

College Students' Perceptions of Interactions with International Faculty

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Abstract

This study examined the perceptions of college students regarding the benefits and challenges in interacting with international faculty. A Likert scale survey was administered to students from 13 face-to-face or online classes yielding 212 usable questionnaires. The results showed that students had both positive perceptions and concerns about their interactions with international faculty. Where there were differences among groups, younger students, females, Caucasians, undergraduates, those who had not taken classes with international faculty, and those who attended activities sponsored by international faculty or organizations tended to have more positive perceptions than their counterparts. Implications of the study are discussed.

Key words: international faculty, intercultural competency

Introduction

As the world becomes increasingly globalized, it is quite common to see students and faculty from foreign countries at university campuses in the US. The internationalization of the university community is believed to bring many benefits, such as more resources for the institution, enriched learning experiences for the students, and a more diverse campus life (Han, 2008; Zupanc & Zupanc, 2009). For this reason, the internationalization of institutions of higher education has attracted a lot of attention in recent years (Han, 2008).

The internationalization process, however, is not a smooth one. Most international students and faculty have to go through a myriad of barriers when they leave their home country to study or work in a place far removed from their birthplace (Wasilik, 2011). At the same time, many undergraduates from the destination country “have had limited or no personal interactions with international individuals prior to their encounter in the university classroom” (Williams, 2011, p. 2). It is important to know what occurs when such interactions eventually take place on a university campus.

Literature Review

Today's students are graduating into a world that is interconnected as never before. All the major challenges of our time, whether in relation to health, the environment, peace or economic security, require knowledge of the world and the ability to interact with people from a range of backgrounds (Devlin-Foltz, 2010). Roberts (2007) calls for increased attention to the preparation of teachers in the United States in terms of international knowledge and experience.

Such a preparation will help their students become competent in interacting with “people who differ from themselves” and promote “the free exchange of ideas, goods and people” (p.11).

According to Gopal (2011), the internationalization of a university campus refers to the incorporation of international elements into the research, teaching, and service functions of the university. As an important component of this process, international faculty are often employed in U.S. Institutions of higher education. International faculty who are relatively new in a country of employment often need help to deal with the various challenges they face (Han, 2008). Dedoussis (2007) found that even with some orientation, the attrition rate for international faculty is very high.

When international faculty accept a position in a country other than their own they are often unfamiliar with the norms of the new work place (Garson, 2005). “[International faculty] are unlikely to be familiar with the local assessment practices, curriculum design principles, teaching styles and most of all the academic and social background of the students they will be teaching (Luxon & Peelo, 2009, p. 652).” They tend to become dismayed when they encounter the “less strictly defined hierarchies established in the American university” (Schwieger, Gros & Barberan, 2010, p. 148). They were prepared in their home countries to be expert dispensers of information, rather than the facilitators or guides the American educational culture advocates (Alberts, Hazen & Theobald, 2010; Cooper & Mitsunaga, 2010; Dedoussis, 2007; Gopal, 2011; Roberts, 2007; Wasilik, 2011; Williams, 2011). They may become disappointed that the teaching techniques which worked well in their native countries are no longer so effective in the new workplace (Wasilik). While some faculty choose to give up their original methods, others may decide to stick to the strategies they know - and either choice can lead to a frustrating experience for them (Luxon & Peelo, 2009).

In addition to teaching strategy, language is also a barrier for most international faculty. According to Dedoussis (2007), students generally prefer to take classes from native speakers rather than those taught by second-language faculty. Gopal (2011) points out that language “conveys so much more than what is uttered and how it is used because it carries assumptions about the culture itself” (p. 376). She suggests that international faculty “make adjustments to the appropriateness and effective use of language in a cross-cultural context” (p. 377). She also reminds us that body language and other non-verbal behaviors are evaluated by students, even if they are not aware of doing so. In order to avoid “unpredictable interaction(s)” with their students, international faculty sometimes resort to formal teaching techniques such as lecturing in front of the class or using PowerPoint presentations (Luxon & Peelo, 2009, p. 655).

Studies also found that international faculty from cultures very different from their host culture tend to have few social interactions with host scholars (Capdelaine & Alexitch, 2004; Howe, 2008; Trice, 2004). Not only do these faculty sometimes feel socially isolated, and fail to understand the system of the universities where they work, they often misunderstand the behaviors and expectations of their students. In particular, international faculty who are women, who are new in their career, or are non-Caucasian tend to experience more difficulties in their work than their counterparts (Alberts *et al.*, 2010).

When comparing job satisfaction of international faculty, Kim, Wolf-Wendel, and Twombly (2011) make a distinction between those who were foreign born and received their undergraduate degree from their home country from faculty who received their undergraduate degrees in the U.S. The former group was significantly less satisfied with their job than U.S. faculty, even though they were more productive in terms of publication rates. This difference was not found between the latter group and U.S. faculty.

A key concept in understanding how international faculty react to and cope with their new environment is intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2011; Gopal, 2011; Wasilik, 2011). According to Deardorff (2011), intercultural competence refers to the development of “specific attitudes, knowledge, and skills” that results in “the *effective* and *appropriate* behavior and communication in intercultural situations” [sic] (p. 66). Using Deardorff’s model of intercultural competence, Gopal (2011) developed a framework of intercultural competence for international faculty teaching in their host countries. In this framework, intercultural competence consists of three core elements: attitudes, knowledge and comprehension, and skills. The element of attitudes encompasses the valuing of other cultures, motivation, openness to cultures, and ethnocentricity. Knowledge and comprehension covers cultural self-awareness, gender roles, and language. The final element, skills, includes self-reflection, reflexivity, and communication skills. Gopal encourages institutions to include instruction and support to international faculty by taking them through an orientation that addresses all areas relevant to intercultural competence.

Other scholars and researchers have also made suggestions that institutions assist international faculty. Williams (2011) emphasizes the importance of helping faculty understand the expectations of their students, alerting them to the concept and practice of students’ zones of proximal development (the distance between what a student can do without help and what a student can accomplish with help), and assistance with negotiating language differences. Roberts (2007) proposes that institutions introduce international faculty to a model for lesson planning that covers engagement, exploration, explanation, elaboration and evaluation. Cooper & Mitsunaga (2010) suggest that important strategies be implemented to increase the access international faculty have to professional interests which are shared by their colleagues, personal affinities and institutional structures. They noted the power of building relationships as international faculty assimilate to the new culture while sharing perspectives from their native cultures.

Howe (2008) reminds us that the body of research on international scholars is quite limited. In a study of student perceptions of diversity at a medical school in the Midwestern part of the U.S., Bresciani (2003) found that only students from a minority group felt the need to diversify the faculty and upper administration of the school. Although most of the students agreed with the need for the faculty to receive diversity training, they did not feel the institution should hire faculty from another country to teach at the institution. Most of the studies on international faculty were conducted through the lenses of the faculty themselves, instead of from the perspectives of the students with whom the international faculty interact on a daily basis. Given that the number of international scholars in the United States is continuing to grow,

and that their impact on students is expanding, it is important that we understand how international faculty interact with our students, especially from the perspectives of the students.

This study was designed to investigate the perceptions of college students regarding their interactions with international faculty. Specifically, it sought to answer the following research questions:

- 1) What are some of the benefits perceived by college students in their interactions with international faculty?
- 2) What are some of the issues perceived by college students in their interactions with international faculty?
- 3) Did student demographic or background variables account for any difference in their perceptions of international faculty?

Method

This study took place in a mid-size public university in a rural area of the Midwestern region of the US. The majority of students live on campus. Cultural diversity in this area is moderate so most students' intercultural interactions off-campus are somewhat common. International students and faculty are found across academic disciplines and programs, including those within the College of Teacher Education where the study was conducted. International enrollment includes about 350 undergraduate and 300 graduate students from more than 50 countries. About 10% of the 450 full time faculty are international. Among the 77 full time faculty within the College of Teacher Education, there are only four international faculty members (5%), with one of them Canadian, one Latin American, and two Asian.

A survey was developed consisting of 6 demographic variables about the students and 22 close ended Likert scale items having to do with their experiences interacting with international faculty. A five point scale was used with 1 being Rarely Agree and 5 being Always Agree. A Not Applicable option was also provided. (The questionnaire is reproduced in the Appendix.) The demographic items included age, gender, student status, and experience with international faculty. The close ended questions covered such dimensions as language barriers, cultural differences, teaching strategies, and academic learning. Fourteen items expressed positive perceptions and eight stated negative perceptions. This mix of items was intended to encourage the respondents to read them carefully. The survey was developed by the researchers themselves, who designed the items based on their personal experiences and the literature concerning potential issues international faculty tend to encounter when teaching outside their home country. The researchers used a mixture of verb tenses with the various survey items, in an attempt to elicit student perceptions of their actual experiences and future expectations regarding their interactions with international faculty.

The survey was administered to both graduate and undergraduate education majors at the beginning of the Spring 2012 semester. Altogether a sample of 255 students was obtained from 13 classes, eight of which were taught by international faculty. Classes taught by US faculty were included in the study since some of the students in those classes may have taken courses

from international faculty. The students who have not taken courses by international faculty were also included in the study so that their expectations of international faculty may be examined. In nine classes, the authors of this study administered the survey in person. In the remaining four classes, it was administered online via the Blackboard website. When students were enrolled in more than one participating class, they were counted only once and were told not to repeat the survey. Altogether, 212 returned questionnaires were usable, resulting in a response rate of 83%.

Factor analysis was performed on the Likert scale items and independent t-tests were used to compare different demographic groups. Where necessary, demographic variables such as age and ethnicity were recoded into dichotomous variables.

Results

Demographic Data

The average age of the respondents was 26.4 and the majority were undergraduates. Table 1 summarizes other demographic characteristics. As is typical of students in American teacher education programs, most were female and Caucasian. More than two thirds had taken a class taught by international faculty but less than one quarter had participated in an activity sponsored by international organizations or individuals.

Table 1.

Demographics and Background of Students

Gender	Female	183
	Male	29
Ethnicity	White Caucasian	194
	Others	18
Student status	Undergraduate	167
	Graduate	45
Class experience	Had international faculty as instructor	145
	Had not had international faculty as instructor	66
Sponsored activity	Had attended activity sponsored by international organization or people	45
	Had not attended activity sponsored by international organization or people	167

Factor Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis was run to see how the various survey items loaded on different dimensions or factors. Varimax rotation was used to derive the factor structure and four factors resulted from this analysis. The factor analysis was used to analyze the internal structure

of the survey items, which could provide evidence regarding the validity of the survey instrument.

Table 2.

Factor Loadings of Survey Items Concerning College Student Perceptions of Interactions with International Faculty

<i>Factor 1. Overall student perceptions of international faculty</i>	
I like to be in a class taught by an international faculty.	0.791
I think I will benefit a lot from having an international faculty as my teacher.	0.780
I look forward to having an international faculty teach my class.	0.758
I don't think I will learn well academically in a class taught by an international faculty.	0.739
My perspectives are enriched through interaction with international faculty.	0.729
I like the teaching methods of my international faculty.	0.681
I think I will get interesting perspectives through interaction with international faculty.	0.679
I try to avoid taking courses taught by an international faculty.	0.650
I learn less academically in a class taught by an international faculty.	0.631
Language seems to be a barrier for international faculty to communicate with the students.	0.619
I will have no trouble communicating with an international faculty.	0.496
<i>Factor 2. Faculty reaching out or making friends</i>	
The international faculty I had care a lot about us students socially.	0.861
The international faculty in my classes tried to make friends with the students.	0.800
The international faculty I had care a lot about us students academically.	0.627
<i>Factor 3. Barriers or challenges in interactions__</i>	
Cultural difference has been a barrier in my interaction with international faculty.	0.718
I would be less open when I am with international faculty.	0.706
There might be some distance between international faculty and their students.	0.553
I would feel more awkward interacting with international faculty than with a US faculty.	0.512
I think international faculty may use teaching strategies not typically used by US faculty.	0.496
<i>Factor 4. Cultural differences and student pre-conceptions</i>	
Cultural difference will not affect my interaction with international faculty.	0.821
My interaction with international faculty helped me to shed off preconceived thoughts.	0.563

Twelve of the 22 Likert items (items 7-13, 17, 18, 24, 26, 27) loaded significantly on a factor dealing with the overall student perceptions of classes taught by international faculty. This factor accounted for 37.7% of the total variance. The second dimension, consisting of three items (items 19, 21, 22) and accounting for 9.7% of the variance, was about international faculty reaching out to or making friends with students. The third dimension, which accounted for 6.9% of the total variance, consisted of five survey items (items 15, 20, 23, 25, 28) that focused on barriers or challenges in the interactions. The fourth dimension, consisting of only two items (items 14, 16) that accounted for 6.1% of the total variance, covered cultural differences and student pre-conceptions. All four factors made sense to the researchers, since they targeted various aspects of the “external outcomes of intercultural competency”, or “effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations” (Deardorff, 2011, p. 66). The first factor also reflected the results of international faculty regularly using teaching strategies or skills that fall outside of intercultural competency.

Research Questions 1 and 2

Responses to the survey items are summarized in the descriptive statistics in Table 3 and answer the first two research questions. Because the survey used a scale that ranged from 1 (Rarely Agree) to 5 (Always Agree,) the midpoint of the scale is 3.0. For the favorable statements (e.g., interesting perspectives, caring a lot academically) we considered positive perceptions to be those above the midpoint, (ratings of 3.1 to 5 with 5 being the most positive) and for the unfavorable statements (e.g., lack of academic learning, barrier due to cultural difference), positive perceptions were those below the midpoint (ratings of 1 to 2.9, with 1.0 being the most positive).

Table 3.
Student Perceptions: Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean	SD
<i>Favorable statements (5.0 = most positive perception)</i>			
I will get interesting perspectives from international faculty.	206	4.0	0.87
International faculty care about students academically	158	4.0	1.04
Overall positive experience with international faculty	167	3.9	1.12
Cultural difference will not affect my interaction	198	3.8	1.23
I will benefit a lot from interactions with international faculty	199	3.6	1.02
My perspectives are enriched	164	3.5	1.09
<i>Favorable statements (5.0 = most positive perception)</i>			
I will have no trouble communicating	197	3.3	1.19
I like teaching methods of international faculty	159	3.3	1.07
Interaction with international faculty helped me to shed preconceptions	147	3.2	1.15
I look forward to classes with international faculty	194	3.1	1.21
International faculty try to make friends with students	149	3.1	1.23

International faculty care about students socially	149	3.1	1.14
I like to be in a class with international faculty	180	2.9	1.05
<i>Unfavorable statements (1.0 = most positive perception)</i>			
	N	Mean	SD
Cultural difference has been a barrier	172	2.0	1.14
I would be less open with international faculty	197	2.0	1.10
I would feel more awkward with international faculty	197	2.0	1.07
I don't think I will learn well with international faculty	195	2.1	1.16
I learn less with international faculty	194	2.4	1.29
I try to avoid classes with international faculty	164	2.4	1.16
International faculty may use non-typical teaching strategies	184	2.9	0.96
There might be distance between international faculty and students	184	3.0	0.98
Language seems to be a barrier for international faculty	189	3.1	1.17

Perceived benefits of interactions with international faculty. In general, the students agreed that they would get interesting perspectives through interaction with international faculty ($M = 4.0$, $SD = .87$) and that their perspectives had been enriched through such interactions ($M = 3.5$, $SD = 1.09$). They felt that international faculty cared a lot about them academically ($M = 4.0$, $SD = 1.04$) and that they would benefit from having international faculty as instructors ($M = 3.6$, $SD = 1.02$).

Perceived issues in interactions with international faculty. Two items showed slightly negative perceptions – liking classes with international faculty ($M = 2.9$, $SD = 1.05$) and language as a barrier ($M = 3.1$, $SD = 1.17$.) However, overall students responded that cultural differences would not affect their interactions with international faculty ($M = 3.8$, $SD = 1.23$). They denied that they learned less in courses taught by international faculty ($M = 2.4$, $SD = 1.16$). They did not feel more awkward interacting with international faculty than with U.S. faculty ($M = 2.0$, $SD = 1.07$). Neither did they feel less open with interacting with international faculty ($M = 2.0$, $SD = 1.10$).

Research question 3: Effect of demographic variables

Independent t-tests were conducted to determine if student demographic or background variables accounted for any differences in their perceptions of international faculty. Only the differences that reached statistical significance are reported. Where statistically significant differences were found, the significance levels were all in the .01 to .05 range with none approaching high significance ($p < .001$).

Age. To facilitate the t-test, the student age information was re-coded, with students 24 years or above in one group and those 23 years or below in the other group. The cutoff age was set at 24, since by that age most traditional students would have graduated from college. Overall, students from the two age groups held similar views regarding international faculty, except in two instances. The students who were 23 or younger ($M = 2.10$, $SD = 1.00$) were less likely than

the older students ($M = 2.55$, $SD = 1.23$) to feel that they learned less in classes taught by international faculty, $t(151) = 2.62$, $p = .01$. The younger students ($M = 2.10$, $SD = 1.13$) were also less likely than the older group ($M = 2.53$, $SD = 1.35$) to avoid classes taught by such faculty, $t(170) = 2.41$, $p = .02$.

Student Status. Undergraduate or graduate status was statistically significant for only one item. Similar to the results for age, where younger students had more positive perceptions when differences existed, undergraduate students ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.24$) were more likely than graduate students ($M = 2.69$, $SD = 1.07$) to feel that their international faculty tried to make friends with them, $t(147) = 2.17$, $p = .03$.

Gender. There were five areas where the perceptions of female and male students differed significantly, with females reporting more positive perceptions on all five items.

Table 4.
Significant Differences in Perceptions by Gender

	Female		Male		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Avoid classes	2.3	1.26	2.81	1.36	-1.95	0.05
Learn less	2.3	1.11	2.83	1.37	-2.10	0.04
Language barrier	2.98	1.13	3.57	1.29	-2.52	0.01
Less open	1.88	1.05	2.43	1.29	-2.47	0.02
More awkward	1.95	1.00	2.44	1.40	-2.24	0.03
Some distance	2.89	0.97	3.30	1.03	-0.99	0.05

Male students were more likely than females to avoid classes taught by international faculty, $t(192) = -1.95$, $p = .05$, to think they learned less in classes taught by international faculty, $t(162) = -2.10$, $p = .04$, and to believe that language is a barrier for international faculty in communicating with students, $t(187) = -2.52$, $p = .01$. Male students were also more likely not to feel as open in a class taught by international faculty, $t(195) = -2.47$, $p = .02$ and to feel more awkwardness in their interactions with them, $t(195) = -2.24$, $p = .03$. They were also less likely to perceive distance between themselves and international faculty, $t(182) = -1.99$, $p = .05$.

Ethnicity. The ethnicity variable was recoded into a dichotomous one, with Caucasians as one group and non-Caucasians as the other. They held similar views with the exception of two items. Caucasians ($M = 3.22$, $SD = 1.12$) were more likely than non-Caucasians ($M = 2.54$, $SD = 1.27$) to believe that interaction with international faculty helped them shed some of their misconceptions, $t(145) = 2.06$, $p = .04$. Similarly, they ($M = 1.89$, $SD = 1.10$) were less likely than their counterparts ($M = 2.73$, $SD = 1.39$) to feel that cultural difference was a barrier in communicating with international faculty, $t(170) = -2.78$, $p = .01$.

Experience with international faculty. Whether students had taken classes taught by international faculty accounted for significant differences in student perceptions in two areas.

Students who were taught by international faculty ($M = 3.18$, $SD = 1.16$) were more likely than those who were not ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 1.14$) to feel that language was a barrier for international faculty, $t(186) = 2.58$, $p = .01$. They ($M = 3.04$, $SD = .92$) were also more likely ($M = 2.72$, $SD = 1.09$) to expect some distance between themselves and international faculty, $t(181) = 1.98$, $p = .05$.

Participation in activities. The background variable for which the largest number of significant differences was found is whether students had attended activities sponsored by international individuals or organizations, which affected perceptions in six areas.

Table 5.

Significant Differences in Perceptions by Participation in Activities

	Participated		Did not participate		t	p
	M	SD	M	SD		
Perspectives enriched	3.90	0.93	3.38	1.12	2.67	0.01
Interesting perspectives	4.24	0.88	3.93	0.85	2.16	0.03
Like to be in class	3.36	0.98	2.86	1.04	2.77	0.01
Look forward to classes	3.44	1.14	3.02	1.21	2.04	0.04
Overall positive experience	4.21	0.84	3.74	1.18	2.43	0.02
Like teaching methods	3.69	1.09	3.16	1.05	2.21	0.03

Students who had attended such activities were more likely to think that their perspectives have been enriched, $t(162) = 2.67$, $p = .01$ and that they would get interesting perspectives, $t(204) = 2.16$, $p = .03$. They were more likely to enjoy classes taught by international faculty, $t(178) = 2.77$, $p = .01$, looked forward to such classes, $t(192) = 2.04$, $p = .04$, and were more likely to have had an overall positive experience with international faculty, $t(165) = 2.43$, $p = .02$ and to like their teaching methods, $t(157) = 2.21$, $p = .03$.

Conclusions and Discussion

This study surveyed students regarding their perceptions of international faculty. The results showed that on almost all of the survey items, students reported positive perceptions, that is, perceptions more favorable than the midpoint of the Likert scale. Although none of the items received a rating in the most positive area of the scale (4.1 to 5 for favorable statements or 1 to 1.9 for unfavorable statements,) only two of the 22 items were below the midpoint on favorability, and in each case, this was just by 0.1. This finding suggested that overall, college students held positive views regarding their interactions with their international faculty, especially in areas such as academic learning and change of perspectives.

This note of optimism, however, needs to be regarded with some caution. As mentioned earlier, ratings on half (11) of the student perception items were around 3.0, regardless of whether the items were favorable statements (e.g., will benefit from being taught by international

faculty, caring about students) or unfavorable ones (e.g., language barrier, distance between students and international faculty). This suggests that at least some students perceive the existence of certain barriers as they interact with international faculty.

For four of the six demographic variables where significant differences were found, they were found for just one or two of the student perception items. For the other two variables, there were significant differences on five or six, or approximately one fourth, of the items. For only three perception items – learning less, avoiding classes with international faculty and language barriers - was a statistically significant relationship found with more than one demographic variable. Thus demographic variables have some, but limited, explanatory power for student perceptions.

Gender was one of the two variables significantly related to several (5) perception items. The researchers consider that female students' greater tendency than males to have positive perceptions of multiple aspects of their interactions with international faculty is consistent with female students' greater tendency to openness to interactions with faculty in general. However, the small number of male respondents may have affected the results and it would be desirable for future research to test this conclusion with a much larger sample of male students.

Another meaningful finding was that students who had attended activities sponsored by international people or organizations tended to have significantly more positive perceptions than their counterparts on the largest number (6) of perception items such as enriched perspectives and positive interactions of international faculty. However, this finding does not prove a causal relationship between the variables. It is possible that both greater attendance and more positive perceptions are effects of another unidentified independent variable. It is also possible that these variables reinforce each other. In any case, the data suggest that it is beneficial for institutions of higher learning to promote internationally-related activities.

The lack of statistically significant differences by both age and student status for almost all of the dependent variables suggests that student perceptions remain rather stable during their university years.

The failure to find a statistically significant relationship between ethnicity and most student perceptions needs cautious interpretation. Combining all non-Caucasians in a single category and the small sample size for that group may have affected the results. Future research on differences among ethnic groups would require an adequate sample size for non-Caucasian students that would permit differentiation among multiple ethnic groups, since perceptions could vary substantially across the subgroups.

It was interesting that students who had taken a class taught by international faculty were more likely to perceive both a language barrier and distance during personal interactions, suggesting that these are real issues and not misperceptions that disappear after personal experience. However, complicating the analysis is that further investigation found that some students in a class taught by an international faculty member were not aware of it. For a faculty member originally from China, 5 out of 10 students in one online class indicated they had not taken a class taught by international faculty as did one of thirteen students (7.6%) in a second

online class. In two online courses taught by a professor originally from Canada, almost half of the respondents said they had not had a class taught by an international faculty member. Similarly, almost one fourth of the respondents in this faculty member's three in-person classes were not aware that their instructor was raised outside of the United States. Clearly these students did not perceive either a language barrier or a culturally-based problem with interaction and the results for these items would have been different if the students had correctly identified themselves as having had a course with international faculty. This suggests that future research cannot rely on student self-reports about taking classes with international faculty. Moreover, the failure of some students to recognize international faculty could have affected their responses to the survey items in general. For instance, even where a student's perspective was broadened by interaction with an international faculty member, this would not have been reported if the student had not realized that the instructor was originally from another country.

This study suggests possibilities for further research including the impact of in-person versus on-line course delivery since language barriers such as accents may be more noticeable in a face-to-face class. It may also be fruitful to explore differences in student perceptions of international faculty whose first language is English and faculty for whom it is a second language. It might also be worthwhile to distinguish among subgroups of international faculty that differ by region and/or language of origin, between those who had studied in the United States and those who had not, and by length of time in this country, all of which may affect language fluency and other kinds of intercultural competence.

Studying student perspectives on their interactions with international faculty is important because of the growing presence of international professors at U.S. institutions of higher learning. How they interact with students deserves our close attention. This study pointed out that hiring high quality international faculty can strengthen U.S. universities and benefit students. Although students did not report experiencing serious barriers when they interacted with international faculty, additional research on student perceptions could pinpoint more precisely the reasons for the barriers that do exist and provide universities with information that would allow them to provide international faculty with more effective support.

Because of the relationship between student attendance at activities sponsored by international faculty or organizations and more positive perceptions of their classroom interactions with international faculty, this study suggests that institutions would benefit from providing extra support to the sponsors of such activities. Among the likely benefits is enhanced student learning in classes taught by international faculty.

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Appendix.

Survey for Student Interaction with International Faculty

Section A. *Please provide some demographic information about yourself by filling in the blanks.*

1. What is your age? _____
2. What is your gender? Female _____ Male _____
3. What is your ethnicity? Afric. American _____ Am. Indian/Native Am. _____ Asian _____
Hispanic _____ Pacific Islander _____ White Caucasian _____ Other _____
4. Are you an undergraduate or graduate student? Undergraduate _____ Graduate _____
5. Have you been to a class taught by an international faculty member? Yes _____ No _____
6. Have you participated in any activity sponsored by an international organization or people?
Yes _____ No _____

Section B. *Please indicate the extent to which you agree with following statements by choosing the appropriate number or letter which corresponds to an option on the following scale: 1=Rarely, 2=Occasionally, 3=Sometimes, 4=Often, 5=Always, N=Not Applicable*

- | | |
|---|-------------|
| 1. My perspectives are enriched through interaction with international faculty. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 2. I think I will get interesting perspectives through interaction with international faculty. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 3. I learn less academically in a class taught by an international faculty. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 4. I don't think I will learn well academically in a class taught by an international faculty. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 5. I like to be in a class taught by an international faculty. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 6. I look forward to having an international faculty teach my class. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 7. I try to avoid taking courses taught by an international faculty. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 8. My interaction with an international faculty helped me to shed off some preconceived thoughts. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 9. Cultural difference has been a barrier in my interaction with international faculty. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 10. Cultural difference will not affect my interaction with international faculty. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 11. I will have no trouble communicating with an international faculty. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 12. Language seems to be a barrier for international faculty to communicate with their students. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 13. The international faculty in my class(es) tried to make friends with the students. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 14. I would be less open when I am with international faculty. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 15. The international faculty I had care a lot about us students academically. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 16. The international faculty I had care a lot about us students socially. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 17. There might be some distance between international faculty and their students. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 18. I like the teaching methods of my international faculty. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 19. I think international faculty may use teaching strategies not typically used by US faculty. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 20. My experience with international faculty has been overall positive. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 21. I think I will benefit a lot from having an international faculty as my teacher. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |
| 22. I would feel more awkward interacting with international faculty than with a US faculty. | 1 2 3 4 5 N |