Fostering International Student Success in Higher Education, Review

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In Fostering International Student Success in Higher Education, authors Shapiro, Farrelly, and Tomaš present both challenges and opportunities for growth among international students and their instructors within the realm of U.S. higher education. While the recent influx of international students in U.S. institutions of higher learning offers significant benefits to both entities, the level of support these students receive is directly critical to their success in their host country and indirectly essential to their future success as global citizens. This book explores the role of cultural factors in the international student experience, and utilizes anecdotes, scenarios, quotes, and research to thoughtfully connect existing instructor knowledge to pedagogical practices and activities solidly grounded in second language acquisition (SLA) theory. Accessible to teachers in a wide variety of disciplines, Shapiro, Farrelly, and Tomaš provide examples of and information on inclusive activities, assessment writing, and rubrics to aid in the empowerment of international students to succeed academically and at the community level.

Content is clearly presented throughout each chapter, and reflection questions play an integral role in connecting this content to the specific pedagogical and personal experiences of the reader. In addition to the quotations and shared anecdotes demonstrating the vast perspectives among international students and their instructors, this allows each reader to participate in a uniquely personalized way. Three essential concepts of SLA theories (scaffolding, interaction, and noticing) accompany the role of language proficiency and appropriately structured activities and assessments without the use of excessive or intimidating subject-specific language. Furthermore, utilizing international students as a resource is encouraged exactly in the manner that instructors are advised to encourage these same students to make use of their own available resources. These consistencies and clearly outlined responsibilities not only render reader participation possible at an individualized level that may evolve over time, they explicitly mimic the scaffolding in the hands-on activities provided for both teacher development and classroom use throughout the text as a whole. Whether functioning as an introduction or serving as a renewed foundation upon which to establish improved practices, the nature in which the text presents this information lends itself flawlessly to the task at hand.

Through its accessible and personalized presentation of content and materials, this book’s promotion of inclusion and empowerment for both international students and their instructors creates an ideal stage for international student advocacy to occur at an institution-wide level. Not only would the text be ideal for instructors of all disciplines who are working with this demographic for the first time, but it also offers all English as Second Language (ESL) professionals the opportunity to serve as advocates for international students both inside and outside the classroom. This advocacy may present itself in the form of offering professional development seminars to educate general faculty about the challenges these students face, serving in an administrative capacity, or identifying and sharing additional resources and opportunities for their students. In addition to assisting the very demographic they aim to support, international student advocacy among ESL instructors would contribute to the creation of global citizens within an institutional, community, national, and increasingly expanding context.

Kimberly Specht first began teaching in Leipzig, Germany, and will graduate with her master's degree in TESOL from Eastern Michigan University in 2015. Currently, she works as an ESL teacher and tutor at various institutions in the Ann Arbor area. Her areas of interest include program administration, curriculum development, and assessment.