Reflection/Study Abroad Articles

ISSN: 2162-3104 Print/ ISSN: 2166-3750 Online
Volume 3, Issue 1 (2013 Spring)
Copyright © 2013-2014 JIS
http://jistudents.org/
This reflection stems from my personal observations of international students in the United States whose first language is not English. Having witnessed some uncomfortable moments and stories, I investigated international students’ experiences of discrimination against their language proficiency, foreign accent, race, ethnicity, and gender. As the number of students from the globe has been continuously increasing, the concern with international students has also been growing across the nation. However, practical instruction that informs international students of unpleasant race- and/or language-related experiences that they may face in U.S. society has been insufficient. Moreover, some international students – East Asian students, in particular, – tend to ascribe racial slurs and microaggressions against themselves not to social or structural problems, but to individual faults such as their lack of English proficiency or cultural inadaptability to a new society (Frey & Roysircar, 2006).

Microaggressions can be defined by three main characteristics: (1) subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, visual) directed at people of color, often done automatically or unconsciously; (2) layered insults, based on one’s race, gender, class, sexuality, language, immigration status, phenotype, accent, or surname; and (3) cumulative insults that cause unnecessary stress to people of color while privileging Whites (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002, p. 160). In this essay, I will explore experiences of discrimination that international students at college or graduate levels go through in everyday life. I hope this reflection calls for special attention to international students who study in the U.S to protect the students’ human rights and improve awareness of related issues in schools and other institutions.

Microaggressions against Language and Race

For international students, studying in the U.S. is full of adventures and challenges. They have to adapt themselves to new schools and a society where different social/cultural norms and regulations exist. Furthermore, English can be an additional constraint for many international students whose first language is not English. In addition to these challenges, international students seem to encounter microaggressions in everyday life. In fact, discrimination against one’s language proficiency and foreign accents is not a recent phenomenon in the U.S at all. Although the US has always been linguistically diverse, certain dialects and accents have always been undervalued (Wiley, 1996). Moreover, speakers of the devalued languages or dialects are stigmatized and even problematized. As for African American English (AAE), the language has been denounced as ignorant, wrong, and improper, although it has a legitimate and grammatical system.

In addition, overall negative attitudes exist towards Spanish and Spanish speakers (Reyes, 2010), and there has been pressure to exclude Spanish from public spaces in both explicit and implicit ways (Hill, 2008). With regard to Asians Americans, a forever-foreign stereotype is perpetuated in American society (Tuan, 1998), and the general public normally views Asians as newcomers who speak English with Asian accents (Reyes, 2010). For international students whose first language is not English, situations are more challenging than for other linguistically marginalized
populations. These students are newcomers to this society and have rarely experienced discriminations against their race or language in their home country.

Previous research studies have shown that people of color in the U.S. suffer from a subtle and covert form of discrimination against race, ethnicity, phenotype, language proficiency, foreign accent, immigration status, last names, and so on and that people of color experience these microaggressions on an almost everyday basis (e.g., Solórzano, 1998; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Yosso, Ceja, Smith, & Solórzano, 2009). In addition, Davis (1999) asserts that microaggressions cause a great deal of stress to their victims because they have to interpret the insult and then make a decision about whether and how to react to the insult. Further, if English is not one’s first language, s/he has an additional burden to decode slangs or certain demeanor that are unfamiliar to their culture. Responding to microaggressions in a proper way is also demanding due to their limited English proficiency and lack of cultural knowledge. What is worse, microaggressions against one’s language proficiency or foreign accent can be mixed with racial and sexual discriminations, so the frustration that international students experience is quite a bit greater than people might normally expect. However, there is little research that specifically focuses on international students’ experiences since they are viewed as temporary residents who will leave this country when they graduate from school. Furthermore, it is generally considered that it is international students who have to be responsible for adapting to this new society by learning language and cultural norms as soon as possible.

Experiences of Microaggressions

In this section I share several experiences of microaggressions that international students have encountered. I have collected these stories as a part of my regular class assignment from students who took English as a Second Language (ESL) or English Composition (EC) classes. The majority of students that I met were from Asian countries (e.g., China, South Korea, and Taiwan) where race composition is almost homogeneous and one official language is spoken. The stories they confessed included various types of microaggressions, and shockingly enough, some of their experiences were overt racism and obvious crimes. Further, the students’ experiences varied depending on their academic levels (undergraduate and graduate) and gender. In general, the younger students were, the more likely they were exposed to microaggressions; and female students were more likely to be victimized compared to their male counterparts. Although this essay cannot include the entire set of stories that I collected, I will share several stories that many students commonly confessed. The following stories were neither revised nor modified in order to give the students voice in their own words.

Physical-assault cases:

Some students said they were physically victimized for no particular reason by being bullied or even beaten by their peers. They also said they were too young to cope with the situations in a proper way. For some international students, it is also difficult to verbalize their feelings and thoughts when they encounter this kind of situation.

“When I came to the States, I attended a middle school as a 6th grader. Because I was an immigrant from Korea, I had difficulty communicating in English. One day I was walking to a classroom, one guy from my class suddenly hit my head and just walked away. I could not react to it because I didn’t know how to speak and respond”

(22 years old, Male, South Korea).

“When I first came to the States, I went to a public school. The guy who sat next to me was White. At that time I was really scared and shy because I didn’t know how to communicate with other people. The guy always stuck trash in my desk drawer and made fun of me. I couldn’t do anything and I didn’t know what to do, so I kept silent about the incidents” (18, Female, China).

Sexual assault cases:

Women are more likely to come across uncomfortable events such as intentional sexual jokes and emotional/physical assaults that take place both verbally and non-verbally. Moreover, some people intentionally take advantage of one’s language proficiency or race in order to sexually harass female international students. Since English learners are not familiar with slang and sex-related vocabulary, female international students can easily be targets of sexual jokes and conversations. Nevertheless, they sometimes...
I do not fully understand how serious the situation can be and how to respond to the situation.

“My lab mates sometimes say sexual words behind me really quickly. And if I don’t understand the word, they laugh at me and make me feel I’m sexually harassed. If I ask them to repeat the word, they just ignore me.”

(24, Female, Philippines)

“I walked down one street, and a White guy came up to me saying, “Smack your ass.” Since he must have been mentally ill and I didn’t exactly know what he meant, I ran in the other direction without responding to him. I was so scared and felt really bad all day long.”

(30, Female, Taiwan)

Race-related assaults

Race-based discriminations are usually associated with language-related discriminations. However, students can experience discrimination against their race alone, and the following cases demonstrate such examples.

“My friend’s neighbor in a campus dorm was mean to Chinese. She used to talk (and say to her boyfriend) things like “Chinese are bullshit ...” and she intentionally let my friend hear that”

(19, Female, China).

“I know a professor who is harsh on Asian students only and ignores what they have done for a lab meeting. However, the professor does not act like that to Caucasian students”

(28, Male, Vietnam).

Language-related assaults

International students also experience microaggressions and discriminations against their first language use, English proficiency, or foreign accent. The following stories show students’ experiences related to their language use.

“I was talking on the phone with my Mom in Chinese. I heard some people passing by mocking me, “Mandarin speakers fuck around”

(20, Male, China).

“During my TA section, a student complained about the grade of his lab report. While discussing his answer, he soon got upset and rudely said, “You don’t understand what I’m saying,” in which he meant my English was too poor to understand him. In fact, he didn’t understand the material, and that was why he didn’t understand me.”

(28, Female, South Korea)

“When we were discussing in class, my American classmates form their own discussion groups. They didn’t want to include me and other international students. They think we are poor in English and may not contribute to the group.”

(24, Female, Japan).

Conclusion

Although the short stories above cannot demonstrate every aspect of the uncomfortable reality that international students face in the U.S., the stories uncover challenging adversities in a partial way. According to the stories the students shared with me, young students and female students, in particular, were more likely to be victims of microaggressions, but they tended to take the microaggressions at the individual level, which can aggravate the situations. Despite the reality, however, there is sparse information available at the school or institution level, and it solely remains the responsibility of international students to manage microaggressions and to take care of their wounded emotions, feelings, confidence, and dignity. Given the increasing number of international students from various cultural/linguistic backgrounds, schools in the U.S. should offer practical instruction for diversity to students at all academic levels. In doing so, I hope both domestic students and international students benefit from each other’s various characteristics and become global citizens who can work for the world as well as their community.
References


About the Author:

Jongyeon Ee is a doctoral candidate in the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles. Her research interests include dual-language immersion programs for English language learners and heritage language learners, integration and desegregation through language education, and Asian immigrant students in the U.S. E-mail: joyee@ucla.edu

How to Cite:

JIS Board: Editors & Reviewers

Founder/Editor-In-Chief

Krishna Bista, Arkansas State University, USA

Guest Editors

Erlenawati Sawir, Central Queensland University, Australia [Spring 2013 Vol. 3 Issue 1]
Susan C. Pearce, East Carolina University, USA [Spring 2013 Vol. 3 Issue 1]

Associate Editors

Charlotte Foster, Missouri Western State U., USA
Diana B. Carlin, Saint Louis University, USA
Hugo Garcia, Claremont Graduate University, USA
June A. Gordon, University of California, USA
Keri Dutkiewicz, Davenport University, USA
Sandria Officer, University of Toronto, Canada
Rai Farrelly, University of Utah, USA
Vera V. Chapman, The U. of Mississippi, USA

Book Review Editors

Charles R. Harris, Stony Brook University, USA
Joy Bancroft, University of Kansas, USA
Kerri Bennett, Arkansas State University, USA
Misato Yamaguchi, Augusta State University, USA
Nicole Gervasio, Columbia University, USA
Shyam Sharma, Stony Brook University, USA

Copy Editors

Elise Geither, Cleveland State University, USA
Glenda A. Riley, Indiana Institute of Technology, USA
Karen Young, Clayton State University, USA
Miguel Lopez, California State University, USA
Paul M.W. Hackett, Emerson College, USA
Rolf Holtz, Troy University, USA
Virginia Gonzalez, University of Cincinnati, USA

Advisory Board

Amany Saleh, Professor of Curriculum & Instruction, Arkansas State University
Don Jones, Assistant Vice-President of Adm. & Student Services, Belhaven University
George Foldsley, Professor of Education & Director, Center for Excellence in Education
Russ Hannah, Associate Vice-Chancellor for Finance, Arkansas State University

Publication Coordinators

Joyce Mann, Arkansas State University, USA
Pamela Shultz, Arkansas State University, USA

Reviewers

The following people reviewed manuscripts submitted for publication in Journal of International Students from December 2011 through December 2012. Their assistance is greatly appreciated.

Abu Kamara, Dalhousie University, Canada
Alex Kumi-Yeboah, Dalton State College, USA
Alexander N. Akulli, Michigan State University, USA
Allenda Zionch, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA
Arnaud Prevot, Argosy University, USA
Brandy Stone, Arkansas State University, USA
Burcu Ates, Sam Houston State University, USA
Cahty Maahs-Fladung, Utah State University, USA
Charles W. Prince, George Washington University, USA
Cheryl DoBose, Arkansas State University, USA
Crystal Machado, Indiana U. of Pennsylvania, USA
Danilo M. Baylen, University of West Georgia, USA
David Pang, The University of Auckland, New Zealand
Elena Yakunina, University of Buffalo, USA
Felicia Castro-Villarreal, The U. of Texas at San Antonio
Fujuan Tan, University of Wyoming, USA
Gina J. Mariano, Troy University, USA
Guam Kun Saw, Michigan State University, USA
Haijun Kang, Kansas State University, USA
Jason Hoi Y. Chan, University of Wyoming, USA
Jeff Koloze, South University, USA
Jennifer Hoyte, Florida International University, USA
Jeton McClinton, Jackson State University, USA
Kris Aric Knisely, Emory University, USA
Lauren M. Griffith, Central Michigan University, USA
Leah Gustilo, De La Salle University, Philippines
Leia K. Cain, University of South Carolina, USA
Leigh Pritchard, Brock University, Canada
Ling Gao LeBeau, Indiana U. at Bloomington, USA
Lisa Kahle-Piasecki, Tiffin University, USA
Martha Vungkhanching, California State U., Fresno, USA
Melissa S. Mincic, Innovation Research & Training, Inc, USA
NaJuana Lee, University of Georgia, USA
Nilay Yildirim, Syracuse University, USA
Noparat Tananuraksaku, South-East Asia U., Thailand
Olena Zhadko, New York Institute of Technology, USA
N. Aida Rustamovna, Kazan National Research Tech U. Russia
Reza Pishghadam, Ferdowsi U. of Mashhad, Iran
Roy Y. Chan, Boston College, USA
Rui Cheng, Nazareth College, USA
Sheena Terrell, Arkansas State University, USA
Shelda Debowski, U. of Western Australia, Australia
Stephen Tippett, Arcadia University, USA
Susan Edgar-Smith, Eastern University, USA
William Lange, Arkansas State University, USA
Zheng Zhu, Washington State University, USA
Call for Manuscripts

An interdisciplinary, peer reviewed publication, *Journal of International Students* (Print ISSN 2162-3104 & Online ISSN 2166-3750) is a professional journal that publishes narrative, theoretical and empirically-based research articles, student reflections, and book reviews relevant to international students and their cross-cultural experiences and understanding.

Published bi-annually, the Journal encourages the submission of manuscripts from around the world, and from a wide range of academic fields, including comparative education, international education, student affairs, linguistics, psychology, religion, sociology, business, social work, philosophy, and culture studies. The Journal audience includes international and domestic students, faculty, administrators, and educators engaged in research and practice in international students in colleges and universities.

a) **Study Abroad/Reflection** - includes descriptions and perceptions from students and scholars concerning another culture, language, people and society from an insider or outsider perspective. Reflections are the building blocks of research papers and offer original points of view on the issues and concerns related to sojourns (between 1,000 to 1,500 words).

b) **Peer-reviewed Article** - includes manuscripts that focus on the interpretation, implication, or significance of research work related to international students and scholars from various disciplines (between 3,500 to 6,500 words).

c) **Book Review** - includes reviews and critiques of the written work of scholars from a number of disciplines related to international students (between 750 to 1,200 words).

Please e-mail your manuscript to the Editor, center.asu@gmail.com. Include your full address with email and telephone number. Follow APA 6th edition in your citation and references. Double space. Times New Roman with 12 font size.

This Journal is a non-profit publication and has been operating through the voluntary services of editors, copy editors, reviewers and guest editors. All positions in the Journal are unpaid. No fees are charged to authors or readers. For further information, please visit our website http://jistudents.org/

**Editorial Office:**
Eugene Smith Hall, Rm 411
Arkansas State University, AR 72467 (USA)

**Contact Address**
*Journal of International Students*
PO BOX 1270 State University
AR, 72467 (USA) Phone: 870-680-4124
E-mail: center.asu@gmail.com

**Disclaimer**
Facts and opinions published in the JIS express solely the opinions of the respective authors. Authors are responsible for their citing of sources and the accuracy of their references and bibliographies. The editors cannot be held responsible for any oversights or possible violations of third parties’ rights.

**Copyright © 2013-2014**
Unless otherwise noted, copyrights for the texts which comprise all issues of Journal of International Students (JIS) are held by the Journal. The compilation as a whole is Copyright © by JIS, all rights reserved. Items published by JIS may be freely shared among individuals, but they may not be republished in any medium without express written consent from the author(s) and advance notification of the JIS editorial board.
CONTENTS

Volume 3                  Issue 1                              Spring 2013

Guest Editorial

Enriching American Riches with International Students
Susan C. Pearce, PhD, East Carolina University, North Carolina (USA)................................................................. i-ii

International Students and Internationalisation of Higher Education
Erlenawati Sawir, PhD, Central Queensland University (Australia)................................................................. iii-iv

Peer-Reviewed Articles

1. Study Abroad and Cultural Learning through Fulbright and other International Scholarships: A Holistic Student Development.
Madalina Akli, PhD, Rice University (USA).............................................................................................................. 1-9

Shelly R. Roy, (Doctoral Candidate), Fairmont State University (USA)................................................................. 10-16

Michelle Jackson (Doctoral Student), Sukanya Ray, PhD, and Danica Bybell (Graduate Student), Suffolk University (USA).............................................................................................................. 17-28

4. Preparedness of Chinese Students for American Culture and Communicating in English.
Melody S. Rawlings, EdD, Chinese American Cultural Exchange Foundation (USA) and Edna Sue, PhD, Chinese American Association of Cincinnati (USA)........................................................................... 29-40

5. The Effects of Collectivism-Individualism on the Cooperative Learning of Motor Skill.
Yi Luo (PhD Candidate), Yan Sun (PhD Candidate), and Johannes Strobel, PhD, Purdue University (USA).................................................................................................................. 41-51

6. International Students’ Likelihood to Seek Counseling while Studying Abroad.
Adebayo I. Onabule (EdS) and Susan R. Boes, PhD, University of West Georgia (USA)............................................. 52-59

Reflection/Study Abroad Articles

7. The Culture of Hospitality in Moldova and the United States.
Anastasiia Dobrovolska (Undergraduate Student) and Rolf Holtz, PhD, Troy University (USA)............................................ 61-63

Young-Kyung Min, PhD, University of Washington at Bothell (USA).............................................................................. 64-69

Sarah Watzky (Undergraduate Student) St. Cloud State University (USA)............................................................................. 70-71

10. “He is an Idiot!” Experiences of International Students in the United States.
Jongyeon Ee (Doctoral Candidate), University of California at Los Angeles (USA)......................................................... 72-75

Book Reviews

Paul Sudnik, Munich University of Applied Sciences (Germany).................................................................................. 76-77

Krishna Bista, Arkansas State University (USA)........................................................................................................ 78-81