagogues.

Their responses may explain the argument of Korean piano professor Byun that the curriculum of private piano and music institutions is stricter in Korea than in the U.S. For instance, Young-Sook Byun, a piano professor at Chonnam National University, reports that while Korean pre-college piano students between six and twelve of age go to the piano institution every day to practice the piano for approximately an hour, and have a ten-minute lesson a couple of times a week, American students tend to do most of their practicing at home, and go to the private music institution one or at most two times a week for their lesson(s)³⁴. Although this may have something to do with having access to a piano, it may also be that having multiple lessons during the week, even if they are short, and having the teacher make sure the student is practicing in their practice room every day for approximately an hour, are ways of

³⁴ Young-Sook Byun, *45 things that mother should know about teaching piano* (Seoul: Samho Publishing, 2004).

instilling self-discipline in young Korean students. It may also help to exert the teacher's control over the student, which reinforces the teacher-based Korean model of learning. For American students, the emphasis falls on individual responsibility; this may give American students more independence to develop their own interpretive ideas with less input from the teacher. In American pedagogy, the teacher may place less emphasis on discipline, but more emphasis on the student's creativity and self-motivation.

Interestingly, these findings are consistent with those of the study of mothers of Asian students (Chinese, Taiwanese, and Korean) who are enrolled in the pre-college division at Julliard and in Japanese piano education. For instance, Midori Koga states that “music students must learn the piano lesson of discipline, obedience, and practice, and it is understood that parents and piano teachers as well as students have made an unspoken contract to endeavor, through discipline and perseverance (*giri*), to lay a solid foundation of knowledge and technical proficiency of the instrument in Japan”³⁵. In addition, Grace Wang claims that many of the Asian interviewees in her study—including Chinese, Taiwanese, and Korean mothers of Julliard pre-college division students—cited discipline, diligence, and persistence as critical reasons for enrolling their children in music lessons³⁶. One of his interviewees, an immigrant from Singapore, explained the critical reasons for enrolling his children in music lessons:

I think you will find that most of the children, if they learn an instrument, they don't have any big problems when they are learning science, mathematics, or something. It's easy, easy for them! ...Because if you have this kind of discipline, the concentration to overcome obstacles, do something over and over again, then

³⁵ Midori Koga, “The Importance of Laying the Foundation,” *American Music Teacher* 48, no.3 (1999): 28-32.

³⁶ Wang, 2009.

you will know, “Oh! If I put in every kind of effort, then I will win.” ...By playing the piano, they can feel like, “Oh, this music is very beautiful,” and in the meantime get this good training and art for the future³⁷.

Wang states that “Many Asian parents readily identified qualities such as focus, hard work, and self-sacrifice as ‘Asian.’ These traits were not perceived to be a natural part of one’s identity, but principles that parents hoped to instill in their children through classical music training.”³⁸

There is no empirical evidence to support why the Asian countries listed above, including Korea, place a high value on discipline, but scholar Kwang-Kyu Lee indicates that the qualities of hard work and discipline have been necessary virtues that Korean mothers want to instill in their children³⁹. It is possible that this is connected to the influence of Confucian philosophy, where self-discipline is considered to be one of the most important moral principles.

Asian/Korean Motherhood

Another area that may arise as a challenge in cross-cultural teaching is that of Asian/Korean motherhood. In fact, some of the most interesting findings in this study concern aspects of motherhood. Participants described how Korean mothers tend to be very involved in

³⁷ Wang, 2009.

³⁸ Wang, 2009.

³⁹ Lee, 2003.

their child's piano studies and report that this sometimes manifests in their preparation for the child's piano lessons and interaction with piano teachers:

Even when I work with young students who are not considering majoring in piano or music in the future, both the mothers and students show their respect to me. For instance, when I taught at the students' houses in Korea, most mothers made sure their child prepared for the lesson; had their child practice or do their assignment until I showed up.... Also ...they prepared desserts for me.... They also made sure their child bowed politely when I came and left the house.... Of course, they also tried to greet me whenever I entered or left the house. (Song)

The parents might change teachers eventually if they have different expectations; however, if their child starts to study piano seriously [or] considers studying piano at college, the parents absolutely delegate their authority to a teacher and show their respect to teachers for their child. (Song)

Asian parents need to back away a little bit so that the student can have time to answer ...because the parent expects the child to answer right away, too. (Ally)

In pointing out Asian mothers' extreme involvedness, both Korean and American participants reported that these mothers were likely to focus on tangible results such as competitions and progress on repertoire, and that they tended to be more competitive than American parents:

In many cases ...since Korean parents care about the results, how fast their child can make the results, and what their child's peers are learning, they will ask teachers things like "I heard this method is popular now; can you use it in lessons?" ..."Even if my child does not seem to be interested in playing the piano, can you make her/him learn as much as his/her peers by threats and coaxing?" ... "How long does it take to learn all 30 Czerny, Op. 849?" (Bo Young)

Mothers also expect teachers to do everything for their child, and are very interested in piano competitions.... I think this is because ...our country is a mostly competitive society.... They want to prove that their child is far better than the others.... One way you can prove this is by winning at competitions.... Another reason comes from this way of thinking: if my child's peer went to the competition, my child should also go to the competition.... Otherwise, they think their child is far behind rather than that their child is different. (Bo Young)

Since the mothers [Korean] are paying for their child's lessons, they want to have tangible results. Even the parents of piano students not planning for art middle school expect their child to expand or learn up to certain repertoire, and to make progress. For instance, they will ask if my child is 10 years old, why she cannot play this piece like her peers.... Since Korean Moms tend to compare their child with their child's peers and they are not merely focusing on only their child's individual learning, they have certain expectations from the teachers and their child ...which mostly are improving performing skills and making progress on the repertoire. (Song)

I remember the piano was starting to boom in Korea when I was ten or eleven years old ...so it will be twenty years ago. Almost all young kids learned the piano ...and even kids who were not considering studying piano or music in the future, I remember they went to a piano institution where many students were the finalists or winners at competitions. I did not attend that institution, but I heard that the teachers were very strict; assigned a large amount of practicing ... sometimes tapped the wrists with a ruler when the student did not have a correct hand position or played with wrong fingerings.... But still, people attended that institution. (Min Young)

Korean mothers, they care about the results of competitions. So I feel pressure.

(Min Young)

The parents ...and the students are aware ...what their friends were playing, how they are playing ...whether they are going to the same festival or not. (Bethany)

The characteristics of Asian/Korean motherhood appear to create considerable challenges when an American student teacher works with young Asian students:

The beginner that I was just talking about, his parents are the ones who kept saying, "This music is that he is reading is so easy looking. Is there something wrong with him?" I think they were comparing him to his peers who were playing things with a lot more notes, maybe, right off the bat, in a different method book, and I think a big driving force behind their concern was that he was not playing same thing that their daughter had played as a beginner. They were afraid he wasn't competing or reaching his potential or something.... They seemed to be much more interested in tangible accomplishments. (Bethany)

There was one situation with one of my Chinese students. Her mom was really involved with correcting her when I was correcting her. I was kind of expecting it

...that is why it surprised me that it was true. Because that was the stereotype about Asian moms and then here it was true in this case....[She was] really involved with children. I keep a journal for my students, I accidentally sent it home with her, and I think she read it ...because she stopped correcting her daughter.
(Ally)

American participants overwhelmingly expressed that working with Asian mothers was a challenge, especially in their initial teaching experience with young Asian students. One experience in particular stands out:

He [the Korean student] was starting from scratch ...so he did not have a previous background in how to learn to play piano. I started him with a more creative approach and a little bit of a slower process to reading ...much more creative ...and I got a lot of resistance from his parents. Not from the student—he seemed to be doing great....

I thought because of his hand size, especially, he was so young ...we were doing a pre-reading book, and a lot of stuff that focuses the hand in a five finger position, in a closed hand position. And that is what I was prioritizing because his hand was small. I knew he probably could handle the reading, but he couldn't handle playing all the notes yet; that was almost insulting to his parents. They asked many times if he was stupid.... [There were] a lot of emails and phone calls.... "Is he not good enough? Why is he doing this?" Saying, "This is not what his sister

did ...He just seems to be progressing so slowly.” Even though I was saying, “He is brilliant. He is grasping material, he is coming around. He is coming up with great and creative projects.... He is so delightful in the lesson, I love the kid.”

When asked how she negotiated with the parents of the student, Bethany responded,

I spent a lot of time on the phone and emailing with them.... They seemed to understand the different teaching philosophy ...that I was trying to incorporate with his sister.... Even though she could play fluently, her other skills levels were really low. Like reading, technique, theory, everything was pretty low ...but she could play it if she heard something.... When fed the music, she could reproduce it, so I wanted to not have him in the same boat.... They did not seem to see as much as value in the other things that he was growing in and I would explain it to the parents, and the parents would understand after a lot of communication that those skills are valuable to me; at least they saw them as valuable for him.... The end of story is that their teacher—the former teacher [who was also Korean]—came back to town after being away, so they decided to go back to her. (Bethany)

Interestingly, Korean participants also expressed that interacting with Korean mothers was sometimes a challenge. As Song commented, “Sometimes it is stressful to deal with Korean mothers due to their pushiness and pressure when I taught in Korea.”

There is also evidence that presents an alternative view. For instance, one American participant described her experiences with a Korean mother who is not competitive or overinvolved:

She [a Korean student’s mother] is not a typical Asian parent.... She never talks to me about anything.... The only thing she told me is that she does not wish [the student] to play at the studio recital.... I do not think that is typical. (Ally)

Along with the participants’ interviews, many feature articles, editorials, and studies have presented and reported on instances of Asian moms’ pushiness, extreme involvedness and interest in their child’s education. For instance, Wang reports that many Julliard music students and American parents equate Asian moms with pushiness⁴⁰. Kimberly Goyette and Yu Xie also indicate that high Asian parental expectations can lead to a child’s high motivation and personal educational expectations⁴¹. Lee claims that most Korean mothers control and intervene when their child enters school. This intensified energy and effort is sometimes displayed through the purchase of housing in exclusive areas so as to provide access to a better school district, or

⁴⁰ Wang, 2009.

⁴¹ Kimberly Goyette and Yu Xie, “Educational Expectation of Asian American Youth: Determinants and Ethnic Differences,” *Sociology of Education* 72 (1999): 22-36.

through asking questions of school personnel and challenging methods of teaching and discipline if a child has a bad record⁴².

While a couple of theories have explained the reasons behind the Asian/Korean moms' characteristics in the studies, two theories provide a different understanding and perspective on Asian mothers' pushiness and extreme involvement with their child's education: the Asian cultural image of being a "good mother," and the Korean understanding of "education."

First is the cultural value of the "good mother" commonly held in Asian societies (Chinese, Taiwanese, Singaporean, and Korean). The qualities of a "good mother" include sacrifice, lack of self-involvement, and dedication to their children. The meaning of these traits depends on how maternal sacrifice is defined; the expectations for and role of mothers can be understood differently in different cultural contexts. Namely, what people from outside of Asia (including America) consider to be an Asian mother's extreme behavior might be interpreted differently in Asia and even seen as natural. Some of these behaviors may be explained as a mother's important or necessary duties and roles in Asia. Wang notes that many of the mothers of Asian students (Chinese, Korean, etc.) she interviewed at Julliard pre-college division pointed to the long distances they traveled as a measure of their willingness to make the sacrifices necessary for their children to reach their musical goals⁴³. According to Wang, although a Taiwanese student's mother, Wang Wei, views the constant travel and family separation as far from ideal, she felt that her maternal duties required such sacrifices. "You have to help them, like it or not, so they never come back and say, 'Mom, you should have let me do that....' I sacrifice myself and even my career. I am a business person in Taiwan. I ran a company, but now, after

⁴² Lee, 2003.

⁴³ Wang, 2009.

two years, my daughter's here, and I quit my company”⁴⁴. Wang Wei also said that prior to quitting her job, she had less time to help her daughter pursue her musical ambitions, and therefore considered herself not as good of a mother. Wang states that the professional and personal sacrifices undertaken by families typically also fall on the shoulders of Korean mothers. One Korean music student's mother, Sookhyun, continued living in New Jersey with her daughter (who attends the Julliard pre-college division) after her husband's work required him to move back to Korea. After presenting a few similar stories, Wang summarized her findings as follows: “The mothers narrated their own stories through the more accepted tropes of good mothering and generational sacrifices, rather than other reasons, such as personal ambition to see their children become famous.”⁴⁵

Images of good mothers being those who sacrifice for the sake of the next generation are also associated with the meaning of Korean word for education, “Kyo Youck,” which is derived from Chinese. The second syllable, “Youck,” consists of two Chinese characters: “Ja” and “Youk.” “Ja” depicts the image of an upside-down child, and “Youk” depicts a pregnant mother. Shine explains that “Youck” had two meanings in the past: first, “delivering a baby,” and second, “reforming” a baby⁴⁶. The upside-down baby who is inside the belly is described as a baby who is in a bent or crooked position, which hardly allows for giving birth. So the mother has to “reform” the baby. According to Shuo-Wen-Chieh-Tzu, one of the oldest dictionaries of classical Chinese language, these two meanings were further interpreted by scholars as mothers who warmly hug their child or mothers who correct children's bad habits in order to guide them along

⁴⁴ Wang, 2009.

⁴⁵ Wang, 2009.

⁴⁶ Shin, 2010.

the right way⁴⁷. I believe that these interpretations explicitly define the mother's role, and may explain why Korean mothers are actively involved with their children's education, in particular piano studies.

Why do Korean parents tend to compare themselves with others and focus on tangible results in piano studies? While there are no definite beliefs and values that explain this in the context of piano education, several theories may offer an explanation.

One reason behind parents' tendency to compare their child with peers may be that they are under the influence of a culture prone to gossip. Lee notes that "one of the important networks among the inhabitants of a rural community in Korea is gossip gathering."⁴⁸ It was common in the past to see several groups of people gossiping under a big tree on a windy hill on a summer evening or afternoon between working. These gatherings are informal groups which do not follow strict social rules but function as a center for the exchange of information. Nowadays, these gatherings still occur among Korean parents as they exchange information about their children's music education in Korea. Wang also states that while children attend music classes and lessons, Korean parents congregate in the lobby and cafeteria at the Julliard School, hang out by the practice rooms, or gather to make group trips to Korea Town⁴⁹. These parent gatherings are often used to share information about their child's progress and information about competitions, teachers, and schools.

Second, parental comparison may have to do with the Korean commitment to collectivism. The Korean word for "human" does not describe people as individuals, but as a

⁴⁷ Shin, 2010.

⁴⁸ Lee, 2003.

⁴⁹ Wang, 2009.

group, living together, and can be associated with the Collectivistic cultures that predominate in Asia. According to Greet Hofstede, these cultures place great emphasis on groups, and think more in terms of “we” than “I”⁵⁰. So-Young Cheon states that these Collectivist cultures are evident in the traditional Korean way of giving and sharing with neighbors in old times⁵¹. During the Thanksgiving season, people gave fruit baskets to each other, and if a new person moved into town, the newcomer brought rice cakes to the each of the neighbors to get to know them better. The neighbors, in return, often lent their house tools or shared information which might make the newcomer’s transition easier⁵². It is quite possible that these cultural practices of knowing neighbors and sharing information are still embedded in the Korean parents’ sharing of their child’s personal piano education information such as what repertoire they are playing, information about festivals, teachers, competitions, institutions, etc. Again, this could lead to comparing their child with their child’s peers, and becoming more competitive.

If gossip and collective identity explain why parents engage in peer comparison, Koreans’ perspectives of education and competitive environments might explain why Korean parents focus on tangible results.

Korean students are, in many ways, encompassed within a more competitive environment than American students, including the strong and ever-present competition to get into a top university after high school. For some Korean parents, tangible results from a music competition or festival can be another piece of the puzzle that helps their child gain acceptance into a prestigious school. Likewise, as one participant explained during the interview, in order to

⁵⁰ Hofstede, 1986.

⁵¹ So-Young Cheon, *Cultural tradition of Korean language* (Seoul: Daewon Publishing, 2011).

⁵² Lee, 2003.

survive within a competitive society, people want to achieve tangible results as proof that their child is succeeding in music study in order to get into a top music school.

Finally, Koreans' extreme interests in education and in cultural model of success might explain their focus on the child's visible accomplishments. There is no empirical evidence to support this view, but it is possible that Koreans follow educational issues more closely than Americans. According to Eun-Young Kim, Korean and Korean-American newspapers, magazines, and books present many examples of Koreans' extreme interests in their children's education⁵³. Indeed, through commercial advertisements, feature articles, and editorials, they indirectly or directly create, maintain, and reinforcing the message in the Korean community that education is important. For instance, near university entrance exam time, it has become almost official for newspapers to explore strategies about how to prepare for a top school, including telling the stories of people who are attending or have graduated from a top school (how they prepared for the entrance exam, etc.), in their lead story. After official exams have finished (similar to SATs), news stations will interview and broadcast stories about those who are at the top of the exams or continuing on to a top school. Also, numerous success stories about who got into Ivy League schools, or the parents' stories about how they raised their children, have been published. Furthermore, according to Kim, cultural models of success in education almost equate with a good educational background such as earning a degree from a prestigious school⁵⁴. Likewise, I believe that the cultural model of success in music (piano) studies also equates with earning a degree from a prestigious conservatory, winning competitions, or becoming a famous musician. Internationally successful classical Korean musicians are featured in Korean

⁵³ Kim, 1993.

⁵⁴ Kim, 1993.

broadcasts, magazines, and articles when they win global competitions or visit their home country.

Of course, other social or cultural influences can be involved, and the above theories can overlap to explain the reasons behind parents being competitive and focusing on tangible results in their child's piano studies. In the meantime, I found that Korean educators, including piano pedagogues, have been more concerned about society and the parents' fervor for education. Korean piano pedagogues have asked parents not to be competitive and to focus less on the progress of repertoire. For example, in pointing out that Korean parents tend to ask first about the progress of repertoire when they meet people who study piano, Byun urges parents to focus less on their children's progress through repertoire, and not compare them with other same-aged children's progress or technical development⁵⁵. Piano professor Si-Won Choi also warns that parents should not compare their children with others, and encourages them not to be overly competitive⁵⁶.

Inter-Linguistic Challenges

As participants reflected on differences in student, parent, and teacher expectations, most participants asserted the importance of understanding the different expectations from both cultures and of modifying their teaching approach if necessary. Indeed, observations of the participants' teaching proved that most participants acknowledged the need to modify their teaching, and managed it professionally when necessary. However, in the supplementary

⁵⁵ Byun, 2004.

⁵⁶ Si-Won Choi, *Music education – How should we do it?* (Seoul: Dara, 1996).

observations, I found that linguistic challenges sometimes hampered this adjustment. One participant confessed that because of the linguistic issues, her alterations did not work out successfully. She discussed the challenges she encountered with the questioning approach in responding to my comment, “I think your questioning approach seemed to be different than what you described in the first interview.”

I sometimes still feel uneasy in talking with American students during the lesson.... I want to ask indirect questions or discovery questions to help the students figure things out on their own.... However, I think because of language difficulties, it seems to be difficult.... Of course, I want to change my questioning approach, I am aware of that. I do not prefer the more direct teaching styles or giving answers right away to students if they do not get it ...but, it is hard to paraphrase the questions immediately.... If the student does not answer my questions ...I want to give other questions to reinforce the ideas or to help the student easily figure it out. However, when I tried it, it did not work for me.... The student did not understand my questions at all.... Afterwards, I usually asked more direct types of questions. (Bo Young)

As a matter of fact, for some people, the first thing they worry about in regards to cross-cultural teaching is language issues. Over the past ten years, like the participants, not all of my students were from the United States. Last year, I had a young student who had just moved from Mexico. She brought a piano method written in Spanish, which I cannot understand. We used it for six months or so since she was still learning English. Neither of her parents could speak nor

understand English. I was also not a native speaker, but we had to communicate in English during the lessons and have my student or her brother translate when I communicated with her parents.

As the world gets smaller, linguistic challenges can happen anywhere. And yet none of the participants mentioned linguistic problems during the first interview. It was only during observation that I began to notice these problems, which led to questions about language challenges during the final interview. Interestingly, even participants who talked about this challenge in their final interview seemed to hesitate or were uncomfortable talking about it. Here are some of the challenges the Bo Young shared in her final interview:

Popular songs, or trends ...what movies children like nowadays ...which cartoon or movie is popular.... I do not have much information about this.... Since I am a foreigner, I am not part of the trends here, which is challenging. And even if I am aware of them, it is not easy to communicate about them, and I am afraid of speaking with students about them ...because of linguistic challenges.... In my teaching philosophy, I believe that when I share in these things, I feel like the relationships with students are more intimate, which of course affects the lessons in a positive way.... I really think intimate, friendly relationships are important, especially in working with young students. But again, since I cannot share in these trends with my students because of linguistic challenges and cultural challenges, it is frustrating. (Bo Young)

In my observation, I noticed minor linguistic challenges during the lessons. For instance, a couple of times, the students said, “What, what?” in order to understand what their teacher just said. In some cases, the teacher misinterpreted what the student had said, although this happened rarely when they talked about playing piano, and did not seem to really bother the students or teachers during their piano studies. However, when I talked about those findings during the final interview, one participant agreed with them, but seemed reluctant to talk about it further; the other participant said she never felt there were challenges, and was reluctant to discuss it. I myself was not always sure which challenges could be identified as linguistic, unless they were significant; since I am also not a native speaker of English, it is possible that I might be overly sensitive to this issue.

For instance, when observing Ally’s lesson with a Korean student, I noticed the student would sometimes repeat what Ally referred to a couple of times slowly to herself before responding. Here is our exchange:

Me: Although the student can communicate with you in English very well, when you worked on cadences in the first lesson, her cognition seemed to be slow due to linguistic challenges.... I think the student tried to translate what you explained into Korean in her head subconsciously ...because she kept repeating what you referred to a couple of times slowly by herself.... Actually that is what I do if I do not understand something immediately.

Ally: I noticed that sometimes [my Korean student] does not understand me, but I never thought it was language issues. But yeah ...maybe it is.

The idea that there may have been a linguistic issue had not occurred to Ally, although she admitted language may have played a role.

Language issues bring up many questions about perception. Jay Lemke states that even though students and teachers maybe use the same words, when they are used with different semantic relations to other terms, they represent very different meanings⁵⁷. Social conflict and perceived social difference can lead to miscommunication and misunderstanding. Even native speaker teachers and students can have a semantic conflict; what about teachers and students who are coming from different language culture?

During my initial experience teaching in America, one of my eight-year-old students tried to fix my pronunciation. I asked her to play “Jingle Bells.” Suddenly she responded, “It is not Jingle [imitating my pronunciation], it is Jingle.” She had me pronounce the word until she thought it was correct. In Korea, people also use the phrase, “Jingle Bells” but although the term is the same, the pronunciation is different than in English. Since I pronounced the word in the Korean way, it was hard to pronounce the word as my student suggested. I was puzzled, but did not think much of the incident. However, I noticed that it eventually brought up the obvious conflict of a pattern of social interaction that pits teacher and students against one another. For instance, when she did not practice the specific passages I had assigned, she claimed she had not heard me and in addition, she did not communicate her assignments to her mother, who was equally puzzled. I believe she was using the situation to her advantage so that she would not have to practice what I had assigned, using semantic misunderstanding as an excuse. Although this

⁵⁷ Jay L. Lemke, *Talking Science: Language, Learning, and Values* (Westport: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1990): 32-48.

was not the result of an actual semantic misunderstanding, I do think this is a situation where language issues introduced social conflict, since it put my authority as a teacher into question.

Pedagogical Adaptions and Connections to Teaching Philosophies

The study showed that between Korean and American participants, there were differences in attitudes towards modifying teaching styles in an intercultural context:

I have been very cautious in dealing with young students in order to avoid complicated issues or students' complaining; I've learned that I have to adjust everything for my students even if I am not pleased with my students' learning or practicing attitudes.... Even if students never prepare for lessons, with inexcusable reasons, you cannot scold or push them to do things like Korean students.... Also, I have been trying to check my students' mood or feelings before the lesson, and trying to change the amount of assignments if the student complains, which I find very frustrating but I think I have to do. (Min Young)

I think here in the U.S., society accepts and supports autonomy. Personal interests and expressions are valid and unique, and ought to be respected, so I think students have less pressure for their practicing assignments or theory assignments; they care more about their interest in music and piano.... If they are not interested in practicing, then they do not do it.... Because of that, I think my teaching style

has changed. For instance, I've started to ask the students questions: "What do you think about this music, how do you like the sound of it," etc. ... If I don't motivate their interests, I feel that they might not continue to study the piano. Also, I have started to take a more serious view of the relationships between the students and me, because the parents are not so much involved with the lessons compared with the Korean moms I had worked with, and also because the reason for taking lessons is not driven by the parents, but by the student's interests. (Song)

I think this was the worst lesson. I was surprised by her behavior and attitude.... I helped her to sit properly and focus on playing, and the student did not respond. When I explained things or asked a question, the student looked at other stuff, or knelt down on the floor, or said she did not want to play the piano today and started tapping the keyboard.... I never had this kind of student before in Korea, so it was quite a challenge and made me think about how to respond to or work with these kinds of students who do not behave properly and are not disciplined.... If I were in Korea, and I had a student with similar behavior, I would usually tell the parent or student that I will no longer teach them, ask them to find another teacher, etc. ... However, I cannot do that here ...and when I took an education class, we talked a lot about how to manage students or classes where unexpected situations occur, or what situations can happen.... I think that in order for me to teach here ...I need to prepare for these issues or challenges which are unexpected for me. (Song)

You have to give lots of compliments.... You cannot be too strict or too honest to young American students.... You need to learn sugar-coated expressions and how to use them if you want to continue teach here. (Min Young)

I used to change the way I approached my Asian students because that is what their parents wanted. I would be stricter ... make sure everything was perfect.... It did not work for me. Maybe I do not have that kind of personality. If I am encouraging rather than commanding, it will give better results. I just thought I should.... Maybe it is from my perception of the way Asian students play, they play perfectly. So they must learn to play perfectly. (Ally)

One was an older transfer student, and usually with transfer students I like to keep something familiar for them, so it's not all new at once, so I think I changed my teaching style more directly for her.... My other Korean student was her little brother, and he was starting from scratch, so I started him with a more creative approach. (Bethany)

While American participants seemed to recognize the challenges and opportunities presented by cultural differences as a challenge, they seemed to try to integrate the new challenges with their pre-existing teaching philosophy and style. In this way, the Americans seemed to be more confident about preserving their pre-existing pedagogical approach. Korean teachers, on the other hand, tended to be sensitive to both Korean and American teaching styles. Accordingly, these participants recognized the need to sensitively accommodate contextual situations, typically attempting to revise their teaching approaches even if they encountered frustration in understanding how to adjust to new cultures.

That Korean participants modified their teaching styles might seem like obvious illustrations of the saying, “When in Rome, do as the Romans do.” In this way, Korean participants, each of whom were international student teachers away from home, determined for themselves the degree to which they resisted, adapted, or assimilated music teaching situations outside their cultural comfort zone. An alternate explanation of this phenomenon is suggested by the notion of “double consciousness,” often associated with critical race theory as explained by W.E.B. Dubois as a “sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others in the mirror.... One feels two-ness, —an American, a Negro...”⁵⁸ According to Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate IV, many African Americans (and other minorities) use a double consciousness to cope with being an “other⁵⁹,” and what Korean participants were doing in terms of modifying their teaching styles seemed demonstrate that they were experiencing a type of double consciousness.

⁵⁸ Gloria Ladson-Billings and William F. Tate IV, “Toward a Critical Race Theory of Education,” *Teachers College Record* 97, no.1 (1995): 47-68.

⁵⁹ Ladson-Billings, 1995.

Participants' Concluding Observations

Most Korean participants were able to offer explanations for their own insights and recommendations—those that they are actually applying or adapting their current teaching methods. Here are specific recommendations from Korean participants to both pre-service Korean student teachers and pre-service American student teachers:

We were used to teaching what we had learned in Korea, but I think when you come to the U.S., you start to think about whether your teaching style or method or philosophy is effective for the students or not.... I guess here, it is more student-oriented.... Here, students actually ask questions during the lesson.... You need to think about various teaching styles or methods for your students.... The technical accomplishment and performance-based style is not the best model here. (Bo Young)

I usually pat my students' shoulders during lessons as an expression of encouragement or a compliment, which is quite common in Korea.... However, when my American colleague observed a lesson, she told me that I had to be careful about physical touch, and should first ask permission from the students or parents to use physical touch.... This was quite surprising to me ...so I guess I

want to tell Korean student-teachers who will work with American students to be careful about physical touch. (Bo Young)

In Korea, I think I did everything I could for my students, because of their expectations. They expected me to do everything for them, so I had to explain everything and teach ... dynamics [and] musical interpretation.... I usually brought a progress notebook for my students, and specifically noted what they needed to practice and how much they needed to practice.... Monday, practice this spot five times.... Tuesday, practice another spot ...five times.... If that does not work, you can just talk with their parents, then everything will work out.... However, in America, I never assign practicing homework specifically.... I think they can figure out what to practice if I explain it well. For young American students, I started to explain to them why they need to practice, and if the students agree with the reasons for practicing, they seemed to prepare for their lessons well. (Bo Young)

First ...like an entertainer ...you need to motivate students' interests and need to have a sense of humor. You need to learn positive expressions, and how to give compliments to your students. You also need to keep the lesson time punctually. (Song)

Advice for pre-service American teachers.... If they work with young Korean students, they have to give more specific assignments ...what the students need to do, how many times they need to do it.... They also need to explain directly what the teacher wants in working with the student and expects from the student ...as you would when dealing with American students. If you give many choices—you can think about it this way, or another way—then the students are easily overwhelmed and confused. (Song)

Korean moms, especially those who have just come to the U.S., have difficulties in communicating with the teachers at first because of linguistic challenges.... Even if a Korean mom does not have difficulty with speaking in English, she might be uncomfortable talking about her expectations with the teachers right away because of the cultural challenges.... Korean mothers tend to be hesitant to say something directly to the teachers at first.... Korean parents think it is quite common that the teacher ask their child to go to competitions or festivals or recitals first. Then the parents feel more welcomed and comfortable talking about their expectations. (Song)

In contrast to the Korean participants, American participants seemed hesitant and reluctant to generalize about their challenging past experiences. As a result, their recommendations are less specific in terms of general cross-cultural teaching situations; their reluctance to generalize may reflect the emphasis in their pedagogical practice on students' individuality. Included in italics are my questions during the interview with Bethany:

What advice would you give to pre-service American teachers who are about to teach young Korean students?

I don't know.... I don't feel like I have had enough experience to give them general comments.

Then ...what about Asian young students? What would you suggest to American student teachers who are about teach young Asian kids?

Well, I think in a way not to single out any kind of culture, the best way would be [to] make sure they have a really throughout interview with the student and the parents before the first lesson ...and sort of observe very carefully the interactions between the student and the parent and the teacher during in that interview and then [ask] a couple of direct questions to both parents and the student ...even in a written format. [That way] you can start to understand the driving forces behind everything that's going to be going on in the piano lessons. You know? Is the parent more interested than the child? The child just expressed interest but they don't have any ability or experiencing being independent as a learner.

For example, a three-and-a-half year-old Chinese girl that I taught—it was clear that she hasn't even been in kindergarten yet, so of course she is practicing with her mom at home ... 'cause everything she learned has been through the parents' involvement.... But if she had been seven or eight, and she had experienced doing things her own, I would be much more curious to see what her level of commitment was for practicing, what her mom's interest level was being involved in practicing ... Sort of establishing a circle of trust and authority for the three of us, so I don't think I can tell graduate students or undergraduate students, you know, "This is how you should go about it." But I think they should collect much information as they can from the very beginning.

What are your suggestions for future Korean student teachers then? Those who are about to start to teach young American students?

I would give the same advice, because as I am learning from you, you can learn so much from other cultures. And I think it sounds like pedagogy in the [United] States is very different. What we value is sort of a general teaching philosophy versus what is taught overseas.

What is that?

Just sort of more holistic, and creative, fun. Independent learning is the model over here ... versus, correct me if I am wrong, but what I've observed is much more parental involvement. It is much more cooperative; it's not independent learning, [it's] learning with a helper or a coach and lots of progressing towards specific, set goals, and not so much for creativity but just for playing. [It's] so much more performance-based. So I

think we all have something to learn from other cultures. So I want Korean students, graduate students or undergraduate students, to learn about the American system by getting to know more American families through the interview process.... If I were teaching undergraduates, I would want them all to prepare a sort of interview or trial lesson, but I want them to do some background reading on why you ask certain questions. Why do you want to know about parent involvement? Because, you know, some schools think that parents want to be less and less involved.... So students become more independent, and then other schools think of it as family learning experiences.... That's going to be an important bond like when you think about Suzuki It's good to know all those of driving forces behind why people do things. (Bethany)

I don't think my Korean student is typical for your study.... It's hard to generalize.... I think it's valuable not to depend upon the culture so much.... Also, I think it is important to talk to parents about what the expectations are for piano lessons, and what the students' expectations are and what your expectations are, because they are coming from another culture of piano lessons.... [I have to] make sure everyone is happy with the way I do things. (Ally)

There is no statistical evidence to support these participant views, but I believe that an understanding of the distinctions between individualism and collectivism may explain the differences in the above responses from Korean and American participants. In societies that

encourage a collectivist philosophy, people forms stronger group bonds. I believe that these people may need to learn the behaviors that fit in with their group early in life. Because of that, they may tend to know their group's customary practices well, which makes it possible for them to make distinctions between their group's and other groups' characteristics. As a result, Korean participants may easily be able to make specific observations about the different pedagogical environments in the two countries, and are therefore able to give more detailed advice about these challenges.

Limitations of the Study

Although my study has broadened cross-cultural understandings of the experience of teaching piano in a Korean-American context, it also has limitations. First, because of the locale in which the study was conducted, it only included a few American participants. A better balance between American and Korean participants may have led to more findings, particularly for areas of the study that the American participants had less to say about: linguistic difficulty and general advice for teaching Korean students. Second and perhaps related to this, the issue of miscommunication and misperception on the level of language was an intriguing outcome, could have been explored in greater depth. If participants, both American and Korean, had been more forthcoming, this may have yielded further results. Another limitation is the sample of participants, all of whom I knew personally outside of this study as they were part of my piano graduate program. If we had not had previous contact, and if the sample set had included students outside of this institution, the sample size would have been larger and the results would

have presented a more diverse pool. In addition, a few of the Korean participants were younger than me. As such, the age dynamic and deference to an elder who was also the “researcher” may have contributed to the manner in which they answered questions.

My own bias as a researcher also presents some limitations for this study. I believe that different dimensions of my identity influenced this research. I was born and grew up Korea until the age of 19. I studied with four private Korean piano teachers between age of 12 and 17, and three American piano teachers between 20 and 33. As a teacher, I taught a few young Korean students before coming to the U.S. I began to teach piano professionally in 2003, working at the piano laboratory at the University of Michigan. I am a bicultural and can speak English as a second language. I understand the society Korean participants and Korean young students come from and the society the Korean participants are trying to reach. My identity as a Korean, teacher, and a doctoral piano student at UW–Madison also helped shape the kind of interaction I had with participants. Several of the issues that came up in the interviews and observations were familiar to me, particularly issues of discipline with American students and the miscommunication that arises because of linguistic and cultural differences. As such, it is possible my interest in miscommunication and in discipline is overemphasized.

Implication for Music teaching and Practice

The present study focused on a specific context comparing the cultural expectations of Korean and American piano instruction. Obviously it would be impossible to generalize from the qualitative data offered here; however, these findings may suggest issues worthy of consideration

by pre-service piano teachers, and may be extended to the academic community in recognizing the complexities of cross-cultural piano teaching.

For example, the qualities pertaining to Confucian and collectivist influence on education, the connections between language and social status, the attention to discipline in piano studies, the role of Asian/Korean motherhood, and attitude towards modifying teaching methods that have been discussed in this paper can be used as starting point for preparing for or reflecting on further cross-cultural teaching. This may serve as a resource as professors engage in the education of professional piano teachers and for those responsible for the decisions about curriculum and instruction in the development of teachers in the U.S. Particularly, the findings about challenges and the recommendation to future teachers can serve organizations such as piano laboratory or pedagogy classes in the university as a source of information and assistance. They may be of particular benefit to student teachers during their initial cross-cultural teaching experiences, especially for Asian teachers arriving in the United States.

Furthermore, the findings may help to affirm that each new international student brings not only a general culture but also a pedagogic culture situated deeply in traditions, beliefs, values, and roles. Namely, it may help us to understand the need to support and assist our international student teachers in the challenging process of adapting to a new culture.

Nonetheless, music teacher preparation in higher education is not the only arena where such efforts can be explored. Additionally, the findings can encourage community music teachers, including private piano teachers and those who teach at studios, to create a teaching philosophy and to communicate that philosophy before enrolling students. Studios might even

consider hiring teachers of various philosophies to match student needs so that all types of learners could have their needs met.

Implication for Further Research

There are many approaches to investigate the challenges and issues within the realm of cross-cultural pedagogy. The methods of analyzing interviews and observing lessons in the study are similar to Bartel Lee and Leonid Sprikut's research model in "Adapting Pedagogic Culture: The Experience of Four Immigrant Music Teachers in Canada."⁶⁰ I also found their research is one of most useful resources to begin to explore at the pedagogy classroom setting along with Karen Iglitzin's "Teaching with Interpreters"⁶¹ and Kenneth Williams's "Cross-Cultural Communication in the Music Studio."

Though my focus here has been within a Korean-American paradigm, I hope my work can assist other researchers in attending to additional cross-cultural piano pedagogy environments. Moreover, I hope that my efforts will eventually add value not only to cross-cultural piano pedagogy, but may even inspire and assist other music education researchers to imagine as well as further explore emerging territories.

⁶⁰ Lee Bartel, 2010.

⁶¹ Karen Iglitzin, "Teaching with Interpreters (in China)," *American String Teacher* 48, no.3 (1998): 48-53.

Conclusion

It is clear from this study that the values and attitudes are, in part, demonstrated via educational priorities and expectations of a society's members including parents, students, and teachers. Then, what are the ways for piano instructors to better negotiate the cross-cultural dynamic of the teaching and learning process? In fact, when I discussed this research topic at conferences, many people asked, "What can you recommend when I work with Korean/Asian students? Should I not ask questions? Or should I be strict with them?"

After I realized that some unexpected reactions and misunderstandings with parents and students were related to the cross-cultural dimensions of our teaching and learning relationships, I decided to learn my students' and parents' educational priorities and expectations. I started to search what favored teaching and learning models are prevalent in the U.S. by simply talking to my students' parents and my colleagues. After noticing there are differences from the two pedagogical cultures, I suddenly started to feel inadequate and insecure as a teacher. Especially when I was interacting with my American students and parents, it was very obvious I was timid. I knew I had to do something differently. Therefore, I tried to act like an American teacher with American students or parents, and to act a totally Korean teacher with Asian students and parents. That was my first adaptation to cross-cultural teaching settings, and it did not work well. Actually, it made cross-cultural teaching even more complicated. It was clear that neither teaching style from either culture matches with my teaching philosophy. This strategy only reduced my integrity as a teacher.

My next adaptation to cross-cultural teaching began intellectually while I took piano pedagogy and music education courses at UW-Madison. While studying topics such as practicum in advanced studio teaching-piano, racial issues, multiculturalism, and music teaching in studio, I was exposed to some American educators or music pedagogues. Their goals or objectives of (music) education, principal beliefs, and values which guide American pedagogical culture, all made me see American pedagogical cultures with a different perspective. I also kept a course-required journal reflecting my misunderstandings and unexpected situations with parents or students that I had before. Sometimes I felt terrible and was deeply ashamed of what I had done with certain parents or students, but I was glad that I was able to look back and reflect on all of the incidents, and recognize how my own thinking has changed since that time.

Here is one of my stories about how my own thinking has changed; during the first year of my teaching, my student, Jenny, who was a seven-year-old, told me that she was so busy with many extracurricular activities that she could not practice piano during the past weeks. I actually could not understand Jenny and her mother, since we were preparing for Jenny's first student achievement test. I told her mother that she needed to practice the performance pieces and to review all theory questions that I asked for. I told her mother again two weeks before the test, her child really needed to practice hard if she wanted to have a good score on the test. I said that because I knew Jenny and her mother also cared about the grade, and I did not want them to have a bad grade either, especially on Jenny's first piano test. I have to confess that I was also very proud of myself when I talked to her –wondering how many teachers would actually care about the student's grade? I was thinking, "Here I was as a dedicated teacher, spending extra time to talk with you about your child even though she had hardly prepared what I had asked!" Of course, I did not say these things, but I assumed the mother would appreciate what I had done for

Jenny. Most Korean mothers would appreciate when the teacher is firm about their children's practicing, especially when they are preparing for the test (or competition). It means the teacher actually cares about their children and their children's success.

Totally out of my expectation, Jenny's mother proclaimed that Jenny was afraid of her first test and that their goal was not a world pianist. Jenny's mother declared that she did not want to give any pressure which almost sounded to me as, "Please, Miss Cho, stop pressuring Jenny." I was stunned and became speechless. When children are preparing for a student recital or competition, most Korean mothers would make their children practice the piece until they think it sounds perfect (or the teacher says it is ready to go). Especially for the first test (competition), most Korean mothers would work through the piece with their children as long as it takes to get the good grade. Some Korean mothers would even hire a substitute piano teacher who can help practicing. To me, Jenny's mother was lazy, irresponsible, and disrespecting. It was obvious that piano studying was not their priority. I was hurt that they did not appreciate my passion for Jenny, and I also almost regretted caring about Jenny's test or progress. I even felt that the reason was Jenny's mother did not respect me was that I am neither White nor a native English speaker.

A month later, I had a chance to talk with Jenny's mother in the hallway. During our long conversation, she told me that she had been a high school teacher once and had quit because she hated the situation that her students lived with all the test pressures. I realized that she, as American mother, cares about Jenny's piano studying in a different way than most Korean mothers. I did not fully understand her then. I still thought that they should have prepared for the test better, no matter what. It still sounded like an excuse to me that Jenny did not work hard

because she did not like the pressures and was afraid of the test. Most Korean mothers and teachers, on the contrary, although they realize that there might be many reasons for test anxiety; believe that the only cure is more practicing and preparation. For Korean mothers and teachers, giving up the test opportunity because children are afraid would mean that they do not trust children's capacity.

Two years later, while studying the cross-cultural topic at my graduate program, I had an opportunity to rethink Jenny mother's earlier response. I realized two differences between Korean and American cultures. One was about the number of extracurricular activities, and the other was about the cultural values placed on the outcome of the (piano learning) activities. First, when I was growing up in Korea, most primary school students, because of demanding school curricula and/or limited availability of extracurricular activities, the children had only one or two activities. Piano was the most common. Therefore, when Jenny said that she was busy with all other curricula, I thought she was just making excuses. I was thinking, "Jenny, you are a first grade student; why are you so busy? Isn't the piano one of only a few extracurricular activities?" I did not know that American students are usually very busy in many extracurricular activities, of which piano is simply one.

In addition to the issue of available time to practice, there is the issue of different cultural values associated with learning piano. In American culture, the child's self-esteem seems to be one of the most important elements, whereas, for Korean mothers, the child's development of discipline and actual achievement are important. Therefore, Jenny's mother's concern about Jenny's feelings about the test was absolutely necessary for them. There was no reason that I should have taken Jenny's mother's response personally; however, I did not know then that the

value concerning a child's self-esteem is common in American culture. I sometimes noticed that some American students' mothers questioned their children's feelings after the lessons or performances. I had assumed that this questioning was related to in the parents' limited confidence in the teachers or in the curriculum. This was another manifestation of the cultural difference.

The fact is that, if I did not study the cross-cultural issues in my graduate program, I still might have lived with my biases. My previous biases were such that the use of student-oriented methods seemed to make students irresponsible and less skillful in technique. My biases also made students and parents seem disrespectful to teachers. One of my biases was that my American students' mothers seemed to care about their child's self-esteem because they did not trust me as a teacher (since I am neither White nor a native English speaker). I cannot completely get rid of biases, but my perspectives definitely have changed through my reflection while learning pedagogical cultures academically.

Eventually these changes made me became flexible to adapt my teaching methods to my students' preferred learning methods. Interestingly, the more I learn and experiment with all possible methods from two cultures, the more I become not so dependent upon the cultural generalizations. I guess, after all my trials and errors, I developed my own teaching philosophy and methods. Now that I have a more solid foundation, when I interact with students and parents, I no longer make unwarranted cultural assumptions.

My answer to the first question (what do we need to do with Asian students after knowing their educational cultures) is that there is not any universal application for piano

pedagogy in a Korean (Asian)-American context. What I believe is that, as long as piano teachers try to reflect on their own potential biases toward specific teaching methods or learning styles from other cultures, and as long as they try to get rid of these biases while learning other pedagogical cultures and their own culture, piano teachers will eventually develop their own effective applications for piano teaching in cross-cultural settings. My hope is that this research will enable readers to understand some of their incidents or questions from cross-cultural teaching (Asian-American settings) with different perspective than before, and provide an opportunity to learn about other pedagogical cultures with fewer preconceptions.

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Appendix A

Initial Interview Questions

1. Personal: name, native country, university degree.
2. Professional background:
 - a. Years of teaching experience.
 - b. Where/location.
 - c. Other than native American or Korean students, have you taught any students from other countries?
 - d. What are/were the ages of the students you have taught?
3. What do you consider to be your professional authentic and coherent practice in your own teaching?
 - a. Tell me about your beliefs regarding the pedagogical relationship between a teacher and student.
 - b. Why do you believe this?
 - c. What are your expectations for your students? Why?
 - d. What are your students' expectations of you?
 - e. What are the parents' expectations of you?
 - f. How do you negotiate these? How do you feel about these?
 - g. Tell me about the conversation style between (a) you and your students and (b) you and your students' parents? For instance, do children and parents use honorifics? Who initiates the conversation?
 - h. What do you feel your relationship to be with your students? With their parents?

- i. Authority manifests itself in different ways in different cultures, especially between teachers and children and teachers and parents. Tell me about how this plays out in your teaching experiences.
4. When you are working with either Korean or American pre-college students, tell me about the teaching style that is expected by your students and parents. If you made changes in your teaching style, please tell me about those changes and your process.
5. Talk about any unexpected situations that occurred in your teaching experiences, either with parents or students, (i.e. attitudes, motivation, behavior, discipline issues).
6. What insights, recommendations, or advice would you like to share regarding working with students and parents of cultures different from your own?

Appendix B

Final Interview Questions

1. Reflect on your teaching practice in the two lessons.
2. Tell me about your teacher decision-making process in the two lessons.
3. If you encountered any linguistic or cultural challenges in these two lessons, (a) what were they and (b) how did you negotiate them?
4. If you feel that you did NOT encounter any linguistic or cultural challenges in these two lessons, describe why you feel that way.
5. Please share anything else with me that you believe is pertinent to this inquiry or that you feel I should know about your multicultural pedagogic practices.

Appendix C

Approved Consent Form

**University of Wisconsin-Madison
Research Participant Information and Consent Form**

Title of the Study: Pedagogic Multiculturalism in the Piano Studio: a Korean Perspective

Principal Investigator: Dr. Jessica Johnson (phone: 608-263-1927 / email:jgjohnson@wisc.edu)

Co-Investigator: Jihun Cho (phone: 734-709-7540 / email:jcho33@wisc.edu)

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

You are invited to participate in a research study about Pedagogic Multiculturalism in the Piano Studio: a Korean Perspective.

You have been asked to participate because 1) you are currently either a Korean or American graduate piano or piano pedagogy student at UW-Madison and have teaching experience with both a pre-college Korean student and a pre-college student from United States.

The purpose of research is to investigate how piano instructors can better negotiate the cross-cultural dynamics of the teaching and learning process. Hence, the primary goals of this research are 1) to invite piano instructors to reflect upon their communicative behaviors by examining their values, beliefs, traditions, and expectations; and 2) to reconsider cross-cultural communication and positive relationships with students and parents within particular types of teaching situations. This study will primarily utilize the Korean-American milieu as an entry point to explore future possibilities for improved cross-cultural piano pedagogy.

The research will take place in the Mosse Humanities Building.

You will be audio-taped during your participation (which only involves an interview format) in this research. The co-investigator will hear the recordings. The recordings will not use the participant's name and will protect the anonymity of the participant at all times. The tapes will be retained for a period of 7 years before they are destroyed.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participate in this research you will be asked to spend up to one semester participating in the research, including the following commitments:

1. Approximately one-hour initial interview (Room 1453 in Humanities Building at the school of music)

<p style="text-align:center">University of Wisconsin-Madison FWA00005399 Protocol: SE-2011-0692 Approved: 10/14/2011 Expires: 10/13/2012</p>

2. Allowing the co-investigator to observe two 30-minute piano lessons if you are currently teaching a pre-college student from Korea/the U.S. If you are from the U.S, the co-investigator will observe your lesson teaching when you work with a pre-college student from Korea, and if you are Korean, the co-investigator will observe your lesson-teaching when you work with a pre-college student from the United States.

3. Teaching observation # 2 will be a follow up two weeks after observation # 1, and it will be with the same student as observation # 1. (one of the grand piano practice rooms in Humanities Building at the school of music)

4. Approximately one-hour final interview (only if you had the co-investigator observe your lesson-teaching) (Room 1453)

Note: The co-investigator will send a letter to your pre-college students' parents via email to get their permission for the teaching observation in advance.

****NO DECEPTION WILL OCCUR.**

ARE THERE ANY RISKS TO ME?

To reduce the risk of a breach, the co-investigator will retain all data in a locked file cabinet and the co-investigator's computer at the co-investigator's office at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Should the co-investigator's office moves, the data will move with her. All electronic data will be only saved in authorized computers at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Only the co-investigator who has ID and passwords to use the computers as well as has a key to the office will access the data. The co-investigator will keep the written data in the office for a period of 7 years, and then the written and audio data will be destroyed. In any written or oral report arising from this research, the data will be presented so that the participants will not be identified or identifiable.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS TO ME?

There are no direct benefits.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

While there will probably be publications as a result of this study, your name will not be used. Only group characteristics will be published. Recordings will not use the name of participants and will not reveal the identity of the participant.

If you participate in this study, we would like to be able to quote you directly without using your name. If you agree to allow us to quote you in publications, please initial the statement at the bottom of this form.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?

University of Wisconsin-Madison
FWA00005399

Protocol: SE-2011-0692
Approved: 10/14/2011
Expires: 10/13/2012

You may ask any questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research after you leave today you should contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Jessica Johnson at 608-263-1927. You may also call the Co-Investigator, Jihun Cho at 734-239-1874.

If you are not satisfied with the response of the research team, have more questions, or want to talk with someone about your rights as a research participant, you should contact the Social & Behavioral Science IRB Office at 608-262-2320.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from the study, you may do so at any point and without penalty.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, have had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research, and voluntarily consent to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Participant (please print): _____

Signature

Date

I give my permission for the interview recording and two teaching observations to be shared in a professional presentation. (initial) _____

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