Empowering College Faculty to Support and Advocate for International Students

CONNECT 2023 Conference, EMU

Fostering
**International
Student
Success**
in Higher
Education

2nd
Edition

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Overview

- **Background to our work**

- **Guiding principles**

- **Guiding framework**

- **Top 10 practices for** supporting and advocating for international students
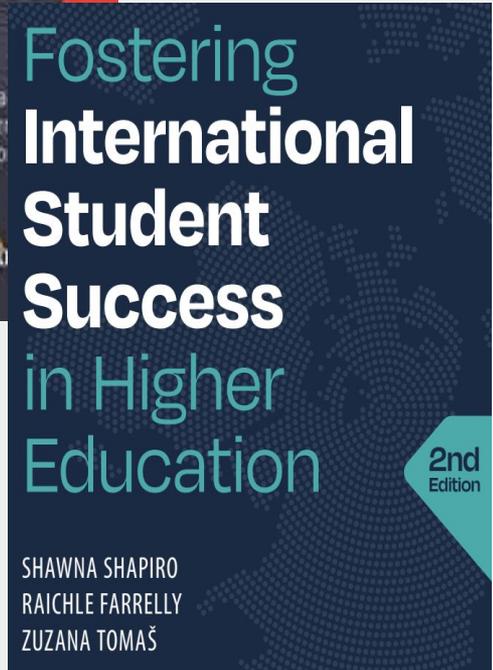
Shawna   **Rai**   **Zuzana**

What led us to this work...

My Educational Journey

UMB Fulbright Professor (2021-2022) — Slovakia, UK

UMB Student (1995-2000)

Brighton Uni. (one semester)

Eastern Michigan University — Professor of ESL/TESOL (2011-present)

Western State College — Student Athlete (2000-2001)

University of Utah — Graduate Student (2002-2011)

ACCESS

How can we be more explicit about our expectations?

How can we support all students in meeting those expectations?

+

ASSET

How might we invite students to draw on their linguistic, cultural, and global backgrounds in our curricula/instruction?

+

AGENCY

How can we prepare students to make informed decisions in line with their goals—including as communicators, new professionals etc.?

Guiding Principles

Activating Background Knowledge

- What unique needs do you think non-native English speaking international students have?

- What challenges have you faced in your instructional contexts when teaching and supporting international students?

- What approaches have you found to be successful when working with international students?
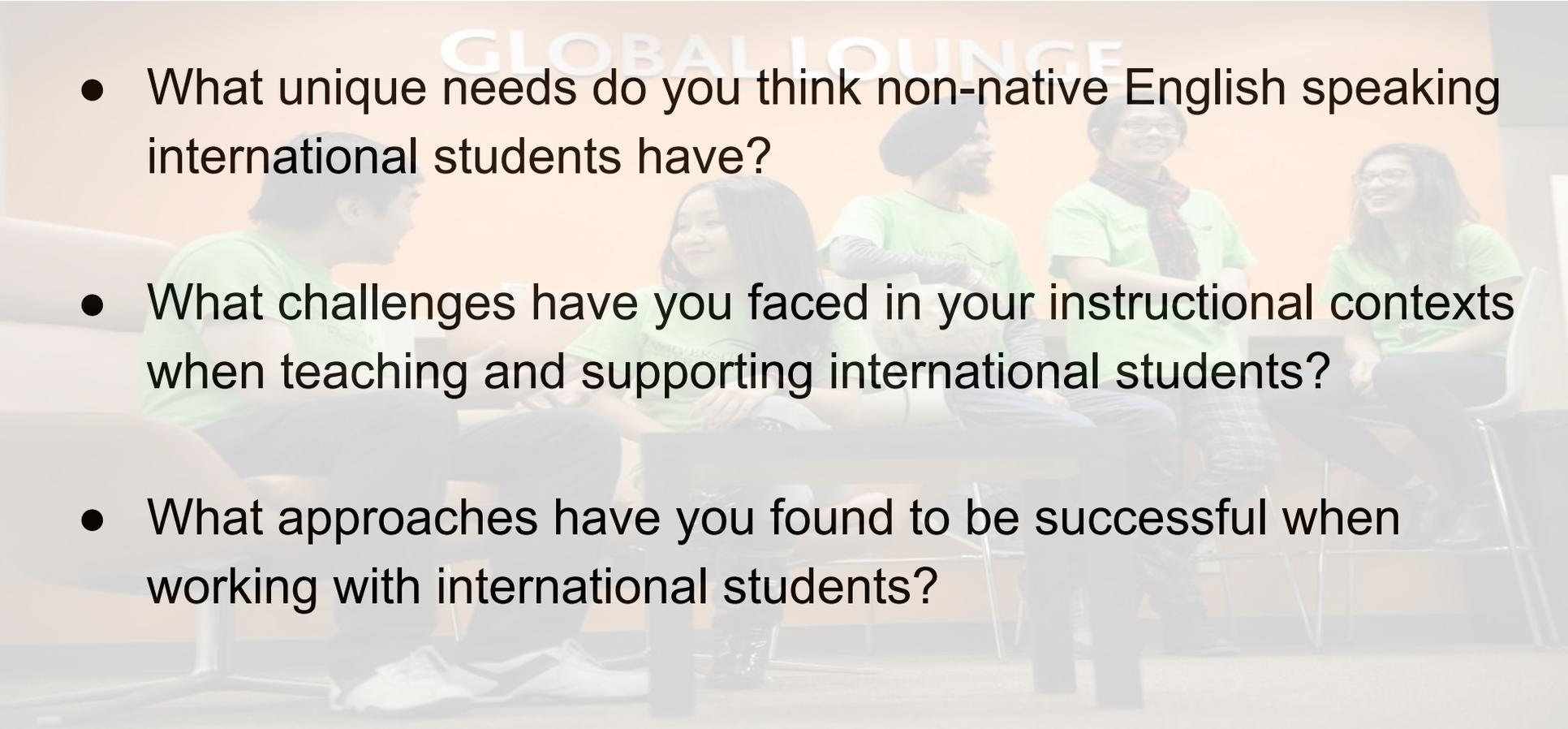
Student Perspectives

It takes me about four hours to read one article, and my professor assigns three for each class! I just can't keep up. —Student from China

"I always want to talk with the American students in groups, but sometimes I take longer to process the question. I need to hear it and think about it first, then I have to find the language to say what I mean. But by then, someone else is talking." —Student from Poland

My professor seems really funny because my classmates always laugh, but I don't get the jokes. They always seem to do with TV shows or sports. It makes me feel kind of stupid that I don't understand. —Student from Vietnam

My professor told me to not just repeat the information, but be more original. But I feel like I have nothing original or interesting to write about. —Student from China

Instructor Perspectives

1. What do I need to know about students' cultural backgrounds?

2. How can I ensure that the content for my course is comprehensible to students who are still learning English?

3. How do I design assignments and assessment that measure student learning equitably, but still acknowledge the difficult of doing academic work in an additional language?

4. How might I tap into the linguistic and cultural capital of international students in the classroom and help them become institutionally integrated while ensuring my American students benefit from having the opportunity to interact with and learn from International students?

Scaffolding

Connecting

Noticing

Ineracting

S-I-N-C Framework for EL Success
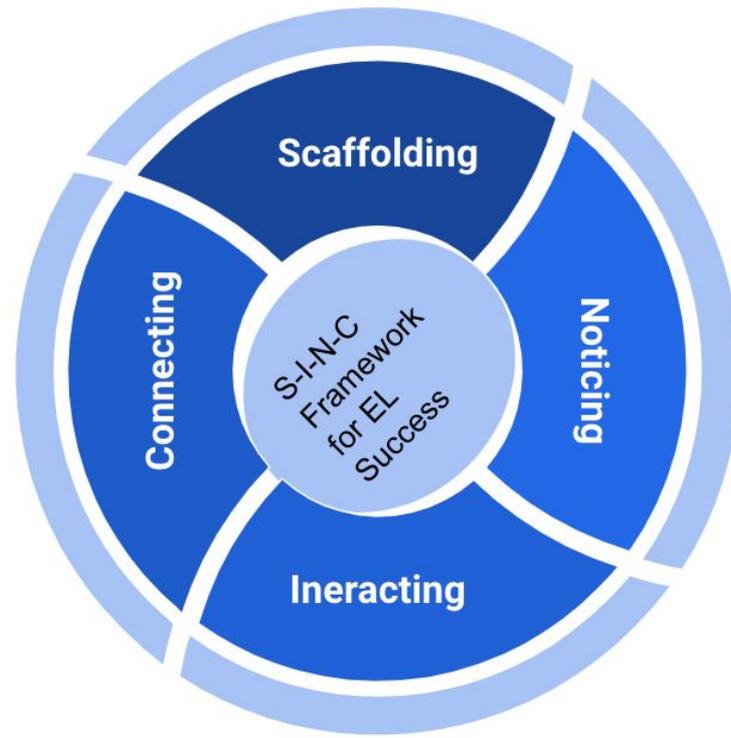
Be in SYNC with International Students using the SINC Guiding Framework

Scaffolding, Interaction, Noticing, Connecting

Scaffolding: How teachers adapt instruction in order to support students with reaching high levels of achievement.

Interaction: How teachers design instruction in order to promote collaboration for academic success.

Noticing: How instructors assist students with attending to or noticing the important and relevant course content and language.

Connecting: How instructors connect course content to students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds, interests, and future goals.

R E A D I N G S

Scaffolding

- Build/activate background knowledge (e.g. through short video use)

- Require note takers, graphic organizers, or other active reading strategies
- Model how you would tackle course readings

Interacting

- Partner reading, "Say something" activities
- Practice critical responses

- Different reading for different groups?
- Study groups to process readings with partners

Noticing

- Providing a reading guide to help Ss notice important aspects of their readings

- Teach, model, and allow opportunities to practice effective reading strategies for particular reading purposes

Connecting

- Help make connections between readings and assignments/assessments

- Include texts by international authors/allow international students to read one text in their first language?

- Ask questions that invite a global perspective (-But try **not** to **"spotlight"** specific students)

Discussions

Scaffolding
- **Provide ample processing time after asking a question (count to 7 or more!)**
- **Use in-class and online discussion**

Interacting
- **Promote interaction by varied groupings**
- **Assign roles/responsibilities to different group participants**

Noticing
- **Provide sentence-frames to help students use effective language for different discussion functions:**

a) *I agree that X is important to consider.*
b) *To build on what Y said…*
c) *To examine another perspective, we can consider Z*
d) *To clarify, are you saying that…*

Connecting
- **Help international students lean into their global experiences when they discuss key concepts**
- **Allow students to use first language if in groups with peers from the same lang. backgrounds**
- **Ask questions that invite an international perspective without spotlighting or essentializing**

Lecture

Scaffolding

- **Establish a routine**
- **Build/activate background knowledge**
- **Be visual**
- **Give verbal signposts**
- **Have Ss do something with the key info**
- **Conduct frequent "processing mini breaks" and comprehension checks**

Interacting

- **"Turn and talk"**
- **Kinesthetic survey (raise hands, hold up fingers, stand and move, show cards, write on board)**
- **Out of the class study groups**

Noticing

- **Highlight and reinforce key vocab/ terms**
- **Make slides available ahead of time**
- **Encourage students to keep effective notes (modeling needed)**

Connecting

- **Tap into Ss' backgrounds**
- **Include examples from global contexts, especially from countries of your international students' origin**

What idea has resonated?

How might you be able to adapt it to your context?

The Role of Culture

- Cultural Adjustment - general culture shock & adjustment to US academic culture
- Individualism vs. Collectivism
- Creativity and Innovation
- Informality and Egalitarianism
- Efficiency and Directness
- Features of US Classrooms
    - Heterogeneity
    - Learner-Centered Instruction
    - Multiple and varied assessments

→ Reminder: Avoid essentializing

In many collectivist cultures, there is great concern over gaining the approval of the collective and respecting existing authority structures. In some cultures, asking questions for clarification may imply that the instructor was unclear in the lecture or assignment instructions. Students might avoid asking questions in class, or might not admit to not understanding a course reading or assignment, so as not to embarrass themselves or the instructor (e.g., Watson, 1999).

Useful resources

"Writing across Borders" video

Thank you!

Questions & Further Discussion

References:

Mott-Smith, J. Tomaš, Z., Kostka, I. (2017). *Teaching Effective Source Use: Classroom Approaches that Work. University of Michigan Press*. MI: Ann Arbor.

Shapiro, S., Farrelly, R., & Tomaš, Z. (2023). *Fostering international student success in higher education*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL Press.

Sample materials from the book

Student behavior	Explanation in terms of cultural norms
Apologizing for "bad English" or poor quality work, even in instances when this does not seem to be the case; downplaying or dismissing a compliment	A student's cultural value of humility may not be recognized as important, leaving an instructor puzzled why a student would apologize or dismiss positive feedback.
Talking to an instructor after class without asking whether the instructor has the time to talk outside of office hours	A student may not understand "efficiency" as a cultural value in the U.S. academic context and that expecting unscheduled conversations could be seen as disrespectful.
Asking personal questions about marriage/relationship status, salary, religion, and other personal topics in office hours or other interactions	A student may have a divergent cultural understanding of questions appropriate for casual conversation.
Including copied text from a professor's publication or lecture in the student's own writing without conventional acknowledgment	A student's value of respect for expertise may be at odds with the conception in U.S. education that ideas are commodities that can be owned. The student might have expected the professor to be pleased, or even flattered, instead of hurt or insulted.

Appendix A
Classroom Activities

The activities in Table A1 promote interaction in the classroom and increase opportunities for active learning. Many of these activities will also provide you with feedback about student learning and your instructional practices.

Table A1 Classroom activities to promote interaction and active learning

Classroom activities	Description/directions	Possible learning objectives	Tips/ideas for implementation
Icebreaker activities			
Mix and mingle	Provide questions on strips of paper. Give one to each student. Tell students to find a partner with whom to discuss their questions. After each person's question has been addressed, have students exchange papers and find another discussion partner.	• Meet peers and instructor; get to know each other. • Review for test. • Provide peer feedback. • Conduct self-assessment. • Collaborate with peers. • Check comprehension.	**Timing:** Set time limit or goal for the number of questions answered. **Monitoring:** Listen to student exchanges; offer clarification and guidance. **Feedback:** Identify questions that challenge, stir, and motivate; revisit these in class discussion.
Peer interview	Students interview a partner. Next, students introduce their partner to the class, sharing information gleaned from their interviews. (Pairs can exchange introductions with another pair instead of whole-class sharing.)	• Meet peers and instructor; get to know each other. • Discuss and share views on a topic.	**Reducing anxiety:** Introducing a partner rather than oneself can address the need for humility in some cultures and reduce the stress of being on the spot. **Interview topics:** Suggest talking points (e.g., personal information, interest in course, background knowledge of content).
People bingo (See Chapter 2 for a sample bingo board.)	Create two or three unique bingo cards with a statement in each square. Students find others to sign for each statement.	• Meet peers and instructor; get to know each other. • Assess background knowledge. • Review for a test or exam.	**Goals:** Choose content of squares depending on objective (e.g., icebreaker, review, assessment). **Audience:** Consider the most appropriate content for the course level (e.g., graduate, undergraduate). **Promote interaction:** Each peer can only sign once per card, so they have to meet other classmates.
Exploring content			
Muddiest points	Students jot down some points that are unclear to them. They can discuss these with a peer, post them in an online forum, or submit them to the instructor.	• Provide peer feedback. • Provide instructor feedback. • Conduct self-assessment. • Check comprehension.	**Revisiting unclear points:** Consider addressing more complex or critical concepts thoroughly in the subsequent lesson.

Table B4 Evaluating Oral Presentations (Single Overall Rating)

Criteria	Rating	Comments
Highly effective • Topic choice is relevant to the course or assignment. • The content is organized (e.g., has a clear introduction, body, conclusion). • Examples are included and the presenter cites sources. • The speech is clear and includes transition words, clear pronunciation, appropriate rate of speech, etc. • The student is prepared and professional (e.g., speaks confidently, uses visuals effectively, and stays within the time limit).	4.5–5	
Moderately effective • Topic choice is only partially relevant. • The content is somewhat organized. • Only limited examples are included, and sources are not cited. • The speech is somewhat clear. • The student is somewhat prepared and professional.	4	
Ineffective • Topic choice is not relevant. • The content is not organized. • There are no examples or sources included. • The speech is not clear. • The student is not prepared or professional.	3	
Total _____ / 5		

Other comments and suggestions: