**Issue 8** | October 2011

# InForm

A journal for international foundation programme professionals

## Special conference edition

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## From intercultural awareness to global citizenship

## Whose 'English' in English for Academic Purposes?

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# Inside *InForm* ...




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# From the Editorial Board ...

The second annual *InForm* Conference was held at the University of Reading in July and we would like to thank the organisers, presenters and delegates who made it such a success again this year.

There were some thought-provoking presentations, discussions and questions that serve as a reminder of the stimulating nature of the IFP sector, especially when so many IFP practitioners can share an opportunity for interaction and debate. We plan to continue holding an annual *InForm* conference, and inspired by the enthusiasm during the Round Table discussion, we will be asking for other institutions to consider hosting these future events.

This issue of *InForm* presents highlights of the conference, the theme of which was internationalisation. The keynote address by Jude Carroll considered the potential benefits of internationalisation. She dealt with some of the key teaching and learning issues faced by students and teachers and highlighted the resources available through the Teaching International Students project.

The conference once again featured two parallel sessions. 'EAP and Beyond' looked at the provision of language and skills teaching and 'IFP Issues' covered a wider range of more general IFP themes.

Chris Walklett examined IFP testing and suggested that all IFP course leaders put assessment under the microscope to determine what purpose it serves. Edward Bressan and Sandra Leigh examined how home students and staff react to a University strategy to promote global citizenship. Stuart Perrin suggested that, as English continues to grow as the academic lingua franca, we should re-evaluate what is meant by 'English' within English for Academic Purposes (EAP) programmes. Ellie Kennedy argued for 'internationalising' seminars, by encouraging the use of communicative teaching methods from EAP in subject seminars. Maxine Gillway argued that internationalisation needs to be exploited at the classroom level but can be taken beyond it. Steven Herron described a practitioner enquiry into how the use of self-study record sheets and thinking skills activities had a positive impact on international learners on a postgraduate foundation programme. Papers from the speakers are interspersed with overviews of the other presentations.

*InForm* Issue 9 will be published in April 2012 and we welcome your contributions for this future edition. If you would like to write an article, a review, or a letter commenting on issues raised in the journal, please contact us on **inform@reading.ac.uk**.

**Elisabeth Wilding**
Chairperson *InForm* Editorial Board

## Keynote address by Jude Carroll

### Teaching international students: effective learning support for all

***In the keynote address, Jude Carroll of Oxford Brookes University introduced the Teaching International Students (TIS) project in order to provide advice on improving learning for all in this era of internationalisation. The two-year TIS project was run by the HEA and features an online resource bank for classroom teachers dealing with diverse student cohorts, produces publications, organises events and endeavours to create networks and communities of practice. Carroll addressed the following key issues in her presentation.***

***What is the context, in 2011, for teaching international students?*** *Not only have the numbers of international students risen, but they now form a much more diverse group of learners, with varied backgrounds, goals and motivations. This rise in numbers has had an impact on teaching and learning in many areas, including the way in which teachers, teaching and programmes were managed. At the same time, it must be remembered that the definition of 'international students' is not clear cut, with different definitions referring to language ability, fee structure, or distance travelled (both literal and cultural). It is perhaps helpful to bear in mind the maxim that 'there is no such thing as "international students" – students are students.'*

***Why focus on teaching international students and is it just an issue of good teaching?*** *The metaphor of the canary in the coal mine is apt for describing these students who are perhaps more sensitive to the difficulties faced by any student given the additional challenges they may experience. International students themselves highlight wider issues of concern: language, transition to a new academic culture, different expectations of participation, a need for support and guidance, and a concern at how useful their skills and degree will be 'back home'.*

***How do teachers react to this increasing internationalisation of the classroom?*** *Teacher approaches to managing this cultural diversity can range from a denial of difference, to a focus on 'repair' (students need fixing), to a belief that the students must adapt (not the teaching), to a view that teachers should accommodate and adjust their practice. The focus of the TIS project has been to help teachers better address the needs of an increasingly academically diverse student cohort, looking at key issues such as students' language capability, their transition to a new way of learning, how to ensure they have the necessary skills, encouraging participation, and promoting collaboration and inclusion.*

*The address ended with a few 'hard truths' learned during the course of the project. It was suggested that there are no easy answers; despite the existence of good practice, most HE academics still find it hard to engage with these issues and the challenge of building strong links between language/pathway programmes and content teachers remains. It was furthermore suggested that the two big unresolved issues remain: the nature of the curriculum and fostering inclusion. Some ideas were suggested for creating a globally relevant curriculum at the programme level that would encourage integration, collaboration and inclusion. Carroll insisted that this must be done at the programme level if it is to have any chance of success. It would perhaps be different for each programme, involve more than just content and the teaching/assessment of cross-cultural skills. The final word reminded delegates: 'Teach for inclusion and the students will succeed with more ease and less pain … and so will you.'*





# Testing, testing, 1, 2, 3 – Is assessment the key to future success for IFP students or merely a box ticking exercise for our institutions?

**About the author**

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*It is difficult to know how to comprehensively (yet fairly) 'test' Foundation Year students in both English language skills and academic skills. What are we testing for? How can we ensure that we are equipping students with the kind of skills which they will need on their future courses? What should the balance be between formative and summative testing and how is this best achieved? This article, embedded in both the theoretical and the practical, is based on the author's experience in instigating change at his institution – the International Academy, University of Essex.*

## Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that IFP courses should never be about tests per se for, as McCombs & Miller (2007) have relayed, the importance given to testing and standard setting should never 'take precedence over individual learners' (Sharpling, 2010 p.6). Barr & Tong (1995) view learning 'as a process whereby students actually construct their own knowledge and skills' (Nicol & McFarlene-Dick, 2006 p.2) With this in mind it is clear that IFP assessment should focus on the enhancement of skills, whether academic or linguistic, that will be applicable to the course the student is due to enter. The type of assessment chosen will clearly have an enormous influence on 'the volume, focus and quality of studying' therein. (Gibbs & Simpson, 2005–2005, p.12).

'The type of assessment chosen will clearly have an enormous influence …'

Sharpling (2010) has critiqued whether assessment on IFPs should be standardised or diversified. The argument for standardisation is that testing methods (such as IELTS and TOEFL) supply us with a measure of validity and reliability. These arguments are, however, more likely to be put forward by administrators in departments who will, quite naturally for reasons of practicality, require some idea of the student's academic, as well as English language, proficiency. Howell (2011) has taken Sharpling's argument forward, insisting that 'diversification and standardisation can and should sit side by side' (p.6), further stating that doing so is an 'ideal scenario'(p.5).

Continuous assessment, described by Figueras as 'the collection of procedures that allow both teachers and learners to monitor the learning process and use feedback meaningfully', (2005 p.52) seems to be the way forward for IFPs. There can be little doubt that a variety of assessment is needed. What follows then, are some ideas for forms of assessment that could be used to implement meaningful (as opposed to box ticking) 'testing'.

## Redrafting

A redrafted essay is a vital form of assessment most obviously because it mirrors what students will encounter on their courses proper. Most assessments on IFP programmes include a redrafted essay/assessment or something similar. This kind of assessment can be both formative and summative in nature depending on what stage is being discussed and how it is being conducted. One possible way of staging a redraft prior to the seemingly inevitable summative grade is as follows;

1. Students hand in a chosen (already marked) essay from one of their subject areas.
2. The AS team assess it in terms of non-content AS criteria and give feedback – which

Hattie (1987) described a 'the most powerful single influence' on student achievement (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004–5, p.9). No marks should be given at this stage as its purpose is purely formative – to get them into the mindset of thinking about how they could improve and 'polish' their essay.

3 The student takes on board this feedback as well as that of the subject/content tutor and, bearing these comments in mind, redrafts the essay.

Boud (2000) has commented positively on the validity and usefulness of redrafting as a form of assessment by stating that 'unless students are able to use the feedback to produce improved work, through for example re-doing the same assignment, neither they, nor those giving the feedback, will know it has been effective' (Gedye, undated p.42)

## Oral presentation

The oral presentation (OP) has become such an IFP staple that employing it is often (unfairly in the author's view) criticised. However, OPs have many benefits, especially if the presentations are done in groups;

- They create good camaraderie and interactivity amongst students, tallying with the ideas of teamwork vital on their university courses proper and in the outside world later.
- They lessen nerves, enabling the student to build up to an individual presentation by first experiencing it in a (considerably) less threatening group scenario.

One way of doing such a group OP is to take a topic from an agreed subject area – an umbrella topic and tackle this issue from various different (but related) perspectives.

'IFP course leaders would do well to put assessment on their courses under the microscope.'

## A reflective task

There are many benefits to implementing some kind of reflective assessment task. This kind of assessment should not be sprung on students though; they should be thinking and reflecting on their learning ideally from day one. It should not be forgotten that they are foundation year students i.e. pre-undergraduates, however, and we should ensure that the chosen type of assessment reflects this. It is possible that IFP students might view a portfolio for example as too constricting or perceive it as boring. To overcome this, technology could be employed by asking the student for example to write a blog on the subject of their progress. This could be done by assigning a topic area to each blog, e.g. first impressions of the university, differences in the academic culture from where they have just come, etc, – such themes could develop as the term progresses.

## Tests/exams

One problem with issuing lengthy texts for reading-to-write tests is the possibility that the student may want to 'borrow' large amounts of texts without the brain actually processing the ideas. This can be avoided by devising a system to do away with any possibility for plagiarism. Students could be issued with texts and then given sufficient time to take notes on them prior to them being returned. It is advisable too to feed in to the test topic in the weeks and months before. Orientation lectures and accompanying texts could help with introducing a subject generally before a more specific aspect is introduced in the test.

It should be remembered though that tests and exams are quite different; 'tests are influential and require planning' whilst the latter less so (Davies, 1990, p.1) so we need to try to ensure that as Black & William (1998) put it, seemingly purely 'summative assessment can provide formative feedback' (Gedye, undated, p.40).

## Conclusion

It seems from provisional enquiries that the amount and type of assessment on IFP varies enormously. While this is not particularly problematic per se, what is important is that students are equipped to cope with their courses proper. This being the case it could be argued that assessment would have to be tailored to the individual subject areas in which the students are due to study. Clearly though this is not always possible so one has to look at employing generally useful strategies such as those outlined above considering particularly whether summative tasks can have a formative slant and justify this to the student by, as Tomlinson (2005) argues, 'emphasising 'the formative role of tasks even when they are summative' (Howell, 2011, p.6)

Gipps (1994) has argued that we should 'harness the powerful tool' of assessment to help 'develop the kind of learning and the higher order skills and processes at the core of a curriculum focused on thinking reasoning and learning how to learn' (Figueras, 2005, p.50) With this is mind, IFP course leaders would do well to put assessment on their courses under the microscope to see if this assessment is truly diagnostic and formative in nature or whether in reality it is being selected to please those box tickers at our institutions.


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# From intercultural awareness to global citizenship: engaging home students and staff in the process of internationalisation


## About the authors

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*Global citizenship is one of five graduate attributes which are prioritised in Oxford Brookes University's Strategy to Enhance the Student Experience. Experience has shown that this important attribute is quite difficult to implement in curricula, partly because of student resistance to working in cross-cultural groups. However, if appropriate assessment tasks are designed which force students to learn from each other's unique skills, more successful learning outcomes can be achieved.*


## Global citizenship as a graduate attribute

Oxford Brookes has included global citizenship in its list of five graduate attributes which are embedded in its 2010 Strategy to Enhance the Student Experience (Brookes, 2010a). It is now expected that our programmes will include specific training in 'cross cultural awareness, knowledge of global perspectives on how disciplinary knowledge is represented and understood within other cultures' *inter alia*.

## The challenge of internationalising home students and staff

The presence of large numbers of international students on campuses is frequently identified as a measure of successful internationalisation. However, the reality is that for many students and staff, the environment poses challenges and threats. Various studies (see Arkoudis et al, 2010) demonstrate that the congregation of diverse students on the same campus does not guarantee successful and meaningful interaction; nor does it necessarily inspire teaching staff to adapt their methods to the needs of the student body.

Indeed, recent studies highlight negative perceptions of home students (and staff) towards international students' learning styles, language skills and interactional patterns. Dunne (2009) identifies innate homophilic tendencies, increased anxiety, lack of motivation and the need to adapt communicative styles as inhibitors which deter home students from voluntarily engaging in intercultural contact. In Henderson's study (2009) home students comment on international students' poor English language skills which are sometimes treated too sympathetically in the assessment process.

## The student voice

At Oxford Brookes University, student representatives are voicing increased levels of dissatisfaction with internationalised learning experiences. Representations include criticisms that lecturers not born in the UK are reportedly hard to follow because they inhabit a different culture and speak accented English, and that they are also criticised for populating their courses with non-relevant examples of activities that sit outside UK culture (Brookes, 2011). Of particular significance is the fact that such views are often shared by international students and UK students.

Student views of each other, alas, are hardly kinder, especially when international and home students are required to interact meaningfully in assessed group work, and the experience is dissatisfying. In a 2010 students'

union assessment of their overall learning experience, the students' union recommended that:

> Research into group work and the language proficiency of international students is required, as they are causing issues for departments where there are high numbers of international students. (Brookes, 2010b)

This all suggests that the challenge of developing global citizens requires intensive efforts and continual intervention at the pedagogical level.

## Probing further

There are a number of valid reasons why, despite criticisms and complaints, we should continue to design group-based assessment tasks. Bressan and Cribb (2007) found that for many Oxford Brookes international students, assessed group work activities have an important social, as well as learning, dimension. For some students, it was the only way in which they were able to make friends on their course.

'Assessed group work activities have an important social, as well as learning, dimension.'

In addition, it should be stressed that the language proficiency of international students is felt by the student body to be the cause of unsuccessful group experiences. However, any language deficiencies that may exist in group-work assignments are also found in individual assignments and as language weaknesses are not considered to be significant impediments to international students' overall progress, there is no reason to think that language is interfering with successful group work learning outcomes.

In our experience, it is not linguistic misunderstandings but cross-cultural misunderstandings that cause problems in group work, and these cross-cultural misunderstandings are held by less cross-culturally aware participants. Addressing these cross-cultural communications issues is at the heart of the internationalisation agenda, and group work continues to be the most natural setting for the practice of true intercultural communication to take place on campus; the experience of multicultural group work is sufficiently internationalised, that is all students – both home and international – are engaged in genuinely internationalised teamwork.

## Teamwork

Successful teamwork has three essential components according to Amabile (1998, p.21). Members should:

a) 'share excitement over the team's goal'

b) 'display a willingness to help their teammates through difficult periods and setback'

c) 'recognise the *unique* knowledge that the other members bring to the table'.

## Designing the task

The reality for many students, however, is that the majority do not recognise the unique knowledge that others bring to the table; monocultural groups bond more quickly (Gibbs, 2009) and students are less likely to feel comfortable in more demanding situations and communicate better with peers of similar ethnic backgrounds (Osmund & Roed, 2010, p. 114).

However, when the assessment task is designed in such a way as to involve all students by honing their 'unique knowledge' as cultural ambassadors, success is more likely and more powerful and productive learning outcomes are assured. If the incentive is so strong that it is impossible to do well in the task without collaborating, success is more likely.

## Internationalised task

The following end-of-semester task was designed on a pre-sessional Finance course. Students had studied the basics of financial theories and had already studied in some depth the UK stock market. For the examination they were required to apply this knowledge to their own countries' stock markets in preparation for the examination. The examination started at 9 am when students met and formed mixed culture groups. The assignment task was distributed and in the two hours which preceded the formal sitting, students worked in multicultural groups. They were required to find out as much as possible from each other.

### Task rubric: Class presentation (groups of three)

You are a group of fund managers who have particular expertise in investing in each of your countries' stock markets.

You have been approached by a client who would like to invest £100,000 in a balanced, long-term, medium-risk and diversified portfolio of shares in global markets.

Justify in your presentation which of your countries' markets you would choose and why?

## Feedback:

The task was designed in such a way that students were forced to work with each other in groups but were individually responsible for the work that they presented. Many of the potential pitfalls of group work were avoided (freeloading, sharing marks, difficulties of meeting etc).

'Student feedback explicitly endorsed this form of assessment with very strong satisfaction rates'

Student feedback explicitly endorsed this form of assessment with very strong satisfaction rates. One student commented that 'it was because we were forced to work together that I managed to learn a lot of information from my classmates – very useful'.

## Conclusion and recommendations

In order to foster global citizenship on campus, teachers on foundation courses should start to think about how we can exploit the cultural capital of our students by tapping into the intellectual resources that they bring to the campus by virtue of their lived experiences. Internationalised tasks which are authentic, motivating and recognise the unique skills of each student but also force them to learn from each other are most successful in achieving these aims.


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**Osmond, J.** & **Roed, J.** (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* 113–124. New York: Routledge.


# Teach them to think: critical reading skills for international foundation students through the use of evaluation checklists by John Hall and Sandra Leigh

***This session began by looking at the broad issue of internationalisation and asking whether an internationalised curriculum should have criticality at its core. The presenters felt that the learning of criticality had a very important place in the foundation curriculum and had wrestled with how best to facilitate this for their students.***

*The approach they have taken involves a text based curriculum, the core text being Global Issues which they selected because of the usefulness to their students' disciplines of the texts therein. Students were asked to select from 25 texts identified in the book those that they considered most useful for their assignments. Once the texts had ben selected, active reading was encouraged by the production of a checklist which the tutors helped their students to write. This checklist required students to look at contrasting sources of information and ask questions such as 'Does the writer use evidence to support his ideas?' Using such a checklist meant that the students were encouraged to engage more critically with the texts they had selected. Students were asked to hand in the notes they had taken on their reading and this formed part of their course assessment. Having to hand in their notes made the students more aware of the need to read to answer questions and meant that their notes could then be used for writing assignments, helping students avoid issues of plagiarism. Hyland's work of 2002 was cited where he discusses the need to utilise the textual space between writer and reader.*

*This was a very practical session with ideas to try out in our own classrooms.*

# Whose 'English' in English for Academic Purposes?


## About the author

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*The growth of English as an academic lingua franca, and medium for academic delivery globally means that the time is ripe for a rethink of what is meant by 'English' on English for Academic Purposes programmes. The assumption that 'native'-speaker standards within the higher education context are still appropriate is questioned within this paper. The paper offers some practical insights into possible ways forward suggesting an academic literacies approach as the best way to meet the demands of the discipline and needs of the student without compromising academic rigour.*

## Introduction

Over the last ten years or so, there has been a noticeable change in higher education (HE) globally, with some estimates suggesting that by 2025 there will over 5.8 million studying outside their home country.

A recent trend has been an increase in English-medium higher educational provision in countries which have little or no connection to English native-speaking countries, as well as an increase in 'foreign campuses and joint ventures', or 'transnational education', reflecting the importance of English as a medium of delivery. Transnational education can be defined as higher education provision that is available in more than one country including via: distance education (with or without local support), e-learning, twinning programmes, articulation programmes, branch campuses and franchising arrangements.

The UK has also seen the growth of 'widening participation' initiatives at UK universities, including those who are domiciled in the UK but have English as a second or additional language. Widening participation initiatives of these, and other under-represented groups, attempt to address the issues that inclusion into the UK student body bring, resulting in an increase in the number of UK domicile English as additional language (EAL) speakers studying at university.

'The growth of English as an academic lingua franca means that there is a real need for effective English language support.'

## English as a lingua franca in academic settings

Graddol (1997 p.10) identifies three types of English speakers, first language speakers or what is often called 'native speakers (NSs)', second or additional language speakers, and foreign language speakers. Jenkins (2000 p.9) describes the use of terminology such as 'native' and 'non-native' as being problematical because of the power that these words imply. Graddol (2006 p.106) suggests that the growth of world globalisation has changed the way that English is perceived, referring to 'the era of Global English'. English is increasingly the main language in business meetings, conferences, political and educational settings. Within communication, English is increasingly acting as a lingua franca between speakers in global situations, including acting as an academic lingua franca. Indeed, it is possible to argue for recognition that 'English as a Lingua Franca' (ELF) interactions take place in English first language speaking environments such as UK HE settings, where the make-up of the student and academic body lends itself to such interactions. Questions have inevitably arisen about 'the extent to which written English should be subjected to correction to conform to native-speaker conventions of use' (Seidlhofer 2004 p.223), such that linguistic ability rather than academic knowledge is the key determinate of success.

## Unpacking English for Academic Purposes (EAP)

The growth of English as an academic lingua franca means that there is a real need for effective English language support at HE institutions globally in the form of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) provision. Hyland and Hamp-Lyons (2002 p.2) suggest that EAP 'refers to language research and instruction that focuses on the specific communicative needs and practices of particular groups in academic contexts'. EAP is not about learning English; rather it aids learners in equipping them with the communicative skills to participate in particular academic and cultural contexts. Although EAP provision varies between institutions and countries, it often shows a heavy reliance on English native-speaker standards as being the target to attain, and can often be one of the main marking criteria when grading is involved, with grammar and vocabulary 'accuracy' being given prominence. Further, there is often no recognition that English has become internationalised across academic discourse, especially to serve 'specific academic and other institutional purposes' (Seidlhofer 2004, p.223).

If the relevance of an English native-speaker standard, however defined, can be questioned in many of today's educational contexts, then the same is true of the English in EAP provision.

Specifically, the following question needs to be considered:

> Does the teaching of English as an academic lingua franca mean the teaching of native-speaker English in EAP contexts?

## An academic literacies approach within an ELF environment

Traditional reliance on English native-speaker norms as the target language that EAP provision should be aiming for is redundant in today's global classroom and an academic literacies approach better meets the needs of today's HE students, whether in an English native-speaker country or not.

'Native-speaker English may not be the main or dominant form.'

Academic writing is one of the main focuses of EAP courses, and of assessment, with native-speaker norms being the standards that writing is measured by. In an academic environment, especially where native-speaker English may not be the main or dominant form, it is perhaps too easy to see student writing as being a technical and surface level skill, and problems with student writing as being purely linguistic in nature.

An academic literacies model of writing sees literacies as social practice and is concerned with meaning making, identity, power and authority. It aims to facilitate reflexivity/language awareness (Street, 2007) and provides an alternative which considers the process of writing at the level of epistemology and social/disciplinary practices within specific institutional settings and discourse communities. English (2002) sees the value in such an approach, suggesting that in considering student writing from this perspective it is possible to see how the integration of teaching academic knowledge and teaching writing can be made explicit within the course structure itself. Drawing on some experiences at Queen Mary, University of London, the following suggestions are worthy of further consideration:

- Emphasis on the constitutive role of language in generating writing (writing to learn – QMUL Thinking Writing Initiative)
- Explicit attention to the writing processes and written outcomes (learning to write – QMUL Thinking Writing Initiative )
- Helping staff to unpack and critique assumptions behind pedagogic and assessment practices, and looking towards innovation in assessment types, such as portfolios of shorter pieces of work
- Renegotiating criteria for assessment
- Increased use of collaborative teaching between discipline staff member and learning instructor, including planning together
- The removal of generality and creation of pathways that are discipline specific
- Drawing on the experience of experts (ex-students) to help the novices
- Encouraging reflexivity through contextualising (discipline specific) writing/reading/seminar practices, identifying how meaning is negotiated within disciplines.

## Conclusions

The recognition of HE environments as an ELF academic learning environment, as well as the adoption of academic literacies practices within this environment does not mean the disempowerment of the EAP professional. Rather it signals a new and exciting chapter. An academic literacies approach removes the concept of a homogenised global English native-speaker standard, and encourages the idea that writing is a process that all students go through as they adapt from their previous learning experiences to a HE one.

This approach requires both discipline specific staff and language professionals to re-evaluate their own roles in the student learning process, so that writing becomes an integral part of class time, to make students comfortable in the discourses of the specific disciplines.

Finally, as Seidlhofer (2004) alludes, the conceptualisation of ELF as a legitimate form of English, which is not tied to native speakers and native-speaker norms, empowers its users. An adoption of an academic literacies approach to student EAP learning only adds to that empowerment and offers new and exciting directions for teaching within current and future ELF learning environments.

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**www.thinkingwriting.qmul.ac.uk/** accessed 27/08/2011.

# Internationalising the seminar – communicative strategies from EAP across the curriculum


## About the author

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*University seminars offer space for students to process concepts, try out ideas and learn collaboratively. For international students, however, linguistic and cultural barriers may result in a reluctance to participate actively in seminars. This can lead to reduced critical engagement with key concepts and materials and poorer performance on the module overall. Furthermore, it may signal an apparent resistance to active learning, making the seminar experience a frustrating one for international students and their tutors.*

Academic research in this area tends to focus on international students in seminars alongside home students (for example Lee 2009; Coward & Miller 2010). Even studies of cultural barriers to participation (e.g. Leki 2001) and linguistic inhibitions (e.g. Brown 2008) treat international students as 'others' in the seminar room. In an international-only environment such as an International Foundation Programme, however, such a distinction is largely absent. Tutors should be able to adapt to overseas students' needs without concern for home students' differing requirements. Furthermore, IFPs and international colleges have trained EFL/EAP tutors on hand who are attuned to such learning needs and used to adapting materials for international students. Indeed, since subject seminars require the kinds of active participation fostered in Language and Skills classes, EAP-style teaching strategies can be particularly helpful in this area.

'Written case studies form the cornerstone of many business seminars.'

This workshop took pedagogical strategies common in English for Academic Purposes and applied them to a Business Studies seminar. The session aimed firstly to raise awareness of international students' specific learning needs, secondly to discuss techniques from EAP which can enhance student participation and engagement, and thirdly to provide a five-step lesson-planning strategy for using native-speaker materials with international students.

Workshop participants were asked to form groups of mixed subject and EAP tutors to facilitate skills and knowledge sharing. After considering the purposes and forms of university seminars, groups were asked to list particular problems international students might face in UK university seminars. These included difficulty following the discussion, problems expressing their own ideas, and a possible resistance to collaborative or critical tasks if students expect to 'receive knowledge' directly from the tutor.

The main workshop activity focused on the difficulties international students experience when required to process longer, native-speaker materials. Written case studies form the cornerstone of many business seminars, but students struggling to understand the language of the text may be unable to grasp the relevant concepts or participate in discussions. Workshop groups were given the case study *New Coke: A Classic Brand Failure* (Haig 2003). The text discusses Coke's replacement of their traditional formula in 1985 with the sweeter 'New Coke'. The new product, disappointingly, resulted in a lower market share when it transpired that consumers were emotionally attached to the old brand. Coke then re-introduced their old recipe as 'Coke Classic', thereby regaining their place as market leader. Students are expected to read the text and use it as a basis for a whole-class seminar debate on the question: 'was new Coke a tactical manoeuvre or a mistake?'

## Steps towards critical engagement

### Some suggested steps for second-language students:

- **F**ocus (main idea)
- **L**anguage (key terms for comprehension and discussion)
- **U**nderstanding content
- **T**hinking (about the key concepts/questions)
- **E**ngagement (e.g. discussion)

'Before international students can engage critically with materials, they may need time and prompting.'

Workshop participants were asked: 'How would you approach this text with a class of international students to maximise critical engagement with the material?' The groups produced excellent suggestions. Some involved ways to introduce and personalise the topic, such as bringing in a can of Coke. Many focused on making the three-page case study less intimidating to students, including skimming tasks and suggestions for breaking the text into manageable chunks. Most involved pair and group activities to encourage students to verbalise responses to the case study.

To conclude the workshop, a five-step approach to lesson planning was suggested, which participants might like to pass on to colleagues.

Five steps towards critical engagement for second-language students: FLUTE

1 Focus
2 Language
3 Understanding content
4 Thinking
5 Engagement

Students may have difficulty identifying the text's main ideas so it is useful to provide a focus before reading. A warmer can both personalise the topic and direct students to key concepts. For example, they could interview a partner with questions such as:

- do you like Coke?
- what is failure?
- what brands do you love?
- how would you feel if your favourite product changed?

Language support is vital for international students. Without guidance, they may needlessly look up every unfamiliar word in a long text. With guidance, they can identify the key terms necessary for understanding the text and discussing its main ideas. Subject tutors do not need to be language experts but can employ common EAP techniques to help students identify and define key words. For example, the tutor could prepare a list of marketing strategies used by Coke and have students scan the text to arrange these in chronological order. This activity helps map the text's structure as well as introducing key terms such as 'blind test'.

Before international students can engage critically with materials, they may need time and prompting to understand content. Tutors could break up the text, checking comprehension after each section, and asking students to predict Coke's next move so that they read subsequent sections with a purpose. Most importantly, the whole text can be summarised after reading, through content questions such as:

- Why did Coke introduce New Coke?
- Why was it a failure?
- How did Coke respond to the failure?
- Was the outcome for Coke more positive or negative overall? How?

Such questions should help students process the main ideas and can be discussed in groups so that even the most reticent are more likely to speak.

Students may appreciate thinking time to formulate a position on the main issue. This could involve small groups preparing their own marketing advice for Coke, which they should support with evidence from the text. The tutor can elicit feedback from several groups, so that students can compare a variety of strategies among classmates. This prepares them for critical engagement. Students should by now be ready to engage with the main issue: 'Was New Coke a tactical manoeuvre or a mistake?' As a result of the previous steps, students can now self-select into 'tactical manoeuvre' and 'mistake' teams. They should be reasonably confi-

dent about engaging in a whole-class debate, and ready to support their position with textual evidence.

Workshop participants agreed that communicative techniques from EAP can help international students grasp key subject concepts while creating a seminar environment more conducive to student participation. Such strategies might include group work, eliciting, and peer support. Meanwhile, the five-step FLUTE approach can help students understand issues and contribute to discussions. The five steps are Focus, Language, Understanding content, Thinking, and Engagement. These techniques represent good teaching practice and should increase participation and critical engagement from all students, whatever their language level. To conclude the workshop, participants discussed practical ways in which EAP tutors in their institutions might be able to share ideas with subject lecturers, and what they might gain in return.

'Techniques from EAP can help international students grasp key subject concepts.'

**Brown, L.** 2008. Language and anxiety: An ethnographic study of international postgraduate students. *Evaluation and Research in Education*, 21(2), 75–95.

**Coward, F.L.** & **Miller, P.C.** 2010. Navigating the Graduate Seminar Discussion: A Qualitative Analysis of International Students' Experiences. *International Journal of Communication* 4. *http://ijoc.org/ojs/index.php/ijoc/article/viewFile/780/472*

**Haig, M.** 2003. New Coke: A Classic Brand Failure. *Brand Failures*. Kogan Page. 13–18. *http://www.slideshare.net/gurjeit/worlds-biggest-brand-failures*

**Lee, G.** 2009. Speaking up: Six Korean students' oral participation in class discussions in US graduate seminars. *English for Specific Purposes*. 28 (3). 142–156.

**Leki, I.** 2001. A narrow thinking system: Nonnative-English speaking students in group projects across the curriculum. *TESOL Quarterly*, 35, 39–67.

## Going the distance: Nigerian disabled scholarship students and their transition to studies by Victoria Crane and Betty Alali Odema

***Victoria Crane and Betty Alali Odema began this session by explaining to the audience the problems faced by international disabled students in the UK for whom no official body exists. The support available is only fragmented in nature leading to feelings of isolation and culture shock. They cited Soorenian (2008) who has written about the experience of disabled students in higher education in the UK***

*Given the absence of support, the presenters wanted us to consider what the institution's role is in providing support for disabled international students. To help us with this question, the research project undertaken was explained and Betty shared with us her background as a disabled student in the UK. Along with eleven other students from Nigeria she had been sponsored by the Rivers State Sustainable Development Agency and they all came from Cheshire Homes in Nigeria, having suffered from polio as children. The homes themselves are well designed to meet the needs of disabled students and they had all been taught the necessary skills to allow them to live independently, but the lack of disability legislation in Nigeria means that it is very hard for them to study effectively in institutions where there is no wheelchair access, back to back timetabling and a lack of acceptance by the wider society.*

*They were therefore surprised to find that where some things were better in the UK such as the lack of discrimination and disability legislation; nevertheless problems existed with things such as timetabling. These problems were revealed through the semi-structured interviews that Betty had conducted with other disabled students using a peer led model of qualitative research. This method was used as it was felt that richer more frank responses would be gained through peer led interviews than if the interviews were conducted with the Programme Director. Victoria therefore helped with the design but not the implementation of the interviews. Changes were implemented as a result of the research such as allowing 15 minutes' transition time between classes.*

*This session was a reminder to us that we cannot think of international students as a homogenous body but as a group made up of many diverse individuals.*





# Internationalisation – to the classroom and beyond!

### About the author

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*To be truly beneficial to all concerned, internationalisation needs to be fully exploited at the classroom level. The University of Bristol uses international students as a resource, and views intercultural competence as a learning outcome. This paper will present successful learning and assessment activities, including cross-cultural group research projects and asynchronous discussion boards.*

### Definitions

Any discussion of internationalisation should begin with an exploration of what it actually means. Definitions from colleagues range from glib responses such as 'making money' and 'linguistic imperialism – but they love it' to more serious considerations of the subject like 'bringing international students in and making them fit to us, our ways of thinking and doing, rather than actually reviewing ourselves, our ways of doing things and refreshing and 'internationalising' our processes'. It is also worthwhile to consider three definitions from the literature which, it can be argued, represent three pervasive views of internationalisation:

- student body (income generation policies)
- curriculum (teaching & research practices)
- outcomes (intercultural awareness/ competence)

The focus of this paper is international students as a resource, internationalisation as content, international group work as pedagogy and intercultural competence as an outcome, and it argues for a transformative approach to internationalisation which leads to 'the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes.' (Deardorff, 2006 p.194). Two modules from a year-long International Foundation Programme (IFP) can show how the teaching aim of familiarising students with UK academic culture actually achieved the unintended learning outcome of developing intercultural competence as well as taking internationalisation beyond the classroom.

'Learning in groups of students from a range of cultures and backgrounds is not discipline specific.'

### Content

In the second term, students focus on writing research reports. They are given the topic of International Students and each group is asked to look at one of three articles on this subject from journals in different subject areas. The articles serve both as a source and a model for their written work. The article by Dooey (2010) on '*Students' perspectives of an EAP pathway program*' is used as a basis for classroom materials to explore the language and structure of a research report, which they then compare with their group's articles, and eventually with a research report from their own discipline. Students choose one aspect of the international student experience – teaching and assessment methods, integration within the university or learning from lectures – and carry out their own questionnaires and interviews among the student population. This process serves to raise their awareness of what is waiting for them as an international student in the UK.

### Pedagogy

Students are organised into multicultural research groups for their projects, although they produce individual written reports. As Hyland et al (2008 p.15) point out:

> 'Learning in groups of students from a range of cultures and backgrounds is not discipline specific, and therefore allows all disciplines to become engaged in the process of internationalisation'

The students' reflections on their group work in their e-portfolios highlighted not only the beginnings of intercultural awareness but also the extent to which the internationalisation extended beyond the classroom.

- *Different people have different ways of thinking so that we sometimes do not understand the other's ideas. However, we try to explain and make sure that everybody in the group understands clearly. For better work, I suppose that we should spend more time together for successful task. (Thai)*

- *Group work was also unfamiliar activities for me. I think our group succeeded in cooperating with each other. However, negotiation was not so easy for us, especially in second language. I strongly felt necessity of English improvement. (Japanese)*
- *Surprisingly, we are never absent meeting every time and always have long meeting in the lunchtimes, even we usually discuss the report processes for a long time after class. Moreover, we often email together in accommodation to talk about the latest situation and give regards. (Chinese)*

## Learning outcome

The final examination (40%) for the module consists of a task-based written report following the situation, problem, solution, evaluation model. Students are given a title and some sources of information (texts and lecture) before the exam and then produce the report under timed conditions. The topic of intercultural competence was chosen for the texts and lecture in the hope that students would be able to draw on their own experience of working in intercultural groups during the course to support their arguments.

## Learning resource

In their final term, students follow a selection of modules from a sociology A level course aimed at raising awareness of British culture in general, whilst practising the teaching and learning methods typical of a UK higher education institution – lectures, seminars, tutorials. Each student writes an essay comparing one aspect of British culture with that aspect of culture in their own society. Students are given a textbook chapter to read in preparation for Monday's lecture. Two students then take responsibility for leading that week's seminar on the Friday. Meanwhile, all students are required to engage in an asynchronous discussion board where issues arising from the lecture and reading are discussed. It was through these contributions that the unintended learning outcome of intercultural competence became clear, as well as the extension beyond the classroom.

'Students follow a selection of modules from a sociology A level course aimed at raising awareness of British culture.'

- *Family topic was almost controversial topic, because of the cultural differences, also related to religious issues. Hence, we were just listen and respect others points of view. (Saudi 1)*
- *The greatest thing that I got from this first seminar was that we are still want to know and to extend more about each other ideas; what I mean we kept talking about it even after the seminar. (Saudi 2)*
- *From this seminar, I've learned to listen other people's talk, to understand that not everyone has the same view with me and try to think about if they are reasonable. (Chinese)*
- *I learnt from others that we should not make a judgement on other different cultures (Thai)*

## Conclusion

These students have begun on that journey of self-deconstruction and re-construction that is the process of internationalisation. However, this will not just happen. International Foundation Programmes are perfectly positioned to facilitate this process as outlined by Byram (1997 p.34) in which linguistic competence plays a key role:

- Knowledge of others;
- knowledge of self;
- skills to interpret and relate;
- skills to discover and interact;
- valuing others' beliefs;
- relativising oneself.

**Byram, M.** (1997). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.

**Deardorff, D. K.** (2006). Identification and assessment of Intercultural Competence as a Student Outcome of Internationalisation. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 10:3, 241–266.

**Dooey, P.** (2010) Students' perspectives of an EAP pathway program *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 9: 184–197.

**Hyland, F., Trahar, S., Anderson, J.** & **Dickens, A.** (2008) *A Changing World: The Internationalisation Experiences of Staff and Students (Home and International)* in UK Higher Education (ESCalate and LLAS report). Retrieved 14/6/2011 from *http://escalate.ac.uk/downloads/5248.pdf*





# A practitioner enquiry into metacognitive thinking and the function of thinking skills on a postgraduate foundation programme

## About the author

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*This paper is a summary of a practitioner enquiry conducted between September 2010 and May 2011 with INTO Newcastle University Graduate Diploma (GD) students. The enquiry looked at cognition and metacognition through the use of both self study record sheets and thinking skills activities. It was found that both had a positive impact on the learners and often encouraged greater thinking about learning.*

## Introduction

The GD programme consists of two academic semesters with subject modules and one module in English for Academic Purposes (EAP). While many different skills are covered along with the ethos of acclimatising to postgraduate level of study and assessment, there are always going to be gaps. This is due to a number of reasons, not least of course, time. The enquiry covered two different aspects, one investigating the use of a self study log sheet in relation to metacognitive reflection and the other exploring the use of thinking skills within the programme context. The focus is based on the categorisation of different types of knowledge and cognition from the revised taxonomy for learning proposed by Bloom (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001) linked with the notion of thinking skills (more of which later).

## Practitioner enquiry aspect 1

The initial enquiry aimed to investigate whether the recording of self study work would have any impact on the learners' metacognitive awareness. One key aspect of the EAP module is the expectation to undertake a recommended 10 hours of self study time every week. While some students are quite independent and/or enjoy the nature of self study, others find it more of a challenge. It can fluctuate depending on the workload of the programme and often students forget the self study work they have done from week to week. When questioned informally by teachers, the learners usually respond with very distinctive opinions that are at one end of the scale or the other.

'Data would be collected from the student log sheets and compared to a teacher observation journal ...'

## Research question

What impact does the recording and monitoring of self study have on a language learner's awareness of metacognition? Metacognition, for the purposes of this enquiry, is limited to the following three key areas:

1. awareness of strong – weak areas of language skills and strategies to develop these areas
2. the ability to evaluate elements of difficulty from classes and then identify suitable materials and methods to improve knowledge
3. the ability to evaluate the skills required by the programme, the output of lessons and the shortfall that the individual needs to self study

## Methodology

The enquiry began with some initial assumptions of the participants based on discussions with the teaching staff. The main approach was qualitative whereby data would be collected from the student log sheets and compared to a teacher observation journal, as advocated by Moon (2009), to aid reflection and stimulate a range of cognitive thoughts from the writer. The sample consisted of 23 students with a range of nationalities including Chinese (the majority nationality), Vietnamese, Brazilian and Thai. The enquiry took the following stages:

- (initial) assumptions / predictions
- log sheet given at beginning of semester 1
- teachers' notes on awareness in class (continuous)
- log sheets checked in week three and feedback from teacher

- log sheets checked in week nine and comments from students

### Outcomes

- The log sheet (and subsequent periods of checking) resulted in encouraging self study amongst most of the participants.
- An increase in awareness of strengths and weaknesses by most of the students who engaged with the log sheet / self study.
- The log sheet was a useful tool for reference and planning development of cognitive skills for both the student and in tutorials with the teacher.
- One issue of reliability was that not all the students attached evidence that they had done the work or could not verify if the evidence was their own if from a computer programme or typed document.

### Practitioner enquiry aspect 2

There is a focus on thinking, such as factual and conceptual knowledge, with critical responses on many pathway programmes; however, the main interest in this study was the range of cognitive skills, including metacognition through active listening and talk (Fisher, 2003; Lipman, 2003). Thinking skills in this context are referred to as opportunities to learn through talk and they involve honesty from the participants and teachers and the ability to be a good listener (Fisher, 2003). They encompass a range of skills such as learning to actually listen (rather than hear), 'sizing up the assumptions that underlie each utterance, drawing inferences, testing for consistency and comprehensiveness, learning to think independently and by freely choosing one's own premises' (Lipman, 2003; 165). A typical activity is introduced (in a scaffolded way if necessary), delivered (whereby there is not one correct answer) and then debriefed together to identify what was gained and how it was learnt (Lofthouse & Leat, 2006). One challenge to this with international students is cultural difference, whereby interjections could be seen as rude and inappropriate in certain cultures (Nunan, 1992). Another factor is the level of a critical response is dependent upon the cultural and educational background of each individual learner.

'There can be a positive impact on some students and it can help to focus their needs during academic tutorials.'

### Research question

How do thinking skill activities aid in raising the development of metacognition for learners on a pathway programme? Do they provide opportunities to enhance the levels of autonomy?

### Methodology

It was decided that qualitative research would provide the type of data required to make more informed interpretations and evaluation of the impact the thinking skills activities had on the metacognitive awareness development (Burns 1999). A teacher observation log and samples of student responses in the debriefing stage were chosen as the main tools for analysis. The thinking skills activities used were stand in a line, concept maps, diamond ranking and an idea funnel. The sample consisted of 26 students from a high and mid level group.

### Outcomes

- Increased opportunities for learning through talk stimulated different degrees of metacognition among the students
- The more the thinking skills activities were used, the more the students engaged with them
- There were issues with some students, perhaps due to the time chosen to conduct these activities and the point in the programme – an earlier intervention may be more useful
- Some of the debrief sections worked better than others – this is an area for personal development to ensure the students get the most out of the activities

### Final thoughts

What both enquiries have demonstrated is that there is a need to investigate the notion of cognition beyond the responses that are determined under the heading of critical thinking. The transition from a system more dependent on the teacher as expert to a constructivist model of learning, for example in a seminar situation, can be scaffolded earlier in the programme to enable the rest of the programme to function as more of an academic acclimatisation that is generally now more relevant in the eyes of the learners. What this enquiry has suggested is that there can be a positive impact on some students and it can help to focus their needs during academic tutorials or help to reinforce what they are learning and why. The very notion of learning in a completely different culture, both academic and general, means that any tool that can help break down the barriers is perhaps worthy of further exploration. Certainly it is not the only way to do this, but rather it offers one approach in what Leat and Higgins (2002) refer to as powerful pedagogical strategies.


**Anderson, L. W.** & **Krathwohl, D. R.** (2001). *A Taxonomy for Learning, Teaching and Assessing: A Revision of Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives*. London: Longman.

**Burns, A.** (1999). *Collaborative Action Research for English Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Fisher, R.** (2003). *Teaching Thinking (2nd ed)*. London: Continuum Books.

**Leat, D.** & **Higgins, S.** (2002). The Role of Powerful Pedagogical Strategies in Curriculum Development. *Curriculum Journal*, 13:1, 71–85.

**Lipman, M.** (2003). *Thinking in Education (2nd ed)*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Lofthouse, R** and **Leat, D.** (2006). Chapter 40: Reflecting on teaching and learning – using thinking skills. In: Balderstone, D., ed., *Secondary Geography Handbook*. 504–512.

**Moon, J.** (1999). *Learning Journals. A handbook for Academics, Students and Professional Development*. London: Kogan Page.

**Nunan, D.** (1992). *Research Methods in Language Learning*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.


# Round Table discussion: an IFP community?

The conference ended with an open forum, chaired by Anthony Manning of the University of Kent, designed to bring all the delegates together to consider the reality, goals and possible future of an IFP community. The discussion centred on four questions:

- Do you feel part of an IFP community?
- What value can an IFP community provide?
- How much interaction can/should there be between English language tutors and subject tutors?
- Do you think most IFPs share a common goal?

The lively debate suggested that there is an interest in continued action in order to share practice, widen the scope of the IFP community (possibly joining forces with other groups such as the Foundation Year Network), and investigate the possibility of a sector-wide framework or model.

It was therefore decided to form a new working group to consider ways to move forward, perhaps even beyond *InForm*. The editorial board invites readers interested to join this group to email **inform@reading.ac.uk** by the end of November 2012 and a preliminary meeting (possibly virtual) will be organised by the end of the year.

# Call for papers

The submission of papers is now invited for the ninth edition of *InForm*, from tutors who represent a variety of academic disciplines commonly found within international foundation programmes. The ninth edition will be published in April 2012.

Full instructions for writers can be downloaded from the *InForm* website at the following address: **www.reading.ac.uk/inform**

Writers are reminded that *InForm* is not predominantly an English language teaching journal.

Articles and letters should be sent by email to **inform@reading.ac.uk** by 12.00 pm on 31 January 2012.

Writers whose articles are published in *InForm* will receive a fee of £100. £50 will be paid for any letter which is published.


For further information, please contact:
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# *InForm* Conference 2012 and beyond

The *InForm* Conference has been successfully hosted by the University of Reading for the past two years and we would very much like to see the scope of the conference continue to grow. We would therefore welcome expressions of interest from other institutions who may be interested in hosting a future conference in either 2012 or 2013.

Please email
**inform@reading.ac.uk**
to discuss further details.

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