Teaching Music History to Non-Native English-Speaking Students: An Exploration of the Cultural and Linguistic Challenges [1]

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The last fifteen years since the publication of *Teaching Music History* have witnessed an increase of interest in pedagogical studies that propose innovative and effective ways to teach music history and to help students articulate informed opinions about a wide range of Western art music repertory.[2] Yet, while these studies offer detailed ways to address the pressing issue of redefining the role and usefulness of the field of music history in higher education, they do not always consider the challenges that the diversity of American university classrooms poses to instructors. Discussions about teaching in a multilinguistic and multicultural environment must consider the identities of students coming from diverse social backgrounds, who oftentimes have distinct gender, class, and ethnic affiliations. The task of teaching in this environment becomes even more complex when we consider not only the cultural and ethnic range among American students, but also the fact that so many of our students are non-native English speakers. Indeed, as I will demonstrate in this essay, the exponential growth in American institutions in the number of international students coming from South and East Asian countries raises vital issues about the ways in which we transmit knowledge from a linguistic, cultural, and ethical point of view. Consequently, our challenge must be to revitalize the music history curriculum and, simultaneously, to balance educational intentions with an awareness of the complexity of students' identities.

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1. This article expands upon ideas that I presented at the International Association of Music Libraries/ International Musicological Society (IAML/IMS) conference "Music Research in the Digital Age," New York, 21–26 June 2015, as part of the IMS Study Group "Transmission of Knowledge as a Primary Aim in Music Education." Written versions of these Study Group presentations have been published in *Musica Docta*, vol. 6 (2016).

2. Mary Natvig, ed., *Teaching Music History* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002); this groundbreaking book grouped different pedagogical approaches focused on the integration of social, political and cultural contexts, a shift away from the "classical canon," and the organization of course material by taking into consideration the need to appeal to students from a diverse range of backgrounds.

While the presence of non-native English speakers in the American university classrooms could easily be thought of as nothing more than a vexing problem, it is in fact a dilemma rife with potential communication issues, cultural challenges, and ethical concerns. In particular, two pressing questions face educators: how can we ensure that non-Western students perform well in a Western classroom, considering language differences; and how do we navigate the issue of cultural values problematized by the presence of non-Western students? Scholars of linguistic studies have already fruitfully analyzed these questions and proposed a critical multicultural approach. However, there is no universal theory of multicultural pedagogy and educators tend to base their approaches on their own experience or on the particular class settings in which they are active. Still, there is agreement on a concept of a critical multicultural education that will focus on celebrating differences, not exacerbating them; in the end, such a multicultural education should help students to understand and relate to diverse identities. As Pepi Leistyna clearly states:

> Educators are encouraged to realize that any uncritical approaches to multicultural education can invite surface reforms, but merely recognizing differences among people, and ignoring such related problems as racism, social justice, and power as a broader set of political and pedagogical concerns, will not lead to a transformation of the exclusionary structural and ideological patterns of any unjust society. Critical Multicultural Education is enormously important for developing theoretical frameworks that historically and socially situate the deeply embedded roots of racism, discrimination, violence, and disempowerment. Rather than perpetuating the assumption that such realities are inevitable, avoidable, or easily dissolvable, this philosophy of education invites everyone, especially teachers and students, across all disciplines and spaces, to further explore and act upon the relationship between these larger historic, economic, and social constructs and their inextricable connection to ideology, power, and identity. In this way, people can engage in real praxis, and develop, as they interact with one another, their own possibilities for the future.[3]

I contend that we should apply this theoretical framework in the music history classroom, thus supporting non-native English-speaking students and shifting the paradigm so that we may view these students not simply as a challenge, but rather as an integral part of our programs. To reach that goal, I assess some aspects of liberal multiculturalism that allow Asian students to understand the premises of a Eurocentric system of knowledge without abandoning their own cultural backgrounds, and I stress the extent to which American institutions are not always equipped to help instructors face the cultural and linguistic challenges that these students raise. In the end, I argue that problems

3. Pepi Leistyna, *Defining and Designing Multiculturalism. One School System's Efforts* (Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2002), 33.

encountered at the classroom level could be solved if ethical issues associated with the growing number of international students in American universities are acknowledged and appropriately addressed at the institutional level.

The Proliferation of International Students in American Schools

The United States is one of the top study-abroad destinations for students around the world. Of the over one million international students studying in American universities, 7.4% are enrolled in fine and applied arts and humanities.[4] At major American conservatories and schools of music, the ratio between national and international students is even more significant than in other institutions. The Spring 2017 enrollment at the Eastman School of Music exemplifies this trend: out of 902 graduate and undergraduate students enrolled, 709 were United States citizens and 193 (or roughly 21.4%) were international students, with the majority coming from China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South Korea.[5] The ratio is even higher if we consider only the graduate students, of which 27.32% (or 100 out of 366) of enrolled students are not United States citizens. This number, as I will show, deeply influences classroom settings and poses major challenges to students and instructors in academic courses.

Why is there such an astounding number of non-American students? There are indeed some basic reasons, including the excellence of academic programs, career-oriented learning opportunities, and the specialization of the academic resources available in libraries and archives. In an article in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, Karin Fischer suggested that some of the key source countries for international students, such as China and India, cannot meet domestic demand for higher education, and therefore that a rising wealthy middle class sends their children to the United States to study.[6]

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4. Statistical data drawn from the Open Doors Report of the Institute of International Education, https://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Insights/Open-Doors, show that 886,052 international students studied in the United States during the 2013–14 academic year. That number grew to 974,926 in 2014–2015, and it continues to increase. During the 2015–2016 academic year, the number of international students enrolled in American universities amounted to 1,043,849 (7% more than the previous year, and 5.2% of the total US higher education population). Students from China (including the mainland, Hong Kong and Taiwan) constitute 34.3% of the international students in the United States, with students from India, Saudi Arabia, and South Korea trailing at (respectively) 15.9%, 5.9%, and 5.8% of the total.

5. I am grateful to Donna Brinx Fox, Senior Associate Dean of Academic and Student Affairs, Eisenhart Professor of Music Education at the Eastman School of Music for providing this data.

6. Karin Fischer, "Number of Foreign Students in U.S. Hit a New High Last Year," the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, November 16, 2009, https://www.chronicle.com/article/Number-of-Foreign-Students-in/49142. More recent research suggests that this number is

Yet, especially when we look at the field of fine and applied arts, we should avoid a standard homogeneous characterization of the rationale behind decisions to study abroad, since there are multiple reasons that attract international students to the Eastman School of Music, the Juilliard School, the Peabody Conservatory, and other major musical institutions. Some of these students come from English-speaking countries, such as Canada, England, or Australia, yet the large majority are non-native speakers. This diverse group ranges from wealthy to nearly impoverished students, and includes graduates from elite top schools and also from second-tier schools. Different North American schools tend to draw students from different types of international institutions. For instance, at Eastman there tends to be a high number of students from a few select prestigious schools, such as Seoul National University or Shanghai Conservatory of Music, because students fostered connections with professors met during international master classes and music festivals before coming to the United States.

While there is tremendous diversity in the backgrounds of these students and in their motivations for coming to American schools, there is no doubt that universities nationwide welcome their presence for the cultural variety that they add to campus life and the learning opportunities they offer to American students. The economic effects of their presence, moreover, cannot be underestimated. More and more universities are becoming active recruiters of foreign undergraduate and graduate students, in part because the tuition and fees paid by these students can provide such a crucial source of support.[7]

The growing number of international students is also sometimes perceived as a social challenge, because some faculty and in-state students feel resentful towards what they perceive to be a mass of non-native individuals populating American schools and potentially displacing local students. Both the economic and controversial aspects of the rising presence of international students have been widely addressed in American media.[8] Tensions aside, though, this trend

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actually decreasing. See Stephanie Saul, "As Flow of Foreign Students Wanes. U. S. Universities Feel the Sting" *The New York Times*, Jan. 2, 2018.

7. Open Doors reports that during the 2015–2016 academic year, about 80% of the non-native English-speaking students in American universities paid full tuition thanks to personal and family assets, or contributions and fellowships disbursed by foreign governments and universities or their current employers, while only 17% were sponsored by American universities or colleges (http://www.iie.org/en/Research-and-Publications/Open-Door).

8. Tamar Lewin reported that the University of Washington's decision to reduce admission offers to Washington residents and increase offers to international students prompted some local politicians and parents to protest and provocatively ask the university president whether their children could get in if they paid nonresident tuition. See Tamar Lewin, "Taking More Seats on Campus, Foreigners Also Pay the Freight," *New York Times*, February 5, 2012. Miriam Jordan argued that: "the perception that foreign students, in addition to out-of-state Americans, displace state residents has fueled tension on some campuses and a backlash in some states."

is not going to diminish soon, as many institutions that formerly received most of their financing from state governments must now rely on tuition, and in particular from the higher tuition charged to out-of-state students, for the majority of their budgets. Moreover, as stated by Lewin in the *New York Times*, "the international influx is likely to keep growing, in part because of the booming recruiting industry that has sprung up overseas. That includes the use of commissioned agents, who help students through the admissions process—and sometimes write their application essays," — allowing applicants, I would add, to appear to pass minimum TOEFL requirements without consideration for the problems that these students will encounter in academic classes once enrolled in American universities.[9]

One would argue that there is nothing wrong in welcoming paying international students, as every institution needs to remain fiscally solvent. Yet one must also wonder what the real implications of the presence of non-native students are and if all universities are equipped to address the cultural and ethical issues that inevitably accompany such a large body of students from so many different international socio-political and cultural backgrounds. A more in-depth study of the economic implications of this presence would certainly yield interesting results, but for the sake of this article, I will focus on the impact that the rising number of non-Western, and in particular Asian, students presents to mainstream classroom settings in our field. In my argument, I will refer in part to my time as a former international student at Bowling Green State University and at the Eastman School of Music, and to my personal experience as an instructor of music history courses for undergraduate and graduate students at Michigan State University and at Eastman.

Common Challenges for Non-native English-speaking Students

Although many American colleges and universities make significant investments in recruiting and admitting international students, the support for this growing student cohort varies widely, and the services to aid them in acculturation and academic success are not always adequate. In the most proactive institutions, international offices with trained professionals advise international students on a broad range of issues, such as immigration and visa matters, employment and practical training, personal and health concerns, and

Consequently, the University of California system capped the percentage of out-of-state and foreign undergraduate students at the Los Angeles and Berkeley campuses at 22%, while the University of Iowa adopted a plan to tie state funding of public universities to the number of in-state students enrolled; see Miriam Jordan, "U.S. News: Foreign Students Stream into U.S.," *Wall Street Journal*, Eastern edition, New York, March 25, 2015.

9. Tamar Lewin, "Taking More Seats on Campus, Foreigners Also Pay the Freight."

financial problems. These offices also help orient students to campus life by assisting with general academic planning, such as selecting academic courses and meeting degree requirements. To help foreign students adjust to the American way of life, institutions may also organize field trips (such as a trip to an American restaurant to order a meal, a visit to a mall, or an excursion to a community event) to experience the nuances of American culture. Some institutions also offer acculturation classes, which are not just orientation classes but also venues where students work through different scenarios and discuss the challenges they encounter in their classes or in the campus community in order to find workable solutions to common problems. Many universities have organizations—some, but not all, student-led—for various cultural/religious/ethnic/international groups. Finally, some universities may also find ways to connect international students with existing local communities representing regions from which they come.

When offered, the support from an institution is indeed essential to international students in making the transition to American culture, as the sense of isolation, culture shock, and the difficulties adjusting to the social expectations of the American classroom can be overwhelming. During my graduate studies, I noted that international students, and in particular those coming from Asian countries, faced a broad challenge of "expectation versus reality"; this is not necessarily always culture-specific but is based on many complex factors, including what students hear from their friends and what they learn through social media outlets. Indeed, while these outlets have mitigated this divide to some degree, they may also make it worse. Because of their familiarity with social media, students often arrive to the United States with some confidence that they are globally savvy and familiar with the institution and its norms, only to find their expectations to be inaccurate. This self-confidence can make the "expectation versus reality" divide hit a little hard when it occurs, both in the classroom and in the "real" world. Thus, we cannot fail to fully realize that international students are dealing with cultural challenges outside their classrooms that range from adjusting to a different cuisine to learning the intricacies of American life and that attempting to meet these challenges takes a lot of time and energy. Something as important and seemingly basic as setting up a doctor's appointment can be a bewildering experience, as international students struggle to understand the complex health system and its vagaries, such as insurance cards, out-of-pocket expenses, and so forth.

Pedagogical practices common in American academia—such as collaborative learning or peer review—can sometimes create major cultural challenges for international students who have been trained in more traditional lecture-style classes. American students consider asking questions or engaging in a discussion with the instructor or other students as a vital and engaging part

of the learning process. Many Chinese schools, however, promote a teaching style that emphasizes memorization and standardized testing.[10] We should not assume that international students do not participate in in-class discussions because they lack fluency in the language of instruction: cultural differences may be a more important factor. For instance, not all foreign students are familiar with the structure of an academic paper or the writing and citation styles used in the United States. While for some who are coming from academic environments with "hands-off" lecturing instructors, approaching faculty members is not only a cultural change, but an almost insurmountable challenge. Specific activities meant to help prepare international students for university coursework are thus vital to their academic success.

To address these issues, schools of music in large universities with a considerable number of non-native English-speaking students offer transition courses that combine English support and academic content, including bridge courses, general writing courses, and explicit instructions for discipline-relevant writing tasks. For instance, at Bowling Green State University, the English for Speakers of Other Languages program (ESOL) offers courses to assist both undergraduate and graduate students in the development of academic English skills to help them meet the demands of their degree programs. As an international student in the graduate program at BGSU, I took two courses for non-native speakers of English. "Academic Composition I" taught me to express myself in English with the increased grammatical complexity and accuracy needed to meet the demands of writing at the graduate level, while "Academic Composition II" was a field-specific course to develop rhetorical skills. Due to these courses, I learned the subtle differences between Italian and American academic writing styles, and my performance in my musicology courses matched that of my American colleagues. Moreover, BGSU provided academic and language support outside the classroom, utilizing peers as tutors and conversation partners, and offering optional programs to promote cultural understanding and language development.

Even with programs designed to help non-native speakers of English overcome language barriers, the adjustment difficulties faced by international students with regard to humanities courses—especially courses that investigate specific historical aspects of the Western world—are particularly acute. For instance, many colleges and universities require students to take a set of general education classes, regardless of their majors, to expose them to a wide variety of subjects. This could come as a surprise for some Asian students, mainly to those accepted to a school of music, who envisioned spending their time practicing

10. For an interesting account of the Chinese education system, see Yong Zhao, *Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Dragon?: Why China Has the Best (and Worst) Education System in the World* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2014).

and performing. Moreover, it also challenges them to spend energy learning topics such as Western history, music history, or philosophy, which are rooted in a culture that is, in most cases, unfamiliar to them. Indeed, the presence of non-native English-speaking students in mainstream classrooms also poses intricate cultural challenges to instructors and American students. But if we want these foreign students to be an integral part of our music history programs, we must recognize that they are also facing their own challenges.

Theoretical Framework

Multicultural linguistic studies have addressed many of the issues that we confront in our classroom settings. Yet, these issues are further complicated in our field, as instructors must attempt to teach Western music history to international students who not only speak different languages and come from different cultural backgrounds, but whose historical knowledge is often based on a different set of values. How do we renegotiate our knowledge in light of cultural changes, and how do we transform the ways in which we transmit it? Suresh Canagarajah argues that we must question a system based on the enlightenment idea of decontextualized universal knowledge and instead consider knowledge as influenced by contexts, interests, and ideologies. Canagarajah also claims that knowledge is constructed by members of a given community to express their interests and values, and that this knowledge is discursive and "constantly negotiated and reconstructed by scholars in terms of the changing social context."[11] If we accept these general statements about knowledge, we must rethink how to address students who are coming from different cultural backgrounds. Indeed, this is the direction taken in the last decade by linguistics scholars, who began to adopt different theoretical approaches borrowed from critical theory, such as Foucauldian poststructuralism, Bakhtinian semiotics, and feminist scholarship as part of their discipline. The more inclusive array of terms and tools at their disposal has thus allowed for a more thorough analysis of the linguistic and cultural challenges encountered by non-native English speakers in academic courses and has helped shift traditional approaches. As Canagarajah argues:

> The philosophical rethinking and empirical efforts to understand the representations of self in social life have initiated much-needed changes in second language acquisition (SLA) and English as a second language (ESL) pedagogies. From focusing on the abstract grammar system and treating learners as a bundle of psychological reflexes, scholars have begun to consider

11. Suresh A. Canagarajah, *A Geopolitics of Academic Writing* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2002), 54.

> how learners negotiate competing subject positions in conflicting discourse communities. As a former ESL student, I am personally encouraged by this "social turn" in applied linguistics. After being treated as non-entities in SLA research and feeling silenced, we ESL students have now achieved complexity, with researchers straining their ears to catch every inflection and modulation in our "voice." After being theorized and objectified, imposed with flat stereotypical identities, we see ourselves celebrated as hybrid subjects who defy analysis.[12]

Indeed, as Canagarajah suggests, obscuring students' identities by eliminating differences and reinforcing the belief that we are all the same and have equal opportunities does not address the complex issues that multicultural and multilinguistic classrooms present for both instructors and students. The recent developments in linguistics are successful partly because they challenge an American educational system that has maintained a universalist approach in which differences are erased. Similarly, Riyuko Kubota—who has explored the interactions and intersections of race, identity, and pedagogy in language teaching—argues that liberal multiculturalism remains deeply conservative as it defends and promotes Eurocentric modes of thinking and educational practices. Kubota sees as an alternative *critical multicultural education*, an approach that goes against difference-blind institutionalism and the hegemony of a leading, or "universal," culture as the product of the most powerful group of people. Kubota's approach exposes the constructed colonialist and imperialist reality in which whiteness is the norm against which all other racial groups are defined.[13] This approach pairs with critical pedagogy in aiming to raise students' critical consciousness about imperialistic issues and promoting social change; rather it demands that all knowledge, not only the official or Western "universal" knowledge, be taught critically. Thus critical multicultural education requests that we go beyond the superficiality of devoting one event a year to a specific culture (Black History Month, Cinco de Mayo celebrations, etc.) and, by means of new curricula and instructional materials that allow students to be critical of established knowledge, that we help students think about diversity.

The applied linguistics theories briefly outlined here also can find practical use in the field of music history pedagogy. Kubota's method, while referring specifically to cultural and ethnic diversities within the North-American system, could easily pertain also to non-native English-speaking students coming from different countries and could help educators to address the challenges

12. Suresh A. Canagarajah, "Multilingual Writers and the Struggle for Voice in Academic Discourse," in *Negotiation of Identities in Multilingual Contexts*, ed. Aneta Pavlenko and Adrian Blackledge (Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 2004), 266–89.

13. Riyuko Kubota, "Critical Multiculturalism and Second Language Education," *Critical Pedagogies and Language Learning*, ed. Bonny Norton and Kelleen Toohey (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 30–52; see especially page 40.

posed by this growing demographic.[14] Undeniably, such an approach would add layers of extra work and further training to our already tight schedule. Yet as educators in classrooms in which the student population is rapidly shifting, we must respect this diversity and should consider an academic curriculum change that introduces methodologies that would help our students to debunk cultural essentialism and explore identity construction.

Shifting the Paradigm

The question we should ask, then, is "How do we familiarize international students with Western culture without undermining their relationship to their own background?" We should question if we do enough to engage them, if we strive to bridge cultural barriers and promote a learning discourse, or if we may inadvertently persist in maintaining the divides between different cultures. For instance, something as simple as referring to an event or personality in Chinese or Korean culture and history could help students to situate Western art music-making within a precise historical period or socio-cultural context. To facilitate this perspective, instructors should also start looking at how the diverse perspectives that international students bring can benefit classroom vitality.

The lack of adequate support and specific preparation to face the cultural challenges generated by multicultural classrooms, though, increases a sense of frustration in both students and educators. To avoid the negativity of such an approach, I suggest that we should shift the paradigm. Instead of considering the diversity of students in our classroom as a problem to be dealt with, we may instead ask ourselves "Who's learning and what can I learn?" While we cannot deny that the lack of fluency in English could become a major obstacle in academic courses, we cannot minimize or simply neglect problems connected with cultural and didactic differences between Western and Eastern worlds. Thus, balancing educational needs with an awareness of the complexity of students' identities by taking into consideration both linguistic and cultural challenges should really become our strategic goal. If we acknowledge international students' value as individuals who can contribute to the liveliness and cultural depth of the classroom, we could also help Western students take advantage of diverse cultures as a learning tool, which broadens communication and thought processes. We should indeed see classroom challenges that are occasionally generated by cultural differences among students as opportunities to create positive and trusting relationships, but this can happen only if we as

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14. Riyuko Kubota is Professor at The University of British Columbia, Vancouver, Canada and her research is primarily concerned with the Canadian system.

educators make every effort to help the class replace cultural biases with an appreciation and a tolerance for cultural difference.

The application of this theoretical framework in a music history classroom may add extra layers of challenge to an already complicated experience. Instructors should indeed contribute to the bridging of cultural barriers, but institutions do not always offer the necessary tools and support to achieve this goal. What do universities do to prepare instructors to create fair classrooms in which, paraphrasing Canagarajah's words, non-native English speakers do not feel silenced but instead are confident that everyone in the classroom is able to catch every inflection and modulation in their "voice"? Musicology university programs typically focus on research and academic writing, but they rarely instruct graduate students on how to teach music history, let alone provide meaningful support for future challenges posed by classes with a high number of non-native English speakers.[15] In part because of a lack of resources, educators tend to believe that the problem is only associated with language barriers and focus on writing assignments as a way to improve English proficiency. However, we might actually be more successful in achieving our goals if we focus less on teaching the language and more on understanding how non-Western students' backgrounds inform their learning process. In what follows, I will introduce some techniques that have been to some extent shaped by my own experience as a former non-native English-speaking student.

Challenges in communication between native and non-native English speakers tend to prevent not only the exchange of ideas, but also the development of an integrated social group, with all its consequences. For instance, Chinese and Korean students are highly regarded in performance studios, where for the most part they excel, but they are often alienated by native English speakers in academic classes, where they are frequently perceived as problematic because of their lack of communication skills. The first step, then, is to find practical ways to engage the students who are struggling to master the English language.[16] When planning lectures for a graduate-level course with a considerable number of international students, instructors should ponder two guiding questions: "How do I design assignments and in-class activities and deliver material in ways that are engaging and understandable to all the students, no matter what their English proficiency?"; and "How do I teach Western

15. On the lack of pedagogical training, see Erinn E. Knyt, "Teaching Music History Pedagogy to Graduate Students," this *Journal* 6 (2016): 1–21.

16. Some students could be struggling because of structural differences between English and their own mother tongue. For example, Mandarin has one pronunciation for feminine, masculine, and neutral pronouns, it does not use definite or indefinite articles, and verbs are unchanging; therefore, many Chinese students grapple with the use of pronouns and articles as well as understanding the function of verb forms in the English language.

music history without implicitly devaluing the cultural backgrounds of the many international students?"

A good starting point is planning to present lesson content using a variety of methods, diversifying teaching techniques to avoid oversimplifying material and instead designing tasks to cater to many different learning styles. Instructors should pay particular attention to the possible challenges that the material would present to non-native English speakers. For instance, even if my English proficiency was already rather strong when I started my graduate studies in the United States, I encountered major obstacles in music theory classes, in which I was often confused by unfamiliar terminology. Instructors took for granted that I comprehended everything they were saying, but many terms were buried in the lecture; I struggled with these courses, spending a lot of time and energy after class reviewing my notes and filling in the blanks left by those many missed words. If only the instructors had written those words on the board or in a handout, it would have made my theory classes more enjoyable, and I am sure it would have also helped many native English-speaking students. Instructors, therefore, might avoid such occurrences and make the lecture comprehensible to all students by thinking through the language demands that the material creates. The use of PowerPoint presentations mixing verbal and visual stim-uli and highlighting the most important words and concepts could anticipate possible difficulties and solve them even before they materialize. As a form of pre-teaching background knowledge and vocabulary, some students may also find it helpful to have access to the PowerPoint presentations before class.

It is also extremely important to keep track of students' comprehension by introducing various group activities to help non-native English speakers use the new vocabulary with the help of native speakers. Moreover, engag-ing students in group and partner work helps build confidence that in turn fosters the exchange of ideas. I often used this technique and, in their class evaluations, students highlighted how they appreciated the opportunity to help each other. Indeed, building this confidence should become our primary aim. For this reason, we should allow non-native English speakers to make gram-matical mistakes, valuing content over syntax in both class discussions and written assignments.[17]

Teaching Western art music without devaluing the cultural background of students can also be quite challenging. Obviously, international students are joining American universities under the assumption that they will study Western art music. I believe, though, that there is value in emphasizing the truth that the concept of art music as it developed in Europe is not universal.

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17. For an interesting study describing a goal-focused approach for non-native English-speaking students to academic writing see Alister Cumming, ed., *Goals for Academic Writing: ESL Students and Their Instructors* (Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2006).

This approach will not only respect the cultural values of non-native English speakers, but will also teach American students that Western art music is just *one* example and not *the* example of art music in the world. Recently published instructional material already encourages us to add non-canonic composers and their works in our music history survey syllabi. For instance, the latest edition of the *Norton Anthology of Western Music* gives more exposure to music and composers that did not traditionally appear among the canons of Western art music, such as nineteenth-century American music, music by Latin American composers, or cross-cultural cases at the verge between Western and Eastern worlds.[18] Still, the way in which we present this less familiar literature can be problematic, and if we do not find the correct channels to integrate it in our historical discourse, we risk marginalizing it even more. Teaching cross-culturalism in art music becomes especially delicate, as we tend to privilege a Eurocentric approach rather than decentralizing it. For this reason, in front of a classroom that was over 30% Chinese students, at times I felt uncomfortable addressing the Chinese-American composer Bright Sheng, whose greatest achievement is arguably the integration of Asian and Western cultures in his music without compromising the integrity of either. My ethnomusicological background was useful in this situation as it helped me address both musical cultures without lessening or reinforcing their values. Yet, I also took advantage of the class diversity and organized pair-activities by combining American and Asian students, in which students shared their own perspectives on the topic and highlighted their own diverse cultural relationships to Western art music through the discussion of Sheng's compositional process. This example demonstrates that a critical multicultural education approach would not only improve the relationship between instructor and students, but also would teach students how to interact and communicate with each other.

Conclusion

The task of shifting the music history pedagogical paradigm from a problem-based to a critical multicultural approach that addresses linguistic challenges as well as cultural diversity in the classroom cannot rely only on the goodwill of an individual instructor. The changing cultural setting of classrooms in American universities also must be acknowledged and addressed at the institutional level, especially if, as discussed earlier, institutions are relying ever more on international students to balance accounts.

18. J. Peter Burkholder and Claude. V. Palisca, eds., *Norton Anthology of Western Music*, 7th ed. (New York, W. W. Norton, 2014).

A college professor's day is already filled with countless activities, and I am aware that the idea of adding even just one extra task may be overwhelming. However, minimal training designed to help instructors understand the many challenges faced by students coming from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds could help transform our perspective. Training can help instructors to approach international students as individuals who can contribute to the vitality of the classroom. But it can also help them to shape the interpersonal dynamics of the classroom, so that all students may appreciate and learn from cultural diversity. Many institutions already have "safe space" and other similar types of training in place; perhaps "international student cultural training" would also be of benefit to faculty and staff. This training could entail such things as familiarity with resources for international students, strategies for making lectures and class materials more accessible to non-native English-speaking students, and even perhaps an introduction to the cultural and socio-political aspects of the native countries of the majority of an institution's international students. This training could also increase awareness of common problems when dealing with this population, such as the tendency to use the qualifier "Asian" for an extremely diverse collection of economic, cultural, national, and ethnic experiences. A Korean individual's background is substantially different from that of a Japanese student, and the issue becomes even more complex when we consider that, within each large group, there are also subunits with distinct experiences and goals. For instance, we cannot generalize by just saying "Chinese," as mainland Chinese students, Taiwanese students, and students from Hong Kong grew up in quite distinct and in many ways contrasting cultural settings; inadvertently conflating these students as one group could create major tensions in a classroom setting. As instructors, we cannot assume that we know any of our students' individual situations, but the proposed training could help orient faculty and staff to the general issues facing our international students and aid us in creating a more inclusive and empathetic atmosphere in our classrooms and campuses.

Institutions should also help instructors by funding the planning of class material based on elements of universal design, in order to make things more comprehensible for non-native English-speaking students. Universal design, which might include strategies such as posting lesson goals, offering diverse kinds of assignments, or highlighting key words on PowerPoint slides, might not only benefit non-native English-speaking and international students, but also other groups of American students. Additionally, many textbooks often refer to aspects of American cultural life that are familiar only to students who grew up in the United States, such as characters of television shows, events, and personalities that have become a part of American culture. Unfortunately, these details are often meaningless and confusing for international students;

yet these misunderstandings and points of confusion might be easily prevented with footnotes in textbooks or a brief explanation from the instructor.

In conclusion, we must value the multifaceted experience of non-native English-speaking students in American institutions by acknowledging their value as individuals who can contribute to the liveliness and cultural depth of the classroom. More steps must be taken at the institutional level to embrace this fact, instead of relying on the willingness of a few concerned instructors, especially in light of the strong financial incentives for institutions to recruit international students. I do not claim to have given a definite answer to the many issues addressed, but I hope to have raised awareness that students, instructors, and institutions alike must work together to reorganize the teaching/learning experience in multicultural classrooms. Instructors should therefore strive to create circumstances that recognize non-native English-speaking students' "voice" and help these students acquire the confidence to speak about their own unique story.