Engaging Diverse International Students: Promising Online Teaching Practices

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George Zhou, University of Windsor
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


# Teaching Practices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic integrity</th>
<th>Academic skills</th>
<th>Assessing needs</th>
<th>Assessments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assignments</td>
<td>Clarifying expectations</td>
<td>Class preparation</td>
<td>Climate in classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communicating outside of the classroom</td>
<td>Culturally-responsive teaching</td>
<td>Differentiated instruction</td>
<td>Diversity and inclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feedback</td>
<td>Group work</td>
<td>Language proficiency</td>
<td>Lecture design and delivery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note-taking</td>
<td>Physical environment</td>
<td>Reviewing material</td>
<td>Student-Centred teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Verbal communications</td>
<td>Visual communications</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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.”
https://www.uwindsor.ca/conference/international-teaching-online-symposium/

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

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

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

The Symposium Proceedings are now available.
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.

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme</th>
<th>Literature Review</th>
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| **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**    | • 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

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors Altering Online Learning</th>
<th>Student’s Perception of Learning</th>
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| 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
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Online Toolbox
References


References


Thank you for listening!

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