Teaching International and Chinese International Students

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In addition to the OISS “Resources for Instructors” and CITRAL’s resource page for Teaching Multilingual Students, English for Multilingual Students (EMS) program faculty have contributed to the following annotated bibliography to spread awareness of research and resources on teaching international and Chinese international students. EMS faculty members at UCSB work almost exclusively with multilingual and international students on campus, and get to know students intimately in small class sizes of 15-18 students. Because our program serves a high population of Chinese students, we have also added a wealth of research and resources for teaching Chinese international students. The research and resources provided are helpful for program administrators across campus, faculty looking to improve their teaching of international and multilingual students, and for those learning more about the scholarship of teaching of linguistically and culturally diverse students.

UCSB faculty cannot rely on multilingual writing specialists alone to provide support for international and multilingual students on campus. All faculty must be committed to making their classes inclusive spaces for international students. In 2010, Michelle Cox compiled a research bibliography “WAC-WID and Second Language Writers” for the Council of Writing Program Administrators calling for Writing Across the Curriculum (WAC) and Writing in the Discipline (WID) programs to provide support for multilingual students in undergraduate and graduate programs. This bibliography builds on Cox’s work to provide research and resources for faculty across disciplines and outside of writing across the curriculum programs or writing intensive courses as the internationalization of United States universities continues to grow.

Writing and language development is an ongoing process that extends beyond required general education courses in writing. With the rise of international and multilingual students on our campus, teacher language awareness and international student awareness is critical to a successful pedagogy. The following annotated bibliography is organized into five sections: administrative implications for international students, research on teaching international students in higher education, research on teaching Chinese international students in higher education, resources for teaching international students in higher education, and resources for teaching Chinese international students in higher education.

Part 1. Administrative Implications for International Students

Heng, Tang


This one-year qualitative study examines the various challenges Chinese international students face such as relearning new language skills and communication styles and understanding new classroom expectations as well as different sociocultural contexts. Language concerns with speaking and writing are the most common challenge reported among students in the study. Students report that writing in Chinese includes more proverbs and metaphors whereas academic writing in the United States values innovation and argumentation. Another major finding among students is a struggle with critical and divergent thinking. However, Chinese students’ experiences changed over time and they made deliberate efforts to overcome their challenges. Heng explains how students’ efforts are aided by increased contextual familiarity in their new educational environments. The students’ agency reveals that engagement in different educational contexts changes one’s abilities, attitudes, behaviors, and values. Heng urges future researchers to consider differences among Chinese international students as they are not a homogenous group. Further recommendations include promoting college policies and workshops for faculty that encourage learning about how student backgrounds influence learning and writing styles.

**KEYWORDS:** international students, higher education, stereotypes, agency

**Office of International Students and Scholars at Michigan State University**

Michigan State University, Office of International Students and Scholars. (2012, March 2). A conversation with Chinese and American students. Retrieved from [https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=9&v=rX_7NuOWYMk](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=9&v=rX_7NuOWYMk)

Peter Briggs, director emeritus, introduces a discussion among American students and Chinese international students at Michigan State University stating the importance of fostering friendships across cultures. The students are not experts on intercultural communication, but the discussion provides meaningful examples of how students see one another on U.S. university campuses, and what they seek in relationships and friendships on campus. This resource can be a valuable tool for
faculty to begin understanding international student and American student perspectives of intercultural relationships on U.S. higher education campuses.

KEYWORDS: student interactions, panel, Chinese and U.S. student interactions, office of international students and scholars

Ross, Heidi and Chen, Yajing


This case study examines several perceived problems that American universities typically associate with Chinese undergraduate students: their silence in class discussions, their self-segregation, and their instrumental view of education. Ross and Chen argue that it is important to look beyond cultural interpretations and examine institutional policies. The case study demonstrates how a business school in a public research-intensive university in the United States Midwest enacts policies that reinforce Chinese sociocultural values and engagement behaviors. For example, Chinese students’ pragmatic choice of majors justifies the expense of international study, leading to high-paying jobs and matching parental expectations of supporting elders. Students’ major choices are influenced by educational norms that allow them to advance within China’s educational system and are conditioned by Midwest University policies and practices. United States higher education expects students to engage in higher order, integrative, and reflective learning as well as to maintain meaningful interactions with their faculty and peers both inside and outside the classroom. The paper reviews social, cultural and economic factors that shape Chinese student engagement patterns in U.S. higher education and concludes that the differences between Chinese and American sociocultural and educational norms limit institutional understanding of Chinese students’ academic behaviors, and Chinese students’ understanding of American higher education expectations. The authors recommend that in order to inspire international student success, an important initial step for administrators, staff and faculty is to become more familiar with international students’ diverse educational beliefs and motivations.

KEYWORDS: Chinese international students, student engagement, higher education policies, sociocultural values

The study investigates factors that contribute to Chinese students’ stress in the United States and offers suggestions for American and Chinese universities in helping Chinese international students acculturation and cross-cultural communication in America. The study is published in the form of a book written by Kun Yan who was affiliated with Tsinghua University, which is a major research university and one of the C-9 League competitive universities in China. Among the many factors discussed, Kun’s research is consistent with other findings that Chinese students primarily interact with co-nationals and find it difficult to build friendships with Americans and successfully communicate with Americans. Furthermore, students attributed their social ineffectiveness to cultural distance.

KEYWORDS: stress management, coping mechanisms, mixed methods research
Part 2. Research on Teaching International Students in Higher Education

Ferris, Dana; Jensen, Linda; and Wald, Margi


Ferris and Wald conducted a study of the perceptions of teachers about international student writers among First-Year Composition (FYC) and on “pre-FYC” Entry-Level Writing Requirement (ELWR) courses among nine University of California (UC) campuses. The results of their survey showed that only 25% of instructors had ever received formal coursework on teaching second language (L2) writers and that 75% of instructors “expressed varying degrees of ambivalence about their abilities” in teaching international students. Ferris and Wald noted that additional in-service training is a viable option in addition to UC Writing programs taking an advocacy role by fully documenting student issues so that administrative units can better understand issues concerning international students.

KEYWORDS: teacher education, comfort, teaching writing
Part 3. Research on Teaching Chinese International Students in Higher Education

Guangwei, Hu


This article attempts to address the question of ways in which unacceptable intertextuality in Chinese students’ writing in English should be dealt with. Intertextuality is the relationship between a writers’ text and other texts, and it a phenomenon that may hold different meanings in various cultures. Hu summarizes three different approaches to deal with academic integrity and plagiarism: a self-regulative approach, a punitive approach, and an educationally oriented approach. The writer discusses these three approaches with specific connection to multilingual Chinese writers and concludes that the educationally oriented approach is most effective with dealing with Chinese international students’ intertextuality since international students may lack a shared understanding of what constitutes illegitimate intertextuality in American higher education. Such a process involves, among other strategies, engaging students in exploring the cultural meanings of intertextuality, developing their academic competence to gather and evaluate sources effectively, teaching them strategies for using and integrating information from various sources, providing examples of acceptable and unacceptable intertextual practices, and familiarizing them with conventions for documenting sources.

KEYWORDS: multilingual Chinese writers, plagiarism, academic integrity, institutional and pedagogical approaches to intertextuality

Kim, Eun-Young Julia and LaBianca, Asta Sakala


Kim and LaBianca explain the various resources that international students seek for academic writing help and investigate perceptions of faculty and international students at one United States university as to what is ethical and appropriate in
academic writing help. The study utilized a survey design in which English as additional learners at the university intensive English program, international students enrolled in undergraduate or graduate classes, and full-time faculty rated the ethicality of 17 different scenarios. Results demonstrate a need for more precise tools to establish boundaries in writing tutors’ use of directive assistance with an emphasis on focusing on higher-order concerns. In terms of proofreading services, the authors call for defining the proofreader’s role on an institutional level and clarifying what constitutes ethical help as well as the need for establishing more explicit guidelines for academic integrity.

KEYWORDS: academic integrity, plagiarism, international students, writing resources

Kun, Yan and Berliner, David


A qualitative inquiry finds that Chinese international graduate students in the United States report academic success as one of the most stressful aspects of their college lives. Using a semi-structured interview of 18 Chinese international graduate students at a large public university, Kun and Berliner identified three academic stressors: language, achievement, and interaction with faculty. Almost all of the graduate students interviewed reported that their own high expectations to succeed academically are a major source of academic stress. Students also reported that filial piety contributes to added academic stress.

KEYWORDS: academic stress, Chinese international graduate students, qualitative research

Spack, Ruth


In her seminal article in the TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Language) discipline, Spack reminds educators that multilingual students should not be put into a cultural box; rather, they need to be free to evolve in their identities and language use. Teachers may erroneously define multilingual students apart from the reality of their lives, which may limit their potential in their own eyes and the eyes of others. Spack highlights generalizations of multilingual students made in scholarship across disciplines. Some of these generalized statements about different groups create and perpetuate stereotypes. Spack claims that “such
statements are never examined critically but once they reach print, they are treated as cultural truths and then applied inappropriately to other cases . . . [creating a] snowball effect when constructions of this sort enter the literature” (769). Researchers make statements that others accept as completely truthful and then build on them in their own research, which can lead to a distortion of accurately identifying culture. Empathetic supporters of our students are establishing rhetorical constructions (constructions of their identity through our rhetoric as we discuss them), which does not always aid our students in establishing their correct and desired identities. The author focuses on outsiders’ created images of China vs Japan, which are two distinct identities that can be merged in the words and minds of outsiders. She also mentions that Chinese language is changing and evolving over time, which has not always been acknowledged by outsiders discussing the attributes of various aspects of the language. “Teachers and researchers need to view students as individuals, not as members of a cultural group, in order to understand the complexity of writing in a language they are in the process of acquiring. . . . Cultural identities are not static but are ‘always in motion, not frozen for inspection’ (772). Spack also points out that “students who crisscross borders are not just products of culture; they are creators of culture” (772). She reminds all educators to allow international and multilingual students the space to evolve in their identities and language use.

**KEYWORDS:** hybridity of culture, rhetorical constructions, international student identity, multilingual student identity

**Wang, Min**


The empirical study investigates the social and cultural factors underlying the challenges that Chinese international students face in American universities in order to enable educators and administrators to better accommodate these students. The case study examines how several Chinese cultural influences such as different teaching approaches, “mianzi” (or losing face), and filial piety hinder international Chinese students’ acculturation and integration into the host culture. The study concludes that being aware of Chinese cultural factors might enable educators and administrators to better assess and resolve problems that students face.

**KEYWORDS:** higher education, Chinese international students, Chinese cultural influences, culture shock
Part 4. Resources on Teaching International Students in Higher Education

Hafernik, Johnnie Johnson and Wiant, Fredel M.


Hafernick and Wiant write for faculty across disciplines in their practical guide for those looking to improve their teaching of multilingual students and international students in higher education. Part 1 begins with a section addressing important myths about multilingual students. Among them is the myth that faculty need formal training to teach multilingual students and that multilingual students will slow down a class. The authors claim that only English language and composition professionals will need formal training to work with multilingual students and that all teachers can learn how to guide students with more practical out-of-class activities that will help them to participate during class. Furthermore, Hafernick and Wiant contextualize the widely accepted perspective by scholars in applied linguistics that English is a global language and it is “unrealistic to believe that multilingual students will become native English speakers” (30-31). The authors also remind faculty that students may be equipped with different kinds of language use such as Basic Interpersonal Communication Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP). CALP takes much more time for all students to develop, but they are still able to engage in critical thinking and abstract reasoning even if their academic language use within a discipline seems weak. The second section of the book guides faculty through practical examples of fostering language skills in speaking, listening, reading, and writing. There are also chapters offering suggestions for group work and advice on frequently asked questions from faculty about assessment of multilingual students. A helpful appendix is provided with sample rubrics and various evaluation tools such as self-evaluation, peer evaluation, and faculty evaluation. Finally, the glossary is a notable place to begin the book in order to get acquainted with applied linguistics terminology.

KEYWORDS: higher education, tips for teaching teaching multilingual students

Zamel, Vivian and Ruth Spack.


Drawing upon research and pedagogical accounts from faculty across disciplines, Zamel and Spack raise several pedagogical reasons to teach language and use writing to promote language development of undergraduate English users. The authors begin with the assertion that “all faculty . . . are responsible for contributing
to multilingual students’ acquisition of language and literacy” (126). Teachers of multilingual students should:
1) maintain positive attitudes about the unique abilities of their ESL students
2) collaborate with professors in different disciplines to meet students’ various needs
3) integrate a writing component into the curriculum.

Zamel and Spack emphasize that there are advantages to a person being multicultural if not multi-lingual, in terms of having a broader perspective on cross-cultural issues. Perhaps one may have had experiences allowing them to analyze and synthesize input from various cultural standpoints. Teachers should look for and notice the advantages evident in multilingual student’s writing. Furthermore, English language instructors should collaborate with teachers in other disciplines to share techniques of instruction that could be effective with all students. Looking at the writing task from the perspective of the multilingual student, the authors recommend that teachers “[find] effective ways to manage the workload and to gain access to the knowledge and strategies that will ensure success in their courses” (130). The writers acknowledge that the typical classroom can be an alienating place for many students improving their English, with various tasks that are either too difficult or too tedious. Zamel and Spack propose the intriguing solution that all faculty who encounter multilingual students must collaborate in their efforts to provide appropriate services. “Finding productive ways to teach linguistically diverse learners is necessarily a shared responsibility,” they assert (136). Finally, the authors stress the importance of writing to learn. Writing isn’t just a way to measure what the student knows, but also helps firm up what the student has acquired. The authors include some suggestions for making student learning tasks meaningful (140); they envision a key role for writing, claiming that “writing does not just display language acquisition, writing promotes language acquisition” (141).

KEYWORDS: linguistically diverse learners, textual identities, language and literacy acquisition
Part 5. Resources on Teaching Chinese International Students in Higher Education

Mast, Richard


This article shows how culture affects international Chinese students’ approaches to learning in western education environments. The study took place at an international school in China designed with discussions for students to address the essential issues that impact their learning when they enter a western learning environment. Mast addresses specific factors that affect learning for Chinese students in an international learning environment. One factor is the impact of Chinese culture on student thinking and experience; students are very aware of their cultural perspective and feel safe in presenting a general cultural view. Once a holistic cultural perspective is shared, it is easier for many Chinese students to progress into giving a more individual and personal perspective. Through analysis of students’ language learning, the author also observes that students have not been taught how to apply language that relates to higher order thinking and tend to be unfamiliar with answering Bloom’s Taxonomy related questions. The author concludes that as educators, we should focus our teaching on the language of learning and using the cultural expectations and experiences of the students to shape as many elements of the learning processes as possible.

KEYWORDS: Chinese students, international students, western higher education

Phillips, W. Kenneth


Based upon an analysis of a literature review on Confucian contemporary values and practices in higher education in China, the author proposes suggestions that faculty can implement to reduce the culture shock of Chinese international students.

KEYWORDS: Confucian values, culture shock, pedagogy
University of Denver, Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL)


The University of Denver OTL provides three resources for faculty on teaching international students. The office explains that more than half of the international students on their campus are Chinese, and one of their resources is a reflection of key takeaways from a workshop on teaching Chinese students. Marketing Professor Don Bacon also provides a tip sheet for teaching Chinese students. Finally, attendees of an OTL workshop focused on Chinese students created a published document on strategies for teaching Chinese students.

KEYWORDS: workshop, international student pedagogy
About the Contributors

Marie Webb is a doctoral candidate in English, Composition and Applied Linguistics at Indiana University of Pennsylvania and is interested in researching and learning more about writing teacher identity at the intersections of applied linguistics, rhetoric, composition, and writing studies. She has been teaching since 2010 in a wide range of settings including California community colleges and universities, and has international teaching experience in Seoul, South Korea, Tokyo, Japan, and Macau, China. In addition to her English language and composition teaching, Marie has also taught master’s-level coursework at the University of San Diego’s Master of Education in TESOL, Literacy, and Culture program. She currently coordinates the online TESOL certificate program at Anaheim University and is a full-time lecturer the English for Multilingual Students program at UC Santa Barbara.

John Robertson has taught in the English for Multilingual Students (EMS) program at UCSB since 2014. Because of EMS’s large enrollment of students from China, Mr. Robertson has devoted himself to better understand experiences common to many of his students, whose upbringing and education was either totally in China or largely so. Thus, the past two summers he has been a guest lecturer at Xidian University in Xi’an. Prior to making the jump into university-level instruction, Mr. Robertson spent many years in K-12 education, including teaching stints in Egypt, Mexico, Indonesia, and Malaysia, as well as California public schools. He connects with pedagogical issues from all age levels and from all regions of the world. Currently, he coordinates his local chapter for CATESOL (California TESOL affiliate).

Andreea Nicolaescu currently serves as a full-time lecturer in the English for Multilingual Students (EMS) Program at the University of California, Santa Barbara, where she teaches various levels of academic writing courses for international students. In her thirteen years of teaching thus far, she has had various experiences in teaching both academic courses in intensive language programs such as at the University of San Diego, where she also received her Master’s in Education with a TESOL emphasis, as well as several composition courses at community colleges throughout the San Diego area. She has also taught internationally in Italy, Mexico, Romania, and Turkey, where she served as an English Language Fellow for the U.S. Department of State and developed and taught teacher education courses. Her primary research interests include higher education writing and teacher education and professional development.