Engaging Diverse International Students: Promising Online Teaching Practices

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The University of Windsor sits on the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, which includes the Anishinaabwe (ah-nish-naw-bay), the Odawa (Oh-daw-wah), and the Potawatomie (Boda-wat-ta-me). We acknowledge both land and water as well as the treaties pertaining to this territory. We also acknowledge the Haudenosaunee (Hood-nish-show-nee) who we share this territory with. We respect the longstanding relationships with First Nations people in this place in the 100-mile Windsor-Essex peninsula and the straits – le-detroits of Detroit.

About Us

- **Dr. Clayton Smith** is an Associate Professor at the University of Windsor in the Faculty of Education. He has spent 36-years engaged in higher education administration and teaching at four post-secondary education institutions across Canada and the U.S. His research focuses on the international student experience, student mentoring, open learning, and strategic enrolment management.
- **Dr. George Zhou** is a Professor in the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor where he works with chemistry and physics teacher candidates to help them learn to appreciate science through a process of argumentation. His research focuses on science education, educational technology, and comparative internationalization.

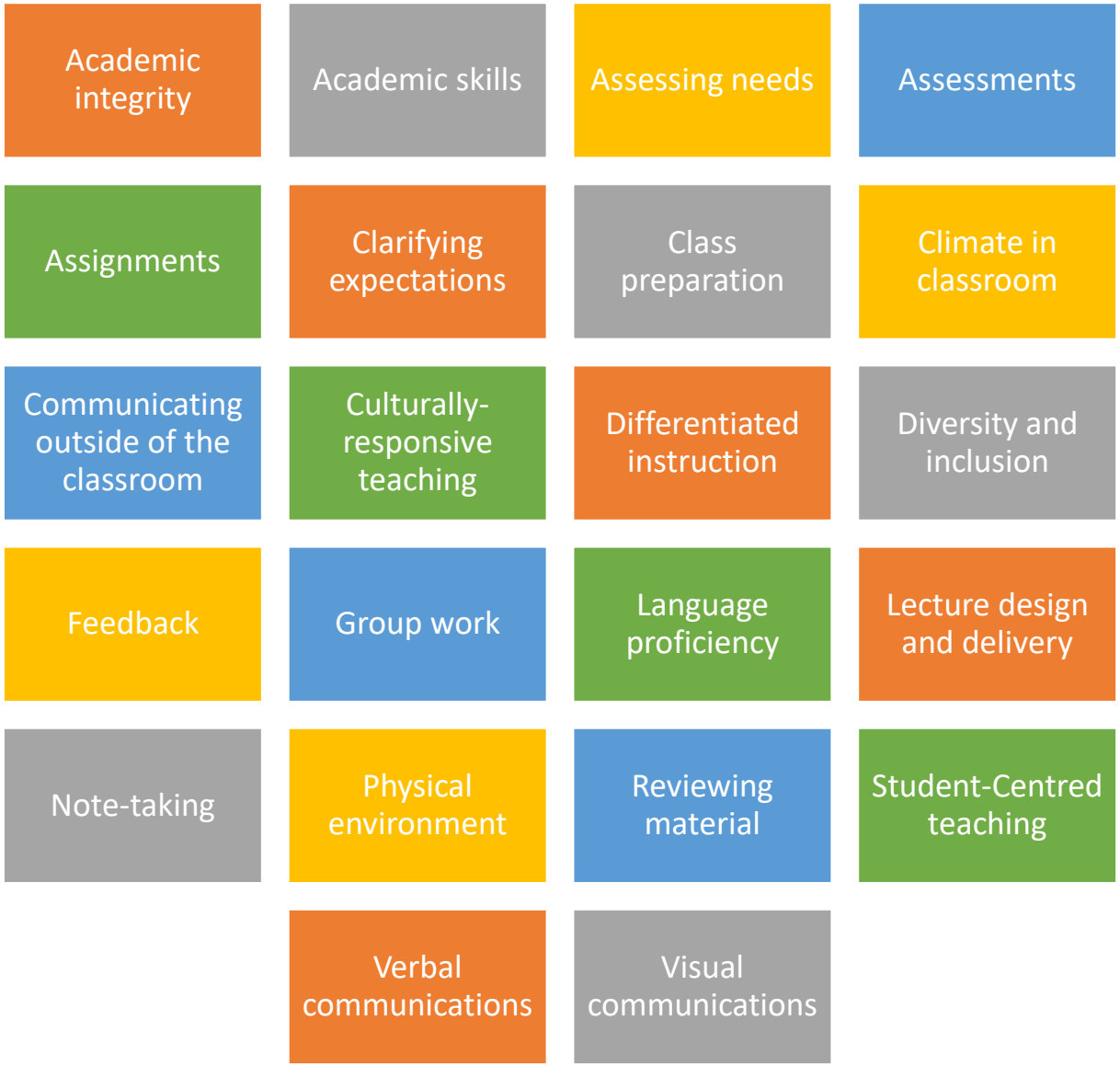
Prior Research: Teaching International Students Research Group

Smith, C., Zhou, G., Potter, M., Wang, D., Menezes, F., & Kaur, G. (2021). Connecting pr best practices for teaching international students with student satisfaction: A review of STEM and non-STEM student perspectives. In Tavares, V. (Ed.), *Multidisciplinary perspectives on international student experience in Canadian higher education* (pp. 63-80). IGI Global. https://www.igi-global.com/chapter/connecting-best-practices-for-teaching-international-students-with-student-satisfaction/262371

Smith, C., Zhou, G., Potter, M., Wang, D., Pecoraro, M., & Paulino, R. (2019). Variability by individual student characteristics of student satisfaction with promising international student teaching practices. *Literacy Information and Computer Education Journal, 10(2), 3160-3169.* https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/educationpub/25

Smith, C., Zhou, G., Potter, M., & Wang, D. (2019). Connecting Best Practices for Teaching Linguistically and Culturally Diverse International Students with International Student Satisfaction and Student Perceptions of Student Learning, *Advances in Global Education and Research Volume 3* (James, W. B., & Cobonoglu, C., Eds.), pp. 252-265, Sarasota, FL: Association of North America Higher Education International. https://scholar.uwindsor.ca/educationpub/24/

Teaching Practices



FINDINGS QUANTITATIVE DATA:

- Academic integrity
- Assessment
- Assignments
- Clarifying expectations
- Communicating outside of the classroom
- Lecture design and delivery
- Verbal communication
- Visual communication

FINDINGS FOCUS GROUPS:

- Student learning experiences were mainly **positive**.
- Most identified **instructors** as a key factor in the student experience.
- Some **characteristics** were especially appreciated, including humour, valuing diverse cultures, and an encouraging approach.
- Students at all study stages endorsed a **student-centred approach, use of interactive teaching methods, specific and prompt feedback, use of practical experiences, pleasant learning environment, and methods that support the learning of additional language learners.**

Most Preferred Teaching Practices: STEM v. Non-STEM

STEM:

- Two-way communication where students and teachers interact with each other."
- "Using visualizing tools, because some concepts are difficult to understand."
- "Labs. So, if we have any questions, we can learn how to apply theories. So, the labs are very beneficial."
- "The storytelling method, since it will always remain in your mind."
- "The seating arrangement where everyone can see each other."
- "The professor engages with us and tries to help us present ourselves in a better way."

Non-STEM:

- "Reviewed one chapter per class. Managed the timing and covered the full amount of time. Managed the tempo of the class."
- "Able to crack a joke."
- "Uses a two-way communication style."
- "Uses a lot of team-work. Projects make the difference."
- "Use of rubrics."
- "Classes that have different structures."
- "Group projects when I can pick my group members."
- "Professor's approach."

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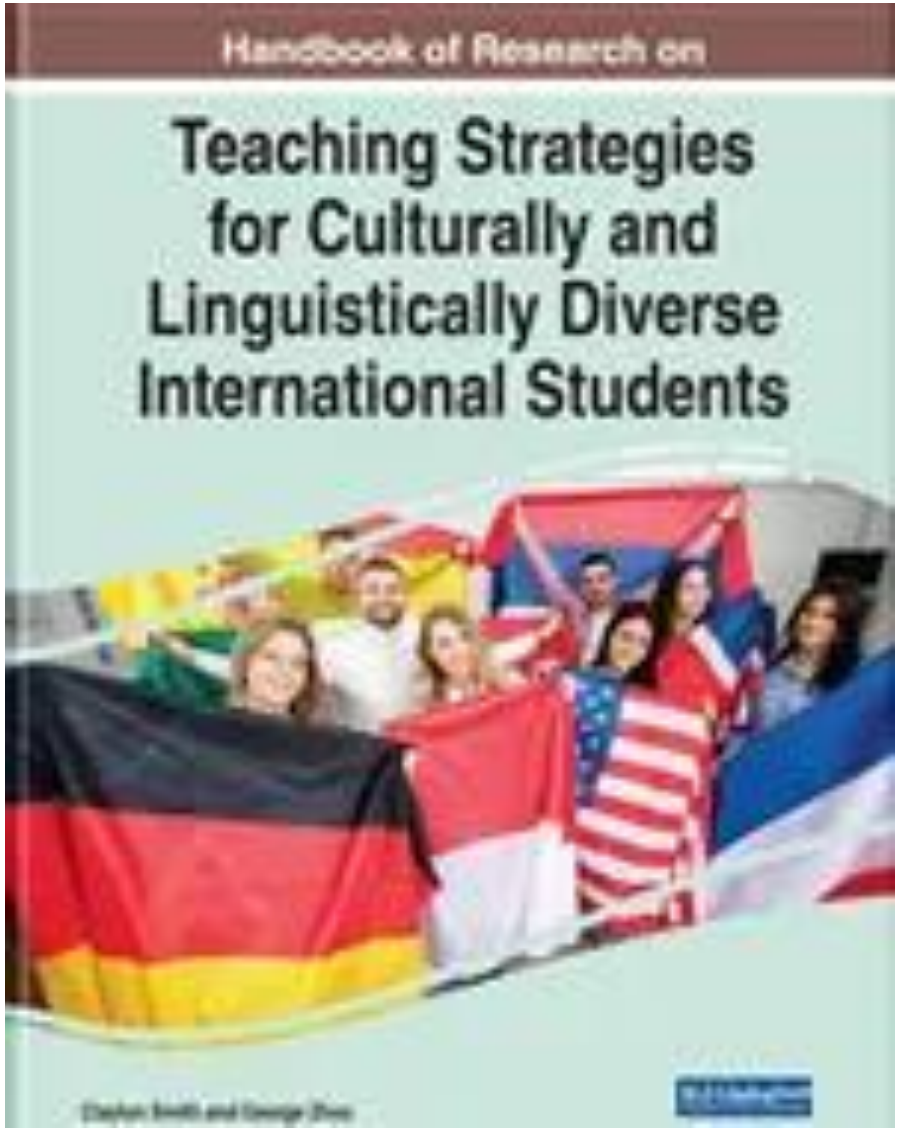
:hing Culturally and Linguistically Diverse International Students in Op Online Learning Environments: A Research Symposium

iversity of Windsor's Teaching International Students Research Group, a project of the University of Wind y of Education, hosted the **Teaching Culturally and Linguistically Diverse International Student in Open or ng Environments Research Symposium** on July 17th and 18th, 2021. We explored the teaching practices a gies that enhance international student learning in open and online settings. We were able to do this throu keynote speakers, concurrent scholarship sharing sessions, faculty, and emerging scholars discussion, international student panel discussion, and networking sessions by topic.

ver 600 registrants from 43 different countries, we believe the event was a very successful and education ence for all our guests and hope everyone was able to take something valuable from this symposium.

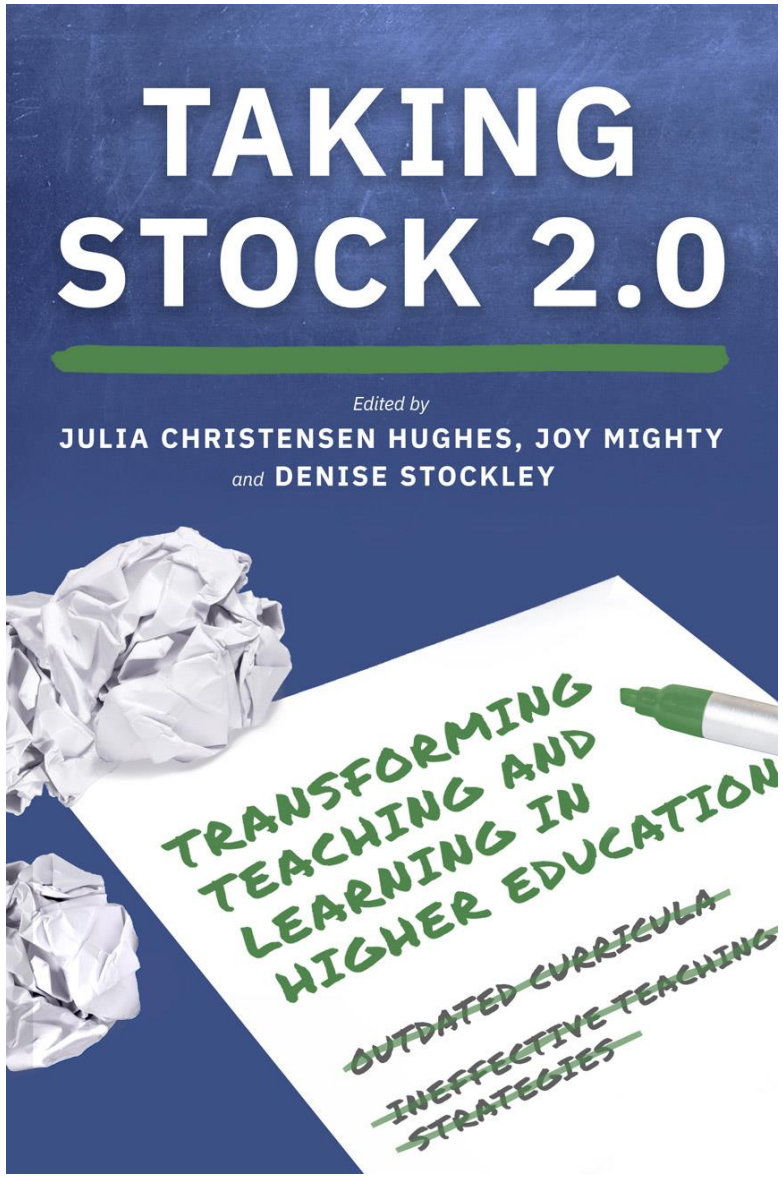
search Symposium was partially supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Can ction Grant.

ch Symposium Proceedings are now available



https://www.igi-global.com/book/handbook-research-teaching-strategies-culturally/274536

- The **Handbook of Research on Teaching Strategies for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse International Students** (2022) explores the promising practices for teaching linguistically and culturally diverse international students within post-secondary educational institutions. This book presents student voice as it relates to student satisfaction and student perceptions of learning. Covering topics such as learning technology integration, student engagement, and instruction planning, it is an essential resource for faculty of higher education, university administration, preservice teachers, academicians, and researchers.


TAKING STOCK 2.0
Edited by
JULIA CHRISTENSEN HUGHES, JOY MIGHTY
and DENISE STOCKLEY
TRANSFORMING TEACHING AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION
OUTDATED CURRICULA
INEFFECTIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES

Abstract

With COVID-19 forcing post-secondary educational institutions to shift to open and online learning, understanding the needs of international students is more important than ever before. This paper will explore the connection between the promising practices for teaching online linguistically and culturally diverse international students with international student satisfaction and perceptions of learning. The study collected data through 15 individual interviews. **Data analysis identified the teaching practices and individual characteristics that resonate with international student satisfaction and perceptions of learning.** Recommendations for professional practice are discussed, along with potential areas for further research.

Keywords: *Online, Open Learning, International Students, Student Satisfaction, Student Perceptions*

Introduction

- Online learning is the new norm… **90% of all learning will be online during the pandemic.**
- Even before the pandemic, there has been a **rise in online education**.
- Studies conducted by Grayson (2008), He & Banham (2011), and Kim et al. (2015) have found **gaps in academic performance** between international and domestic students.
- Some reasons this may occur include **language difficulties**, culturally related learning differences, **academic support issues**, and **poor adjustment** to new educational systems.
- This leads to **poor satisfaction** with experience and **less engaged classrooms.**

Theories Guiding This Study

Students who are involved both socially and academically are more likely to graduate (Tinto, 1993).

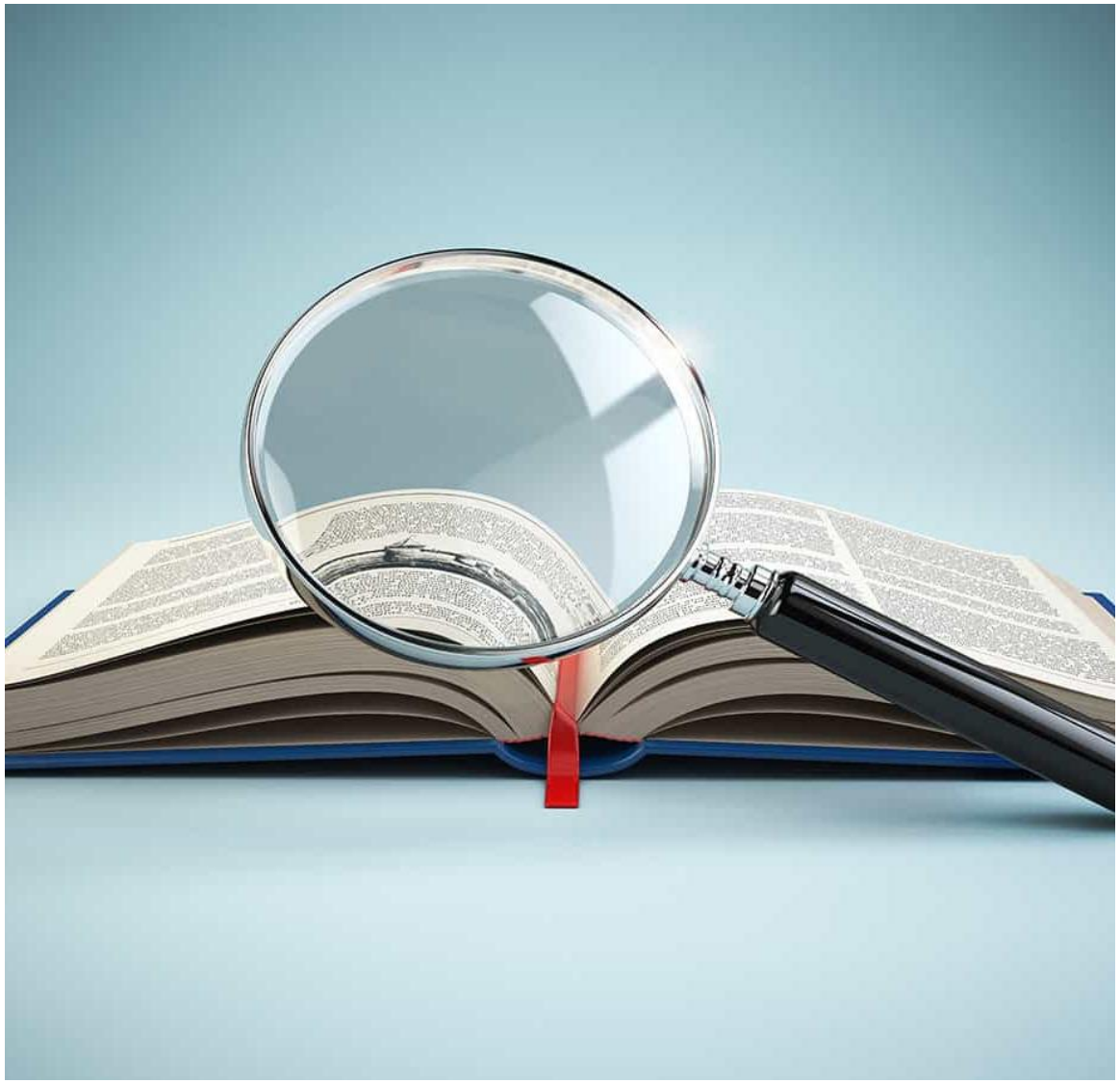
The personality of the professor can affect learning (Darby & Lang, 2019).

The Framework for Teaching and Learning for International Students discusses the importance connecting with academic and social experiences (Tran, 2020).

There is a connection between promising practices for teaching international students, student satisfaction and perceptions of learning (Smith et al., 2019).

Research Questions

- How satisfied are international online students with the online teaching strategies presented and what are their perceptions of learning with these strategies?
- What personal characteristics do international students feel improve/hinder their learning experiences online?
- What personal characteristics of their instructors do they feel improve/hinder their learning experiences online?



Literature Review

- After reviewing the literature on ways to improve international student learning, two main themes were identified including:
  1. The importance of **communication**
  2. Ensuring instruction is **student-centred**

Literature Review

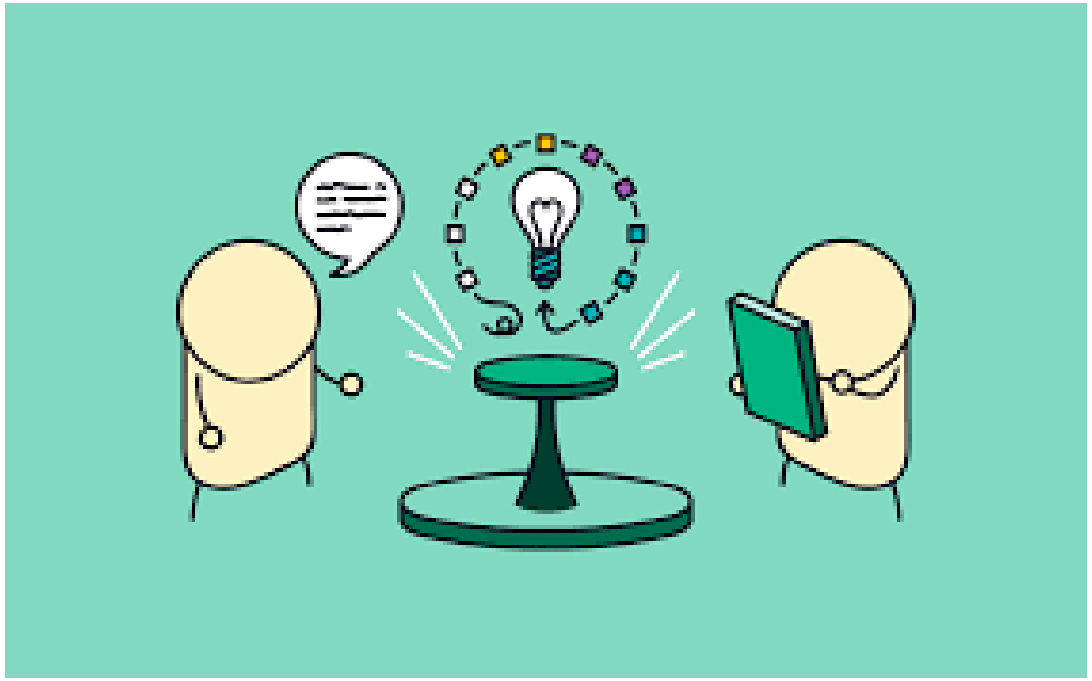
Theme	Literature Review
Communication	• **Build community** and encourage socialization/interaction • **Communicate outside of the classroom** to build teacher-student relationships • Know the **difference between basic proficiency and academic proficiency** • **Verbal skills**: paraphrasing, summarising, and repeating difficult concepts • **Visual components** to be included during lectures: diagrams, charts, and pictures
Student-Centred Learning	• Introduce students to **western education practices** • Understand the **needs of each student** in the classroom • Encourage students to **come to class prepared** • **Differentiated instruction** such as the use of multi-modal instruction

4 Gaps in the Literature

1. Challenges that first time online students face
2. Effectiveness of strategies for supporting online students outside of the region of the institution
3. Impact of differing course loads
4. Effectiveness of online courses for non-English speaking students

Methods

- **Qualitative** research design
- **15 individual interviews** at a mid-sized, comprehensive university
- Graduate students: 53%, the remaining were undergraduate students
- STEM majors: 8/15 of the participants, the remaining students were in non-STEM majors



Results: General

Mix between being satisfied and unsatisfied

Many expressed their **appreciation** for their instructor's hard work

60% felt that online learning was **not a suitable replacement**

The three factors that altered online learning: **communication, sense of belonging, and assessment practices**

Results: The Details

Factors Altering Online Learning	Student's Perception of Learning
Communication	• Shift from **in person to digital was difficult** • Concerns with the **communication** during lectures and assignment feedback • Most students were satisfied with communication received on class **expectations**
Sense of Belonging	• **Lack of community** within the online classroom • Most connection was through **discussion boards**, but many did not use this feature • Isolated and stressful, **students felt alone** • No **discrimination**. Students enjoyed group work because it helped them get to know their classmates
Assessment Practices	• **Drastic differences in grades** between members of the same project • **Not enough variety**… mostly just multiple-choice questions • **Marking** done by graduate assistants was unorganized • Some believed **grading** was fair

Results: Biggest Takeaways

01

Communication was the biggest change, with one student explaining how her online learning experience was unsatisfactory because of the drastic change in communication.

02

Almost all participants agreed that **there was a lack of community.**

03

Assessment practices changed for the worse and many students believed these **changes were unfair.**

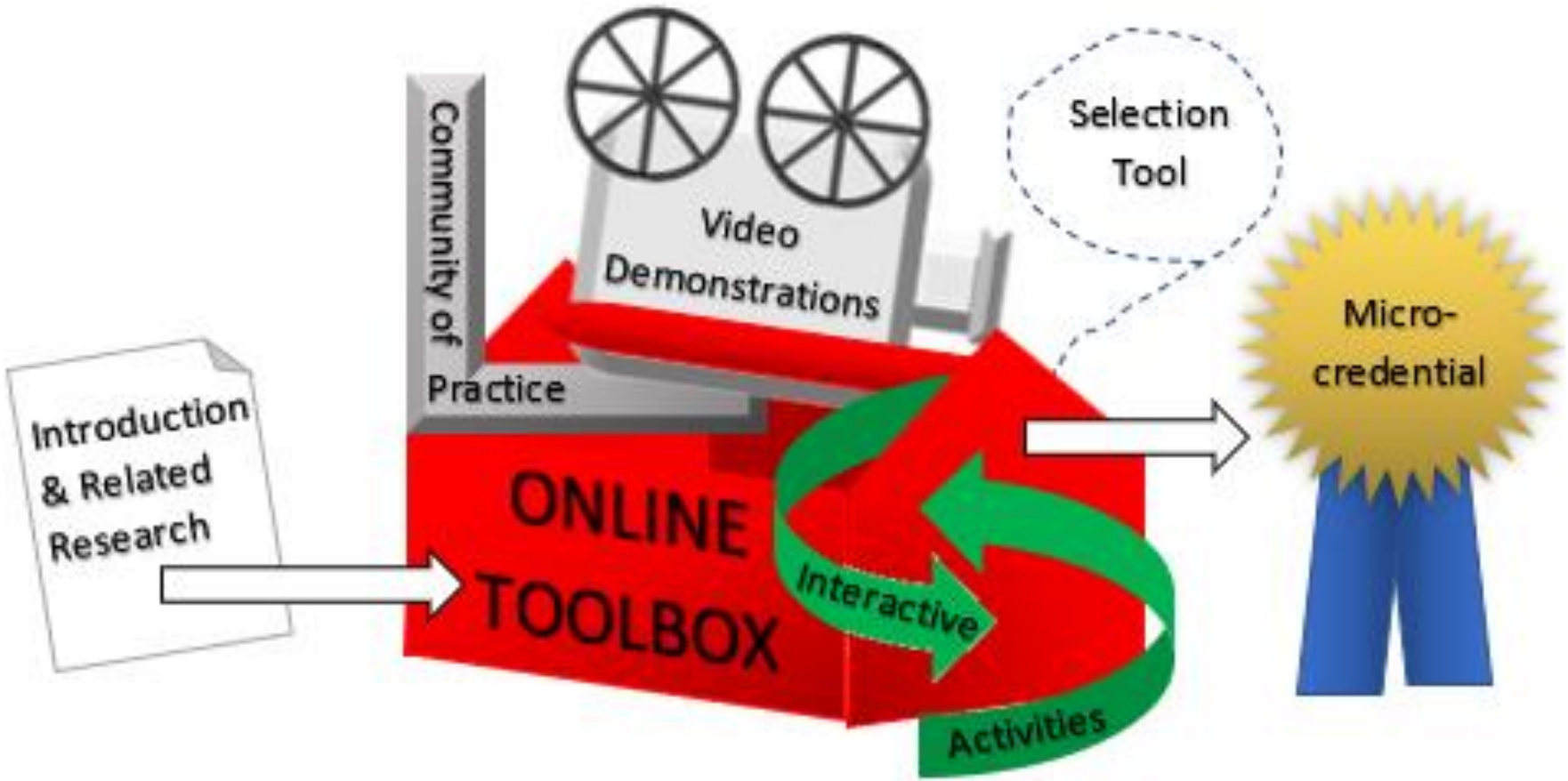
Discussion and Conclusion

- The **literature** stated the importance of clear communication, building community within the classroom, and fair assessment practices.
- We noticed that the **negative perception of online learning was due to the lack of these practices.**
- The following **teaching practices** should be used: clarifying classroom expectations, being aware of diversity and inclusion, fostering a positive online learning environment, and focusing on student-centred teaching.
- It is important that professors, teachers, and institutions **continue to provide supportive environments and use best practices to teach international online learners**!

What promising teaching practices will you try?

Academic integrity	Academic skills	Assessing needs	Assessments	Assignments	Clarifying expectations
Class preparation	Climate in classroom	Communicating outside of the classroom	Culturally-responsive teaching	Differentiated instruction	Diversity and inclusion
Feedback	Group work	Language proficiency	Lecture design and delivery	Note-taking	Physical environment
	Reviewing material	Student-Centred teaching	Verbal communications	Visual communications	

Online Toolbox



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Thank you for listening!

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