



Communicative Patterns in Intercultural Classrooms

- Case Study with Focus on Intercultural
Communication, Humor & Laughter

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Abstract

Today, because of globalization and the development of communication technology, it is easier for people from different countries to get in touch and communicate with each other. In order to communicate better in different areas, such as business, diplomacy, tourism, etc, language competence is essential. With the rapid development of economy, Chinese language is becoming one of the most used languages in the world. However, because of the cultural complexity and unique language system, Chinese is difficult to learn. Moreover, the students studying Chinese language as their second language might face difficulties in learning the Chinese language and culture because of cultural diversity in classrooms.

This thesis describes and analyzes the communication in Chinese language learning in the intercultural classrooms. It consists of two aspects: intercultural communication (responsible: Rui Zhang) and humor and laughter (responsible: Yanhua Bai). This study is carried out at the Chinese school of Chinese Association of Students & Scholars in Gothenburg by making participant observations for 3 months and Xi'an International School in China by video recordings 4 short Chinese lectures and interviewing a Chinese teacher. The data is analyzed by using Activity Based Communication Analysis (Allwood 1999, 2000, 2007).

The main results are the description and analysis of communication in Chinese language learning in the intercultural classrooms with focus on intercultural communication, humor & laughter. This thesis can recommend that attention must be paid to the cultures in the intercultural classrooms, which can help to facilitate the communication in L2 (The Second Language) learning in the intercultural classrooms.

Key Words

Chinese, culture, communication, intercultural communication, intercultural classroom, humor, laughter, educational communication

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1. Introduction

This study is conducted in two areas (adults in China and children & teenagers in Sweden) but one context (Chinese lectures in the intercultural classrooms). In China, the students, who are studying Chinese language in Xi'an International School, are adults. They are from different countries, but mostly from western countries. In the video recordings of the 4 short Chinese lectures, the students are from America and Canada. Their mother tongue is English. In Sweden, the students, studying Chinese language in the Chinese school in Gothenburg, are children and teenagers who are raised up in Sweden. In the Chinese immigrant families, most parents require their children to learn at least two languages (Chinese and Swedish) at the same time, which can be seen as an advantage but also can create pressure for their Children.

The Chinese language learning in the intercultural classrooms is different from the traditional Chinese classrooms. Two or more cultures are intergraded in the communication in the Chinese lectures. According to observations and video recordings, Chinese teachers tend to try to accept the cultural differences and might adapt different teaching methods for foreign students in the intercultural classrooms, and the foreign students often try to fit in the Chinese culture. Moreover, humor and laughter happen quite often in the classrooms since both teachers and students intend to cater for each other. Some of the humor and laughter happened in the intercultural classrooms are caused by cultural differences. Culture can be both facilities and barrier for L2 (The Second Language) learning in the intercultural classrooms.

In the intercultural classrooms, both students and teachers have to deal with the collision and integration of at least two cultures, which might be difficult and confusing. Students and teachers have their own cultures' beliefs, norms and values, and the differences in their cultural backgrounds may cause developmental variations in their language acquisition (Lustig & Koester 2007: 302).

2. Purpose and Research Questions

The main purpose of this study is to describe and analyze the communication in Chinese language learning in the intercultural classrooms with focus on the analysis of intercultural communication, humor and laughter.

The study concentrates on intercultural communication, humor and laughter, and aims to find at least partial answers on the following questions:

1. Intercultural communication:

- 1) How does culture influence the communication in Chinese language teaching and learning in the intercultural classrooms?

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- 2) How do the cultural differences and similarities between teachers and students influence Chinese language teaching and learning in the intercultural classrooms? And how do the teachers and students deal with it?

2. Humor and laughter

- 1) How do humor and laughter influence the communication in the intercultural classrooms?
- 2) What teaching strategies about humor and laughter can be suggested to facilitate the communication between teachers and students in L2 teaching and learning in the intercultural classrooms?

3. Methodology

For our study, a combination of methods such as observations, video recordings and interview is used to describe and analyze the communication in Chinese language learning in the intercultural classrooms.

3.1. Data Collection and Participants

We have collected some empirical data:

- Video recordings of 4 short Chinese lectures in Xi'an International School by a Chinese teacher using DV.
- Observations of 15 students in Class 7 for 3 months in the Chinese school of Chinese Association of Students & Scholars in Gothenburg by participating in the lectures and taking notes.
- Interview of a Chinese teacher in Xi'an International School. The interview was carried out through Video calling on Skype. All the questions were drawn up before the interview began. The whole interview took about 20 minutes without any interruption.

We have also conducted a literature review:

- Literature review: relevant literatures on communication, humor and laughter have been reviewed. Some theories of communication are used for analyzing the collected data. The reviewed literature is mainly from library catalogue-GUNDA in University of Gothenburg.

In the video recordings, there are 4 teachers and 4 students. The ages of the Chinese teachers are between 20 and 30 years old, and they have taught Chinese there for less than 5 years. The ages of the students are also between 20 and 30 years old. One of

them is from Canada, and the others are from America. Besides, some other teachers and students also appear in the video recordings as assistants (e.g. holding the pictures).

In the observations, the teacher is 26 years old male Chinese, who has taught Class 7 for 1 year and a half; there are 15 students in Class 7 whose ages are between 9 and 18 years old. The students are originally from China. In the interview, the teacher is 27 years old female Chinese, who has 3 years teaching experience in Xi'an International School. She has taught many students from different regions in the world, such as North and South America, Eastern Asia and Europe.

3.2. Methods for Data Analysis

- The video recordings and the interview are transcribed and translated from Chinese into English. In the transcription, \$ represents speakers, S means students, T stands for Teachers, and different numbers indicate different lectures.
- The field notes were taken during observations in the Chinese school of Chinese Association of Students & Scholars in Gothenburg.
- The video recordings and transcription from Xi'an International School and the observations from the Chinese school of Chinese Association of Students & Scholars in Gothenburg are analyzed by using Allwood's Activity Based Communication Analysis (1999, 2000, 2007).

3.3. Ethical Considerations

During the process of data collection, ethical issues are taken into consideration. The principles of informed consent are obeyed at each step of data collection. Appropriate information about the purposes and the procedures of the study is given to the informant in written form. The informants and participants are guaranteed anonymity. The information obtained is confidential, all names are coded and no personal data is used in the thesis.

4. Theoretical Background

The purpose of the study is to describe and analyze how cultures influence communication in the intercultural classrooms, which relates to the research questions, so cultural difference is a central factor, which should be primarily considered. In this study, there are four cultures involved: Chinese culture, Swedish culture, Canadian culture and American culture. In this section, There are two theories which are widely applied to describe cultural difference, namely, Hall's (1976) high- and low-Context Cultural Taxonomy, and Hofstede's (2001) Cultural Taxonomy. Besides, Communication in the classrooms can be seen as a social activity, Allwood's (1999)

(2000) (2007) patterns of communication analysis provide us a different perspective to analyze the communication in the classrooms. Furthermore, a useful strategy, which is commonly used in the classrooms, is the use of humor and laughter. Especially, it has been increasingly used in the intercultural classrooms, which has a positive impact on teaching and learning. Some relevant theories concerning humor and laughter are introduced. These theories above construct the foundations for this study.

The intercultural communication is paid special attention in this study, so the terms of intercultural communication should be firstly introduced.

From the viewpoint of Allwood (1985:3), intercultural communication is described as people with different cultural backgrounds share information under different levels of awareness and control. Different cultural backgrounds contain both national cultural differences and differences which are related to involvement in different activities existed within a national unit.

Lustig & Koester (2007:52) also provide the definition of intercultural communication. Intercultural communication happens when large and vital cultural differences produce diverse interpretations and expectations concerning how to communicate competently. Groups of people are different with their cultures, such as cultural patterns, verbal and nonverbal codes, and social perceptions. When such vital differences are relatively large, the misunderstanding of message interpretations may take place.

4.1. E.T. Hall's Taxonomy

Edward T. Hall (1976) provides an effective way to examine cultural similarities and differences in both perception and communication, which has been often used in studies of intercultural culture. He treats cultures as high or low context, depending on the extent to which their primary messages' patterns are high or low context. Hall (1976: 85) states that "one of the functions of culture is to provide a highly selective screen between man and the outside world. In its many forms, culture therefore designates what we pay attention to and what we ignore." Therefore, the study of high-context and low-context cultures provides us insights into what people concentrate on and what they ignore. It might give teachers and students from different cultures a point of view to understand each other in order to obtain an effective teaching and learning results.

According to Hall (1976), high-context cultures "prefer to use high-context messages in which most of the meaning is either implied by the physical setting or presumed to be part of the individual's internalized beliefs, values, norms, and social practices; very little is provided in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of message" (Hall 1976) (Lustig & Koester 2007: 110). In these cultures, information is provided

via gestures, the use of space, and silence. The message is also delivered “through status (age, sex, education, family background, etc)” (Forster 1992: 280). Chinese culture is the typical high context culture which needs people to interpret the meanings between the lines.

Low-context cultures “prefer to use low-context messages, in which the majority of the information is vested in the explicit code” (Hall 1976) (Lustig & Koester 2007: 110). Hall & Hall (Samovar, Porter & Stefani 1998: 79) says “each time they interact with others they need detailed background information.” In these cultures, the verbal information includes most of the messages and little is rooted in the context or participants. According to the definition of low-context culture, Swedish culture, American culture and Canadian culture are low-context culture. People from Sweden, America and Canada communicate in a much more direct way than Chinese people. Usually they focus more on the explicit information conveyed in the messages, while Chinese people are good at expressing and reading between the lines.

However, there are still mixed context cultures existed, which are at the middle level of high- and low-context cultures. It might depend on situations it involved.

Hall (1976) also describes other characteristics of high- and low- context cultures included the use of covert and overt messages, the importance of in-groups and out-groups and the orientation to time which are reflected in this study.

4.1.1. Use of Covert and Overt Messages

According to Hall’s (1976) definitions of these two terms, in high-context cultures, the meanings of messages are internalized and more focus on nonverbal codes, in which messages are almost programmed. Those meanings of messages are taken for granted and are not required to be explicit and verbally delivered. However, in low-context cultures, people look for others’ behaviors in the messages that are plainly and explicitly coded. The details of the messages are expressed precisely and specifically in the words that people use, and only a little of communication is taken for granted. In order to understand accurately, messages should be delivered directly and explicitly (Hall 1976, as cited in Lustig & Koester 2007: 111).

4.1.2. Importance of In-groups and Out-groups

Communication differs when communicating with in-group and out-group members. According to Hall (1976), in high-context cultures, it is easy to distinguish from one group to another. High-context cultures can be difficult to enter if you are an outsider. Since the commitment between group members is strong, you can't create close relationships immediately if you don't carry on messages internally. In low-context cultures, it is not easy to determine who is a member of a group and who is not. Low-context cultures are comparatively easy to enter if you are an outsider. The

commitment to long-term relationships is low.

4.1.3. Orientation to Time

Another distinct characteristic of high- and low-context cultures is difference in orientation to time. Hall (1976) states that in high-context cultures, time is viewed as more open, less organized, more responsive to the immediate demand of people. In low-context cultures, time is highly organized, mostly because the additional energy is needed to understand the messages of others. (Lustig & Koester 2007: 114)

Participants from data collection are teachers and students. It can be considered that teachers and students from high context cultures often tend to use indirect and implicit ways of communication. The messages they use are covert that nonverbal communication is more often used. Nonverbal signals are helpful in communication between teachers and students in the intercultural classrooms. Teachers and students from low context cultures often tend to use direct and explicit ways of communication. The messages they use are overt and verbally coded. They might have difficulties in understanding the indirect communication of their students or classmates from high context cultures.

4.2. Hofstede's Cultural Taxonomy

Hofstede (1986) explores the interaction differences between teachers and students from a cultural perspective related to cultural dimensions which are Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV), large versus small Power Distance (PDI), strong versus weak Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), and Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS). Hofstede (1986:12, 13, 14 & 15) outlines the communication differences between teachers and students according to these cultural dimensions.

Hofstede (2001) has done some impressive studies of cultural differences. His approach is based on the notion that people have their mental programs about culture which are developed during childhood and reinforced by their culture. He defines culture as “a collective phenomenon and collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”. In his studies, he offers five dimensions which can help to understand the cultural differences among Swedish culture, Canadian culture, American culture and Chinese culture in this case. Hofstede (2001) provides five dimensions which have a significant impact on patterns of cultures: individualism versus collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, power distance, masculinity versus femininity, and long-term versus short-term orientation” (Hofstede 2001: 29).

4.2.1. Individualism versus Collectivism

According to Hofstede (2001), cultures vary in the degree to which individual

autonomy is treated favorably or unfavorably (Lustig & Koester 2007: 115). Hofstede (2001) refers to these differences as the individualism-collectivism dimension, the extent to which a culture depends on and has allegiance to the self or the group. Hofstede (2001) states that the relationship between individualism and collectivism is diverse in different cultures and it concerns the societal norms in human society. Therefore, the relationship between individualism and collectivism might influence “both people’s mental programming and the structure and functioning of man institutions aside from the family: educational, religious, political, and utilitarian” (Hofstede 2001:210). According to the study, the difference on this point might determine the way of teaching and behaviors during classroom activities in the intercultural classrooms. Furthermore, some problems might generate due to different culture categories they belong.

Hofstede(1986:12) states that in collectivistic societies people highly value traditions. Students want to learn how to do and are expected to speak up in class only when asked personally by teachers. Harmony in learning conditions should be kept during the whole class. Face-saving is highly valued for both teachers and students. The purpose of education is to obtain social prestige and be part of certain higher status group. However, in individualistic societies people look for something new. Students want to learn how to learn and expected to speak up in class to give reactions to a general request by teachers. Open conflicts in learning conditions can be accepted. Consciousness of face-saving is weak. Education is a vital way to gain economic improvement and self-respect depends on personal competence.

4.2.2. Uncertainty Avoidance

According to Hofstede (2001), cultures vary in the degree to which they prefer and can tolerate ambiguity and show in the way they choose for coping with change (Lustig & Koester 2007: 119). Hofstede (2001) refers to these differences as the uncertainty avoidance dimension. Cultures with low uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) can tolerate more uncertainty and ambiguity and are willing to take risks and try new things; on the contrary, cultures with high UAI like to ensure the certainty and don’t tolerate dissents.

Hofstede (1986:14) notes that in weak Uncertainty Avoidance societies students accept unstructured classroom activities such as broad assignments, no timetables. Students can say “I don’t know”. A good teacher is valued to use plain language. Controlling emotions are expected for students and teachers. On the contrary, in strong Uncertainty Avoidance societies, classroom activities are well-structured such specific assignments and detailed timetables. Students are expected to answers all the questions. A good teacher is to use academic language. Emotions are expressed used by teachers and students.

4.2.3. Power Distance

Hofstede (2001: 83) mentions Mulder's (1977) definition of power and power distance. Mulder (1977) defines power as "the degree of inequality in power between a less powerful Individual (I) and a more powerful other (O), in which I and O belong to the same (loosely or tightly knit) social system". (Hofstede 2001:83)

They consider status inequalities as "good or bad; right or wrong; just or unjust and fair or unfair" (Lustig & Koester 2007: 122). Hofstede (2001) refers to these differences as the power distance dimension. According to Hofstede (2001), cultures with smaller power distance believe that "institutional and organizational power should be distributed equally and the decisions of the power holders should be challenged or accepted." (Lustig & Koester 2007: 122) On the other hand, cultures with larger power distance prefer that authorities should remain powerful and hierarchy is appropriate for the society.

Hofstede (1986:13) presents that in small Power Distance societies: Students' independence should be respected by teachers. The class bases on student-orientation. Teachers expect students to look for their own proper ways to learn and effective learning associates with efforts both from students and teachers. Students can speak up freely in class. Students have opportunities to criticize teachers. Students and teachers might be treated equally outside school. Conversely, in high Power Distance societies: Students should highly respect their teachers. Teacher-orientation is emphasized. Students expect teachers to provide paths to learn and effective learning depends on the competence of teachers. Students can speak up in class only when called by teachers. Public criticism from students is avoided. Teachers are still respected outside school.

4.2.4. Masculinity versus Femininity

Hofstede (2001) uses the words "masculinity" and "femininity" to refer to the extent to which masculine or feminine traits prevail. Masculinity is the degree to which the leading values in a society are male oriented and is related to "such behaviors as ambition, differentiated sex roles, achievement, the acquisition of money, and signs of manliness." (Samovar L, Porter R & Stefani L 2007:71). A femininity world believes "less in external achievements and shows of manliness and more of importance of life choices that improve intrinsic aspects of the quality of life, such as service to others and sympathy for the unfortunate." (Lustig & Koester 2007: 126). Concerning masculinity, school and educational system, Hofstede (2001: 303) holds that "On the masculine side teachers' brilliance and academic reputation and students' academic performance are the dominant factors. On the feminine side teachers' friendliness and social skills and students' social adaptation play a bigger role"

Hofstede (1986:15) says that in Feminine societies: openly praising students is not often used by teachers. Average student evaluation is used by teachers. The failures of

students are not seen as serious accidents. Corporal punishment is avoided. However, in Masculine societies: Openly praising is a good way to encourage students. Best student evaluation is used by teachers. The failures of students are serious cases to self-images. Corporal punishment is occasionally used.

4.2.5. Long-term versus Short-term Time Orientation

According to Lustig and Koester (2007: 128), the time-orientation dimension refers to people’s view of reference about life and work. Long-term oriented cultures admire “persistence, thriftiness, humility, a sense of shame and status differences within interpersonal relationships” (Lustig & Koester 2007: 128). Conversely, short-term oriented cultures have a strong appreciation for “tradition, personal steadiness and stability, keep the ‘face’ of self and others.” (Lustig & Koester 2007: 128). Hofstede (2001: 354) especially mentions the Chinese long-term oriented culture which is associated with Confucianism.

As we know, Chinese culture is one of the oldest cultures in the world. The arenas in which the culture exerts a profoundly influence covers the whole eastern Asia. In China, a huge variety of social values are stemmed from the traditional value systems such as Confucianism.

It is well-known that Confucianism as a dominant philosophy embedded in every aspect of society down the ages. It concentrates on five basic human relationships on maintain social harmony. Among them, father-son and emperor-subordinate relationships can be corresponded to parent-child and leader-child relationships. In these two relations, Confucianism emphasizes the importance of authority that child should obey the instructions given by father and the subordinate don’t oppose his or her leader’s opinions. Meanwhile, Confucianism advocates that the student takes his or her teacher as a role-model and show respect through complying with his or her teacher’s ideas during class. These traditional thoughts significantly affect the patterns of communication within these social relationships.

All the participants in the observations and video recordings are from four countries: China, Sweden, Canada, and America. According to Hofstede’s cultural dimensions above, these four cultures can be shown below:

	China	Sweden	Canada	U.S.A
Individualism	20	71	80	91
Uncertainty Avoidance	30	29	48	46
Power Distance	80	31	39	40
Masculinity	66	5	52	62
Time Orientations	118	20	23	29

Table 1: The scores of Geert Hofstede cultural dimensions of China, Sweden, Canada and United States (Latest Source from Hofstede’s official website)

More specifically, Chinese culture is low IDV (individualism), low UAI (uncertainty avoidance), high PDI (power distance), high MAS (masculinity), and has long-term time orientation; Swedish culture is high IDV, low UAI, low PDI, low MAS, and has short-term time orientation; American culture is high IDV, low UAI, low PDI, high MAS, and has short-term time orientation; Canadian culture is high IDV, low UAI, low PDI, medium MAS, and has short-term time orientation. Chinese culture and Swedish culture are completely different on every dimension except UAI. American culture and Canadian culture are similar to each other, although there is slightly difference in MAS. The UAI and MAS are similar among Chinese culture, American culture and Canadian culture.

4.3. Allwood's Research on Patterns of Communication

According to Allwood (2002:1), Communication is defined as a “transmission of content X from a sender Y to a recipient Z using an expression W or medium Q in an environment E with a purpose or function F”. More specifically, content X is the shared information, shared both “intentionality and meaning”. Sender Y and recipient Z are co-communicators who are senders and receivers at the same time. Expression W can be shown intentionally and consciously. Medium Q can be the paper (e.g. a textbook), the air. Environment E includes physical environment (e.g. a classroom), social environment (e.g. the status of teacher and student) and cultural environment (Chinese speakers).

Teaching and learning activity in the classrooms in our study can be treated as a social activity. The participants are from two social statuses: teacher and student. Their interactions in the classrooms can be analyzed by Allwood (1997, 2000, 2007)'s activity based communication analysis.

Jens Allwood (1999) defines “pattern of communication” as a sum of a series of influencing factors and characteristics in such as thoughts, behavior and artifacts that have an impact on a particular group of people. In Allwood's article (2007), He describes four key parameters which can be used in analyzing a certain social activity. It also can be examined in this study through the following aspects: purpose, roles, overall structures and procedures, communicative behavior perspectives.

Allwood (2007:11) noted that there are four main parameters which influence a certain social activity. These are: 1. Purpose, function, procedure; 2 Roles (including rights, obligations and competence); 3. Artifacts (including instruments, tools and media); 4 Environment (including social, physical environment). These parameters could be found from observations and video recordings and it could be used to describe and analyze intercultural classroom activities.

The purpose of a conversation decides the essence of the communication and an activity. For teacher-student relationship, normally, the purpose of communication is to teach or study knowledge (Allwood 1999).

The roles (Allwood 1999) are partly determined by the aim of the activity, which are related to certain rights and duties. The role of teachers is to inculcate knowledge to students and relatively the role of students is to input the knowledge taught by teachers.

Overall structure and procedure:

Typical sequences

According to Allwood (1999:2), the expression "typical sequences" is to refer to "the fact that what occurs in a conversation often happens in a certain sequence". These can be divided into three parts depending on where in time they happen: initial, medial and final sequences.

According to Allwood (1999), usually, the first behavior involving communication is gaze and eye contact which tends to be essential but not sufficient circumstances for face-to-face communication. During this relation of teachers-students eye contact does not only take place at the initial stage of a conversation, but also during a conversation. Greetings and introductions are also very common initial communicative behavior.

Allwood (1999) stated medial sequences can be perceived, for instance, surrounding talk related to the primary aim of a conversation. These sequences can relate to how one proposes a sensitive topic, how one asks someone for a favor, etc.

Final sequences are similar to initial one but to some degree they are different from these. As Allwood (1999) says, more commonly there are, associating with leave-takings, almost the same type of bodily contact that we presented during initial sequences.

Turntaking (Allwood 1999) is an important part of a conversation. No matter for which culture, the goal of communication is primarily to transmit information from a sender to a recipient. During a conversation, it is more helpful if the speaker can attract the listener's attention. According to Allwood (1999:14), there are two main strategies to reach the goals: (i) direct competition for a recipient's attention through speaking simultaneously with other speakers and (ii) indirect competition for a recipient's attention that is to compete for the floor.

According to Allwood (1999), feedback refers to the fact that speaker and listener must understand how the other party is reacting in a conversation. Feedback is a third

important element in conversation. Every conversation involves in two units, the speaker and the listener. The speaker needs to know if the message he/she send to listener is received and understood. Meanwhile, the listener needs to confirm if he/she has really understood the speaker. Feedback can be offered with the help of verbal and nonverbal language.

Topics of conversations are also an important element of the analysis of a pattern of communication. According to Allwood (1999:3), “There can sometimes be restrictions on what kinds of topic are possible in a particular type of conversation”. All topics and ways of expressing them don’t adapt in all situations.

According to Allwood (1999), the procedure of interpretation and understanding involves different characteristics. If someone wants to interact with the other persons, it is not enough for just speaking. What’s more, he/she should understand and interpret the communication of the people he/she communicates with. He/she should perceive what is being communicated with presupposed messages. The most part of these messages includes specific cultural background information. Such kind of information shares by a certain group members with the same cultural backgrounds. It can lead to misunderstanding and prejudice between the persons who have different cultural backgrounds.

In this study, humor and laughter are also described and analyzed as a common phenomenon in the intercultural classrooms, which different purposes and functions involved.

Our study also focuses on using humor and laughter as teaching and learning tool to assist to language learning process, which is frequent used in the video recordings. In order to analyze the use of humor and laughter in intercultural classrooms, some relevant terms of humor and laughter could be involved.

4.4. Humor and Laughter

Cultural differences display on different aspects in different ways. In the intercultural classrooms, the different ways of using humor and laughter can be seen as consequences of cultural differences.

4.4.1. Definition of Humor and Laughter

Long and Graessner (1988:37) states “Humor is anything done or said, purposely or inadvertently, that is found to be comical or amusing”. Tannen defines humor as “one of the most highly distinctive aspects of any person’s style” (1984: 130). According to Ziegler (1988), humor is seen as a social message could generate laughter, which satisfies certain functions, uses certain skills, has content, and is used in certain situations. It is a daily phenomenon in human beings, clearly audible and visible.

Furthermore, Richards (2006: 92) thinks that humor “serves as one of the most distinctive features of professional life, providing both a source of enrichment and nourishment as well as serving as a key characteristic of a territory as seen and represented by its residents”.

According to Provine (2000), laughter is generally subdued during conversation. Speech plays a leading role and laughter serves as a phrase break which can produce a punctuation influence on language. Laughter therefore has a specific role in communication and is not random. Common causes for laughter are sensations of joy and humor.

Hill (1988) states that students feel relaxed and can be listeners when teachers have a sense of humor and are willing to use it. It can be seen as a sign that teachers share with the group.

Kristmanson (2000) points out the demand of creating a warm language teaching and learning classroom. He notes that it is need to create an environment in where students can be heard and feel motivated, at the same time, their language learning anxiety are low.

4.4.2. Use of Humor and Laughter

As Loomax and Moosavi (1998) studied, humor is an effective assistant in education where using humor in the classroom decreases tensions, creates enjoyment, improves classroom atmosphere, benefits for relationship of teachers and students.

According to the interview and observation by Wells (1974), there are several elemental reasons for using humor in classrooms:

Humor, helps reduce tension, enhances student-teacher relationships, help create warmth, and make school fun. It eases the burden of daily study and occasionally provides a moment of deep, interpersonal communication between a teacher and a child. (1974:156)

Berk (1998) states that laughter has a positive effect on psychology and physiology and bring benefits to teaching and learning, especially in five important aspects: the relation of teachers and students, classroom atmosphere, students’ feedbacks, test performance and student presence.

These above are the common reasons for the use of humor of students and teachers in the intercultural classrooms.

5. Analysis and Results

Here are the results from observations in the Chinese School of Chinese Association of Students & Scholars in Gothenburg in Sweden, video recordings of Chinese lectures and an interview from Xi'an International School in China. Those results describe the communication in Chinese language learning in the intercultural classrooms and show the influences of culture, humor and laughter on communication in the intercultural classrooms.

5.1. Description and Analysis of Chinese Lectures as a Social Activity

There were only teaching and learning activities which took place in the Chinese lectures in the video recordings from Xi'an International School. In the observations, both the activities inside and outside the classrooms were observed in the Chinese school in Gothenburg. In order to analyze the communication in the intercultural classrooms, only the activities happened in the classrooms will be focused here. The table below presents the analysis of the Chinese lectures as a social activity:

Table 2: Chinese lecture: purpose, activity structure, goals and procedures

	Activity Structure	Goals	Procedures
Purpose: To teach and learn Chinese language and culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Greeting • Small talk and introduction of the content of the Chinese lecture • Presenting the content of the Chinese lecture • Asking and answering questions • Teaching and learning activities such as games, discussion and talking. • Leave-taking 	Teacher: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give knowledge of Chinese language and culture to students • Manage the class and motivate students • Build trustful relationship with students Students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn and acquire Chinese language and culture • Pass tests • Interests • Socializing and making friends 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher and students greet each other • The teacher and students have a small talk before the lecture • The lecture begins with an introduction of the content • The teacher and students ask and answer questions back and forth • The teacher chooses to take different teaching and learning activities according to different situations • The teacher announces the end of the lecture, gives suggestions and says goodbye to students, and then the students say goodbye to the teacher

5.1.1. Purpose and Participant Roles

The main purpose of the Chinese teachers in both schools is to give knowledge of Chinese language and culture to the students, and the sub purpose is to create an active and relaxed environment which can help to facilitate the process of Chinese teaching and learning.

However, the main purposes of the students vary. In Xi'an International School in China, the main purpose of those four students from Canada and America is to learn and acquire Chinese language and culture in order to pass the tests and achieve a certain level of proficiency of Chinese language. On the contrary, in the Chinese school in Gothenburg, the Chinese lectures are not mandatory and most of the students go there because of their interests and the requirements from their parents. The sub purpose of the students in both schools is to have fun, socialize and make friends.

Below, the roles (rights, obligations and competences) will be discussed.

A) Teachers

The Chinese teachers are to be competent in Chinese language teaching and their obligation is to deliver the knowledge of Chinese language and culture to the students in efficient ways. Intercultural competence is often required in the intercultural classrooms. Teachers have rights to choose the teaching methods according to different situations and manage the teaching and learning activities.

B) Students

The role of the student requires them to listen to the teacher, be quiet and respectful when teachers are speaking and their obligation is to learn the knowledge. They have rights to discuss and ask things which they don't understand.

C) Participants

In the video recordings, there were some participants in the Chinese lectures. They are required to be quiet and respectful when teachers are speaking and their obligation is to help teachers with teaching activities. They have rights to provide feedbacks such as laughter in the class.

Power and Behavior

The roles of teachers and students can influence the communication in the intercultural classrooms, which leads to the power and consequential behaviors. In the video recordings of the Chinese lectures from Xi'an International School, it can be

clearly seen that teachers and students have casual and relaxed relationship. In the beginning of the lectures, there were no formal addressing and salute between teachers and students, they just said “hello” to each other. In general, all of them are very relaxed. Here are some examples from lecture 1 in the video recordings from the Chinese school in China:

Example 1:

\$S1: Hmm...that girl who is smiling is my classmate's daughter, child.

\$T1: Hmm. Hmm...that girl who is smiling. She and she are both smiling.

\$S1: Ah. Ah...

\$T1: There are two smiling girls.

\$S1: The person who is wearing black jacket is Jing's child.

....

\$S1: that, with big nose, seems to be my brother.

\$T1: He is a student in our school.

\$S1: Oh. Is he?

\$T1: He is called Da Hu.

\$S1: Oh, I heard he is a bad guy.

\$T1: (Laugh) He is a very, very...earnest student. Is there anyone you know? No.

\$S1: No at all.

\$T1: No at all. Is there anyone you know?

\$S1: Hmm...know one.

\$T1: Which one?

\$S1: Hmm...the child who is playing football is, is also Jing's child.

\$T1: The child who is playing football is Jing's child. OK. This. Do you know anyone?

\$S1: Right.

The students and teachers had a small talk, and they talked about their families and common friends during the lectures. Similarly, in the Chinese school in Gothenburg, the power distance between the teacher and the students was small in the beginning probably since the students were used to the small power distance in the Swedish schools, but afterwards the teacher tried to enlarge the power distance by making rules which can help to make kids behave themselves in the class.

5.1.2. Artifacts and Environment

In the video recordings from Xi'an International School, there are some artifacts used in the lectures: computer, projector, pictures, white board, pens and cards. In the Chinese school in Gothenburg, mainly two artifacts are used: white board and pens. Computer, projector, pictures and cards were used for the joyous teaching and learning activities in the lectures, and they created a more comfortable, efficient and relaxed environment for the students. For example, in lecture 2 in the video recordings, the teacher used pictures to involve more people to participate in the teaching activity; in lecture 4, the teacher used computer and cards to make the teaching activity more

interesting. White board and pens are usually used for formal teaching and learning activities. In the Chinese school in Gothenburg, the teacher only used white board and pens, sometimes pictures, in the teaching and learning activities. The choice of artifacts can be influenced both by the nature of the activity, e.g. using pictures can be helpful in illustrating words to be learned, availability of the artifacts in school, and a particular teacher's preferences.

The environment comprises two parts: physical environment and social environment.

A) Physical Environment

In the video recordings of the Chinese lectures in Xi'an International School, the arrangement of sitting was not common for traditional Chinese classes. Usually, in China, students sit together while teachers are always on the platform, which allows less interactions, but here in the Chinese lectures in Xi'an International School, teachers and students sat together by the table, which allowed more interactions. However, in the Chinese school in Gothenburg, the arrangement of sitting was just like the traditional classes in China. The only difference is that the students could choose where to sit and whom to sit with, but the teacher always stayed on the platform.

B) Social Environment

In China, the teaching activities are traditionally formal and serious, and teachers are highly respected and revered. Students in China usually follow teachers' instructions without questioning the authority of teachers, and they accept how teachers teach and manage the class. However, in the video recordings for the thesis, the social environment in the Chinese lectures in Xi'an International School in China was different compared to other traditional Chinese classes, probably because of cultural diversity. It is more like it in Western countries. The interactions between the Chinese teachers and foreign students were active. For example, in lecture 1 in the video recordings, the teacher used some pictures of American politicians and celebrities for teaching the American student, and they had fun together. In the Chinese school in Gothenburg, the social environment was more like it is in China although it was in Sweden. However, the teacher tried to be open to questions and challenges, while the students tried to follow the instructions.

5.1.3. Communicative Behavior in Classrooms

Here are the expressive features and content features in the communication in Chinese language teaching and learning in the intercultural classrooms.

A) Expressive Features

Verbal Communication

The lectures were about Chinese language, so the verbal communication was central. Students who are not native Chinese speakers made mistakes of pronunciations all the time because of the unique verbal system of Chinese language, and teachers had to correct them. Constant corrections made students feel frustrated, so teachers always tried to compensate with some encouragement and positive feedback during the lectures. Here are examples in lecture 1 from the video recordings:

Example 2:

\$S1: The person who is wearing red clothes is “lao fan”.

\$T1: Lao.

\$S1: Lao

\$T1: Ban.

\$S1: Ban.

\$T1: Lao ban (boss).

\$S1: Oh. Lao ban (boss).

\$T1: Right. Do you know Lao ban (boss)?

\$S1: I...know.

\$T1: Hmm.

...

\$S1: Oh, I see. Is that person who is wearing black clothes and holding a blue Shu(book),
Shu what?

\$T1: Shu Bao (schoolbag).

\$S1: Shu Bao (schoolbag), that person who is wearing glasses?

\$T1: Right. It is him.

\$S1: Let's Dao qu there.

\$T1: Guo Qu (go over).

\$S1: Guo Qu there.

\$T1: Hmm.

...

\$T1: Hmm, very good. Know at “Nv, Nv Hai'er”(girl), that should be pronounced as
“Hai'er”.

\$S1: “Hai'er”.

\$T1: Right. You pronounce it very well.

\$S1: Thanks!

The examples above show that one of the most important functions of teachers' verbal messages is to correct students' wrong pronunciations in Chinese language teaching and learning activities. In the Chinese school in Gothenburg, the teacher also corrected students' wrong pronunciations very often and read the book for the students so that the students could hear the right pronunciations of the words they learned.

Non-verbal Communication

Non-verbal messages are often used by teachers and students in the intercultural classroom in order to facilitate the process of Chinese language teaching and learning. Here is an example from lecture 2, the Chinese teacher asked some participants to illustrate how to use the verbs “来 (come)” and “去 (go)” by their movements:

Example 3:

\$T2: Then, We learned “come” and “go” yesterday. Do you still remember? OK. Then let’s see now, hmm...how the two teachers do.

\$\$S2: OK.

\$T2: Wang Jing, come (wave his hand). OK. Wang Yan, come (wave his hand). Wang Jing, go (point the direction). Wang yan, go (point the direction). OK. Can you do it? I tell you, you do it, OK?

\$\$S2: OK.

In lecture 1 and 4, pictures and cards were used to indicate the meanings of the words. In the Chinese school in Gothenburg, the teacher also used non-verbal messages to explain the meanings of some Chinese words so that students could understand easily. For example, when the teacher was teaching the Chinese word “提(lift)”, he lifted the chair in order to make the students understand the meaning.

B) Content Features

Topics

The topics in the classrooms are usually about the teaching and learning activities, but according to the video recordings of Chinese lectures in Xi’an International School, there were a number of personal topics which are usually considered not appropriate in the traditional classes in China. Here are some examples of topics:

Example 4:

\$\$S1: OK. The girl who is wearing a hat. Hmm...what?

\$T1: Xing (the family name is).

\$\$S1: xin.

\$T1: Xing (the family name is)

\$\$S1: Hmm...Xing Wang (the family name is Wang).

\$T1: Right.

\$\$S1: The teacher who is teaching will get married next month.

....

\$T3: Who teach you this word?

\$\$S3: My husband.

\$T3: Your husband speaks Chinese better than you. Now I believe it .very good, I think you used the right order, in right situation. Be careful , don’t be sacred ,look at..

....

\$T4: Do you know Li wenhua?

\$\$S4: I know him.

\$T4: Where do you meet him?

\$\$S4: Over there.

\$T4: When we work, you can see him.

\$\$S4: Yes.

\$T4: But you don't see him after work. Today I show you what he is doing after work.

You only watch and listen at the first time.

Here in the examples above, the teacher and the student talked first about a girl they both knew, and the student even mentioned that the girl they knew was getting married in the next month. Later, the topic discussed was the student's husband. Afterwards they talked about another teacher the student knew. In the examples above, it seems that both teachers and students did not mind to talk about their families and friends during the lectures, which it is very uncommon in traditional Chinese classes. In the Chinese school in Gothenburg, students liked to ask personal questions of their teacher, which is also considered not appropriate in the classes in most cases.

A distinctive feature of the Chinese lectures is praises, which will be discussed below.

Praises

Praises took place very often in the Chinese lectures in Xi'an International School. As mentioned before, complementary feedbacks were frequently used by teachers after corrections to ease students' frustration when they made mistakes. Here are some examples of praises the teachers gave to students in the video recordings:

Example 5:

\$T2: Yes. Hmm. You answer very well.

...

\$T3: How clever you are .You Are a Genius.

...

\$T4: You made up many sentences, so many, I think you did a good job. So I wanna give you reward-lollipop.

...

\$T4: I am surprised. I think you can be Dubber . I think you did better. You did a good job. Finally, I say, you do .ok?

...

\$T4: You did really a good job. That is all for today. You can listen more, see more and ask more. I believe your Chinese will be better. Ok. Class is over.

The Chinese teachers gave praise to the students in the class, and the Canadian student also paid attention to teachers' academic reputation:

Example 6:

\$S1: Hmm...that person who is teaching is the best teacher in our school.

In the Chinese school in Gothenburg, the teacher also praised students openly for their good behaviors and academic achievements, and the students seemed to accept and enjoy the praises from the teacher.

Another distinctive feature of the Chinese lectures is humor.

Humor

In the video recordings, humor was frequently used in the content of Chinese lectures. However, the frequency and the ways of using humor varied under different situations in the lectures and cultural backgrounds of teachers and students.

Here are some examples of using humor in the video recordings:

Example 7:

\$T1: You can read English first.

\$S1: I cannot understand English. (Laugh) OK. OK. OK.

\$T1: Are you American? (Laugh)

\$S1: Yes. (Laugh)

....

\$S3: Is that guy handsome? (Laugh)

\$T3: Who? There are too many men. (Laugh)

\$S3: The Canadian guy in hat. (Laugh)

\$T3: Is he a man? (Laugh)

\$S3: Yes, I don't cheat you. (Laugh)

\$T3: Just so so. (Laugh)

\$S3: What do you think? (Laugh)

In the examples above, the purpose and function of using humor was to reduce the tension and stress as well as make the class lively. From the context of lecture1, the teacher obviously knew the nationality of the student, but she still asked if the student was American. At the same time, the student who is from America said she couldn't speak English. They both used humor during the conversation in the first period of the class to create a positive classroom environment. Similarly, the same situation took place in lecture 3. They made a joke if the male student was a man. The distinct characteristics of these two examples are that the students used the humor as a tool to make a more relaxed learning environment.

In the video recordings, humor occurs with the interactions between the teachers and students during teaching and learning process usually both intentionally and spontaneously. The purpose is to make positive and interesting environment as well as

reduce embarrassment. Examples can be found in the video recordings:

Example 8:

\$S4: You use my card. (Laugh)

\$T4: I am sorry. I give back to you. (Laugh)

\$T4: Find....oh, I don't know... I am abnormal today. (A self-mocking laughter)

In the example above, the teacher used the sentence “I don't know... I am abnormal today” to hide her embarrassment in front of her student and continued her teaching. It is a typical Chinese way of face-saving when people make small mistakes in front of their subordinates.

According to the interview, the teacher said that they might not use humor if they found the poor psychology state of the students, which resulted in ineffective use of humor. When the students are in poor physical or mental conditions, they hardly put their full attention to what they heard and learned. The best way to do is to come to the point that is related to the materials they presented.

5.1.4. Interpretation and Understanding

In the process of teaching and learning activities, it is crucial that teachers have to make sure that students understand the contents of the lectures. Especially in the intercultural classrooms, teachers and students can misunderstand and misinterpret messages because of cultural differences. In the Chinese school in Gothenburg, the teacher always asked the students if they understood the instructions. In the video recordings from Xi'an International School, such examples can also be found. Here is an example from lecture 1:

Example 9:

\$T1: You feel strange when I asked just now who that person is, right?

\$S1: Right. I...(Laugh)

\$T1: Right. Which one? Right? (Laugh)

\$S1: Right.

\$T1: The question I asked, right?

\$S1: Right.

\$T1: You don't know what I was asking.

\$S1: Right.

\$T1: But, at the second time I asked that person who is playing basketball, do you know that person who is playing basketball? You know which one I was asking.

\$S1: Right.

In the examples above, the teacher asked again and again for the confirmation that the student understood the question. This kind of examples can be found often in the educational settings, and especially in the intercultural classrooms.

In the Chinese school in Gothenburg, the students seemed to have difficulties understanding covert messages. In the beginning, the teacher used covert messages to imply the disciplines in the classroom. For example, when the lecture started, the teacher just simply said to the students that they should know what they should and should not do during the lecture, since the teacher assumed that the students were typical Chinese students and understood the basic rules in the classrooms, but the students could not understand and could not behave themselves. During the lecture, some of them ate snacks; some of them played their mobile phones; some of them talked with each other. Therefore, the teacher switched to use overt messages to manage the class, which was successful. Three basic rules in the classroom were directly told to the students: 1, no snacks during the lecture. 2, raising hand before talking. 3, turning off mobile phone. Although the students were not happy about those three rules, they followed them.

Another factor worth mentioning is the degree to understandings and interpretations of humor in the intercultural classrooms. According to the interview of the Chinese teacher, when she used some types of humor which related to complex meanings and traditions, their students from low-context culture could not follow them and consequently, the embarrassment rose from both sides. In this case, humor creates a negative effect to teaching and learning in the intercultural classrooms.

5.1.5. Interactive Patterns

The interactions in the intercultural classrooms are different from the mono-cultural classrooms. Below, typical sequences, turn management and feedback are discussed.

A. Typical Sequences

Initial sequences

Lectures usually start with greetings. In both schools, the greetings were very simple and casual. In the video recordings of the Chinese lectures in Xi'an International School, all four lectures started with simply "hello", "please sit down" or "how you doing?". In the Chinese school in Gothenburg, the lectures also started without formal greeting, and the teacher just said "let's start the lecture". According to the video recordings, in the beginning of the lecture, humor was often used. Here is an example from lecture 3 in the video recordings:

Example 10:

\$T3: What do you think? How do you think of teacher Li's singing?

\$S3: Who is teacher Li?

\$T3: She is teacher Li, the most beautiful one.

\$S3: I suppose that she sings not bad. (Laugh)

\$T3: Really? Don't regret! Teacher Li has another performance. (Laugh)

\$S3: Did she rap?

\$T3: This is not important.

In the example above, the teacher and the student both used humor related to teacher Li's singing.

Medial Sequences

In the process of Chinese language teaching and learning in Xi'an International School, teachers and students asked and answered questions back and forth. Students always asked and answered questions immediately and directly without asking for permission to talk when they had questions or wanted to answer. Examples can be found through the whole video recordings. There are some typical examples from lecture 1 and lecture 3:

Example 11:

\$T1: Now, you look at the pictures. You can tell me, hmm...now listen to me, the person who is playing table tennis, is, Mao Zedong.

\$S1: Is it?

...

\$S1: Oh, I see. Is that person who is wearing black clothes and holding a blue Shu(book), Shu what?

\$T1: Shu Bao (schoolbag).

\$S1: Shu Bao (schoolbag), that person who is wearing glasses?

\$T1: Right. It is him.

...

\$T3: There is a building. I think these buildings are very high.

\$S3: Use this?

\$T3: Yes, use this grammar.

....

\$T3: We are going to learn.... We are going to learn a new....that isis an old grammar we have learned.

\$S3: Excuse me! Could you speak slowly?

In the Chinese school in Gothenburg, students also asked questions without permission in the beginning, but afterwards, the teacher started to require students to raise hands before talking, and the students accepted it and obeyed it.

The instructions from the teachers in both schools were very explicit and detailed so that students could understand and follow the instructions. Here is an example in lecture 2 from the video recordings:

Example 12:

\$T1: Hmm. We need to know which person we are saying, saying. OK. In Chinese, we have

three ways. Usually we say who or what VO's person is. Is my friend, is my teacher. The second one, we say how VO's person looks like. VO's person is very tall, very beautiful. The third one, we say what VO's person is doing, and VO's person likes drinking coffee, VO's person does not have kids. OK.

\$\$1: OK.

Besides verbal messages in the instruction, non-verbal messages are also often used by teachers to explain the meanings of the words in the Chinese lectures. Examples are provided in the previous section "Expressive Features".

According to the video recordings from Xi'an International School, teachers and students had a lot of interactions (e.g. asking and answering questions back and forth), but in the Chinese school in Gothenburg, there were fewer interactions, and the teacher focused on the formal teaching and learning activities.

Final Sequences

In the video recordings from Xi'an International School, there was no formal ending of the lectures, and usually praises, encouragements and suggestions were added in the end of the lectures. Here is an example from lecture 4 in the video recordings:

Example 13:

\$T4: You did really a good job. That is all for today. You can listen more, see more and ask more. I believe your Chinese will be better. Ok. Class is over.

In the example above, the teacher gave praises, encouragements and suggestions to the student in the end of the lecture. In the Chinese school in Gothenburg, the teacher also ended the lecture informally with praises, encouragements and suggestions.

B. Turn Management

Usually, teachers decide when to stop or interrupt a student turn, and they are always the first one to speak in the lectures. In the lectures, teachers manage the turn taking by using verbal and non-verbal messages. There is an example from lecture 1 in the video recordings from Xi'an International School:

Example 14:

\$T1: Now, you look at the pictures. You can tell me, hmm...now listen to me, the person who is playing table tennis, is, Mao Zedong.

\$\$1: Is it?

\$T1: Do you know which picture I am talking about?

\$\$1: Hmm...right.

\$T1: Point at it.

\$\$1: This.

In the example above, the teacher used pictures, gestures, explicit verbal instructions and questions to manage the turn taking in the lecture. In the video recordings, eye contacts and smiling were also used for managing turn taking. Students in both schools usually just followed teachers' pace, but sometime they interrupted and asked questions when they did not understand. Examples can be found below:

Example 15:

\$T1: Now, you look at the pictures. You can tell me, hmm...now listen to me, the person who is playing table tennis, is, Mao Zedong.

\$S1: Is it?

...

\$T3: There is a building. I think these buildings are very high.

\$S3: Use this?

\$T3: Yes, use this grammar.

....

\$T3: We are going to learn.... We are going to learn a new....that isis an old grammar we have learned.

\$S3: Excuse me! Could you speak slowly?

In the examples above, the students interrupted the teachers' instructions when they had questions or difficulties understanding, which is not common in the traditional Chinese classes. In the video recordings, it can be seen apparently that the use of laughter is used as turn taking. Here are some examples from the video recordings:

Example 16:

\$T3: Is it bright? I hardly see inside clearly. So I think it is not very bright.

\$S3: En, I made a mistake. (Laugh)That is, this...this place is not very bright.

...

\$T3: After class. (Laugh) It's your turn.

\$S3: Do you think I am clever or not clever? (Laugh)

\$T3: Generally, you are very clever, but sometimes you are not very clever. (Laugh) It is my turn. Do you think the grammar is different you learned today?

\$S3: Not very difficult. (Laugh)

\$T3: Please be modest. Ok, it's your turn. (Laugh)

The examples above show that the teachers used laughter as a transitional point to the next turn and they decided the tempos and the directions of communication.

Allwood (2000:17) mainly categorized turn management to two types: Own communication management (OCM) and Interactive communication management (ICM). Own communication management (Allwood 2000:17) is to make communicators to choose and change his/her message. Interactive communication management is to make communicators to manage the interactions, such as relating to sequences, feedback and turn management. Some examples in the video recordings

can show that laughter can be used as those two types of turn management. There are as follows:

Example 17:

\$T4: Fall asleep. (Laugh)

\$T4: Can't stand up. (Laugh)

\$T4: Can't see.

\$\$S4: I can't see.

\$T4: Sorry, it is not finished. (Laugh) Stand up. I will tell you two verbs and you do these together. Eat too much and can't move. Open the door and enter. Take and put down.

From the example above, it is shown that the teacher used laughter as own communication management to hold the floors and lead the communication to the way that teachers can control the teaching process with an effective learning result.

Besides, teaching and learning in the classrooms is an interactive process so that the interactive communication management is apparently shown during the lectures in the video recordings. The following examples are shown that the use of laughter can be seen as interactive communication management.

Example 18:

\$T1: Which one? Don't use your hands. (Laugh)

\$\$S1: Oh...sorry. I am bad. (Laugh)

\$T1: It is OK, because I want you to practice. (Laugh)

...

\$T1: OK. Hmm...Now let's look some new pictures again. Which girl do you think is the most beautiful? (Laugh)

\$\$S1: That girl. (Laugh)

\$T1: No Hands! No hands! (Laugh)

...

\$T3: Really? I thought you speak better. (Laugh) This grammar....be careful! There are three points. You have to be careful. Remember these, we're gonna take a test later.

Laughter was used as interactive communication management in the whole video recordings. From the examples above, it can be clearly seen that the teachers used laughter as signals to request answers or give instructions to the students and meanwhile, the students gave the answers to show their understanding of what to be asked and expected to get feedbacks from their teachers. Besides, the way of using laughter in communication in the video recordings is simple, direct and explicit. The teachers started communication and got the floors to give instructions or orders to the students by using plenty of laughter as a comfortable way of controlling the floors and students also gave reactions to these nonverbal communication codes to get their floors to answer and ask questions.

C. Feedback

Communication is a process of mutual understanding. In order to examine the result of information delivery, feedback is necessarily used to figure out the correctness of information transmission. In the intercultural classrooms, the feedback is important for both teachers and students. In order to know if students understand, teachers require the feedbacks from students. If students understand it right, teachers also give feedbacks. Examples can be found in the whole video recordings. Here is an example from lecture 2:

Example 19:

\$T2: Then, We learned “come” and “go” yesterday. Do you still remember? OK. Then let’s see now, hmm...how the two teachers do.

\$\$S2: OK.

\$T2: Wang Jing, come. OK. Wang Yan, come. Wang Jing, go. Wang yan, go. OK. Can you do it? I tell you, you do it, OK?

\$\$S2: OK.

\$T2: OK. Then stand up. OK. This. Go. OK. This. You, go. OK. Come. OK. You have remembered “come” and “go” we learned yesterday. Very good! OK. You can sit down. OK. Then today let’s look at one, hmm...sentence, sentence. Let’s see look at. Right. Let’s look at some places, OK?

Both teachers and students in the example above used verbal and non-verbal feedbacks frequently. Additionally, the reactions from the students were very explicit and obvious in Chinese language teaching and learning activities in the intercultural classrooms, and the students always used “OK”, “right” and “hmm” with the movement of nodding as feedbacks. In the video recordings, the feedbacks were also often shown as laughter, body movements and the words such as “yes” and “hmm”.

Feedback can also be used for measuring the result of using humor. It can be continuously used if humor and laughter have a positive impact such as activating classroom atmosphere, making students at ease. Otherwise, the use of humor and laughter should be reduced or abandoned such as no reactions from students. The ways of giving feedbacks includes both verbal and non-verbal information. In the intercultural classrooms, the most direct feedback is verbal messages such as utterance, which are simple and clear. Besides, it is more likely that students use verbal and non-verbal messages simultaneously. Some of the feedbacks in the conversations in the video recordings are shown below:

Example 20:

\$T1: You can read English first.

\$\$S1: I cannot understand English. (Laugh) OK. OK. OK.

\$T1: Are you American? (Laugh)

\$\$S1: Yes. (Laugh)

.....

\$S1: Hmm...the person who is drinking coffee is my grandfather. (Laugh) Speaking, is the person who is speaking your husband? (Laugh)

\$T1: My husband is Chinese. (Laugh) He is not my husband. I don't know him.

\$S1: Me, neither. (Laugh)

....

\$T1: That girl who is wearing black jacket is Jing's child. Good. More?

\$S1: No.

\$T1: (Laugh)

\$S1: I don't know. (Laugh)

\$T1: That person who is hitting you.

....

\$S3: Is that guy handsome? (Laugh)

\$T3: Who? There are too many men. (Laugh)

\$S3: The Canadian guy in hat .(Laugh)

\$T3: Is he a man? (Laugh)

\$S3: Yes, I don't cheat you. (Laugh)

\$T3: Just so so. (Laugh)

\$S3: What do you think? (Laugh)

It can be seen that the effective feedbacks in these conversations resulted in successful humor and laughter delivery. In these three lectures, both verbal and non-verbal feedbacks were presented to respond the teachers' or the students' humor and laughter. In the examples above, most feedbacks showed that the students could understand or interpret the teachers' purposes of using humor and laughter and the teachers could know if it was successful to use humor and laughter. In the Chinese lectures in the video recordings, the teaching procedures went smoothly due to the effective feedbacks from the students and teachers.

5.2. Cultural Impact on Communication in Intercultural Classrooms

According to the observations and video recordings, overt messages were frequently used and desired in order to make teachers and students to understand each other during the process of Chinese language teaching and learning. Teachers in both schools tried to share common even personal experiences and thoughts with students in order to facilitate the communication and shorten distance between them. The time in the classrooms is highly organized and scheduled in order to complete the process of teaching and learning, which is not related to the cultural differences in the educational context.

The Chinese language teaching and learning activities in both schools showed the characteristics of both individualism and collectivism. The behaviors of students in both schools were different: the students in Xi'an International School tended to adapt

collectivism during the lectures by showing respect and following teachers' instructions, while the students in the Chinese school in Gothenburg tended to be more individualistic by speaking up in the class. Teachers and students in both schools had low tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity in the educational context so that the teaching and learning process can be efficient. The power distance in both schools was small, although power distance could be changed by teachers under the precondition that students share at least some parts of the culture with teachers. Praises and compliments were often used in both schools, which show the characteristics of masculinity, but students' purposes and goals of studying Chinese are different in the two schools: the students in Xi'an International School focus more on achievements, which shows the characteristics of masculinity, while the students in the Chinese school in Gothenburg focus more on interests, which shows the characteristics of femininity. Persistence was highly emphasized and encouraged by teachers in both schools, which reflects the value of Confucianism.

5.3. Humor and Laughter in Intercultural Classrooms

A) High Frequency of Using Humor and Laughter

There are four lectures recorded as data collection for this study. It is apparently from these four lectures that both teachers and students tended to be frequent of use of the humor and laughter as an effective tool of teaching and learning. More specifically, from the video recordings, it can be counted that students used laughter 59 times and similarly, laughter was used 54 times by teachers. Besides, they used laughter for 20 times simultaneously. Finally, teachers used 7 times of humor compared to 12 times use of students.

B) Purpose and Function of Using Humor and Laughter

It can be seen clearly that laughter and humor in the video recordings was used mostly to reduce the anxiety and tension, give feedback to the speakers and at the same time, activate the class atmosphere. In addition, laughter was used to hide both teachers' and students' embarrassment due to their mistakes of teaching or learning. Compared to traditional Chinese classrooms, humor and laughter are more common in our data, which is probably due to intercultural environment.

Furthermore, the teachers consciously used humor and laughter to make the class lively and reduce the nervousness of the students. During the teaching process, the cultural backgrounds of the teachers and students affected the use of humor and laughter in the intercultural classrooms.

Finally, laughter can be used as turning taking management that there is two types: Own communication management (OCM) and Interactive communication management (ICM). More specifically, in the video recordings, teachers distributed

turns and decided when to stop or interrupt students' turns. Teachers used laughter as own communication management to get and change the floors to control the teaching process with an effective learning result. Laughter was used as interactive communication management as signals to question or give instructions to the students and at the same time, students gave the feedbacks to show their understanding of what to be required and expected to obtain reactions from their teachers.

6. Discussion

In this section, the communication in Chinese language teaching and learning in the intercultural classrooms is discussed according to the theories of intercultural communication, humor and laughter.

6.1. Cultural Factors

Hall's (1976) high- and low-context cultural taxonomy can to some extent provide explanations for acceptance of use of humor for participants in the intercultural classrooms. According to Hall (1976), in high- context cultures such as China, information is provided via gestures, the use of space, and even silence. The message is also delivered "through status (age, sex, education, family background, etc)" (Forster 1992: 280) conversely. In low-context cultures such as Sweden and America, the verbal message includes most of the information and little is rooted in the context or the participants. As a consequence, the people from these cultures need more detailed background information when they communicate with others. As a result, the frequency of misunderstanding or misinterpretation may occur in the intercultural classrooms.

According to the video recordings and observations in the Chinese lectures, it seems that Chinese teachers are aware of the cultural differences when choosing their teaching methods. For example, overt messages were frequently chosen to be used by teachers in the Chinese lectures in order to make students understand no matter which culture the students are from, because students need to get the meanings from the teachers' messages which are plainly and explicitly coded so that they can understand and learn, especially for the students who are from low-context cultures. Examples of using overt messages can be found in teachers' instructions through the whole video recordings, such as Example 11. The Chinese teachers use overt messages to deliver the knowledge of Chinese language and culture to the students so that the student can understand and learn. Teachers have the rights and are required to have the competence of choosing the right teaching methods. In the educational context, teachers tend to use overt messages no matter which cultural backgrounds they have.

In the Chinese school in Gothenburg, the Chinese teacher's failure of using covert messages indicates that students have different extents to understand covert messages,

although they are originally from China. The different extents of understanding covert messages possibly depend on how long they have stayed in China and how much cultural influence they have got from their Chinese families. However, there is one thing worth mentioning: the rules in the classrooms are usually followed by adult students in every school in China no matter teachers emphasize it or not, but the students in the Chinese school in Gothenburg are kids and teenagers who are different from the adult students, and teachers there need to emphasize the rules so that the kids and teenagers can behave themselves.

According to the video recordings and observations, non-verbal messages are frequently used in the Chinese lectures. Sometimes non-verbal messages can be more overt and efficient than the verbal messages when teaching languages. Chinese teachers' frequent use of non-verbal messages also reflects the fact that people from high-context cultures use more non-verbal messages than ones from low-context cultures.

Lustig and Koester (2007: 304) refer to that "Those who prefer a more hierarchical relationship between individuals will structure the relationship between student and teacher with greater status differences". According to Hofstede's (2001) cultural index of power distance, Chinese culture prefers a high degree of formality in the classrooms, and teachers' authority is not often questioned. However, in Canadian, American and Swedish cultures, the power distance is quite small, which affects the communication between students and teachers in the intercultural classrooms.

In the video recordings of the Chinese lectures from Xi'an International School, it can be clearly seen that teachers and students have casual and relaxed relationship, which indicates small power distance. They were sitting together by the table, which allowed more interactions. The teacher used a lot of different artifacts such as pictures, computer and projector. In the beginning of the lectures, there were no formal addressing and salute between teachers and students, they just said "hello" to each other, and they even liked to have a small talk during the lectures. The topics during the lectures were very different compared to the traditional Chinese classes. They talked about their private lives and the people they both know, which indicate the small power distance in the intercultural classrooms. Usually, in the traditional Chinese classes, teachers and students have very formal and serious relationship. They greet each other in a formal way, and usually they don't talk about their families and common friends in the classrooms. But according to the video recordings from Xi'an International School, it seems that the Chinese teachers were fine with casual greetings and did not mind to talk about some private topics. The possible reason is that they were aware of the cultural differences in the classroom and compromised to facilitate the communication in the Chinese language teaching and learning

In the Chinese school in Gothenburg, the power distance between the teacher and the students was small in the beginning since the students were used to the small power

distance in the Swedish schools, but afterwards the teacher tried to enlarge the power distance by making rules (three basic rules), using different artifacts (white board and pen are frequently used in teaching) and arrangement of sitting (the teacher always stay on the platform). The students there are influenced by Swedish culture, but somehow they still accepted the changes in the classroom. The possible explanation of their acceptance is that they have got influenced from their Chinese families.

The students in Xi'an International School always ask questions immediately without asking for permission to talk when they have questions. There are examples in the video recordings such as Example 15. The students in Xi'an International School are from Canada and America, it is more acceptable to interrupt the teachers and ask questions immediately and directly in their cultures than Chinese culture according to Hofstede's cultural index of power distance and individualism. Although Chinese, Canadian and American cultures all have high tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity, this cultural dimension of Hofstede cannot be applied here in Chinese language teaching and learning activities in the intercultural classrooms. However, the teachers noticed the cultural differences and accepted it. In the Chinese school in Gothenburg, students always followed the rules and raised hands when they had questions during the lectures or asked questions after the lectures, but showing off was also acceptable in the class. Those factors in the Chinese school in Gothenburg indicate the characteristics of both collectivism and individualism, so this shows that it is hard to measure the cultures in the intercultural classrooms.

In the video recordings, both teachers and students used feedback frequently, and those feedbacks are explicit with body movements. Evidence can be found in Example 3. It can show the characteristic of the low-context cultures: "Reaction in high-context cultures are likely to be reserved, whereas reactions in low-context cultures are frequently very explicit and readily observable" (Lustig & Koester 2007: 113). Although the teachers are from Chinese culture which is high-context culture, they still used observable reactions to respond to the students in order to make them understand in the teaching and learning activities. In the case of feedbacks in the intercultural classrooms, the use of overt and covert messages from Hall's (1976) high- and low-context cultural taxonomy cannot be applied. Teachers and students tend to compromise culture for better understanding in the intercultural classrooms.

According to Hofstede (2001: 303), "[o]n the masculine side teachers' brilliance and academic reputation and students' academic performance are the dominant factors. On the feminine side teachers' friendliness and social skills and students' social adaptation play a bigger role". Chinese culture is masculine culture, and academic performance is rewarded highly in the schools in China. Usually teachers like to openly praise the good students in the class. Evidences can be found in the Example 5 and 6 in the video recordings. The praises from the Chinese teachers and foreign students all reflect the characteristics of masculinity. According to Hofstede's (2001) cultural index of masculinity, Chinese, Canadian and American cultures are all

masculine cultures, and this cultural similarity is clearly showed in the lectures in Xi'an International School. Praises are not common used for academic performances in the classes in Sweden, since Swedish culture is a feminine culture. However, in the Chinese school in Gothenburg, the students seemed to accept and like the praises from their teacher. The possible explanation can be that the students got influenced by Chinese culture and tried to adapt Chinese culture in the class.

The main purposes of the students in both schools are different. In Xi'an International School, the 4 students focused more on achievements, while in the Chinese school in Gothenburg, the students focused more on their interests. This difference reflects the cultural index of Masculinity in those countries. According to Hofstede's MAS (2001: 286), China, America and Canada have positive scores, which means those countries prefer masculinity and focus on achievements, but Sweden have the largest negative score which means Sweden prefers femininity and focus on interests.

Additionally, about the suggestion the teacher gave in the end of the lecture, there is one thing worth mentioning: Hofstede (2001: 354) mentioned that Chinese culture has long-term time orientation which is related to Confucianism. Due to that, the values of Confucianism are highly appreciated in Chinese culture. One of the values is persistence. Chinese teachers all insist that language acquisition is a long-term process, and persistence is one of the most crucial factors which can lead to the success of language acquisition.

6.2. Humor and Laughter

According to Ziegler (1998), "Humor is communication (written, verbal, drawn or otherwise displayed) including teasing, jokes, witticisms, satire, sarcasm, cartoons, puns, clowning, which induces (or is intended to induce) amusement, with or without laughing or smiling." In intercultural classrooms, the short jokes are frequently used by teachers as an assistant teaching tool. From Chinese traditional educational view, the atmosphere of classroom should be serious and the use of humor is rare. However, with the development of teaching methodology and the demand of effectiveness of learning, humor is gradually used as a tool applied in the classrooms and it is acceptable by the students.

According to the interview and observation by Wells (1974), humor can reduce tension, strengthen student-teacher relationships, create lively atmosphere of the classroom. It can shorten the distance between the teachers and the students.

Besides, as Berk (1996: 73) states, the most important function of humor in classroom settings is that humor decreases anxiety, tension, stress, and boredom; improves attitudes toward the subject; increases comprehension, cognitive retention, interest, and task performance, increases motivation to learn and satisfaction with learning and promotes creativity and divergent thinking. In Xi'an International School, humor

showed those functions in the Chinese teaching and learning activities. Evidence can be found in Example 7.

Generally speaking, in China it is more likely that the teachers hold the power of using humor. However, in the intercultural classrooms, the teachers and the students may come from different cultures, and the role of leading the conversations and using humor as a communication tool may vary according to the situations and the cultures they are from. In addition to this, according to the video recordings, the students are from western countries and all the teachers are Chinese, it seems that the teachers don't always control the power of using humor. Conversely, in Chinese traditional classrooms, teachers are expected to assume leadership and use formal vocabularies during the lectures, and at the same time, students also use formal language to communicate with teachers which is treated as a way of showing respect. Under this environment, humor is rarely used in the classes. However, according to the video recordings, in the intercultural classrooms, the students are from western cultures which focus more on active performance of students and student-centered orientation, and the teachers are not the absolute leaders in the classes. As a result, the Chinese teachers consciously use humor as a tool to reduce students' unfamiliar feelings towards the different culture and language and make them adapt to the new study environment as soon as possible. Furthermore, there is a new characteristic of using humor showing in the intercultural classrooms which is to meet the needs for foreign students.

The time of using humor is also an important point. Within a whole lecture, probably less than 15 minutes (the whole class is 45 minutes) are helpful. The overuse of humor can lead to lack of efficiency. More specifically, the use of humor may create negative impact on the results due to distribution of the students' attentions and undone teaching assignments. Teachers can decide the time and the quantity of using humor according to the feedbacks of students. That means that the students' feedbacks are vital for the use of humor. It leads to student-orientation which is opposite to traditional Chinese classroom.

Foreign students have different extents to understand the humor in the intercultural classrooms due to cultural differences. For a better mutual understanding, if the students are from low-context countries cultures, the more detailed, clear-cut and definite messages should be sent through the use of humor in order to make full use of functions of humor as a teaching tool.

Humor is often used in the beginning of the lecture in the intercultural classrooms. Evidence can be found in Example 10. When the lectures start, the students may not fully concentrate on what the teachers say. It is not proper and efficient to give important information in the beginning. Using humor can draw the students' attentions to the lecture. Secondly, it is to serve as a way of releasing stress, tension and anxiety which students may bring to the lectures (once they have laughed,

perhaps their minds will be free and open to receive what the teacher has to present). Especially, in the intercultural classrooms, the students may feel stressful during the lectures due to unfamiliar language and cultural backgrounds, so they may not perform well during the lectures. In the beginning of the lectures, the use of humor can give them a message that the atmosphere of the class is relaxing and open. Furthermore, it is to trigger a “fun” attitude toward learning and the content to follow.

Laughter can be used for turn management. Example 16, 17 and 18 can all show that teachers and students used laughter for their own communication management (OCM) and interactive communication management (ICM). The use of laughter for turn management often takes place in the classrooms due to the demand for effectiveness of teaching and learning process. How to teach and learn effectively within a time- limiting class is a question that every educator and student has been thinking about. Especially in the intercultural classrooms, the teaching language is not the native language for the students and the students not only learn the language itself, but also need to learn some surrounding knowledge concerning the language they learned. Due to this, they may have many confusing questions or cannot finish the assignment during the class. At this time, the teachers are required to figure out what should be continued in teaching and what should be ignored at that moment in order to finish the teaching plans and make full use of teaching time. The use of laughter can be treated as a gentle tool for teachers to control the communication process.

7. Conclusions

The aim of this study is to describe and analyze the communication in Chinese language learning in the intercultural classrooms with the focus on analysis of intercultural communication, humor and laughter. The video recordings, observations and interview were conducted with the intention of answering the following research questions:

Intercultural communication

- 1) How does culture influence the communication in Chinese language teaching and learning in the intercultural classrooms?

In this study, Chinese, Swedish, Canadian and American cultures are discussed. The cultures in the intercultural classrooms influence the communication on many aspects. The communication between teachers and students in the intercultural classrooms are analyzed by using Allwood’s Activity Based Communication Analysis (1999, 2000, 2007), which shows that the communicative patterns are influenced by the cultural factors on every dimension. It is probably the main reason why the communication in the intercultural classrooms is different from the traditional Chinese classrooms. The

communication between teachers and students in the intercultural classrooms shows that they are both aware of their different cultural backgrounds, and they are trying to meet halfway. Both of them try to adapt each other's cultures and compromise for the communicative needs in the intercultural classrooms. For the students, since they are learning Chinese as their L2, they are also learning Chinese culture. They try to adapt the Chinese culture in the Chinese lectures so that they can learn and communicate better with the teachers. For the teachers, all the Chinese teachers compromise between the Chinese way of teaching and the western way of teaching. The Chinese teachers try their best to find an efficient way to teach the students, so they have to pay attention to their students' cultural backgrounds and adapt parts of their students' cultures. However, it can be another way around for the teachers. When the teachers are teaching children in foreign countries, they also adapt the Chinese way of teaching in order to organize the Chinese language teaching and learning activities and keep the discipline in the class. Cultural influence exists in Chinese language learning in the intercultural classrooms and act on both students and teachers. The environment is the key here. In the intercultural classrooms, cultures cannot be clearly measured by the cultural taxonomies, because of the cultural diversity and educational context. When adapting cultures in the L2 teaching and learning activities in the intercultural classrooms, teachers and students cannot just simply stick to one culture and both of them should compromise and meet halfway.

- 2) How do the cultural differences and similarities between teachers and students influence Chinese language teaching and learning in the intercultural classrooms? And how do the teachers and students deal with it?

The cultures existed in the intercultural classrooms in the study are defined according to Hall's and Hofstede's cultural taxonomies. The only cultural similarity here is that all the cultures are low UAI. About this cultural dimension from Hofstede, it is not working according to the collected data in this study. In the Chinese lectures, it is totally the opposite. Students always ask teachers when they have questions, and teachers also like to make sure if students can understand them. Somehow it helps to make Chinese language teaching more efficient. Therefore, Hofstede's index of this cultural dimension cannot be completely applied in the intercultural classrooms. However, the cultural differences influence a lot the educational communication in Chinese language teaching and learning activities in the classrooms. Although there are two or more cultures exist in the classrooms, teachers and students tend to adapt one culture for one matter. The Chinese teachers and the students are using low-context messages in the classrooms, although Chinese people prefer high-context messages; they could all accept the collective teaching activities although the students are from individualistic cultures; the power distance can be enlarged or shortened according to the different situations although Chinese culture is High PDI; they tend to adapt masculinity/femininity according to the environment although it can be the opposite in their own cultures; they all agree that L2 acquisition is a long-term process, and persistence is the key to the success although the students are from the cultures

which have short-term orientation. Different cultural backgrounds should be paid attention in L2 teaching and learning activities in the intercultural classrooms. Cultures cannot be taken for granted because of what the book and theories say. It requires experiences and observations for teachers to adapt the right cultural pattern for the best benefit of teaching and learning.

Humor and laughter

- 1) How do humor and laughter influence the educational communication in the intercultural classrooms?

The use of humor and laughter can contribute to the teaching and learning activities in the intercultural classrooms. It can provide a positive learning environment for teachers and students. However, the effects and the ways of using humor and laughter vary according to the cultural backgrounds of teachers and students in the intercultural classrooms.

More specifically, teachers use humor and laughter to reduce the tension and stress as well as to create a positive environment. Additionally, in the intercultural classrooms, who using humor may differ according to different situations and cultures existed.

Furthermore, the time of using humor should be considered when using of humor and laughter. Teachers can decide the time and the quantity of using humor according to students' feedbacks. That means that the students' feedbacks are important for the use of humor.

Moreover, in the intercultural classrooms, cultural backgrounds are highlighted when speaking of the factors which influence the use of humor and laughter. Because of cultural backgrounds between teachers and students, the extent to understandings and interpretations of humor varies. According to the interview, when the teachers used some types of humor which related to complex meanings and traditions, the students from low-context cultures could not understand and as a result, the embarrassment rose between both sides.

Another factor, which should be highly considered, is that the mental state of the students may influence the use of humor and laughter. Some students who are very sensitive may have negative reactions (such as silence or resistance to learning) because of improper use of laughter. The teachers should consider if they use or how to use laughter as an effective way to assist teaching.

Finally, feedback is also an important factor which affects the use of humor and laughter. It can measure the result of the use of humor and laughter. It can be continuously used if humor and laughter has a positive influence. Otherwise, the use of humor and laughter should be reduced or abandoned.

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- 2) What teaching strategies about humor and laughter can be suggested to facilitate the communication between teachers and students in L2 teaching and learning in the intercultural classrooms?
- a) The primary consideration is to be aware of the intercultural backgrounds of both teachers and students before using humor and laughter.
 - b) Teachers can encourage laughing at proper situations to help students have a deep impression and remember what the lectures are given.
 - c) Teachers should use humor that adds to teaching process in order to let students perceive it effectively. The target of the humor and laughter should be specifically and preferably associated with more cultural background information.
 - d) Teachers should pay more attentions to the mental conditions of the students to consider in what way the humor and laughter can be used and how much degree it can be applied.
 - e) Students should have positive and relaxing attitudes towards the use of humor and laughter by their teachers, which the use of humor and laughter is for a better teaching and learning consequences.

8. Limitations

It is difficult to find all the materials that associated with our study. We intend to collect useful information as much as possible. There must be some inevitable omissions in our study.

In the video recordings of Chinese lectures in Xi'an International School, those four student participants are from North America. There must be some limits of analyzing students' learning behaviors related to different cultural backgrounds. However, it can be seen as a general and typical model for analyzing the educational communication in L2 teaching and learning activities in the intercultural classrooms. Besides, in the interview, the teacher we interviewed is female, what she felt can be a representative of female teacher, but there must be some different opinions due to gender difference. Furthermore, the student representatives are not interviewed because of geographic problems and time limitation. However, the teacher who was interviewed knows and often communicates with her students, so the information she gave can be generally seen as some parts of students' opinions. In the observations in the Chinese school in Gothenburg, the observer was also participating in L2 teaching and learning activities, and the observations can tend to be subjective.

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