Chapter 6
Multilingual International Students From the Perspective of Faculty:
Contributions, Challenges, and Support

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explores the experiences and perceptions of 14 faculty members toward multilingual international students at River University—a large, research-focused university in Ontario. Data was collected through an online survey and analysed thematically. Responses were categorised under three broad categories with respect to faculty's (1) perceptions of multilingual international students' contributions to River's academic community, (2) challenges surrounding faculty's interactions with multilingual international students, and (3) strategies developed and implemented to support students' academic success. Overall, findings were consistent with those in the current research literature, in which language proficiency was identified by faculty as a major concern, and multilingual international students were considered important for the enhancement of cultural and intellectual diversity, and for the internationalisation of higher education.

BACKGROUND

Canadian colleges and universities have experienced a rapid growth in their international student enrolment. According to data from Statistics Canada (2018), international student enrolment numbers in higher education rose to 245,895 in the academic year of 2016/17, resulting in a growth rate higher than that of domestic students. The Canadian Bureau of International Education (CBIE, 2020) reported that the number of international students pursuing post-secondary education in Canada exceeded 498,000 in 2019. This steady increase has helped broaden the focus of research concerned with international students and higher education in Canada with the aim of enhancing our understanding of the multidi-

mensionality of international students' experiences, particularly those experiences of a socio-academic and linguistic nature.

Recent research about international students' socio-academic dimension of lived experience in Canada has explored a variety of important topics. For instance, some scholars have examined the affordances of informal learning contexts for international students' development of social and professional skills (Fu, 2018), discrimination by members of international students' host academic communities, whether in or outside the classroom (Houshmand, Spanierman, & Tafarodi, 2014), the lack of an internationalised curriculum (Guo & Guo, 2017), and international students' adjustment to new social and academic expectations specifically within the graduate classroom (Alqudayri & Gounko, 2018). Investigations such as these have productively offered key insight into some of international students' experiences in Canada from the perspective *of the student*. However, as this very research demonstrates, international students' socio-academic experiences are co-constructed in interaction with other members of the academic community, such as local students, support staff, and faculty. Among these, the perspectives of faculty remain underexplored in the Canadian literature, despite the significance of the multiple institutional roles played by faculty to the socio-academic experiences of international students (Glass, Kociolek, Wongtrirat, Lynch, & Cong, 2015).

This chapter seeks to contribute to this line of research by exploring the experiences and perspectives of 14 faculty members at a large research-oriented university in Ontario. During the winter term of 2019, a study was conducted through an electronic survey forwarded by email to faculty in all departments in the institution under consideration in this study. Prior to describing the methodological design of the study, this chapter provides an overview of the literature related to faculty and international students' interaction in English-medium universities. In closing, the chapter offers a discussion in light of the findings, which highlights the perspectives of faculty on the ways in which multilingual international students contribute to their institution, the challenges faculty reported encountering in working with the students, and the support mechanisms developed and implemented to enhance faculty and student inter-group experiences. The study presented in this chapter was guided by the researcher's concern and interest to explore faculty's experiences and perspectives on multilingual international students.

FACULTY'S PERSPECTIVES ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

Exploring faculty's perspectives on and experiences with multilingual international students can offer unique insight into the (co-constructed) international student experience. The following paragraphs aim to contextualise such insight by foregrounding three important inter-related dimensions of socio-academic experience commonly found in the scholarly literature. First, this review will discuss the influence which multilingual international students' interactions with faculty can have on the students' perceptions of their academic performance, both inside and outside the classroom. Second, it will identify some of the challenges faculty have reported to encounter while working from their multiple roles with multilingual international students. And third, this review will present some of the benefits faculty associate with the multilingual international student presence in academic communities. Altogether, the findings in this section help illustrate some of the complexity inherent in faculty-international student interactional experiences.

For international students, positive relationships with faculty may significantly enhance their sense of a positive academic experience. By exploring international students' perspectives on their social

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