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"Let Me Talk!" Silenced Voices of International Graduate Students and A Need for Transcaring Pedagogy

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ABSTRACT

This research delved into the experiences of five international graduate students (comprising three from China, one from Germany, and one from Saudi Arabia) attending a university in the United States. The aim was to gain insights into their adjustment process to a new academic, linguistic, and cultural environment. The data were gathered through surveys, on-site observations, and semi-structured interviews, and were analyzed using Domain analysis. The study employed transcaring pedagogy as a theoretical lens to interpret and present the findings. Results indicated that international graduate students often felt discriminated against due to their different language usage. Additionally, professors tended to uphold the dominance of mainstream culture while silencing the voices of international students. These instances of 'uncaring practices' contributed to the students feeling marginalized and oppressed. These findings underscored the necessity for transcaring pedagogy within higher education programs. Thus, professors can create inclusive environments where international students feel empowered to express their identities, engage in dialogues, and socialization with mainstream students.

Keywords: Caring approach, equity in education, graduate programs, international students, transcaring pedagogy

The United States of America (USA), as a pioneer of the internationalization of higher education movement, remains the top choice for tertiary-level international students (Higher Education Policy Institute, 2019). Each year, thousands of students from 227 countries relocate to the USA to pursue advanced degrees, particularly in STEM fields (science, technology, engineering, and math). Recent reports from U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) indicated a

student body exceeding three million international enrollees, constituting nearly 6% of the total student population in the country (Boundless, 2022). This number notably surged in the 2021-2022 academic year post-COVID-19, with master's programs experiencing the most significant increase (15.7%), while bachelor's programs saw a more modest rise (1.6%).

Even with this, the increasing presence of international students in the USA did not automatically imply their contentment with both academic and non-academic aspects. Recent studies have pointed to a rise in emotional difficulties among international students due to the challenges posed by an unfamiliar educational system, a cultural milieu distant from their familial and social support networks, and disparities in academic expectations as their numbers grow in the USA (Hailu & Ku, 2014; Mamiseishvili, 2012; Mukminin & McMahon, 2013; Xue, 2013; Van Horne et al., 2018; Yan & Berliner, 2009). Perceived biases and discrimination stemming from international students' languaging differences in American classrooms further influenced their experiences, opportunities, and challenges (Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Glass & Westmont, 2014; Lee & Rice, 2007; Malcolm & Mendoza, 2014; Sato & Hodge, 2009).

While the existing studies yielded significant insights into the connection between international students' racial or ethnic identities and their educational experiences, there remained a gap for further exploration of the linguistic encounters of international students in classrooms predominantly occupied by native English-speaking peers. Thus, this study explored international students' learning experiences in graduate-level classrooms predominated by mainstream Native English-speaking (NES) students in higher education. The findings of this study provided educators with important insights to determine the pedagogies that could promote equity for graduate-level international students in U.S. higher education institutions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Several studies revealed that tertiary-level international students often experienced academic, social and cultural, and psychological challenges in their programs due to subtractive schooling practices, i.e., "the attempts to eliminate and erase students' culture and identity starting from erasing their language" (del Cerro & Ruiz-Esteban, 2020; Han et al., 2021; HeeHyun, 2019; Kanno, 2018; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Lin, 2012; Valenzuela, 1999, p. 301). The academic challenges included international students' struggles due to their unfamiliarity with cooperative learning activities (Yan & Berliner, 2009), student-centered teaching (Xue, 2013), skills in managing time and stress, and academic culture (Hailu & Ku, 2014). International students also struggled to comprehend knowledge and demonstrate their learning due to their limited academic language skills (del Cerro & Ruiz-Esteban, 2020; HeeHyun, 2019; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Lippi-Green, 2012; Lin, 2012).

Social challenges included problems in building relationships with peers and professors due to their limited sociocultural competence (Han et al, 2021; HeeHyun, 2019; Lippi-Green, 2012; Lin, 2012; Ssempala, 2018). International

students reported occasionally feeling misunderstood in their communications with native English speakers, which hindered forming friendships with mainstream NES peers (Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002). Moreover, international students perceived negative evaluations of their NES peers due to their different languaging practices and avoided approaching NES to protect their faces (Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Yilmaz, 2014).

Finally, psychological challenges included feeling discriminated against, homesick, lonely, and cognitively and emotionally incompetent (Baba & Hosoda, 2014; HeeHyun, 2019; Lin, 2012). Research showed that international students of color perceived discrimination in higher education classrooms (Malcolm & Mendoza, 2014). Moreover, assumptions about international students' cultures, languages, or histories were used to stereotype these students (Siczek, 2015). As a result of these practices, international students experienced psychological problems and get silenced and oppressed, which influenced their motivation and development of a sense of belonging (Clements & Petray, 2021; Kanno, 2018; Le et al., 2016; Perrucci & Hu, 1995).

While some factors contributing to these challenges, e.g., limited knowledge about the U.S. education system, can disappear in time as international students interact with their environments, others, e.g., accents and languaging practices, can hardly disappear because they are part of the students' heritage identities. Thus, rather than ignoring these factors, professors in higher education must acknowledge and celebrate them. Adopting an asset-based approach, such as transcaring pedagogy, which values each student's funds of linguistic, cultural, and academic experiences, professors can facilitate international students' academic, social, and psychological transitions and integration into the US higher education. Thus, this study uses transcaring pedagogy as a theoretical framework to analyze international students' experiences in a graduate program at a southern university in the USA.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: TRANSCARING PEDAGOGY

Care is defined in the dictionary as a state of mental suffering or engrossment. When someone cares for something or someone, s/he is in a burdened mental state of anxiety, fear, or solicitude of the cared one. According to Nel Noddings (1984), "caring involves stepping out of one's frame of reference into the other's. When we care, we consider the other's point of view, his objective needs, and what he expects of us" (p.24). Knowing those requires being attentive, that is, motivating. Moreover, caring requires time, effort, and dedication to do good for the cared one (Noddings, 2002). Therefore, the caring person (or the carer) needs to invest time and effort to meet the needs of the cared for and to insist on his encouraging work until he receives the expected results.

Care theory has attracted attention the most in education to promote the relationships between students and teachers and thus increase 'silenced' students' engagement in education. Noddings (1984) considers care and building relations as a fundamental aspect and requirement in education to

achieve success and establish social justice at home, in society, and in the world (cited in Flinders, 2001). To Noddings (2002), teachers can include students' languages, cultures, and histories to teach them effectively; however, real success can be achieved only if students "are cared for and learn to care for others" (p.12). To teach caring to their students, teachers must adopt *a caring pedagogy*. She lists modeling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation as the four key components of caring pedagogy. *Modeling* means that teachers not only tell their students to care but also model them how to care through their actions. *Dialogue* is essential to caring because it engages students to critique and better understand their relationships. *Practice* refers to providing students with a way to demonstrate their caring. Finally, *confirmation* refers to the act of affirming, encouraging, and supporting students in performing their best (Noddings, 2002).

Nodding's (1984) concept of care in education received considerable attention, specifically from scholars working on the education of minorities (García et al., 2012; Garza, 2009; Nieto, 2005; Valenzuela, 1999). Valenzuela (1999) focused on the authenticity of care and Latino students' precondition of a caring adult to care for school. Nieto (2005) related care to teachers' high expectations and rigorous standards. García and colleagues (2012) extended these conceptions and added a critical dimension to care by proposing the concept of transcaring. They suggested that care must address culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and the "questions of power and otherness in schools" (p. 801). They defined transcaring as "caring enacted to build a common collaborative 'in-between' space that transcends linguistic and cultural differences between schools and homes." (García et al., 2012, p. 799).

Transcaring pedagogy includes four strategies: Translanguaging, Transculturación, Transcollaboration, and Transactions through dynamic assessments (García et al., 2012). First, as a practice of transcaring pedagogy, students are encouraged to translanguage, that is, use their full linguistic resources fluidly and dynamically to engage in learning. Secondly, a transcaring teacher not only builds on students' cultural background but also creates spaces in which they can transcend their heritage cultures and form new cultural practices and fluid identities; that is called transculturation. Thirdly, a transcaring teacher enacts a transcollaboration between stakeholders within and beyond school walls to address students' needs. Finally, a transcaring teacher does not solely rely on standardized assessments, and s/he evaluates students' learning through dynamic assessments that deploy the students' entire linguistic, cultural, and sociocognitive repertoire.

The literature revealed that teachers who adopted a transcaring pedagogy could better address culturally and linguistically diverse students' social, academic, and psychological needs in education (Canagarajah, 2011; Karlsson et al., 2019; Makalela, 2015; Marshall et al., 2012; Mazak & Herbas-Donoso, 2015; Moody et al., 2019). For example, Mazak and Herbas-Donoso (2015) revealed in their studies with bilingual students in a science program that translanguaging as a teaching practice increased students' comprehension and engagement with the content compared to traditional monolingual teaching. Similarly, Makalela

(2015) found increased collaboration among students of different language backgrounds and communities with a transcaring pedagogy. In addition, Canagarajah (2011) and Marshall and colleagues (2012) revealed in their studies that a transcaring pedagogy that allows international college students' dynamic languaging practices in writing essays supported the construction of their fluid identities. Finally, Moody and colleagues (2019) revealed in their studies that transcaring practices promoted second language development and provided them opportunities to enhance their social networks.

The transcaring pedagogy framework guided the data analysis process of this study. The participants' discourses in the interviews are analyzed based on the presence of four components of caring pedagogy: Modelling, dialogue, practice, and confirmation. The presence or absence of these components based on participants' reports informed how professors in higher education implemented inclusive teaching practices to comfort, value, and celebrate international students' diverse linguistic, cultural, or academic resources. Reporting the findings, the author also made more references to Garcia's transcaring strategies, i.e., translanguaging, Transculturación, Transcollaboration, and Transactions to dynamic assessments, to interpret the teaching, learning, and communication techniques used by graduate students and professors in American higher education.

METHOD

The study was designed as an exploratory case study and considered each participant's experiences in two demographically and linguistically different contexts as a case because case studies can provide in-depth, multi-faceted explorations of complex issues in real-life settings (Crowe et al., 2011). This qualitative case study aimed to explore international graduate students' academic, social, cultural and psychological experiences in graduate-level tertiary classrooms predominated by native English speakers as they experienced more anxiety in these classrooms. The findings of this study could inform to what extent transcaring pedagogy was implemented in these classrooms to smoothen the international students' academic, social, cultural, and psychological transitions to the higher education system in the USA.

The manuscript's data was extracted from the researcher's master's thesis. Data collection methods included a survey, field observations and notes, and individual interviews. The survey used only to determine the participants of the interviews. It was adapted from well-known assessments, including the Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety Scale (FLCAS) developed by Horwitz and colleagues (1986), the English Language Anxiety Scale (ELAS) created by Pappamihiel (2002), the Japanese Class Anxiety Scale designed by Kitano (2001), and the Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale established by Leary (1983). The survey contained a background information questionnaire (10 items) and two questionnaires (50 items in total) comparing the participants' experiences in two different contexts: classrooms where a majority of the students were native speakers and classrooms where a majority of the students were international

students. The items of the two questionnaires were scored on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 (Strongly Agree), 2 (Agree), 3 (Neither agree nor disagree), 4 (Disagree), 5 (Strongly Disagree).

Among 22 volunteer international graduate students from different universities in the USA (16 females and six males), five international graduate students with high anxiety levels in classrooms predominated by the NES peers were selected for in-depth exploration of the phenomenon. The five participants (aged 18-30) were interviewed with semi-structured interviews for 35-45 minutes to achieve the study's purpose. The participants were all female; three were from China, one from Germany, and one from Saudi Arabia. Ten open-ended and some follow-up questions were asked to the participants at the interviews depending on their experiences and responses to the survey items. Interviews were recorded to be transcribed and analyzed later. Moreover, the researcher observed these five participants three times in their classrooms predominated by mainstream NES students to better understand their learning experiences and interactions with their NES peers. Each observation took one classroom period and field notes were taken.

The survey analysis was completed before the interviews as the results determined the participants of the interviews. To analyze the survey, the percentage of participants' ratings, the means and standard deviation values were calculated for each questionnaire and the participants with higher levels of language anxiety were selected. After they were interviewed and observed, the recordings and field notes were transcribed for the data analysis. These data were analyzed with the 'Domain Analysis' technique, which suggests defining the elements mentioned in the data and categorizing them under certain domains based on their semantic relationship with each other (Spradley,1979). Domain analysis had three steps, i.e., identifying 1) included terms (individual categories), 2) cover terms (title given to a set of individual categories), and 3) semantic relationships. After identifying included terms, I assigned a code to each set based on the semantic relationships between the included terms. Next, the key terms related to the transcaring pedagogy were defined and coded with some cover terms. Then, the cover terms were compiled under themes. Finally, the results were reported in this paper.

Positionality

About a year before this study, the researcher entered the U.S. territories as an international graduate student with two goals. Her first goal was to complete her graduate degree and become a researcher. Her second goal was to enhance her social network, improve her English language proficiency, and increase her cultural competence. She hoped living in the U.S. would be an outstanding experience because the American people were portrayed as welcoming, friendly, and fun in the media. Thus, she expected her peers to support her in overcoming her cultural conflicts and help her have a smooth transition by being good friends, teaching the American Culture, and providing feedback on her English proficiency skills. However, as soon as she stepped into the classroom, she noticed

that her professional and social journey in the U.S.A. would not be as smooth as she expected.

The author observed groups constructed based on race in the first class she attended, and she felt like an outsider as the only Turkish graduate student. In the following days, she could establish relationships with other international graduate students in the program, but her interactions with native English speakers were still limited. Thus, she experienced high-level language anxiety, specifically in classrooms predominated by mainstream NES students. In this study, she wanted to explore if other international graduate students shared her feelings and how they experienced transitioning to US higher education. She accessed the participants through her academic and social network. She took courses with the interview participants in different semesters. She collaborated with them on different assignments and built rapport, resulting in more open and honest answers to the interview questions. To avoid influencing participants, the researcher took a passive role in the interviews and field observations and avoided commenting on their answers or interactions with peers.

RESULTS

The author observed groups constructed based on race in the first class she attended, and she felt like an outsider as the only Turkish graduate student. In the following days, she could establish relationships with other international graduate students in the program, but her interactions with native English speakers were still limited. Thus, she experienced high-level language anxiety, specifically in classrooms predominated by mainstream NES students. In this study, she wanted to explore if other international graduate students shared her feelings and how they experienced transitioning to US higher education. She accessed the participants through her academic and social network. She took courses with the interview participants in different semesters. She collaborated with them on different assignments and built rapport, resulting in more open and honest answers to the interview questions. To avoid influencing participants, the researcher took a passive role in the interviews and field observations and avoided commenting on their answers or interactions with peers.

The Hegemony of Native-like American Accents and Culture

The study revealed that speaking English with a native-like pronunciation and competence in the American culture was associated with more power by international graduate students. The participants expressed that they often experienced challenges interacting with NES students due to their accents or limited cultural competence. They believed that the more fluent and native-like the international students spoke English, the more power and respect they gained among mainstream students. They expressed discomfort around mainstream students when their languaging practices in English were reflected as limited or deficient. For example, Daria, the German participant, shared her experiences in her interactions with her mainstream peers in the classroom as such:

> With native speakers, I am afraid that they don't understand me first because of my accent; because I experienced that people asked me 'what?', and then I repeated, and they said 'what?' again. And that happened maybe three times, so that happened often. And in that case, I try to speak more pronounced, but at times people couldn't understand me; I don't know why. So, that was a pretty uncomfortable situation, and people in this academic world, people are speaking on a very high level, and I just try to, I just feel I have to match that somehow.

In the excerpt above, Daria emphasized the role of academic language to fit in graduate school and shared what challenges she experienced due to her accent and limited academic language. Her feelings implied limited dialogue between international and mainstream NES students.

Moreover, the participants reported that they had low self-efficacies and experienced internalized oppression (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012) around their mainstream peers and more proficient international peers due to their accents and their unique languaging practices. Thus, they often avoided speaking (aloud) during classroom discussions in contexts where most classmates were mainstream students. For example, Zhen, one of the Chinese participants, stated:

> What I observe is that all classmates,…. the thing is when we had more native speakers, we would prefer not to participate. I don't know whether because we don't know the answer or, like me, we are just afraid of making mistakes.

In the excerpt above, Zhen implied that she feared being judged by the more powerful ones, NES and more proficient peers, when she made mistakes, and thus, she avoided speaking loudly to protect her face. Her discourse also implied that English proficiency and power had a direct relationship in graduate classrooms. Her experiences implied limited confirmation in these classrooms due to limited encouragement for active participation.

In conclusion, native-like English languaging practices perpetuated their hegemony in graduate classrooms, and speaking Native-like English positioned mainstream or more proficient international students as superior, while international students with 'limited' English proficiencies were perceived as inferior or deficient. Therefore, international students who experienced the fear of being judged by these 'superior' peers often stayed silent during class discussions to protect their faces (Hanh, 2020).

Perceived Discrimination from Mainstream Peers

International students reported that they often perceived discrimination by their mainstream peers, possibly because of their 'other' status, identities, and linguistic deficiencies (or so-called "limitations"). Although some participants stated that mainstream students in their classrooms were kind to them, the other participants perceived severe discrimination and exclusion by the mainstream students in the classrooms. Moreover, they perceived that their cognitive skills were also

evaluated as deficient, parallel to their 'limited' English proficiencies. Zhen explained some of her mainstream classmates' attitudes toward her as such:

> Graduate students in Elementary Education, some of them are really bad… in terms of their attitude to international students, and they, I guess, intentionally give us pressure, give us the fear like they don't care about us. They don't want to hear our ideas or our decisions. They don't want to interact in group discussions. They just write what they think. That makes me feel really bad, so I don't like classes I had with students in the Elementary Education program.

In the excerpt above, Zhen exemplified how her NES peers' attitudes lacked care for diverse ideas due to the thinkers' identities. She noted the need for modeling care to diversity in the program so that her peers from the XX program could be good teachers of their English language learner students after graduation.

Similarly, Daria criticized her mainstream peers for not caring about the international students' opinions as such:

> If they (mainstream students) try to help and accept us as who we are and how our English is, then we will have lower anxiety. If you can sense from their facial expression, 'oh maybe he or she doesn't like my English and doesn't want to pay attention', we then say, 'oh my god, I have to try really better to express my ideas. So when I have teammates who are native English speakers, they didn't pay attention to what I am saying, I feel a little bit pissed off and also nervous. .. They don't care what international students think.

Daria's experiences indicated a lack of practice in graduate classrooms that would challenge positioning international students as cognitively incompetent, inferior, and deficient; instead value their funds of knowledge.

Avoidance was another form of discrimination that international students perceived in their classrooms. Bao shared her negative experiences with one White American graduate student in the Elementary Education program as such:

> There was an American student the first semester we came here. There were like eight Chinese students in our class, and there were other international students, as well. But every time when we were doing group discussion, she was trying to avoid us and went to other groups. I mean, it's really obvious. When she was talking to others, she was nice, but no international, no!

In this excerpt, Bao highlighted a purposeful avoidance of dialogue from a NES student, which made her feel not cared for and discriminated.

Finally, some participants claimed that NES students' perfectionist tendencies and stereotypes about international students put additional pressure on them and influenced the confirmation component of caring pedagogy. For instance, Daria asserted that she felt obliged to speak native-like with her mainstream peers in socializing because she thought she might be exposed to their negative evaluations

due to her accent. She said: "I feel I have to speak perfect English because the Americans are maybe perfectionists, and if I make a mistake, it may reflect negatively in some way." Moreover, the perceived discrimination created a social distance influencing dialogue between mainstream and international graduate students in the same classrooms and led to a lack of social integration. The international students demonstrated introverted or tentative behaviors during the classes as they felt excluded and otherized.

In conclusion, international students often experienced perceived discrimination by their mainstream NES peers due to their differences and 'limitations.' These discriminatory practices were implemented through avoidance and disdain. As a result of these discriminatory practices, participants developed internalized oppression and felt 'uncared' and formed a social distance between themselves and their mainstream peers.

Professors' Teaching Practices

Since professors, as power figures due to their higher status, determine the legitimized discourses and practices in the classrooms, their caring and inclusive practices play a critical role in empowering international students' voices, cultures, and identities. Unfortunately, this study showed that participants' professors often adopted 'uncaring' or subtractive practices, negatively influencing international graduate students' participation and engagement with the lesson.

The findings demonstrated that only few professors employed culturally sustaining practices such as building background knowledge or connecting home and school for international students in their teaching. Their subtractive practices filtered the procession of new information and resulted in limited learning for international students. Moreover, international students could not actively participate in small or whole group discussions due to limited comprehension and often remained silenced. For example, Bao explained why she was silent during the group discussions about teacher training programs such as "teach for America" stated as such:

> When I started my degree in the U.S.A., I was unfamiliar with the American education system and programs like "teach for America". So, when the professor did not explain them to her before assigning these topics to group discussions, I had to stay silent during the discussions.

Moreover, rather than adopting inclusive and caring practices and challenging the inequities in the classrooms, some professors even affirmed and empowered mainstream graduate students' linguistic and cultural supremacy in the classrooms. Professors did not care about international students' silence or limited learning because they did not make additional effort to ensure their understanding and inclusion. Professors' subtractive practices implied a lack of *practice and confirmation of caring pedago*gy. Zhen shared her professors' uncaring subtractive practices as such:

> One thing I found out was that they (professors) didn't understand what we were talking about most of the time, and they wouldn't ask questions to clarify ideas. So they would just rephrase what we said, but that's not exactly our words or our thoughts. That's just how they think we said. But we had different ideas. What the professor said was not our words. They did not understand, but they didn't want to clarify either; I don't know why. Maybe they don't want to make us feel bad, or just they don't want to waste time listening to us.

Alina from Saudi Arabia also shared similar observations. She said:

> Teachers sometimes feel more comfortable talking with only native speakers because they get the answer quickly, and they can understand any small details they are saying... They are looking at them more than they are looking at non-native speakers.

Zhen and Alina perceived that their professors did not care about their opinions or contributions or value their assets. Also, professors avoided establishing dialogues with them because they did not have the same cultural backgrounds or speak the same language.

Finally, participants stated that most professors did not involve their cultures in class discussions to embrace cultural diversity, value their identities, and practice confirmation. They noted that they would feel more valued in the classrooms if they could explain their cultures, relate them to the topic, and demonstrate their expertise. On the other hand, all participants agreed that this was a minor problem because they expected to learn about American Culture at school, and professors could meet their expectations by excluding different cultures.

In conclusion, participants perceived uncaring and subtractive practices by most of their professors. Although the professors did not explicitly practice discrimination in the classrooms, their teaching practices, such as avoiding eye contact or dialogues with international students or not building background knowledge about the content, were perceived as discrimination and uncaring by most international students. Thus, international students demonstrated lower classroom participation and often stayed passive during classes.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study showed that international students perceived discrimination by their peers and professors due to their accents and limited cultural and academic competencies. The discrimination from their peers took place in the form of avoidance and disdain. These findings implied a lack of an authentic and reciprocal caring atmosphere (Valenzuela, 1999) for the other's well-being. Mainstream NES students demonstrated an individualistic culture and did not share responsibility for international students' learning. In contrast, international students expected them to be more collaborative and willing to communicate since they came from more collectivist cultures. This finding

affirmed Nodding's (2005) assertion that the dominant individualistic culture in U.S. mainstream classrooms often hinders the implementation of caring practices for culturally and linguistically diverse students.

This study also revealed that some professors enacted perceived discrimination through subtractive practices and limited transcaring strategies rather than promoting translanguaging, transculturation, and transcollaboration in the classrooms and smoothening international students' transition to graduate school in the USA. The participants reported that some professors failed to build background knowledge or link international students' previous knowledge with new knowledge, like the professors in del Cerro and Ruiz-Esteban's study (2020). Moreover, the professors' frequent and warmer interactions with the mainstream NES students otherized international students and hindered their transculturation process and connections with their professors. Valenzuela (1999) proposed that students' school engagement could be maximized when culturally and linguistically diverse students could build rapport with an adult at school. Since the international students in this study could not build rapport with their professors due to their uncaring and subtractive practices, they failed to perform to their full potential in the classes. Instead, they demonstrated low engagement, participation, and school success.

The international students complained about a lack of clarifying dialogues with both their mainstream peers and professors when international students' statements or contributions were not clear due to their languaging practices in English. Considering that Noddings (1984) positioned dialogue as a key component of caring practices, these subtractive and uncaring practices made international students feel inferior and develop internalized oppression, as found in several other studies (See Anderson et al., 2020). According to Nieto (2005), avoidance of clarifying questions and interactive dialogues in teaching and group discussions implied low expectations from international students. The ideology that associates limited language proficiency with low cognitive skills or a learning disability can be observed in many different domains, especially in K-12 schools (Harper & de Jong, 2004, 2009; Miller & Badaly, 2021; Yilmaz, 2021). This ideology needs to be challenged through meaningful dialogues and transactions through dynamic assessments (García et al., 2012) because, contrary to popular belief, bilinguals can perform more complex cognitive tasks than monolinguals when tasks are comprehended clearly (Bialystok et al., 2012).

Perceived discrimination and uncaring practices from their peers and professors resulted in silenced and passive international graduate students in the classrooms (Clements & Petray, 2021; Hanh, 2020; Stone & Han, 2005). Since the international students did not feel valued by their peers and professors, they avoided building social relationships or rapport with their mainstream peers and professors (HeeHyun, 2019; Lin, 2012). On the other hand, building social relationships with their professors was not as discomforting because the international graduate students' social expectations from their professors were often limited (del Cerro & Ruiz-Esteban, 2020). Most international graduate students expected their professors only to teach the content and American culture effectively (Ssempala, 2018). Even if they did not expect them to be caring, there

was still a need for transformative pedagogies and asset-based approaches in higher education classrooms so that international students could integrate into their new academic and social life easier (Brooks et al., 2010; Li Wei, 2014; Scanlan, 2007).

Finally, more than race, English language proficiency skills played a determining role in the international graduate students' academic and social experiences in U.S. higher education classrooms, as found in Derwing's (2003) study. Since the professors affirmed the hegemony of English in the classrooms by not opening spaces for international students to enact their full linguistic resources or share their cultural funds of linguistic knowledge (Moll et al., 2001; Shannon, 1995), their practices were perceived as subtractive and uncaring. Due to their limited English skills, specifically in academic language, international students felt inferior or experienced internalized oppression. They believed they would have experienced fewer academic and social difficulties if they had had higher English proficiency. This finding indicated that they associated English proficiency with power, success, and acceptance in graduate schools.

CONCLUSION

International graduate students may experience great difficulties in social and academic settings in the USA due to their linguistic and cultural diversities. These difficulties can result in detrimental effects such as loneliness, low academic success, and internalized oppression. To better understand international students' experiences in U.S. universities, this study surveyed 22 students and observed and interviewed five international students of various ages and from various countries. The findings showed that international graduate students mainly experienced challenges in their interactions with their mainstream NES peers, perceived discrimination from their peers and professors, and experienced academic challenges due to limited teaching accommodations and stereotyped cognitive abilities.

The international students justified their negative experiences in graduate schools with their limited English proficiency skills and believed that the challenges could be minimized as they promoted their English proficiencies. However, the analysis of their professors' instructional strategies revealed that rather than adopting a transcaring approach to teaching international students, the professors affirmed the linguistic supremacy of mainstream students and the hegemony of English in class. Moreover, they failed to equalize the status of mainstream and international because international students in this study highlighted their silenced voices and passive roles ass learners during the instructions.

To create an equitable learning environment for international students in U.S. universities, professors can adopt transcaring practices. To respond to the specific experiences of the international students in this study and establish social justice for other students with similar experiences, professors can implement four specific transcaring practices: 1) creating third spaces in which students can use and enhance their linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge, 2) employing more

get-to-know activities to facilitate socialization between mainstream and international students, 3) building background knowledge to facilitate learning, and 4) assigning the international student to more active roles. This way, the professors can provide international graduate students equal and equitable opportunities, increase their classroom participation, engagement, and academic success, make them feel welcomed and valued, and build rapport between professors, mainstream and international students.

Implications

This study revealed that international graduate students experienced discrimination and exclusion due to their linguistic 'limitations' in White-dominant higher education classrooms. Moreover, some professors consciously or unconsciously affirmed these perceived discriminatory practices by affirming the hegemony of English and not employing any special teaching accommodations in their instructions. This part discusses four transcaring strategies that professors can employ to challenge inequities in graduate classrooms, make international students feel more welcomed, included, and valued in the classrooms, and establish equity of talk among students. These strategies are 1) creating third spaces in which students can demonstrate and promote their linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge, 2) employing more get-to-know activities to facilitate socialization and dialogue between mainstream and international students, 3) building background knowledge to facilitate learning, and 4) assigning the international student to more active roles to promote their leadership and accountability.

The first transcaring strategy that professors can employ to include, empower and voice international students in their classrooms is to open third spaces (also called transformative spaces) in which students can deploy, demonstrate and perform their linguistic and cultural funds of knowledge (Martin-Beltrán, 2014; Pontier & Gort, 2016). This practice aligned with translanguaging and transculturation components of transcaring pedagogy (García et al., 2012). Through third spaces, professors can demonstrate to their culturally and linguistically diverse students that they acknowledge, affirm, and value their resources and identities. Moreover, international students can share their linguistic and cultural expertise with their mainstream peers, eventually creating links between mainstream and international students and increasing their participation and engagement with school. Also, mainstream students, who acknowledge international students' expertise, can counteract their stereotypes about diverse students. Finally, both mainstream and international students can enhance their linguistic and cultural repertoires through the discussions in the third spaces (Flóres & García, 2013). In conclusion, through third spaces, professors can acknowledge, affirm, and value international students' funds of linguistic and cultural knowledge, empower their bilingual and bicultural identities, challenge inequities in the classroom, and establish a more socially just learning atmosphere.

Secondly, professors need to implement more get-to-know activities that not only inform professors about their students' academic, social and psychological

backgrounds but also establish dialogues (Noddings, 1984) and build rapport between mainstream and international students. These activities can include ice-breaking activities, surveys, interviews, small or whole group discussions, etc. These activities are important because knowing students is a requirement to *care about* them and become a 'caring' teacher (Valenzuela, 2016). The international students can share their histories and learn about their mainstream peers through get-to-know activities. Moreover, these activities can allow students to learn about each other's unique languaging practices in a comfortable, anxiety-free learning environment. Familiarity with each other's unique languaging practices can support peer comprehension throughout the semester and decrease discrimination based on accent. Finally, get-to-know activities can help international students develop a belonging to the classroom or program and feel more comfortable speaking aloud or clarifying their opinions when not understood. In sum, by engaging students in get-to-know activities such as ice-breaking, professors can increase linguistic familiarity, promote linguistic diversity, position international students' diversities as assets and help international students develop belonging.

Thirdly, professors must build background knowledge to facilitate international students' learning (Li Wei, 2014). As this study and Ssempala's (2018) study, international students often experienced challenges in making sense of some conceptions or policies that were referred to during the instruction. For example, a graduate student pursuing a degree in teaching and learning may not understand acronyms such as F.S.A. (Florida Standardized Assessment) and P.E. (Physical Education) or policies such as NCLB (No Child Left Behind) and ESSA (Every Student Succeeds Act). To challenge those cultural biases in instruction, professors must build background knowledge for their international students. For example, they can identify these concepts and introduce them at the beginning of the lesson to develop familiarity and build new knowledge (Moll et al., 2001). Or they can give brief explanations of them during the instruction. They can also ask international students about these concepts and link their previous knowledge with the new knowledge. Thus, international students' academic performance can increase, and mainstream students' negative evaluations of their cognitive skills can be minimized. Lastly, by using special accommodations to ensure international students' learning, professors can model how 'caring' is performed, which is necessary for a caring pedagogy, according to Noddings (1984).

Finally, professors can assign more active roles to international students when international and mainstream students are grouped to complete a task so that they can develop to promote their leadership and accountability and overcome internalized oppression (Martin-Beltran, 2014; Shier, 2001). This practice aligns with the *transcollaboration* (García et al., 2012) component of transcaring pedagogy since it is more than engaging students in group work but assigning diverse students to group tasks by heeding for equity among them. As mentioned in the findings section, international students often avoid talking and stay silencer in group discussions because they may fear negative evaluations of their mainstream group members and decide to stay silent due to their internalized oppression (Padilla, 2001). It may also be because mainstream students dominate the discussions and give limited opportunities to international students to involve.

Regardless, international students' active participation in group tasks can be ensured with the assignment of more active roles to them in group work. As a result, by keeping international students accountable through more active group roles, professors can voice international students more and establish the equity of talk in the classrooms (García et al., 2017; Freire, 1972).

Limitations

The first limitation of this study was the number of participants recruited. Moreover, all participants were master-level graduate students, as international graduate students at the master's level outnumbered others in the USA. New research studies that can recruit more participants at not only master's level, but also undergraduate and doctorate levels can reveal different results.

The second limitation of this study is that all interview participants were female. Although research suggested that men often experienced less language anxiety in ESL contexts, which also aligned with our survey findings, recruiting men for interviews could provide a new perspective on international students' transitions to academic life in the USA and the role of mainstream NES peers in this process.

Finally, this study focused mainly on graduate students' linguistic experiences, not race. However, racial diversities can be another reason for perceiving discrimination in classrooms predominated by mainstream NES peers. Thus, further research focusing on international students' raciolinguistic experiences in graduate school classrooms can reveal a more complex and broader picture of the phenomenon.

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x☐ None
☐ Some sections, with minimal or no editing
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☐ Entire work, with minimal or no editing
☐ Entire work, with extensive editing

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