



Today's Chinese Student: Understanding the U.S. Classroom

April 4, 2013 NAFSA Webinar
Discussion and Resource Guide

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Webinar Presenters

Jeff Lindgren directs the International Teaching Assistant program at the Center for Teaching and Learning, which helps prepare international graduate students for their instructional roles. He also facilitates workshops and provides consultations for faculty and teaching assistants on topics such as curriculum design, active learning, and internationalizing the curriculum. He lived in China for six years, teaching English and studying Chinese. His master's degree is in Teaching English as a Second Language, and he is currently a doctoral candidate in higher education at the University of Minnesota. He speaks Chinese (Mandarin) fluently and recently conducted his doctoral research in China.

Scott Stevens began his career in ESL in 1981. He received his BA from Bucknell University and his MA and EdD from the University of Delaware. As an instructor, he has taught all skill levels, but he has specialized in the application of drama techniques to the improvement of oral intelligibility. Director of the English Language Institute at the University of Delaware since 1984, Stevens has overseen the development of more than a dozen English for Specific Purposes programs. He has conducted teacher training both in the United States and abroad, working on numerous federally funded projects. Stevens has a joint faculty appointment with the School of Education, where he has been coordinating the MA-TESL program since 2003.

Wenbo Fan is an undergraduate student at the University of Delaware. She is in her junior year as a fine art major and theater production minor. She comes from the town of Dandong in Northeast China and looks forward to sharing her experience during today's webinar.

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Cultural Differences that Impact Academics and Campus Life			
	China	United States	Possible Impact
Conception of Self	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collectivist Value placed in own cultural group and individual modesty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individualist Self-reliance, self-promotion Value freedom from imposed constraints 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited class participation Not wanting to appear immodest Less willing to risk behavior that is displeasing to group May not respond to posted extra credit assignments/ activities
Rule of Law	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hold great faith in personal relationships than in written policies or regulations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have great faith that laws, regulations, and policies lead to fair outcomes and must be followed or changed through rule-governed processes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rules can be circumvented to achieve goals
Educational Framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May focus on extensive memorization without as much emphasis on critical response or new application 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> American system emphasizes creativity, exploring new ideas, challenging existing concepts or theories 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Problems in responding to “why?” Unfamiliarity with problem-based learning Unease with self-expression Great facility in memorization aids in taking standardized exams
Social Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Formal, hierarchical Most comfortable in context in which position and rules for behavior are known 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Informal, egalitarian Social hierarchy is present but less visible and de-emphasized 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confucian respect for professors can severely inhibit class participation
Role of Silence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prompt speech distained Student silence is sign of respect More pronounced in situations where student's status appears ambiguous or student feels unwelcome 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Silence in the presence of others is rare and uncomfortable Focus on interactional competence Silence viewed as lack of preparation, competence, or respect 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seldom participate if not part of grade Seldom given time by teachers to give considered opinion (lack of hang time or support for risk taking)

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Discussion Questions

1. How is “academically successful” defined on our campus? How do we communicate this to our students?

2. What types of classroom adjustment issues are Chinese students facing on our campus? How do we know?

3. What is our institution’s process for handling academic misconduct? Could the process be improved?

4. How is our campus supporting faculty with the changing demographic in the classroom? Who is involved? Should we be involved?

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