

Doris Dippold

University of Surrey, UK

1. Background

In the context of the internationalisation of higher education, the United Kingdom attracts eleven per cent of the world's mobile students (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2014). The term *internationalisation at home* refers to "the creation of a culture or climate on campus that promotes and supports international or intercultural understanding and focuses on campus-based activities" (Middlehurst and Woodfield, 2007, p. 30). However, in practice, an international ethos or climate on campus is often all but a fiction:

in many institutions, international students feel marginalised socially and academically and often experience ethnic or social tensions. Frequently, domestic undergraduate students are known to resist, or are at best neutral, about undertaking joint academic projects or engaging socially with foreign students unless specific programmes are developed by the university or the instructor. International students tend to band together and ironically often have a broader and more meaningful experience on campus than domestic students but lack a deep engagement with the host country culture. Of course, this scenario is not applicable to all institutions but it speaks to the often unquestioned assumption that the primary reason to recruit international students is to internationalise the campus. (Knight, 2011, p.1)

This state of affairs finds extensive support in the literature. Home students find interactions with their international peers taxing due to the language barrier, the need for accommodation, the lack of shared cultural reference points and differences in communication norms and styles (Dunne, 2009; Peacock and Harrison, 2009; Spencer-Rodgers, 2011; Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern, 2002). They harbour fears of being seen as prejudiced and thus are reluctant to engage in contact and friendships with international students (Colvin et al., 2013; Peacock and Harrison, 2009). Meanwhile, the guests also deal with language deficiencies, perceived or real, and with a new environment of teaching and learning (e.g. Gu & Maley, 2008; Welikala & Watkins, 2008). Not only does this environment require them to draw on a new repertoire of verbal strategies (Bardovi-Harlig and Hartford, 1990, 1993, 1996; Dippold, 2013), but they also often feel marginalised and silenced by the controlling, confrontational and intolerant attitude of their hosts (Hellesten and Prescott, 2006; Osmond and Roed, 2010; Robinson, 2006).

2. Methodology

In addition to these insights gained through an extensive review of studies in education, educational / cross-cultural psychology and applied linguistics, this paper also draws on documentary research on the internationalisation policies and practices of a sample of twelve UK universities from across the university spectrum.

This analysis has shown that, when universities include cultural goals in their policies, these tend to be described through the notion of *global citizenship*. For example, Central Lancashire aims to develop their students into “a culturally integrated, highly skilled, graduate and postgraduate workforce, who are motivated, informed and have the potential to become creative, global entrepreneurs” (Central Lancashire Corporate Plan 2013-2017). However, few universities say explicitly how they intend to achieve these goals, and the majority do not offer any student development opportunities bar courses in English for Academic Practice, which are offered exclusively to international students.

Thus, home students generally end up being excluded from any opportunities to develop their skills to interact with students from other cultures in the classroom and beyond. EAP provision in turn generally focuses on functional language skills, does not offer input on skills specific to an academic discipline and does not encourage reflection on practices and communication strategies.

3. Main argument

This paper argues that that, in order to prevent the marginalisation of international students, to address home students’ barriers to interaction with international peers and to truly develop students’ skills for global citizenship, the classroom – seminars, lectures, tutorials etc. in the main subject of study – needs to take centre stage. The classroom is the one environment of their educational journey where home and international students meet by necessity, and it is at the core of their educational experience.

The classroom is thus at the centre of an experiential model which I will propose to develop students’ intercultural competences and skills for interactions in the classroom and beyond. The model builds on Kolb’s (1984) notion of experiential learning which centres on learning from concrete experience by observing and reflecting on these experiences, learning from these reflections and testing out new practices. The classroom provides an ideal forum for all these activities, in particular as it allows students to try out new interaction strategies and debrief from them.

The experiential model for students includes the following four core elements

Knowledge

- attends to information about classroom practice, provided for example in induction or through peer-mentoring
- learns about how personal engagement in classroom interaction contributes to academic and relational goals
- learns about common classroom practices and their potential impact on learning and relationships
- knows a range of strategies to negotiate meaning and to achieve academic and relational goals

Awareness and positive attitudes

- is aware of how their linguistic, cultural and educational socialisation may influence their own classroom interaction strategies and their expectations of others’ practices

- is aware of their own goals and biases re classroom interaction as well as peers' and tutors' potentially diverging goals and biases
- develops a positive and proactive attitude to classrooms characterised by diversity and to its members

Action

- listens attentively to what peers and tutors are trying to say, including via indirect signals of meaning (for example body language)
- uses proactive and reactive strategies to reach academic and relational goals
- uses a range of strategies and is able to adapt them when required
- addresses difficulties with teaching and communication style through appropriate channels, and in a commensurate manner

Reflection

- reserves judgment about peers' and tutors' character and abilities that could be derived from their behaviours
- appraises own successes and failures
- reconsiders what works or not
- rehearses new strategies, to be able to draw on a repertoire of styles

It is argued that, whilst the primary aim of the experiential model is to develop students' classroom competences, students can use the knowledge, attributes, skills and reflexivity in other intercultural settings, in particular the workplace.

References

- K. Bardovi-Harlig and B.S. Hartford (1990) 'Congruence in Native and Nonnative Conversations: Status Balance in the Academic Advising Session', *Language Learning*, 40(4), 467-501.
- K. Bardovi-Harlig and B.S. Hartford (1993) 'Learning the Rules of Academic Talk: A Longitudinal Study of Pragmatic Change', *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 15(3), 279-304.
- K. Bardovi-Harlig and B.S. Hartford (1996) 'Input in an Institutional Setting', *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 18(2), 171-188.
- Central Lancashire Corporate Plan 2013-2017,
<http://www.uclan.ac.uk/corporate-information/index.php>, date accessed 5th November 2014.
- C. Colvin, S. E. Volet and F. Fozdar (2013) 'Local University Students and Intercultural Interactions: Conceptualising Culture, Seeing Diversity and Experiencing Interactions', *Higher Education Research and Development*, 32(1), 1-16.
- D. Dippold (2013) 'Interaction for Learning in the Anglophone University Classroom: Mastering Interactional Challenges Through Reflective Practice', *Journal of Academic Language and Learning*, 7(1), 14-25.
- C. Dunne (2009) 'Host Students' Perspectives of Intercultural Contact in an Irish University', *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13(2), 229-239.
- Q. Gu and A. Maley (2008) 'Changing Places: a Study of Chinese Students in the UK', *Language and Intercultural Communication*, 8(4), 224-245.
- M. Hellesten and A. Prescott (2003) 'Learning at University: The International Student Experience', *International Education Journal*, 5(3), 344-351.
- J. Knight (2011) *Five Myths about Internationalisation*,

~~www.international.ac.uk/media/1417436/International_Focus_67.pdf~~, date accessed 5th November 2014.

- D. A. Kolb (1984) *Experiential Learning: Experience as a Source of Learning and Development* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall).
- R. Middlehurst and S. Woodfield (2007) *Research Project Report 05/06: Responding to the Internationalisation Agenda. Implications for Institutional Strategy*, http://www.jisctechdis.ac.uk/assets/Documents/internationalisation/responding_to_the_internationalisation_agenda_full_report.pdf, date accessed 5th November 2014.
- J. Osmond and J. Roed (2010) 'Sometimes it Means More Work... Student Perceptions of Group Work in a Mixed Cultural Setting' in E. Jones (ed.) *Internationalisation and the Student Voice* (London and New York: Routledge).
- P. Peacock and N. Harrison (2009). "It's so Much Easier to Go With What's Easy": "Mindfulness" and the Discourse Between Home and International Students in the United Kingdom', *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 13(4), 487-508.
- S. Robinson (2006) 'Reflecting on the 'International Group Working Experience': a Study of Two MBA Programmes', *International Journal of Management Education*, 5(2), 3-14.
- J. Spencer-Rodgers (2001) 'Consensual and Individual Stereotypic Beliefs about International Students among American Host Nationals', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 25(6), 639-657.
- J. Spencer-Rodgers and T. McGovern (2002) 'Attitudes Towards the Culturally Different: the Role of Intercultural Communication Barriers, Affective Responses, Consensual Stereotypes, and Perceived Threat', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 26(6), 609-631.
- ~~UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2014) *Global Flow of Tertiary-Level Students*, <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-student-flow-viz.aspx>, date accessed 5th November 2014.~~
- T. Welikala and C. Watkins (2008) *Improving Intercultural Learning Experiences in Higher Education: Responding to Cultural Scripts for Learning* (London: Institute of Education).