Exploring Intercultural Communication Themes in English Classes Through the Movie *Outsourced*

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Since English is the global language, it is important for English language learners to be proficient in the language and knowledgeable about intercultural communication in English-speaking countries and other countries that use English as a lingua franca. Movies can be an informative and memorable tool for teaching intercultural communication concepts. This descriptive exploratory study centers on the movie *Outsourced* (Jeffcoat, 2006), which is about an American expatriate in India. He experiences many frustrations trying to assimilate to an unfamiliar culture, but he eventually adapts and appreciates his new lifestyle. Research objectives centered on determining which intercultural communication themes South Korean English language learners in university could identify in the movie as well as how they viewed these themes. The study also sought to examine how the learners perceive the effectiveness of using the movie to learn about intercultural communication. Data included a worksheet, class discussions, and an essay which were each analyzed through qualitative content analysis. Students were able to identify primary themes related to intercultural communication and generally perceived the movie favorably as a tool for learning about intercultural communication. Practical suggestions are provided for instructors who are considering using movies in the classroom to teach cross-cultural communication or cultural themes.

I. INTRODUCTION

Movies can be an engaging and authentic way to improve language and cultural awareness in English language classes. Movies can also promote greater interest in learning English (Choi, 2013; Inage, Lawn, & Lawn, 2013; Kusumarasdyati, 2004; Shieh, 2015). Previous research has shown benefits of using movies in classes that center on intercultural communication (e.g. Champoux, 1999; Mallinger & Rossy, 2003; Roell, 2010; Varner & Beamer, 2005). By examining movies with intercultural communication

themes, students can explore cultural differences and see authentic examples of how people from different cultures interact (Cardon, 2010). Movies can also elicit a greater interest in intercultural communication. There are various benefits to using movies in English language classes, especially in terms of improving intercultural communication skills and awareness of other cultures. This paper explores intercultural communication concepts in the movie *Outsourced* (Jeffcoat, 2006), which focuses on the experiences of an American expat named Todd who is living in India. The film provides rich examples of intercultural communication concepts that largely center on Todd's experiences with his Indian coworkers.

This study expands on the body of literature by concentrating on five intercultural communication themes South Korean English language learners in university can identify in the movie as well as how they perceive these themes. The themes that were examined include differences in language, high versus low context culture, individualism and collectivism, ethnocentrism, and culture shock. These themes were selected since they had previously been covered in class, so the students were already familiar with them. Additionally, the study sought to explore how these learners view the effectiveness of using the movie *Outsourced* as a resource for improving their understanding of intercultural communication. Most of the studies that examine this movie as an intercultural communication tool, focus on U.S. and Indian participants. Finally, obtaining more qualitative data on the students' perceptions can help instructors develop movie activities that are centered more on students' learning needs and opinions. Thus, the research questions used to guide this study include:

1. What examples of differences in language, high versus low context culture, individualism and collectivism, ethnocentrism, and culture shock from the movie *Outsourced* do English language learners in South Korean universities identify?
2. How do English language learners in South Korean universities perceive these intercultural communication themes portrayed in the movie *Outsourced*?
3. How do these learners view the effectiveness to learn about intercultural communication themes?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Effectiveness of Using Movies to Learn Intercultural Communication Concepts

According to Chao (2013), intercultural learning can be defined as the “process of searching for, observing and interpreting the attitudes and behaviours of people from different cultural or linguistic backgrounds in target contexts, rather than addressing only ethnic, national or international differences” (p. 249). Movies with intercultural themes have been studied as components of intercultural training sessions and classes (e.g. Mallinger & Rossy, 2003; Pandey, 2012; Smith, Shrestha, & Evans, 2010; Varner & Beamer, 2005). Prominent examples include studies by Mallinger and Rossy (2003) on *Gung Ho* (Howard, 1986), Smith et al. (2010) on *Crash* (Haggis & Yari, 2004), Cardon (2010) on *Slumdog Millionaire* (Boyle, 2008), and Pandey (2012) on *My Big Fat Greek Wedding* (Zwick, 2002) and *Outsourced*. Korean studies have also examined how movies can be used to promote a greater understanding of other cultures and people (e.g. Choi, 2013; Lee, 2017; Seo, 2010). Students’ perceptions of using movies to learn intercultural communication concepts have generally been favorable.

2. Examining Intercultural Communication Themes in the Movie *Outsourced*

The movie *Outsourced* has been examined in several studies (e.g. Adibah, 2017; Briam, 2010; Pandey, 2012; Pandey & Ardichvili, 2015) that focused on intercultural communication principles, cultural themes, business topics, and general cultural differences. This study focuses on five intercultural communication themes including language differences between Indian and American English, high-context and low-context cultures, individualism and collectivism, ethnocentrism, and culture shock. In Pandey’s (2012) study, students discussed various positive elements of the movies *Outsourced* and *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*, which helped to improve their understanding of intercultural communication. Pandey (2012) indicated that not all of the students had positive views of the films as learning tools, but none of the students stated that they were dissatisfied with the experience. These types of movies can enhance their understanding of other cultures and intercultural communication concepts while improving English language proficiency.

1) Language Differences

Language and culture are largely interrelated (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2012; Li & Wang, 2015). The movie *Outsourced* provides examples of differences between American and Indian English. Briam (2010) provides a framework for how to use *Outsourced* to teach intercultural communication classes. Briam (2010) mentions that when Todd meets his Indian counterparts he is referred to as “Mr. Toad.” His name is constantly mispronounced. When Puro discusses his fiancé, Bhagyashree Sasamunde, Todd replies with “Baggy who?” Puro also discusses the Indian festival *Holi*, which is a

festival of color and seasonal changes. Todd says, “Holy what?” Various language misunderstandings appear in the film. Briam (2010) also discusses how the slang words, “redneck,” “kitsch,” and “schmuck,” that Todd uses are unfamiliar to the Indian staff. In addition, a language misunderstanding arises in the call center when an Indian call center representative tells an American woman on the phone inquiring about school supplies that she may need some “rubbers,” not knowing that the term refers to condoms in the U.S. By examining language differences in the movie, students can become more knowledgeable about how English is used in different countries and contexts. They can also become more cognizant of how language and culture are intertwined.

2) High-Context and Low-Context Cultures

Hall (1976) reported that cultures can be classified into two primary categories based on how people communicate with each other. Cultures that are significantly low-context include Scandinavian countries, Germany, and Switzerland where speech tends to be direct. Conversely, countries including Japan and China are classified as high-context, in which communication is more implicit, less verbal, and body language cues are used more to convey messages. However, it is common for personal questions about family and relationships to be asked directly in high-context cultures. In the movie *Outsourced*, various contrasting examples of high and low context cultures are portrayed. India is typically classified as a high-context culture, but some elements of the culture can be classified as low-context. In addition, India is a large country with varying ethnic groups with different practices. Terms such as “high context” and “low context” are cultural generalizations and do not apply to all situations or groups. Nevertheless, cultures are generally defined by specific characteristics and are labeled accordingly. India is generally portrayed as a high-context country in the movie. Todd’s actions are evident of a person from a low-context culture. Todd tends to be very blunt about his feelings regarding the call center when he first visits, which is indicative of communication styles in low-context cultures. He says, “Oh, you gotta be kidding me. This is it?” He also makes very direct negative comments about the call center. However, when Todd asks Puro if he can travel a long distance to get a shipment that was sent to the wrong location, Puro indirectly replies that he needs to sleep for a couple of hours first and ensure that his mother goes to the hospital. Instead of responding directly that he does not want to go, he replies in a roundabout way causing confusion for Todd. This is a sign of the importance of “maintaining social harmony” in high-context cultures (Briam, 2010, p. 390). Students need to be familiar with differences in high context and low context cultures so that their behavior and use of language is appropriate and not offensive to people from other backgrounds. Even if students never travel abroad, they may be exposed to foreigners in

their own country and should be familiar with the concept of high and low context cultures, so that they can effectively interact without causing embarrassment or misunderstanding.

3) Individualism and Collectivism

Collectivism involves “a social pattern consisting of closely linked individuals who see themselves as part of one or more collectives (family, co-workers, tribe, nation); are primarily motivated by the norms of, and duties imposed by, those collectives” (Triandis, 2018, p. 2). Members of collective cultures tend to emphasize the goals of the group over their own priorities and stress the importance of connections with the group. Conversely, individualism centers on “loosely linked individuals who view themselves as independent of collectives” (Triandis, 2018, p. 2). They are more concerned about their own goals, priorities, and needs. India is generally defined as a collectivistic culture and the U.S. an individualistic. Primary examples of individualism portrayed in the movie include that Todd lived alone in Seattle, his parents lived a few hours away, and he is very work-oriented (Briam, 2010). Puro is shocked that Todd lives so far away from his parents and does not see them often. Todd also sits on a very busy train at the beginning of the movie. A young boy gives up his seat for Todd and then sits on Todd’s lap. As an individualist, this seems very strange to Todd. At the beginning of the movie, he has intentions to stay at a hotel and seems to want to be alone, but Puro insists that he stay at Auntie Ji’s guest house. He states that the hotel “is very lonely” and Auntie Ji will take care of him more than his “own real mother.” While meeting Auntie Ji, she asks Todd very personal questions about his family, which is considered normal in many collectivist cultures. In addition, Todd asks Asha what she thinks about living in the U.S. Her response is, “I would miss my parents. It would be too hard.” Briam (2010) discusses the role of marriage in the film. Todd is in love with Asha and learns that she has been engaged to be married. Her parents arranged her engagement when she was four-years-old. Scenes such as this emphasize the role of collectivism and the importance of family in Indian culture. These examples provide a visual depiction of realistic differences in collectivistic and individualistic cultures. By learning more about collectivism and individualism, students gain a better understanding of different cultures and can more effectively interact and communicate with people while reducing cultural misunderstandings and other barriers. Moreover, the way language, even English, is used in different cultures is influenced by individualism and collectivism.

4) Ethnocentrism

Ethnocentrism can be defined as “a kind of ethnic or cultural group egocentrism, which

involves a belief in the superiority of one's own group, including its values and practices, and often contempt, hatred, and hostility towards those outside the group" (Bizumic, 2015, p. 2). Although ethnocentrism is not a clear component of intercultural communication, exhibiting ethnocentric behaviors and attitudes can certainly inhibit intercultural communication. Briam (2010) discusses how Todd initially tells the call center employees that they need to learn about America. Todd states, "The center's numbers are nowhere near what they should be, and based on the customer complaints we've been having, it's a culture thing. Basically, you people need to learn about America." Todd also goes on to say, "Things go faster if the customer feels they are talking to a native English speaker." He reiterates the need for the workers to learn about America. He fails to realize at this point that the workers are native English speakers and that their style of English is just different. In another scene, Todd tells the employees about one of the company's popular products, a burger brand, which is highly offensive to his Hindu coworkers who believe that cows are sacred. In a pivotal scene, Todd's future romantic partner, Asha, tells him, "You need to learn about India." Through the movie, students can visualize what can happen when individuals do not take the time to learn about the host culture. Various misunderstandings and language communication problems can develop. Furthermore, the adaptation process can be particularly difficult.

5) Culture Shock

Culture shock is a dominant theme in the movie. Culture shock can be defined as "a disorienting experience of suddenly finding that the perspectives, behaviours and experience of an individual or group or whole society are not shared by others" (Furham, 2012, p. 11). It is also considered a normal part of the acculturation process that many people experience when traveling or living in another country (Furham, 2012). The movie explores a wide range of cultural differences including music, holidays, religion, family, food, language, and dating and relationships. These new aspects of life present challenges for Todd. Various scenes of busy Indian cities can be seen in the movie as well as Todd's struggles to use public transportation. Todd eats at the guest house of Auntie Ji where he is staying and engages in culturally offensive behavior by eating with his left hand. He also goes to another city to visit "McDonalds" to eat a cheeseburger but soon realizes it is not an actual McDonalds but rather "McDonnells." In addition, the McDonnells does not sell hamburgers but rather veggie burgers. Many of these differences are quite frustrating and annoying for Todd who is struggling to adapt. He meets another expatriate when he visits McDonnells and is given words of wisdom that seem to positively impact him. His new acquaintance states, "I was resisting India. Once I gave in, I did much better." After this scene, Todd discusses his faults and ignorance with his coworkers. Moreover, he asks

for advice from his Indian counterparts to help the company function more effectively (Briam, 2010). As time progresses, Todd becomes more understanding of Indian culture. In Pandey's (2012) study on intercultural themes in the movie, students also highlighted the topics of cultural adjustment and adaptation which are aspects of the final stages of culture shock. Students often discussed acculturation, adaptation, and adjustment in their notes about the movie. The movie provides myriad examples of different stages of culture shock. Students can learn about the challenges and rewards of living abroad and also consider the experiences of foreigners living in their own country.

III. METHODOLOGY

A qualitative exploratory descriptive analysis was used for this study to determine which aspects of intercultural communication the students could identify in *Outsourced*, gain more insight into students' views of intercultural communication themes presented in the movie, and explore how students perceive the effectiveness of using the movie as a tool for learning about intercultural communication. Convenience and purposive sampling were used to obtain participants (Creswell, 2007).

1. Context

Participants in this study attended two intercultural communication classes (class 1: $n = 17$; class 2: $n = 12$) that covered the same content over the course of the spring semester in 2018. There were 18 male and 11 female participants. The objective of the course was to help students effectively communicate and interact with people from diverse cultures. Most students were majoring in English language or English language and literature and were advanced speakers. Many had a second major in a business-related field. All of the students were in their late teens and twenties, with the exception of one student in his early thirties. The study was conducted at a private university in central South Korea. All of the participants were South Korean. One foreign exchange student participated in the study, but her data was excluded from the results.

2. Movie Information

Outsourced, released in 2006 in the United States, is a romantic comedy directed by John Jeffcoat and written by George Wing and John Jeffcoat. The movie examines cultural differences between India and the United States and centers on three primary characters. The main character Todd, a call center manager, has been told that his Seattle based

company will be outsourcing to India. He must go to India to train the new employees at the Indian based call center. The movie focuses on his experiences adapting to life in India. Puro, Todd's replacement, is the manager of the call center in India, and Todd has various interactions with him throughout the movie. Asha is one of the call center employees who eventually develops a romantic relationship with Todd. The movie chronicles Todd's experiences adapting to life in India, which begins with many frustrations and shocking cultural experiences and culminates with deeper understanding and acceptance of the new culture.

The movie *Outsourced* was chosen for this class because students can recognize the familiarity of American culture through Hollywood films. Participating in discussions and class activities about a completely unfamiliar country or culture may be quite challenging if the students do not have sufficient background knowledge. However, the instructor also wanted the students to be exposed to a culture that they are less familiar with. Even though Indian culture and Bollywood are quite popular around the world, the students indicated that they were not very knowledgeable about Indian culture. The students also specified that they want to learn more about less familiar English-speaking countries. Dominant English-speaking countries, including the United States and Great Britain, are commonly discussed in language and culture courses. It is important to highlight other cultures that use English (Baker, 2012; Holliday, 2009; Nault, 2006; Rubdy, 2009). The instructor wanted the students to be able to contrast Indian and American culture as portrayed through the movie. In addition, the instructor wanted to explain intercultural communication concepts (language differences, high versus low context culture, individualism and collectivism, ethnocentrism, and culture shock) shown in the movie that had previously been discussed in the course.

The movie was divided into four sections (approximately 25-26 minutes each) of about equal length and was shown over the course of a month. The classes met on Mondays and Wednesdays for 90 minutes each day over the course of a 16-week semester. The movie was shown in the second half of the semester so that the students had ample time to learn important cultural concepts prior to watching the movie. The movie was shown with English subtitles to help the students note any unfamiliar words and expressions.

3. Data Collection

Data consisted of a written listening comprehension and open-ended question activity, class discussions, and an essay. Prior to watching the movie, the instructor briefly discussed background and setting information with the class to provide critical contextual information. In addition, each activity was reviewed by a colleague to ensure that the questions were clear and could be easily understood by the students. The class had brief

discussions about aspects of Indian and U.S. culture that they were familiar with. The topic of outsourcing was also examined since it plays a key role in the movie. Each activity below was categorized based on the five areas being studied: differences in language, high versus low context culture, individualism and collectivism, ethnocentrism, and culture shock.

1) Listening Comprehension and Open-Ended Question Activity

The listening comprehension sheet included category boxes in which the students could write examples of the five intercultural communication themes being examined in the movie. Specific examples of these themes were not discussed as a class until students had a chance to identify examples independently and in small groups. In addition, an adapted version of the *Outsourced* listening comprehension sheet was used (Rotary Youth Exchange, n.d.). This form was used as a foundation for comprehension and to ensure that students were actively listening to the movie. Several of the questions were adapted to make them clearer and easier to understand. In addition, a few of the questions were not as relevant to the class and were eliminated. The instructor added open-ended questions to the worksheet, to learn more about the students' views of scenes in the movie pertaining to intercultural communication since the original questions were primarily objective in nature. Objective questions generally included just a few words for each answer, whereas the answers to the open-ended questions were mostly one to five sentences.

2) Class Discussions

Class discussions were used to obtain a variety of student opinions about their perceptions of intercultural communication themes in the movie as well as the effectiveness of using the movie to learn about intercultural communication. After each of the four movie sessions, the students discussed the questions that were covered in that day's viewing in small groups and then again as a whole class. The instructor wanted to check that the students understood the content discussed in the movie and to make note of their responses to the open-ended questions related more to their views regarding intercultural communication elements in the movie. Through class discussions, the instructor could learn more about students' perspectives related to the movie and intercultural communication themes. The instructor took notes related to dominant themes that emerged as well as some examples that were more unique. A form was used to divide student responses based on the five intercultural communication themes and the effectiveness of using *Outsourced* to learn about intercultural communication.

3) Essay

After watching the movie in its entirety, students wrote an essay that was required to be at least 10 sentences pertaining to what they learned about intercultural communication through the movie based on the five primary themes discussed in class (differences in language, high versus low context culture, individualism and collectivism, ethnocentrism, and culture shock). Most of the essays were significantly longer than 10 sentences. Students were instructed to write about one example of each theme from the movie and then discuss their perspectives of the themes. Finally, students were asked to discuss the effectiveness of using the movie *Outsourced* as a tool for learning about intercultural communication.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis was based on qualitative content analysis (McDonough & McDonough, 1997) using the three research questions as a guide. This method had been utilized in Pandey's (2012) study that examined students' perspectives of the movies *Outsourced* and *My Big Fat Greek Wedding*. The instructor first categorized student responses based on the three types of data that were collected: the listening comprehension and open-ended question activity, class discussions, and an essay. The instructor strove to examine prominent themes that emerged and significant patterns (Creswell, 2007). A second coder was used to improve reliability and to ensure that the most salient themes were examined. Coding was done using the predetermined categories that were based on the five major intercultural communication themes discussed in class. Within these categories, divisions were made to classify examples and perceptions. Finally, an additional category for students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using the film to learn about intercultural communication was created. Hence, the findings include the five major intercultural communication themes that are combined with results related to students' perceptions of these themes. Additionally, a section on students' perceptions of the effectiveness of using the film to learn about intercultural communication is included.

V. FINDINGS

Students identified key aspects of intercultural communication through the movie including differences in language, high versus low context culture, individualism and collectivism, ethnocentrism, and culture shock. They also expanded on how they view

these elements of intercultural communication. Furthermore, students reported that the film improved their understanding of intercultural communication which aligns with the results of other studies (e.g. Champoux, 1999; Mallinger & Rossy, 2003; Roell, 2010; Varner & Beamer, 2005) that noted similar benefits. The first section of the results pertain to the intercultural communication themes that the students could identify and how they perceive these themes. The second section of the results discusses students' perceptions of using the movie *Outsourced* for learning about intercultural communication.

1. Intercultural Communication Themes and Perceptions

1) Language Differences

Students could identify three specific examples of differences in American and Indian English through the movie. These examples include: the Indian characters could not understand Todd's jokes, frustrations regarding the use of American English at the company, and differences in vocabulary and pronunciation.

Eighteen students mentioned that the Indian characters could not understand Todd's jokes in English. An example is the meaning of the word "schmuck." Students stated that it means "stupid," but when Puro asked about the meaning, Todd said it means "nice guy." Students remembered that Puro then told Todd that he is a schmuck. Several students stated that they could not understand the jokes because they were not familiar with the vocabulary being used. Students mentioned that it was helpful to learn new English vocabulary through the jokes used in the movie. In addition, they stated that it is easy to have language communication problems when traveling or living in other countries because they might be unfamiliar with jokes and even idioms.

Twenty-one students also indicated that Todd's Indian counterparts were getting frustrated by his use of American English and that Todd seemed to think that his English is the "proper" or "right" English. Five students mentioned that Asha informed Todd, her future romantic lover, that neither English is right or wrong. They are just different styles of English and both originated in England. This scene seemed to resonate with a lot of students since they were annoyed by Todd's ethnocentric behaviors and wanted him to be aware of his ignorance. This also led to a short discussion on the Korean use of "Konglish." Students mentioned that since English is a global language, there will obviously be variations making it important to research and learn more about the local culture and language when traveling or moving overseas.

Students also highlighted examples of vocabulary and pronunciation differences between Indian and American English. A common example noted by 14 students is that the word "rubber" means "condom" in America, but it means an eraser in India. Another

example mentioned by 12 students is that Puro was not familiar with the words “schmuck,” “kitsch,” and “redneck.” Eleven students also stated there is a major difference in English accents of Americans and Indians. One student said, “Even staff member who speaks in the same language can have problems due to intonation and pronunciation differences.” Eight students also mentioned that Todd informs the staff that they need to pronounce “Chicago” the American way, resulting in several pronunciation drills at the office. The majority of students stated that they are not as familiar with Indian pronunciation, so it was helpful for improving their listening. Students once again emphasized the importance of learning about how English is used in different countries to prevent misunderstandings and problems.

2) High-Context and Low-Context Culture

Students tended to be fixated on one primary scene involving differences in high-context and low-context cultures. This was at the beginning of the movie when Todd, who was planning to go to a hotel, was instead taken to Auntie Ji’s house where he was asked several personal questions. Although directness is often avoided in high-context cultures, it is often normal to be asked personal questions about family and relationships. Auntie Ji asking personal questions about family and relationships is indicative of someone from a high-context culture, whereas Todd, being from a low-context culture, was puzzled and surprised by the questions.

All students mentioned that Todd was asked personal and private questions about his family in America. Auntie Ji was very interested in Todd’s family background and even asked about his father’s occupation. Nine students also discussed similarities to Korean culture and recognized differences in American culture. One student stated, “They ask question about individual and personal story like Korea. For example, ‘What is your father’s job?’” Another example provided is, “I could know that India is a high-context culture because Auntie Ji asks many personal questions which makes Todd uncomfortable.” A similar example is that “Aunt asked many personal questions to Todd which made him embarrassed because he is not familiar with being asked those questions.” Students recognized that this type of questioning is normal in high-context cultures and could observe similarities with their own culture. They could also identify that these types of questions made Todd uncomfortable. Students stated that it is important to learn more about high-context and low-context cultures to prevent misunderstandings and to reduce culturally offensive behaviors. Being from a high-context culture, students could easily relate with some of the behaviors of the Indian characters.

3) Individualism and Collectivism

Students were able to identify specific examples of individualism and collectivism. Students especially highlighted Todd's personal background in the US when discussing individualism. Dominant examples of collectivism discussed relate to Indian marriage and family culture. One student provided a succinct summary of these two concepts that she learned, "Through this movie, I was able to understand the overall collectivist and individualist culture. Todd who is an individualist himself-centered and personal. On the other hand, Indian people were group oriented and focused on the family."

Sixteen students indicated that Todd discussed his personal background in America, which included being single and not often seeing his family. He also wanted to stay in a private room rather than with Auntie Ji. Personal questions discussed in relation to high-context and low-context cultures were also discussed. "In India which is a collectivist culture, they ask personal questions such as 'What does your father do?' 'Are you married?'" But in individualistic cultures they are likely to talk about weather, sports, and parties. They don't talk about their family and privacy. Perhaps these personal, family questions are asked since family is so important in collective cultures. Students stated that Todd's behavior reminded them of other American television and movie characters who behave very similarly. Some of the students also have American friends or have had American teachers and are familiar with some characteristics of individualistic cultures. They did not seem particularly surprised by Todd's individualistic behaviors.

In terms of collectivistic culture, 12 students discussed the marriage and family culture and were especially intrigued by arranged marriages. Based on class discussions, the students were surprised and somewhat saddened to learn that Asha, who seems to be in love with Todd, is engaged to be married. Her marriage had been arranged by her family when she was a young child. Students recognized that arranged marriages were also once common in Korea, but they stated that this practice is uncommon these days and they would be uncomfortable marrying someone that they have not chosen for themselves. "Indians have strong obligation and responsibility to their families. So Indian parents participate in child's marriage, while Americans don't." Students seemed to identify with the significant role of family in Indian culture, which is also very important in Korea.

4) Ethnocentrism

Students were able to identify key examples of ethnocentrism in the movie based on Todd's behaviors and attitudes, which made it seem that he believed his own culture is superior to Indian culture. Three major categories emerged including ethnocentric attitudes toward general Indian culture, ethnocentric views of Indian business culture, and

Todd's behaviors changing as he adapts.

Nineteen of the students mentioned that throughout most of the movie, Todd seemed very ignorant and unaware of Indian culture. Various examples were provided about his lack of knowledge about Indian English, religion, foods, bathroom customs, holidays, and transportation. They also indicated that his views seemed very negative, and he just thought that his customs and behaviors were "right." They mentioned that he faced many challenges initially but learned to adapt as time progressed. One student remarked, "As the time passed, he can learn about Indian culture such as eating habits and the culture of the workplace." Students stated that foreigners will likely face many challenges as they adapt to a new country, but they must also try to learn more to help foster better assimilation.

Twelve students also noted business cultural differences that led to culture shock. One student stated, "While they are working, the main character of the movie enforces the American business style, but it only influences the workers negatively." Another student stated, "He spoke ethnocentrically while talking to his coworkers. He said to them, 'you guys have to learn about America.' They told him that he has to learn about India." A similar example is:

At first Todd wanted to push his own business ways, but later he listened to his colleagues' opinions and cooperated with them. I was impressed by his action, especially when he adapted to the collectivist culture of India. Through his experiences, I could know that an understanding of each country's culture is the most important thing to communicate with people from different countries. (Male, Junior)

One student also mentioned how Todd teaching American pronunciation and expressions to the staff made "him seem so ethnocentric." Students indicated that Todd's behaviors and attitudes irritated them, but they could also see that they are probably normal for many foreigners living in other countries. Nevertheless, they emphasized the importance of trying to learn about the culture and to be more accepting.

Although students provided examples of many of Todd's weaknesses in terms of cultural adaptation, they also mentioned his turning point and how he eventually adapted. A primary example is the transformation that he experienced after washing himself in a river after *Holi* festivities. He submerged himself like the locals, and when he came out of the water it was symbolic and showed that he was adapting and maybe even enjoying his new life. One student highlighted the importance of understanding other cultures by stating:

During the first half of the movie, Todd has really hard moment because

Indian culture is very different from his, but after his mind changed, he enjoys his stay. So I learned how much we should respect and do our best to understand other cultures. To learn about other cultures make us understand we are not the center of the world and we can learn from these new cultures. (Female, Junior)

She also discussed how the call center office was flooded, but Todd was already adjusted to surprises in India and deals with the situation very calmly by telling everyone to move to the roof of the building to continue working. Another student stated,

Todd finally adapted to Indian culture and started to embrace the Indian people around him after swimming in the river, which showed that people from other cultures could be true neighbors as well as friends only when they understand and respect others' cultures and norms. (Female, Junior)

This quote is important because it shows that the students could see Todd transitioning and beginning to accept and appreciate his new life. Students stated that life in another country will be very difficult if foreigners do not try to assimilate. Todd had numerous struggles initially, but over time he became more familiar with Indian lifestyles and culture. Eventually, he learns to adapt and even “carries” Indian culture back with him to America, which is evident in the final scene where he is drinking tea the way he did in India.

5) Culture Shock

Students were able to provide specific details about culture shock that Todd experienced in India. The responses generally centered on eating culture, bathroom practices, social classes, the *Holi* festival, and public transportation and chaos. They generally discussed how the main character Todd struggled immensely while trying to adapt to life in India, especially initially. Some of the topics previously discussed in other categories discussed above could also apply to the concept of culture shock. The responses included in this section relate more to examples that were not already discussed in previous sections. In the written activity, one student provided a holistic understanding of Todd's experiences related to culture shock.

When the main character Todd started work in India, he had culture shock and he didn't adapt to the culture of India. Moreover, he wanted his Indian colleagues to follow his values and ways that are formed by his own nation rather than being respected by his colleagues. However, as time went by, he

adapted to life in India gradually. (Male, Senior)

Sixteen students mentioned meal etiquette in India and the importance of eating foods with the right hand because the left hand is considered unclean. Twelve also discussed the cow being a sacred animal and that Todd was surprised when he could not get a hamburger. Several students mentioned that although Todd had many difficulties with the food culture and even got sick at the beginning of the movie by consuming a beverage that he purchased on the street, he eventually adapts. He later eats with a poorer local family outside of their home on the ground. Students made comparisons to Korean meal culture and stressed the importance of food in different cultures. They recognized that although there are differences in the eating cultures of the country, meals play an important role in everyday life. They stated that Todd really showed his acceptance of India when he ate with the poor family outside on the ground.

Bathroom culture was discussed by 14 students. They frequently commented on how the left hand is used in the restroom, so this hand should not be used for eating. Although a lot of students knew about this, seeing this in the movie surprised them. Some also mentioned similarities with Korean culture, since a squatter style toilet can be seen in the movie. They also discussed how toilet paper is not used, which was surprising to them. Three students stated that they do not want to visit India because of the bathroom culture. They said that it would be awkward to use their hand in place of toilet paper. Students were curious about this topic and researched it more on their phones. They found that modern western style toilets and toilet paper are used in some areas of India. After doing more research, students could understand the bathroom culture more and did not think it was as strange as they initially had thought.

Eleven students mentioned that Todd was surprised to see the gap in wealth between different social classes (former caste system) in India. Although most of the students were at least aware of the caste system, the movie made them think about it more. One student wrote,

The caste system categorizes people into a social hierarchy. This system still happens now, although it is illegal. I could feel their life through differences between poor areas and other people living in regular areas that don't have as much poverty. (Male, Junior)

Eight students also stated that India is a very poor country. However, one student pointed out that India's GDP is ranked 7th in the world, which makes it higher than their own country, Korea. It seemed that some students were judgmental of poverty in India and especially accentuated the gap between the rich and poor.

An example of culture shock that was commonly discussed was the Indian holiday *Holi*. Students mentioned how surprised Todd was because of the colored paint that is thrown around. Five students stated that they were also shocked about Holi. “They don’t mind their clothes to dirty and just enjoy it.” Although the students were discussing Todd’s reactions to Holi, they also learned about this event and how Indians celebrate the day. Another student expanded on the festival by stating:

It has a lot of meanings like good over evil, gathering relatives and friends and have some fun, fixing the broken relationship, and so on. Sometimes, they use water guns and water filled balloons. It was good to learn about the deeper meanings of the festival and that it is not just only about fun. (Female, Junior)

Students were very surprised by the activities, and seven stated that they would love to go to India and participate. They also wanted to learn more about *Holi*, so it was discussed in more depth in class and an article with discussion questions was provided to the students.

Fourteen students also mentioned the frustrations that Todd had in using public transportation and how chaotic Indian life seemed. He was not familiar with the process of beckoning a taxi. He also did not know how to properly negotiate a price with taxi drivers. One experience was particularly surprising to Todd. He entered a very crowded train, and a young boy stood up to give him his seat. As soon as Todd sat down, the young boy sat on Todd’s lap. The students laughed during several of these scenes, and most mentioned that they were not familiar with Indian transportation culture. They were also surprised by the level of “noise” and “chaos” that Todd experiences when he arrives. One student stated, “When he arrived at first, it is very noisy, but the Indian told him ‘It is very calm.’” Students stated that they would have to learn a lot about public transportation prior to visiting India since it seemed very “strange,” “difficult,” and “uncomfortable.”

2. Students’ Perceptions: Using *Outsourced* to Learn About Intercultural Communication

Students’ perceptions of using the movie to benefit their understanding of intercultural communication were positive overall. One of the primary takeaways from this activity is that most students discussed the importance of accepting and adapting to local cultures when people move to another country even if it is not easy and familiar to them. “Through this movie, I could understand this more.” Another student stated, “When we face some challenges, we have to accept their culture because it is their original characteristics. We have to respect their culture. It will make us broaden our perspectives. It will be difficult though.” Another example is “Before go another country, we must study their culture and

don't force them our own opinion and way!"

Seven students mentioned that they are interested in experiencing Indian culture, and 15 stated that they would like to visit India. "If I have a chance to go there, I want to experience Holi. It looks so fun." One student stated that she was really inspired by this movie to learn more about Indian culture, so she decided to visit an Indian restaurant in Korea and watched some other Indian movies including *Three Idiots*. She said that she learned more about Hinduism, particularly the goddess *Vishnu* as well as the origins of the *bindi*. (Female, Junior)

Overall, most students were pleased with the experience and stated that the movie was an effective tool for improving their understanding of intercultural communication. Some notable quotes about what students gained through the movie include:

I learned the ultimate lesson of the movie. I think the director of this movie wanted to say to the audience, you need to learn other cultures when you're going to make business or work with foreigners. Just abandon your elitism about your culture and ethnocentrism. Do not force your staff to learn your own culture. (Male, Senior)

Before I start explaining what I learned from the movie, I would like to say it was fun to watch. There was a scene showing him and his employers having a meeting after work. I could see something when he told one of them to speak like an American and Asha, suggested him to accept Indian culture. This reminded me of my international life when I lived overseas. I put my own culture before theirs for about a couple of months for the first time. So, I could not adapt well. However, when I began to understand differences between them, I started enjoying it. I miss it even now. (Male, Junior)

I'm thankful for watching this movie which reminded me of my past experiences overseas. I could see a lot of similarities that I faced. Through the movie, I learned how it is important to be educated about intercultural communication. First of all, the scene where Mr. Toad asked the Indian employees to speak as a native English speaker and the Indian lady asked Mr. Todd to learn about Indian culture was really impressive. I could find some people including myself being selfish sometimes. Before asking others to follow my way of doing things, we should check how we are doing first. (Female, Junior)

Although students were generally satisfied, six had recommendations to improve the

experience. Four students stated that it would have been more beneficial to use Korean subtitles since some of the content was difficult to understand. One student stated that she enjoyed the movie but would have preferred doing oral communication activities in class instead. Another student specified that he liked the movie, but it was long and could have been assigned for homework. These suggestions were noted for future class activities involving movies.

VI. DISCUSSION

Through the movie, students could gain more insight into the importance of understanding how English is used differently in other countries and cultures. Students could also see how language and culture are interrelated (Cushner, McClelland, & Safford, 2012; Li & Wang, 2015). Several students mentioned that jokes can be based on local culture and may not be understood by English speakers in other countries or cultures. Students could also empathize with Todd because they too struggled at times to understand the Indian pronunciation. Students were more familiar with American pronunciation and could generally understand what Todd was referring to unless they did not know specific vocabulary or phrases. Although they could identify some examples of vocabulary misunderstandings in the movie, they also missed some examples that Briam (2010) discussed, especially when Puro talks about his fiancé and Todd could not pronounce her name. They also missed the example when Todd is told about the Indian holiday *Holi* and he says “Holy what?” However, these are not English word misunderstandings, and therefore the students may not have concentrated on these or may not have known how to spell the words. Chao (2013) examined several primary benefits of using movies to learn about intercultural communication, and one key point was becoming acquainted with different English accents. Students emphasized that there are different variations of English and it is important to know more than just U.S. and U.K. styles. This objective was achieved through this movie activity, even if students were only exposed to a few new vocabulary words and jokes. They could also listen to two different types of English pronunciation throughout the movie. They could see the importance of learning about other cultures and how language is used to prevent misunderstandings and problems.

In comparison to the other four aspects of intercultural communication examined, students struggled to verbalize examples of high and low context cultures through the movie. These concepts had previously been discussed in class and students were tested on them indicating that they are aware of these key aspects of each type of culture. The students were able to identify one primary example of high-context culture, which is Auntie Ji’s questioning of Todd about his personal life. Although there were other

examples portrayed in the movie, these were not identified by students. Even though students only focused on one example, they were able to discuss it in depth since it is germane to Korean culture. They discussed how Koreans often ask personal questions to foreigners from different countries, even if they are from countries that are considered low-context. Even though the students do not live in a low-context culture, they are quite familiar with it based on movies, television shows, and interactions with Americans and people from other low-context cultures. Students missed a key example of low-context culture when Todd bluntly states “Oh, you gotta be kidding me. This is it?” when visiting the call center for the first time. Another example of high context culture that was not discussed is when Puro does not want to go a long distance to pick up a shipment that was sent to the wrong location. He makes several excuses about why he cannot go that Todd does not seem to understand. The instructor pointed out these other examples that the students did not identify. Perhaps they were not identified because they were not as explicit as the personal questions asked by Auntie Ji. In addition, the concepts of high and low context culture were slightly more difficult for students to define earlier in the course in comparison to other intercultural communication concepts discussed.

In terms of collectivism and individualism, students stated that they were already familiar with America being a very individualistic country which was discussed in their previous English classes. They stated when discussing culture of English-speaking countries and the concept of individualism, America is usually discussed. Students could also identify similarities between Indian and Korean culture. They could see that family plays a critical role in both Indian and Korean culture. There was one notable difference that they discussed though which is arranged marriages. This was also mentioned by Briam (2010) in her analysis of intercultural communication themes in the movie. They thought the concept of arranged marriages is very strange and felt sorry for Asha because her future husband was selected at such a young age. Several students mentioned that arranged marriages still happen in Korea and they were very common in the past. Students sometimes seemed quick to pass judgment especially on Indian culture, but they realized that there are a lot of similarities between Korean and Indian culture. They could understand how foreigners could be judgmental of Korean culture, especially if they examine past practices such as arranged marriages.

Students emphasized the importance of learning about other cultures, especially if someone plans to travel or live in another country. They stated that Todd’s behaviors were annoying and seemed very ethnocentric. Students were especially shocked when Todd told the Indian staff that they need to learn about America, which was also mentioned by Briam (2010). This was very offensive and made some of the students angry. This was also connected to the topic of American elitism. Since America is such a dominant country in the world, students stated that some Americans and foreigners as well consider the

American way to be the “right way.” Students asserted that there is something to be learned from every culture. This also led to some discussion about human rights in one class. One student said that although the caste system is technically illegal, the social classes are still largely divided in India. It is important to learn about other cultures, but our own views of human rights can make some cultural practices seem offensive and degrading. Some students said that they are a little fearful to travel to India due to stories about gang rapes and violence against women. These are of course legitimate concerns, but the instructor also pointed out that gun violence is a major issue in the U.S., which often dominates international news. Students missed some other primary examples of ethnocentrism, namely Todd introducing the burger brand to his Indian staff and when Asha tells Todd that he needs to “learn about India.” The instructor later discussed some of these key points that were not mentioned in the data.

Culture shock was the fifth intercultural communication theme explored. Students could provide numerous examples of culture shock through the movie. It was also common for students to discuss some of their own experiences related to culture shock when they were living or traveling abroad. The majority of students had traveled abroad, and some had lived overseas for an extended period of time. They stated that it is natural to experience culture shock but trying to adapt and learn about the host culture is vital. This aligns with Pandey’s (2012) study in which students discussed the importance of “respecting and accepting cultures as they are” (p. 341). Students generally felt the same way and asserted the need to learn about the local culture. However, in one class students discussed the issue of human rights violations, including social class divisions that still technically exist, that should not be accepted as just part of culture. Although students mentioned the importance of adapting, they also were shocked, particularly when visualizing the traditional bathroom culture. It was also interesting that a student stated that India’s GDP is higher than Korea’s. Students said that there is a prevalent stereotype that Indians are generally poor and dirty people. They also said that there are aspects of Indian culture that they would really like to experience, especially *Holi*. It was helpful for students to make personal connections to the movie through their own culture shock experiences abroad.

Overall, students indicated that the movie was a helpful resource for improving intercultural communication, which supports similar studies (Champoux, 1999; Mallinger & Rossy, 2003; Roell, 2010; Varner & Beamer, 2005) that examined the use of movies to foster greater understanding of intercultural communication. They mentioned that it was fun and interesting to learn about how English is used in other countries. This aligns with other studies (Choi, 2013; Inage, Lawn, & Lawn, 2013; Kusumarasdyati, 2004; Shieh, 2015) which highlight the benefits of using movies in English language classes. Some of the responses were similar to primary quotes in Pandey’s (2012) study, that underscored the importance of learning about other cultures to reduce culture shock and promote better

integration in the host culture. There were some recommendations to make the activity better including the use of Korean subtitles. However, since the class is an English class and the students are majoring in English, the use of English subtitles is still probably more effective for their learning. For students who are non-English majors and are not as proficient in English, subtitles in the native language may be more appropriate. It may also be beneficial for students to watch the movie for homework. This may not be practical though if the students cannot easily access the movie.

VII. CONCLUSION

The movie *Outsourced* can be a beneficial resource for English language learners who are interested in learning about intercultural communication. It helped to reinforce concepts discussed in the class, and many students indicated that it was a memorable and informative movie that increased their understanding of intercultural communication. Students also stated that they will be more likely to remember concepts taught in class because of the movie, which can have a longer lasting impression than regular class lessons and discussions. Students were also able to expand on specific cultural themes presented in the movie that had been previously discussed in class including language differences, high-context and low-context culture, individualism and collectivism, ethnocentrism, and culture shock. In a highly interconnected world, students need to be equipped with the knowledge and skills needed to effectively engage with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Even though English is the lingua franca of many international exchanges, knowing the language is not enough to effectively communicate with people from different backgrounds. Cultural understanding is also vital. Since many students may have already been exposed to dominant English cultures, such as the U.S. and U.K., instructors may want to consider exploring less familiar cultures in the classroom. Students can also be encouraged to participate in other authentic intercultural communication exchange through pen pals, language sharing groups in the local community, Meetup opportunities, and international festivals.

A significant limitation of the study is that it was conducted in the English language, which is not the native language of the participants. Therefore, the participants may not have been able to fully express their views in comparison to their native language, Korean. The study was also limited to two classes at one South Korean university, so the results cannot be generalized to all English language learners in South Korea. Finally, there was a small number of participants. Future research can explore other films that have intercultural communication themes, or cultural and language differences. It would also be beneficial to quantitatively measure students' intercultural awareness prior to and after

viewing the movie through objective analysis.

Although the participants in this study were university students, the concepts can be applied to other contexts including training programs for expatriates, corporate trainers, and those working in intercultural communication settings (Pandey & Ardichvili, 2015). This study was primarily based on materials developed by the course instructor, with the exception of the listening worksheet. There are educational resources available online for instructors and teachers who would like to use premade resources. In the article, "Intercultural Training with Films," Roell (2010) provides an extensive list of movies (including *Outsourced*) with intercultural themes as well as a list of general questions for evaluating movies and a list for assessing the intercultural aspects of movies. The concepts discussed in the article as well as the questions can be used as a foundation for evaluating movies with intercultural themes. Roell (2010) also provides practical suggestions for pre-viewing, while-viewing, and after-viewing activities as well as other intercultural communication activities that can be conducted based on themes in the movie. The movie *Outsourced* is appropriate for many classes with intercultural communication and business themes, but the instructor should use a movie that best meets the needs of the students. To make the movie activity more student centered, the instructor may want to include students in the lesson planning process as well. Finally, students need to be more cognizant of the importance of intercultural communication. Although the participants in this study were taking intercultural communication courses, similar activities can be conducted in general English language classes. If used effectively, movies can be a helpful resource for examining intercultural communication concepts and reinforcing lessons learned in the classroom.

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