Empirical Article

"Lock Us in a Room Together"—Local Students' Suggestions for Improving Socialization with International Students

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ABSTRACT

In Canada, research has examined international-local student interaction by focusing on international students' perceptions and experiences. As such, the perspectives of local students toward socialization with international students remain less explored. Designed as a survey-based case study with 17 local students at a university in Ontario, this study sought to understand the perspectives of local students on how to improve socialization between the two groups. Additionally, this study investigated how local students conceptualized their experiences of multiculturalism and multilingualism at their university, considering the importance of diversity for the development of intercultural knowledge and intercultural relationships. Findings suggest that local students considered their university to be multicultural/multilingual primarily based on the availability of cultural events and different languages being spoken on campus. Moreover, local students ascribed much importance to socialization with international students but expected the university to assume a more formal role in developing structured opportunities for the two groups to come together.

Keywords: Canada, higher education, international students, local students, multiculturalism, peer interaction, social interaction

INTRODUCTION

Canada has emerged as a top destination for international education over the last ten years. At the postsecondary level, more than 313,300 international students were registered at Canadian colleges and universities in the academic year of 2018/19 (Statistics Canada, 2021). The significant increase in enrolment in the last decade has fueled the need for a better understanding of the lived experiences of international students, considering that the early rhetoric of internationalization focused on highlighting the financial contribution made by the students to Canadian society (Chen, 2008). Indeed, the positioning of international students traditionally as sources of revenue has been a factor in obscuring the other contributions the students make, and equally important, the role Canadian institutions of higher education have played in perpetuating some of the challenges international students encounter (Arthur, 2017; Houshmand et al., 2014; Stein & de Andreotti, 2016).

Socialization between international and Canadian students has been an ongoing topic of concern documented widely in the literature. Arthur (2017) has called on the local academic communities to reconceptualize their approaches to promoting the social inclusion of international students. This is because social interaction with local students is linked to better adjustment outcomes for international students, including overall satisfaction with the new academic experience (Rienties & Nolan, 2014). Nevertheless, international students generally report experiencing a lack of social ties with local students, despite their desire to develop such connections (Guo & Guo, 2017; Tavares, 2021a). In the Canadian context, there remains a need to further explore how *local students* perceive and experience social interaction with international students.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the perspectives of local students in relation to improving social interaction with international students. This paper is guided by two questions. First, what are the perceptions and experiences of local students in relation to multiculturalism and multilingualism in higher education? Second, what are local students' perspectives on improving social interaction with international students? This investigation is framed as a survey-based case study with 17 local students at a large university in Ontario. This paper begins with an overview of the literature concerning socialization between the two groups of students, both in general and with reference to the Canadian context. Subsequently, this paper presents the methodological design of the study. This paper adds to our knowledge of the international student experience in Canada in the domain of intergroup relations by understanding it from a local student perspective.

AN OVERVIEW OF INTERNATIONAL AND LOCAL STUDENT RELATIONS

Social interaction with local students plays a multifaceted role for international students. Hendrickson et al. (2011) found that international students with more friendships with local students experienced "higher levels of satisfaction, contentment, and significantly lower levels of homesickness" (p. 290) in comparison to international students with more friends from the same national background. Social interaction with English-speaking local students also affords international students who speak English as an additional language (EAL) opportunities to further develop their proficiency in English naturalistically (Tavares, 2021a). However, how such interactions are initiated is influenced by complex psychological, social, cultural, and linguistic factors. Without taking a multidimensional view of social interaction into account, the common assumption that international students simply prefer to stay within their national groups is preserved and also applied uncritically to explain intergroup relations (Rienties & Nolan, 2014).

Unsurprisingly, social interaction with international students also benefits local students in numerous ways. They afford local students the development of skills in a foreign language and of intercultural sensitivity, although this development is correlated to factors such as personal characteristics, peer interaction, and the kind of social activity in question (Luo & Jamieson-Drake, 2013). Activities which take place especially within the classroom, including (cross-cultural) group work, and that occur in a consistent fashion "seem to have a significant and strong impact on learning and friendship relations between international and home students" (Rienties et al., 2013, p. 349). Gaulee (2018) has drawn attention to the need to build upon the motivations which local students have to interact with international students in order to improve intergroup relations and maximize gains for both groups.

Local students are known to identify language proficiency as a major barrier to successful social interaction between the two groups. Language proficiency is paramount for multilingual EAL international students' academic and social success (Sherry et al., 2010). In social interactions, language proficiency for multilingual EAL international students does not encompass simply the use of "proper grammar," but also social and cultural knowledge that can help embed international students into local students' social milieu (Arkoudis & Baik, 2014; Myles & Cheng, 2003). Yet, even when sufficient linguistic and "social" proficiency is achieved by multilingual EAL international students, issues of acceptance can persist (Guo & Chase, 2011). For instance, international students' foreignized status is often seen as an indicator of inferior cultural or academic knowledge (Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Xiao, 2021). In addition to language and nationality, discrimination rooted in other factors such as gender, race, and cultural differences interferes with how intercultural contact is facilitated and sustained (Robinson et al., 2020).

The level of participation in social activities and events in university also differs by each student group. Hartwell and Ounoughi (2019) found significant differences in their study in which local students reported frequenting libraries and orientations more than international students did. In turn, international students reported attending multi-nationality events much more frequently as well as opting for student residence more than local students did. As the authors explained, because students invest into different social experiences, they have uneven opportunities to meet students from the other group. Yet, designing opportunities in which the two groups can come together is only one part of the process. The sociocultural environment where socialization occurs impacts students' perceptions and attitudes toward multiculturalism and intercultural interaction. Monoculturalism in the academic space means that local students' ways of defining socialization remains privileged and considered the "right" one (Durkin, 2008; Fell & Lukianova, 2015).

Discrimination also subverts international student success in terms of social interaction and integration. Despite discourses of celebration of multiculturalism in the host environment, Lee and Rice (2007) have drawn attention to neo-racism to explain the kind of discrimination toward racialized international students based on the hierarchy of cultures and languages. According to Hubain et al. (2016), racialization is "a historical, political, ideological, and social process that situates race and racial categories in hierarchal manners" while prioritizing the needs and interests of White individuals (p. 947). Notions of cultural and national superiority work to perpetuate the exclusion and marginalization of international students who look, act, dress, and speak differently. Discrimination becomes therefore justified for it helps to preserve the "better" culture. Bias, prejudice, and stereotyping are some of the mechanisms that operationalize discrimination toward international students in both subtle and salient ways. It is not uncommon that racialized international students will be excluded by local students, particularly in group work, because their multilingual language proficiency and cultural behaviour are considered a hindrance to individual and collective success (Wei & Bunjun, 2021).

Research in the Canadian context has focused on how international students perceive local students' attitudes toward social interaction. Many international students report feeling intentionally ignored by local students in encounters outside the classroom, even after weeks of close contact facilitated pedagogically within the classroom (Fu, 2021). Some international students also feel openly discriminated against by local students based on their race. Houshmand et al. (2014) found that racialized international students felt as though "their domestic White peers did not care about or want their presence on campus" (p. 381). Such attitudes were related to the perceived inferiority of international students. In the same study, many of the international students turned to interaction with peers of the same or similar racial and cultural groups as a coping mechanism.

International students have also identified the kinds of socialization activities of Canadian students as a potential impediment to interaction. International students in Guo and Guo's (2017) study explained that typical social activities which their local peers engaged in, namely drinking, partying, and clubbing, were not enjoyable for them, though simultaneously such activities were key sites for social interaction. In a similar vein, although international students in a study by Robinson et al. (2020) characterized Canadian students as friendly and respectful, they explained that their social interactions with Canadian students did not lead to meaningful or long-lasting friendships. Walsworth et al. (2021) found that international students

who reported having more friendships with Canadian students, even if these friendships were superficial, experienced greater cultural and social satisfaction. While these students foreground the voices of international students, local students' perspectives remain less explored in the Canadian context (Tavares, 2020).

THIS STUDY

This study was designed through a case study approach in the context of a large and research-oriented university in Ontario. Case studies focus on understanding the situated experiences of a small number of participants (Creswell, 2013). Following an explorative orientation within qualitative research, this case study was concerned with identifying the meanings participants subjectively ascribed to experiences bound within a particular space (Leavy, 2017). Pond University, the pseudonym for the academic institution under consideration, is known locally and nationally for its racially and ethnically diverse profile. According to Pond University's website, more than 150 countries were represented on campus in the year of 2019. The number of local and international students combined in the same year surpassed 50,000. At least 10,000 of those were international students.

In addition to students, institutional diversity is also sustained by faculty and support staff. Members of both institutional groups totaled about 7,000 in the year of 2019, and according to the university's website, some of the faculty were hired from abroad, thereby contributing to internationalizing the university's status within Canada and globally. Pond University has 11 faculties and two campuses in Ontario. On the university's mission statements page, a commitment to valuing diversity and establishing global connections was presented. The university characterized itself as a multicultural institution that reflects the broader sociocultural community in which it is embedded. Equally noticeable was its statement on embracing diversity and inclusion. The statement included a commitment to valuing cross-cultural knowledge and different ways of seeing the world.

Participants

An email invitation was distributed among local students with the assistance of the college offices at Pond University. Considering its large size, Pond University is divided into smaller colleges. The colleges work to make the undergraduate student experience less intimidating, more intimate, and community-like by connecting incoming and already-enrolled students together through events organized by each college office, some of which are run by student officers. The office of each college was contacted by email with an explanation of the research project as well as a request that the invitation be circulated through the member networks. These colleges are open to undergraduate students only, which helped focus on the recruitment and the experiences of students at the undergraduate level. Approval to conduct the study was granted by the research ethics office at Pond University.

All participants consented to participating in the study prior to answering the questions on the survey. Participants were considered eligible to participate as long as they held local student status at the institution, which normally meant being a permanent resident or Canadian citizen. In total, 17 local students participated in the study. With the exception of one student, all participants reported speaking English as a first language. Participants were also asked about their multilingual repertoires. All participants reported speaking additional languages to varying degrees, which included American Sign Language (ASL), Arabic, Cantonese, French, Hebrew, Hindi, Ilocano, Italian, Japanese, Lithuanian, Marathi, Mohawk, Nepali, Polish, and Spanish. All participants have been assigned pseudonyms. While local students are referred to as a broad category of students throughout, it is important to note they do not form an ethnically, culturally, or linguistically homogenous group. The findings are discussed specifically in light of the students' *institutional status*: being local, rather than international, students.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was collected through a survey with both closed- and open-ended questions. A survey was a suitable and convenient instrument considering the need to reach local students at different colleges across Pond University. Additional affordances of using surveys in research have been identified by Wyatt (2000),

including the potential to work with participants who are part of the context of the study, but may not be physically present. Surveys also facilitate the process of analysis since data are "captured directly in electronic format, making analysis faster and cheaper" (Wyatt, 2000, p. 427). Surveys are also interactive, and as the process of data collection unfolds, the survey can be adjusted quickly in order to address any technical issues. Data was collected for a period of one month in the fall semester of the 2019-20 academic year.

The closed-ended questions focused on capturing students' demographic and academic information. They consisted of checkbox and limited-choice items on drop-down menus to ensure first that the students met the criteria for participation—being a local and an undergraduate student—but also to record information such as program and year of study (e.g., Crisp et al., 2009). Conversely, open-ended questions were designed to investigate topics of concern in more detail. Brown (2009) explained that open-ended questions hold the potential to explore participants' experiences "by not restricting the respondents to a set of answers but asking them to express their own ideas more fully or inviting them to elaborate or explain their answers to closed-response items in their own words" (p. 202).

The development of the survey questions was informed by the themes identified in the review of the literature. The analysis followed a thematic approach (Braun & Clarke, 2012). The guiding questions of the study were used as pre-established categories. The content from the responses was analyzed for emergent themes and subsequently organized under one of the two main categories (i.e., in response to one of the main questions). Themes which did not correspond with any of the guiding questions were excluded. Consistent with the aims of qualitative research, the responses were sought for the purpose of understanding rather than generalization. As such, the findings cannot be generalized to represent the larger local student group at Pond University.

FINDINGS
Part I: Perceptions and Experiences with Multiculturalism and Multilingualism
Local students considered Pond University to be a multicultural and multilingual university. Multiculturalism and multilingualism were conceived of in terms of hearing or seeing *difference*. More specifically, for local students, these two institutional features were reflected in hearing languages which one did not speak or seeing someone who looked different. Local students explained that they could experience multiculturalism and multilingualism organically across the campus. However, when sharing their conceptions of multiculturalism and multilingualism, local students rarely included themselves as contributing to or reflecting the two features of the university's culture. Local students made sense of their experiences by focusing on *the other*:

> If I'm not mistaken Pond is one of the most diverse universities. Everyone stands out to me. No one looks or feels the same when I'm on campus. (Sumaya)

> I've met people from all around the world at Pond. Just walking in the halls, I hear dozens of languages being spoken. (Gabriel)

> I do consider Pond to be multilingual and multicultural because I hear people talking in other languages sometimes more than English. (Mark)

> While I'm at school I see many different cultured people walking around, and hear many different languages being spoken. (Bruno)

In this sense, there was a formulaic assessment of multiculturalism and multilingualism: *other* cultures and languages. Such an understanding suggests that foreign cultures and languages were viewed as revolving around the dominant Anglocentric culture and language of the broad community where Pond was situated, which by extension, becomes the enveloping cultural construction of Pond University as well. In their responses below, Lucas, Patricia, and Faris associated multiculturalism and multilingualism to

being primarily group-specific phenomena. The students positioned student clubs and associations as the *porte-parole* of multiculturalism and multilingualism. Experiencing cultural and linguistic diversity depended therefore on having "different" cultures and languages organized distinctively side-by-side. Moreover, food was considered a strong marker of multiculturalism in the academic space (see Block, 2006):

> I consider Pond's campus to be very multicultural and multilingual. There are many different cultures that have their clubs around campus, and also many different food places from different cultures. While walking around campus, one can hear the many different languages being spoken by different groups of people. (Lucas)

> I believe that Pond is multicultural and multilingual because the student body is quite diverse. Also, there are many groups and clubs that make events of other cultures outside of Canada. (Patricia)

> I often see posters advertising student clubs for various ethnicities, religions, etc. I also hear conversations in many different languages as I walk around campus. (Faris)

Other students considered different cultural groups to be sufficiently well represented throughout the university. Yet, the same students raised questions about how out-group members might be able to access and feel included within the different groups. In her response below, Jessica explained that the majority of multicultural and multilingual activities that she had come across had been initiated by students themselves. She argued that students invested their efforts into strengthening the visibility of their own cultural groups and focused on attracting students of the same cultural background. Jessica believed that such arrangements failed to promote intercultural opportunities for students of different cultural backgrounds to meaningfully connect with one another. She attributed group divisions to be partially the product of "human nature" and referenced the local city to exemplify another manifestation of this "natural" tendency:

> I think Pond University makes great efforts to include multicultural and multilingual activities. However, these are mostly student-driven. As such, many become exclusive to those outside of the culture being exhibited. Due to this lack of inclusion, many international students, in my opinion, fail to fully connect with others who are not of their culture. This I believe is partly due to human nature, because who likes to be out of their comfort zone continuously? This phenomenon is not new, to see this, one needs only to walk through the many "sub-villages" in [Canadian city]. (Jessica)

> Pond is very multicultural and multilingual since we are in [Canadian city] which is a very multicultural city on its own. (Yash)

Marie's comment below echoed the notion of "natural" group identification on the basis of a mutual language or ethnicity. For her, the fact that groups self-organized into separate groups at Pond University contributed to making it easier for her to find other French Canadians. She also believed that hearing different languages on campus was a strong marker of multiculturalism and multilingualism. Conversely, for Marcel, signalling diversity through boundaries established on the basis of cultural identity posed a certain level of conflict. He argued that diversity organized through groups helped raise awareness of the existence of other groups and consequently promote better in-group member identification. However, he questioned whether such divisions helped bring the different groups together:

> I believe the campus is very multicultural and multilingual since any room you walk into, you can hear at least 3 different languages. There [are] many events and communities of specific cultures that happen everyday. And even myself, I am a French Canadian and I easily bond with people of

that same background and easily find them since it is such a large campus filled with so many different people of all cultures. (Marie)

I think there are quite a few ways that people identify their diversity through student groups, fundraising and other activities. This visibility allows students to find one another and creates exposure for others. The question becomes, how much do people mix, or do we segregate according to identity? (Marcel)

For Stephanie, Pond University was not all-around multicultural. She reported seeing other cultures being represented through social events on campus. However, she explained the same experience was not available within the classroom. Finally, John and Larissa also believed that Pond was a multicultural and multilingual institution. They based their evaluation on the inward movement of students—in this case, multicultural and multilingual international students—joining Pond's community. Yet again, both students conceptualized existing student clubs and associations formed around a mutual language or ethnicity as one of the end points for incoming international students. The role played by local students in the process of integration of international students into the community was not discussed by any of the local students.

It's multicultural *in a way*. There's a lot of events catering to the expression of multiculturalism and how people can experience different sets of cultures. In the classrooms, however, I am not sure because I have not experienced that myself. (Stephanie, emphasis in original)

Yes, as we are a developing community and many individuals from around the world choose Pond University as their stream of education. We also have a variety of clubs that are based on ethnicity and languages of the various cultures. (John)

Pond is multicultural and multilingual. People from nations all over the world are welcome here and can find communities and groups of their peers who speak the same language to connect with. (Larissa)

Part II: Improving Socialization with International Students

All local students reported that developing social connections with international students was a valuable experience. Yet, the students also explained that it was the responsibility of Pond University to initiate and mediate local-international student interactions. The students proposed that the university should develop events and programs that would bring the two groups together. However, a number of such available initiatives were already listed on Pond University's international office's web page. These included events in which the cultures of international students could be represented and celebrated as well as peer programs where incoming international students would be mentored by both local and senior international students. The responses suggested that the local students either were unaware of these initiatives or recommended them for others, but not themselves.

Partner a domestic and international student together for a few weeks to learn about culture in [Canadian city] and their culture back home. (Sumaya)

I think that Pond University could help by partnering students with multilingual international students. They could offer community involvement points to those willing to participate. This could be presented by individual departments in order to make matches. In this way, international students would not be left to their own devices and instead have a language/cultural mentor from the moment they arrive on campus. (Lucas)

Perhaps the university could introduce a buddy system in which an international student is paired with a domestic student as a peer mentor. That way, they have a buddy who can help them navigate

not just Pond's services, but [Canadian city] as well. I think a day or a week dedicated specifically to all the different cultures at Pond could work too. Each culture could have a booth or area dedicated to their traditions, food, music, language, etc. (Mark)

The expectation by local students that the university should develop more structured opportunities for intergroup socialization is not uncommon. Knight (2011) argued that local students "are known to resist, or at best to be neutral about undertaking joint academic projects or engaging socially with foreign students—unless specific programs are developed by the university or instructor" (p. 14). Although the local students did believe that social interaction could function as sites for the exchange of knowledge and experience, they did not envision initiating it themselves. Both Gabriel and Yash made reference to possibilities for partnership within the classroom, while Yash also proposed moving beyond the classroom to include social events unrelated to academics:

Teachers could maybe pair international students up with domestic students to help them understand and feel more welcome. This is also a great opportunity for those people who are domestic to learn about another place and another culture. (Gabriel)

Have more group projects in classes and have more non-school events to meet new people. (Yash)

There was also a general perception that international students were very likely to encounter adjustment issues. Hence the emergence of many recommendations for support. For example, the "buddy system" was proposed by Marie as a strategy to help remedy issues of sociocultural adjustment. While most suggestions for the improvement of socialization between the two groups were based on having options for local students to choose from, some of the local students believed that Pond University should have mandatory activities in place for local students. These would include events (Larissa) and more language programs (Taylor). Taylor proposed that if local students were required to take foreign language courses in their undergraduate program, they might be more likely to relate partially to the experience of living in another language and to better interact with international students. Taylor also believed that international students might benefit from more face-to-face assistance from certain support services at the university.

Perhaps creating a buddy system to pair up new international students with domestic students to help them create meaningful friendships and adjust more easily to the cultural differences. (Marie)

An event from the school that makes it mandatory for domestic and international students to attend and mingle. (Larissa)

More language programs!! Make a "second" language mandatory in undergrad! When I studied in Europe one summer, every single person there know 3-5 languages. A better intake process at Admissions and Advising, where students should have more in person contact. (Taylor)

Another mechanism proposed to promote interaction between the two groups entailed the development of cultural events. Some of the local students proposed that cultural events could focus on selling food or artefacts characteristic of international students' cultural heritage and on creating exhibits for music and language, both of which might stimulate local students' curiosity about the other. However, food-related experiences by international students play an important role when it comes to the maintenance of their (heritage) identity (Lordly et al., 2021). The commodification of ethnic food in international events can obscure the reasons why international students resort to food-related experiences (e.g., preparing, cooking, sharing) when they encounter challenges in monocultural environments. Heller (2003) explained that "we are seeing authenticity also becoming commodified (as opposed to being used as a marker for political struggle), sometimes in the form of cultural products (music, crafts, dance, for example)" (p. 474).

Pond could potentially arrange events, maybe even host something akin to a "culture festival" in which groups could open stands to sell foods or items from their culture or have mini shows or demonstrations for common cultural practices. (Nagi)

When reflecting on the common denominators for intergroup socialization, cultural and linguistic knowledge were identified. Patricia argued that local students had a role to play in the integration outcomes for international students. She rejected the idea that successful social interaction depended on international students having fluency in English. Jessica, on the other hand, believed that fluency was critical for both social and academic success and reported that this was an issue for many multilingual international students who spoke English as an additional language. As for Faris, he viewed the lack of social interaction between the two groups as the product of a natural predisposition among people to stay within linguistically or culturally familiar groups. Overall, there was a consensus that international students seemed to stay together as a separate group.

I think that sometimes they just stay in their own groups of people who are familiar to them, this is understandable, but we could do a better job at inviting them to places if we see them alone or even in a group just making sure they know that you don't need to speak English to have fun. (Patricia)

Many of them may not speak English fluently and so it may be very difficult for them to understand classes and make new friends. (Jessica)

The potential for language barriers is always a concern, and as much as people might not like to admit it, I feel people tend to gravitate to socialising with people of their own culture and language, so there may be barriers between students socially. (Faris)

There was also a belief that experiences that did not include local peers could better benefit international students. Such experiences were conceptualized as potentially meeting some of international students' cultural and social needs primarily in relation to their affective attachment to their home countries. International students are known to develop their own support networks through which they may gain emotional and academic support from fellow international students (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009). Nevertheless, many of international students' needs cannot be seen as fundamentally different from the needs of local students. Much of the social distance that exists between local and international students is sustained by support programs and services designed on the basis of institutional status (i.e., local/foreign) and language (i.e., native/non-native) rather than a common need or challenge that university students face in general (Jones, 2017).

I think it's important to have clubs and activities geared specifically towards multilingual international students. That way, they can meet people experiencing what they're experiencing and can build a support network. It might also be a great way to relieve some homesickness if they get to eat food or participate in an activity that reminds them of home. (Lahti)

Finally, one local student believed that the two groups of students needed nothing special to come together, except the willingness to do so. Stephanie argued that opportunities to socialize were more than sufficient at Pond University. In light of this, she explained that individual choice was really the only factor at play. Stephanie's proposition differed completely from Bruno's, who believed that the university should have a physical space designated for both groups to socialize in informally. He also proposed that student clubs should receive financial support for their social activities.

Lock us in a room together. I don't know, I think people have plenty of opportunities to connect, they will if they want to, I'm not sure what more could be done. (Stephanie)

Provide funding to student clubs that integrate domestic and international students and have a dedicated place on campus where domestic and international students can hang out and get to know one another. (Bruno)

DISCUSSION

The first question guiding this investigation focused on understanding local students' perceptions of and experiences with multiculturalism and multilingualism. As the responses illustrate, all students proposed that Pond University was a multicultural and multilingual university. The students' responses also give us insight into the ways by which the students conceived of these two cultural phenomena: as long as difference could be seen and heard around campus, multiculturalism and multilingualism were present. Such understanding of the ways in which multiculturalism and multilingualism are experienced reflects what Alenuma-Nimoh (2016) called "eating the other multiculturalism." This approach to multiculturalism reduces the true potential of intercultural experiences and affirms different cultural identities by simply "celebrating different festivals, eating exotic foreign foods and wearing festive traditional clothing" (p. 128) without any goals toward structural change.

Local students referenced a kind of multiculturalism by considering the differences between cultures and languages. However, recognizing difference in terms of cuisine, customs, and language does not necessarily promote opportunities to engage critically with political and social issues that culturally minoritized students face (Gosh & Abdi, 2004). Consequently, the hierarchy of cultures and languages is maintained, despite the feeling of being involved in selected multicultural experiences. In terms of the internationalization of higher education, the experiences of local students suggest that Pond University was a space where cultural and linguistic difference could be openly recognized and celebrated. However, intercultural and interlinguistic knowledge gained by means of experience still needs to be rewarded (Leask, 2012). Without rewarding it, local students will continue to have little incentive to critically engage with multiculturalism in ways that help address issues of marginalization and othering.

The need to move beyond the "pick-and-choose" or commodified kind of multiculturalism on campus remains. So long as the cultural heritage of international students is made available to be purchased, tasted, and experimented with without a commitment to transform the sociocultural fabric of Pond University, the local culture and language will continue to occupy a hierarchically privileged position. Alenuma-Nimoh (2016) has argued that this dominant/othered approach results in "the relegation of other stories to the periphery where the other's voice is often filtered through the dominant perspective" (p. 133). In the context of Pond University, this can be seen in local students' experiences with multiculturalism as something *optional*. Learning critically about the other needs to lead to the transformation of the dominant culture (Srivastava, 2007).

The same approach to multiculturalism as optional reveals an important gap in the experiences of local students. That is: whether, how, and how much local students engage with multiculturalism and multilingualism themselves. While the students were able to point to manifestations of those two phenomena on campus, particularly by referencing cultural events and student-led organizations, there was little to no indication that the local students actually participated in these events themselves. Therefore, it is more accurate to argue that there was awareness of, rather than an experiential engagement with, multiculturalism and multilingualism on the part of local students. As others have discussed, increasing the number of international students on campus does not necessarily equate to a meaningful or better development of intercultural knowledge for local students (Knight, 2011).

For one local student, multiculturalism and multilingualism were present in Pond's broader academic space, except for within the classroom. When internationalization transforms pedagogy to be (more) inclusive, local and international students encounter more opportunities to work together in interactions where multicultural perspectives and intercultural knowledge are valued (Guo & Guo, 2017; Zhang & Zhou, 2010). International students wait on their instructors to initiate multicultural learning opportunities between local and international students (Zhou et al., 2017). With this in mind, it is important for instructors to design collaborative opportunities and to group different students together in order to enhance the chances of local students gaining some form of contact with multiculturalism in teaching-

learning and of international students working with local students as well. When left to their own volition, students are not be pedagogically equipped to maximize and gain from the potential for intercultural learning in the classroom.

The second guiding question focused on understanding local students' perceptions and experiences toward improving socialization. All students viewed the university as the initiator and mediator of opportunities for intergroup interaction. Without an examination of Pond University's context, the responses would suggest that the institution needed to assume a more formal role in this regard. However, as mentioned previously, Pond University already had numerous programs in place. It remains unclear whether local students were uninterested in or unaware of such services. When it came to describing their experiences with multiculturalism and multilingualism at the university, all local students demonstrated an awareness of the existence of international student clubs and events that could potentially connect them to international students. Still, the responses suggest that the local students were less/not interested in actually taking part in these opportunities.

Some of the students expected the university to not only facilitate interaction, but also make a certain level of participation mandatory. Yet, mandating that local students attend cultural events and participate in social initiatives is unlikely to produce any meaningful outcomes if local students' dispositions to engage in intercultural interaction (and learning) are low, despite their contradictory reporting that socialization with multilingual and multicultural international students was valuable. Moreover, simply expecting that local students be present in a multicultural environment with international students does not lead local students to necessarily experience the benefits connected to intercultural interaction, such as the development of intercultural sensitivity, which is the "the ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences" (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 422).

There was a general expectation that socialization may improve if opportunities unrelated to academics were made available. Ammigan (2019) has argued that opportunities facilitated by universities "must accompany both curricular and extracurricular programs and occur in social settings inside and outside of the classroom" (p. 277). This is especially important for incoming international and local students alike, for whom the academic experience is generally novel in relation to establishing new friendships and acculturating to a new environment (Jones, 2017). Extracurricular programs might help with connecting students who may not easily meet through academic opportunities due to different programs and schedules (Tavares, 2022). Students have social lives outside the university and universities can help international and local students connect on the basis of mutual interests, such as attending religious service or cultural events (Tavares, 2021d). However, the identification and implementation of such additional opportunities should not be left to international offices alone. Different academic and service units can come together to holistically improve opportunities for intergroup socialization.

Language proficiency also emerged as a potential barrier. While proficiency in the academic register of English is important for international students' academic success, multilingual international students also need to develop everyday and cultural forms of the language. However, international students tend to "feel like outsiders so they do not participate in social activities with host nationals" (Myles & Cheng, 2003, p. 258). At the same time, local students need to initiate informal socialization through which international students can acquire and practice the language used by locals, which includes idiomatic expressions, humor, and slang. As one student reported, local students could "do more" to help include international students beyond "buddy programs" that are typically bound to the academic context, which limits the extent to which naturalistic and unstructured opportunities for language to be acquired are available.

Finally, some local students believed that international students preferred to stay within their own groups, which undermined possibilities for the two groups to interact. This was hypothesized to be the influence of human nature in which unfamiliar groups were automatically avoided. Yet, the expectations and needs of international students reported in the literature do not align with such perceptions of local students (Guo & Guo, 2017; Heng, 2017). The local students' perceptions overlook the ways in which the configuration of the sociocultural environment, such as the structural barriers and power relations in place, interferes with international students' ability to act toward socialization. Conversations about improving

socialization should include *both* groups of students and move away from stereotyping international students, which has resulted in a neglect of how international students employ agency to meet their needs (Heng, 2018; Tavares, 2021b).

CONCLUSION

This paper adds to the literature on international-local student interaction in Canada by foregrounding the voices of local students. The findings strengthen the existing evidence that simply bringing local and international students together in a shared physical environment is unlikely to produce meaningful socialization. As the perspectives of local students demonstrated, higher education institutions need to continue to develop curricular and extra-curricular opportunities in which social interaction may be facilitated and cultivated. This paper is limited by the small sample and the lack of in-depth exploration of local students' experiences; nevertheless, it highlights some of the areas which continue to deserve scholarly attention. For example, further research can examine what approaches international offices in Canadian universities employ to design and advertise their programming to local students.

The pedagogical practices employed by faculty should also be considered further, given their potential to foster social proximity between the students. Finally, respect for and celebration of multicultural practices are essential for how international students see their place in Canadian academe. More importantly, however, is the need to reward intercultural knowledge for local students by moving away from a superficial engagement with multiculturalism and multilingualism on campuses. This becomes especially timely as Canadian institutions of higher education increasingly commit to promoting equity, diversity, and inclusion (Tavares, 2021c). As Hartwell and Ounoughi (2019) have put it, the lack of (opportunities for) social interaction produces a two-way deficit through which both local and international students miss out on the chance to grow in many intrapersonal and interpersonal areas.

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