



***Understanding
International
Student
Experiences***

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Overview

01.

***Who are
international
students?***

02.

***Educational
Background***

03.

***Cultural
Adjustment***

04.

***Academic Areas
of Concern***



Who are international students?



Numbers at UNC



2501 International Students

- Undergraduate Students
• Graduate Students
• Exchange Students



853 International Scholars

- Postdoctoral Scholars
• Visiting Scholars



100+ Countries

1. China
2. India
3. South Korea

Who are international students?

Visa Holders



Legal status tied to university.



Many w/families here or at home abroad.



< 20 hours on-campus work. Spouses likely prohibited.

Who are international students?



3 Circles of English

Kachru, B. B. (1990). World Englishes and applied linguistics. *World Englishes*, 9(1), 3-20.

Inner Circle

- e.g., US, Canada, UK, Australia
- Highly valued

Outer Circle

- e.g., India, Nigeria, Singapore
- Official language

Expanding Circle

- e.g., China, South Korea, Brazil, Russia
- English as a Foreign Language
- Greatest number of English Speakers

Educational Background



TOEFL & IELTS



Assess readiness to begin

- Assess Reading, Writing, Speaking & Listening
- Independent & Integrated tasks
- Introductory-level university language tasks



Do not predict success

- Weak positive correlation with academic achievement ($r = .231, p < .001$)
- Doesn't replicate the demands of graduate study



Educational Background



Teacher's Role



transmitter

stimulator

Goal of Learning



conservation

extension



Cultural Adjustment Concerns

General Orientation

- **Collectivist:** interdependence, harmony, conformity, and reciprocity
- **Individualist:** independence, autonomy, assertiveness, and personal achievement

Cultural Differences

- **Academic:** teaching style, power distance, assignments, expectations
- **Social:** politeness, openness, political and religious values, food



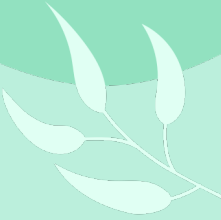
Stressors

- **Internal stressors:** language anxiety, desire to excel, homesickness, loneliness and/or isolation
- **External stressors:** language barrier, interpersonal problems, academic challenges, financial constraints, unfair treatment/discrimination

Help Seeking

- May be reluctant to reveal struggle
- May have cultural stigma against mental illness and/or therapy
- Facilitated by strong social connections

Ma, K., Pitner, R., Sakamoto, I, & Park, H.Y. (2020). Challenges in acculturating among international students from Asian collectivist cultures. *Higher Education Studies* (10)3, 34-43.



Academic Areas of Concern



***Speaking and
Listening***



Reading



Writing





Academic Areas of Concern

Speaking & Listening

Variety of Tasks

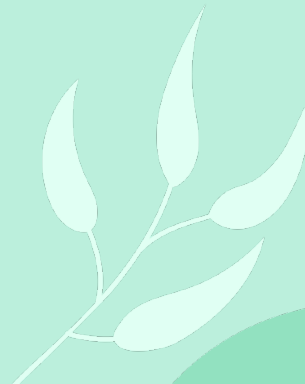
- Class Participation
- Small Groups
- Advisor Interactions

Turn Taking

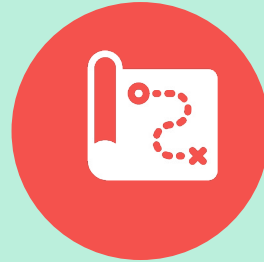
- Cultural Differences
- Power Dynamics
- Physical Cues

Listening

- Rapid idiomatic accented speech
- Reductions: Ahmunagodada _____.
- Topics change



Academic Areas of Concern



Complex process interaction

- **Top-down:** activating genre awareness and background knowledge, goal setting, making predictions and assumptions, paying strategic attention, relating new info to old, making inferences, monitoring understanding, etc. (aka, metacognitive, global strategies)
- **Bottom-up:** decoding words, sentences, inter-sentential linkages, rereading, consulting references, e.g., dictionary or thesaurus, rephrasing to enhance comprehension (aka, problem-solving and support, local strategies)

Takes 20-70% longer in L2

- Complexity of sentence structure
- Unfamiliar vocabulary
- Difficulty determining priority content and vocabulary



Academic Areas of Concern: Writing



Genre

- Familiarity/Awareness
- Conventions



Accented Writing

- SEAE (Standardized Edited American English)
- Native speaker standards
- Minor errors (e.g., prepositions, articles) conflated with major errors that truly impede understanding



Cultural Expectations

- Reader's responsibility
- Writer's responsibility



Source Use

- Fear of plagiarism
- Complex citation systems
- Complex set of skills involved in integrating sources appropriately

QUESTIONS ?

