InForm

InForm
Conference 2013

What do IFP students need? Balancing linguistic and content teaching: how much and when?

The annual *InForm* Conference provides an opportunity for interaction and sharing of practice with others from the IFP sector.

The event will take place at the University of Reading and will include seminars and workshops on themes related to international foundation programmes.

Saturday 20 July 2013

Palmer Building
Whiteknights campus
University of Reading

Conference fee: £55.00

Registration

Please register for the conferenceby 14 June 2013. Further information can be found on our website **www.reading.ac.uk/inform**.

Speaker proposals

Speaker proposals are invited from professionals involved in the delivery of international foundation and pathway programmes. Sessions should appeal to tutors and course managers from across the curriculum. We are particularly interested in receiving proposals which involve collaboration between tutors across subject areas, as this aligns with the inherent diversity embedded within most international foundation programmes.

Speaker proposal forms will be available for download from **www.reading.ac.uk/inform**

Please email all speaker proposals to **inform@reading.ac.uk** by 30 April 2013.

Inside *InForm* …

From the Editorial Board …

The *InForm* Conference 2012 in Newcastle was a resounding success. This statement is not as self-congratulatory as it may seem, given that this year's conference left Reading for the first time and headed north to the University of Newcastle. Steven Herron and his team at Newcastle organised a stimulating and informative day, with a variety of sessions reflecting the breadth and depth of the IFP sector. On behalf of the *InForm* Editorial Board I would like to thank Steven for all of his efforts in making the conference so enjoyable and thought-provoking.

For those people who were unable to attend the conference, this issue of *InForm* will provide a window onto the interests and concerns of presenters and delegates alike as we looked at ways to enhance our international foundation programmes through the theme:
Is teaching and learning enough? Can additional elements aid the transition from a foundation programme to university study?

The three keynote speakers responded to this theme in different ways. First of all, Dr Felicity Breet (University of Sunderland) addressed the basic question of what our programmes are aiming to achieve – to make our students fit in or help them to break the mould – and encouraged us all to step back and scrutinise what it is we are trying to do. Next, Professor Vivian Baumfield (University of Glasgow) focused on the ways in which international students learn to synthesise sources and develop an argument suitable for UK academic study. She argued that teaching and learning isn't enough – unless we understand it in a richer way. Finally, Dr Peter Sercombe (Newcastle University) reported on his research into international students' perceptions of their intercultural adjustment, which suggests the importance of non-academic issues and people to their experience.

The presentations that followed the opening session went on to explore more of the additional elements that are important at foundation level. As you will read in the following pages, these included; culture, language support, critical thinking, reflective learning, global citizenship, video resources, and a student conference. We are grateful to the authors for writing up their presentations for inclusion in *InForm* 10, and for sharing their ideas, research and initiatives with the IFP sector.

We welcome your comments, letters and contributions. To submit an article for *InForm* 11 please email it to: **inform@reading.ac.uk**.

Elisabeth Wilding
Chairperson *InForm* Editorial Board

The psychosocial adjustment of international students

About the author

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On coming to live and study in the UK, international students invariably have to come to terms with not only different academic literacy conventions, but also an unfamiliar socio-cultural environment both on and off-campus. Academic literacy course providers have an opportunity to mitigate the potentially negative effects of culture shock by first recognising the particular psychological and sociocultural issues which confront their students and then altering the provisions – both academic and non-academic – that are provided.

It is tempting, certainly at least within the context of preparatory academic literacy courses, to view our students through an exclusively pedagogic lens. Teachers and institutions can be forgiven for focusing on the cognitive, behavioural and literacy skills required for undergraduate study; that is, after all, what we are paid to do.

Yet the boundary drawn between the students' formal academic identities inside the classroom and their 'real lives' outside the classroom is not as clear-cut for our students as it is for us. We might consider ourselves and what we do as somehow separate from their everyday lives, but as far as they are concerned we are very much an integral part of their 'UK experience'.

An important step, then, towards having a greater sense of personal and institutional solidarity with our students is to find out how they are doing (psychological well-being) and what they are doing (sociocultural adjustment) in terms of coming to terms with their new lives here. Once we have a clearer idea of our students' psychosocial adjustment, we will be better able at an institutional level to adapt and expand upon the provisions we offer to better suit our students' needs and expectations (Andrade, 2006).

Justification for institutional interest in students' psychosocial adjustment:

1. *Pedagogic*

What happens outside of class affects what is understood in class and vice versa (Bacon, 2002). A clearer understanding and awareness of our students' lives and experiences elsewhere will allow teachers a greater depth of understanding as to what students relate to (and engage with) and what they do not.

2. *Linguistic*

Our students are language learners, and this extends beyond the remit of the classroom and formal academic literacy. The degree to which they have meaningful contact with the English speaking world will ultimately determine their written and spoken fluency and accuracy across all genres, include academic ones (Regan, 1998).

3. *Commercial*.

Word-of-mouth is one of our biggest recruiters. If our students are happy, well-adjusted and successful, then news of those positive experiences will spread (Ryan, 2008), which – at the end of the day – is good for business. It makes sense not only for individual institutions but also UKplc to find out if our customers are satisfied.

Case-study

I conducted a small-scale case study over the 2011–2012 International Foundation Programme at Queen Mary, University of London. I focused on the out-of-class socio-cultural experiences of 6 students, gathering qualitative data through interviews, diaries, group discussions and questionnaires. The investigation centred on the following themes:

- Social activities
- Friendship networks and languages used socially
- Living arrangements
- Attitudes towards Britain and British society
- Feelings and general psychological well-being
- Motivations and aspirations

While they were demographically quite similar (Asian, 18 years old, IELTS 6.0, planning to study Business or Economics), I discovered some notable differences in terms of how the students engaged with their new cultural surroundings. *Tom*, for example, saw London as a playground to explore with co-national and co-cultural acquaintances; when asked his impressions of living in the city, his observations were related to nightclubs, licensing laws and littering. *Lucy*, on the other hand, was far more cautious and reserved, rarely venturing from

her room (and when doing so only going as far as Chinatown). *Kate* thought London was 'boring', while *John* complained – unironically – that London had 'too many foreign people'.

There were, however, some feelings and experiences about their lives here which were unanimous:

- Linguistic inadequacy. The students felt that, although their English was functional, it was not adequate for socially engaging native English speakers. Thus, even when they had the opportunity to interact with British people, they chose not to out of embarrassment, fear or (real or perceived) passive discrimination.

- Institutional marginalisation. All of the students described a sense of 'not really belonging' to the university sub-culture, and that, by virtue of being foundation students, they somehow 'sat at the baby table'.

- Disappointment. Before arrival, the expectation had been for more genuine interaction and integration with the host society. Instead, there was a general feeling of being 'stuck' with other students from similar cultural and linguistic backgrounds because of either their own inability to meaningfully engage with their surroundings, or lack of opportunity to do so.

The case for institutional intervention

Of course, we cannot assume that these feelings and experiences are shared by all IFP students everywhere. Undoubtedly there are many who feel unfazed by language barriers and fully integrated into their sociocultural environment. It's fair to presume, though, that a significant number of foundation programme students want and expect an authentic UK-study experience, but instead feel alone or trapped in an 'at-home-abroad' bubble of cultural and linguistic same-ness. This sociocultural marginalisation leaves students more vulnerable to acculturative stress (Berry, 2005), which can in turn manifest itself as somaticised physical illness or mental health issues (Smith and Khawaja, 2011).

'there are several steps that can be taken to ease the acculturative process.'

Although it is beyond the power of an institution such as a university to guarantee psychological well-being and sociocultural adjustment for all its students, there are several steps that can be taken to ease the acculturative process. UKCISA (2008), for instance, recommends that international students be supported through mentoring schemes and extended cultural orientation sessions, while Boyle (2009) suggests introducing participation with the student union as a mandatory part of the curriculum.

Doubtless, as institutional contexts vary so too will their corresponding issues – there is unlikely to be a 'one-size-fits-all' solution to all of our students' psycho-social needs. Nonetheless, a shared common interest and concern among all course providers in regards to the psychological well-being and social adjustment of our students is a significant first step towards taking a more holistic approach towards the range of provisions that we offer.

Andrade, M. S. (2006). International students in English-speaking universities. *Journal of Research in International Education, 5*(2), 131–154.

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Culture (dis)orientation and (un)social English

About the author

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Many believe culture to be the fifth language skill; if this is the case, why then is cultural instruction, in terms of both induction to UK culture and/or social English, rarely incorporated into university programmes such as IFPs? This paper will look at what we do (or perhaps do not do) in terms of social and cultural orientation in Foundation classes. It will also consider problems that can occur due to lack of, not only linguistic, but also social and cultural knowledge. This paper will offer suggestions for activities that could assist students in both academic and non-academic situations: everything they want to know . . . but we are afraid to teach.

Introduction

As culture is such an inter-disciplinary subject, encompassing as it does linguistics, psychology & sociology, it is an area that few, including myself, are truly qualified to talk about. Regardless, this paper aims to do just that, drawing on my own observations from both a 'teacherly' perspective and from involvement in pastoral care.

The need for social/cultural instruction

There can be little doubt that the majority of IFP teachers are well aware of the usefulness of social/cultural instruction However, few, if they are honest, would admit to spending much, if any, time on it. As well as lack of time, tutors have also suggested that this is due to a lack of confidence i.e. not knowing *how* to cover it and/or *what* to cover. It is certainly the case that IFP academic skills syllabuses rarely contain anything that could be said to represent social/cultural instruction apart from that which is purely incidental to language work.

'Clearly in the British university environment, learning academic skills as well as English language skills is not enough.'

Clearly in the British university environment, learning academic skills as well as English language skills is not enough, Tomalin (2008) refers to culture as the 'fifth language skill' saying, *'I'd assumed that if you learned the language you learned the culture but actually it isn't true. You can learn a lot of cultural features but it doesn't teach you sensitivity and awareness or even how to behave in certain situations. What the fifth language skill teaches you is the mindset and techniques to adapt your use of English to learn about, understand and appreciate the values, ways of doing things and unique qualities of other cultures ... It is an attitudinal change that is expressed through the use of language.'*

Cultural 'bumps' and incidents

Tomalin and Stempleski (1995) suggest culture can be divided into 4 areas;

- Cultural knowledge – awareness of a culture's institutions, which they call 'the big C'

- Cultural values – what people believe to be important i.e. ideas on fairness and attitudes to family and patriotism
- Cultural behaviour – the way people behave on a daily basis e.g. routines – they call this 'the little C'
- Cultural skills – 'the development of intercultural sensitivity and awareness … using the English language as the medium of interaction' (Tomalin, 2008)

Greenall (2003) discusses culture shock and what he has entitled 'cultural bumps' – less serious incidences of cultural adaptation. Cultural bumps range from a recognition of difference through to surprise, while full culture shock starts with communication breakdown, moving on to a state of shame or anger. So-called 'cultural incidents' (that is, cultural faux pas or misunderstandings) can also cause considerable cross-cultural stress. I recently observed a conversation between a (native) trader and a (non native) customer that ran as follows;

Customer:	*'How much this?'*
Trader:	*'That's £5, sir'*
Customer:	*'Too much! I give you £2!'*

As this is a written version of a dialogue it might not be possible to pick up on the all-important intonation but suffice to say this was a problematic exchange full of tension largely due to cultural misunderstanding. The problem from the trader's point of view was that the customer had come over as aggressive through their intonation, use of grammar and lack of use of common pleasantries such as 'excuse me' or 'please'.

Activities – academic

All this leads to the question of what kinds of activities can be done in class to help students with some of the aforementioned problems. I tend to focus on a variety of activities applicable to both academic and non-academic situations. With regard to academic situations, I have worked on activities dealing with appropriacy of: salutation, level of formality and phrasing between both

tutors/administrative staff and students. These types of activities could include role play covering a variety of likely situations such as apologizing for lateness/ non attendance and asking for extensions. Given the prevalence of communications by e-mail nowadays it is important to engage in awareness raising activities that highlight acceptable and unacceptable ways of communication via this medium.

Activities – non academic

I also incorporate a variety of non academic activities. One that always seems to engage and enlighten students is an activity that compares and contrasts etiquette in their own country with that of the UK. As Moss (2002) said,'*When students are engaged in cultural learning they will naturally compare the foreign values, behaviour and customs with their own country's and this reflection can help them know their own culture better or modify pre-conceived conceptions'*. Comparative etiquette activities work well with mixed nationality classes, on a variety of levels. I tend to reinforce these findings with a FAQ sheet summarising attitudes in the UK with regard to factors such as punctuality and attitudes to time, appropriate responses to invitations and greetings, and an overview of various cultural factors in the UK, for example the norm for social interaction between men and women.

Another worthwhile activity relates to situational/ functional 'speech acts' which are believed to 'vary enormously between cultures' (Brown and Eisterhold, 2004). This activity sets a series of scenarios and asks what a native response might be. Topics include refusing politely and linguistic 'tactics' – including structures such as *'I don't know what it's called but …'* to describe an item when one has forgotten the word for

it. Other activities include the functional and succinct nature of directions, as well as the cultural nature of complaints – polite but firm! Work on slang and euphemism can also prove productive. As students tend to have difficulty understanding UK culture, activities such as those dealing with stereotypes of how British people look, think and act may also be helpful. I have successfully used humorous postcards portraying the British for such a purpose.

Conclusion

I believe it is our duty to make time for cultural/ social instruction in class. To use an informal phrase we as tutors need to 'grow some' – speaking up in meetings and at other times in order to get such vital input incorporated into our syllabuses. For, if we fail to do so, we will surely be at least partially responsible for the students' state of cultural disorientation, having ill equipped them linguistically for life outside the classroom.

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Moss H. (2002) *The Importance of Developing Cultural Awareness.* Available at http://www.britishcouncil.org/pt/portugal-inenglish-2002s-developing-cultural-awareness.pdf.

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Service learning and social-entrepreneurship in foundation year: a new paradigm?

About the author

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This presentation offered a model for integrating social entrepreneurship and service learning projects that can be adapted to most foundation/ long-term pre-sessional courses and assessments for students transitioning to Western-style university education. Numerous examples from the literature, existing programmes, and results from the presenter's own on-shore and off-shore experience emerged as a framework of potential projects that can be integrated to support pre-defined programme goals; and participants were challenged to debate whether this type of provision should be a core component of foundation year and if so, how social-entrepreneurship and service learning can be best integrated into Foundation programmes.

Why Social Entrepreneurship?

Lee Hawkes presented directly before me that Foundation students are struggling to acculturate primarily due to limited language proficiency and their position 'inside but outside' university communities. Furthermore, Quinlan (2011) reports that the UK student experience is underdeveloped.

Despite these consternations, for the last five years I have been quite successful at addressing the student experience and acculturation issue through initiating a 'service learning' and 'social entrepreneurship' paradigm based on Astin's Higher Education Involvement (1999) and Transformative Leadership (2000) theories. One step further, Gordon

Bloom suggested in 2006 that the integration of social entrepreneurship is a new form of pedagogy because it entails student-generated topics. In the UK, social entrepreneurship, loosely
defined, is now part of the National Curriculum (Anglia Ruskin, 2009) and provides thousands of experiential learning opportunities for young people to explore and reflect on their values and goals (Social Enterprise UK, 2011). My version of this paradigm situates social action at the centre of learning and engages students into the wider community, offers 'real-world' practice of Academic English and potentially many other Foundation level subject skills, and integrates leadership and management skills into Foundation projects and assessments. Through these projects I have seen students' creativity, self-motivation, and leadership potential come alive and spark further interest in contributing to society. As many students come to university hoping to later become business leaders, systematically introducing entrepreneurial skills in Foundation year has been particularly welcomed by the administration, as well as the majority of students who seem to be aching for meaningful learning experiences. This overview offers possible course objectives and an activity framework that can be integrated into most Foundation programmes by aligning goals to competences.

Social Action Course Objectives

Ensuring positive social transformation in foundation courses requires a clear set of achievable aims which correspond to the wider vision of the parent university and benefit the common good. At the University of Notre Dame in the USA, for example, a government-funded service learning pre-sessional course was developed in 2011 that included amongst the course objectives: 'Help students to integrate opportunities

'**students who have the confidence to turn their social ideas into action.**'

for language learning and practice with community volunteer service projects and community engagement; and assist students in the design of a community service project which can be carried back to their home countries and implemented with appropriate follow-up and support'. Burke (2007) highlighted service learning objectives relevant to Foundation year such as 'Research and address real-world problem', 'Connect substantive coursework to actual experiences', 'Develop a habit of reflective self-evaluation', and 'Enhance job skills and personal responsibility'. Although all Foundation curricula should aspire to achieve similar objectives, the added value of social-entrepreneurship offers Burke's entire list as well as initiation to several key transferable competencies for leadership roles in the private, and public spheres as well as the rapidly emerging 'third sector':

- Develop an understanding of the complexity of managing teams and processes within deadlines and based on performance-criteria
- Gain experience with action planning and implementation
- Develop written/spoken results and methodologies based on real-world business and NGO practices
- Develop a sensitivity to the processes and outcomes of marketing and advertising ideas
- Create a feasibility process and product that can be adapted to multiple environments to support the common good

Four Types of Social Action Foundation Projects

The 'Social Entrepreneurship Research Project' (Lange, forthcoming) in Table 1 below offers practitioners and course designers an adaptable framework of activities which can be linked to Foundation-level assessments:

Table 1: Amended Academic and Social Involvement Activities for Foundation and Pre-sessional Courses

Involvement Activity	Description	Example
Team Fundraising Research Projects into Written Reports – Global or Local Level	includes an established NGO that supports an initiative related to the reading material, lectures, or other course content	Two teams in one class are required to write 5,000 word team research reports or 1,500 word individual argumentative essays about a small fundraising project for a Global Clean Water charity. Each team completes two small projects during a given time frame and analyses their results.
Individual Social/Community Activity Building into an Extended Essay/Report	includes a local project or campus project that the student initiates and/or completes	Individuals define an issue that affects the campus or local community and acts on it, such as a recycling campaign. The results are analysed/discussed according to pre-defined criteria in a 2,500 word paper.
Individual or Small Group Modelling of Involved Public Speakers	targeted listening activities using an inquiry/reflective approach that prompts students to act using multiple discourse items	In-depth analysis of the intonation/word choice/approach of expert speakers on the topic can be followed by development of students' own online speaking forum, a short film, or giving a presentation to a local interest group.
Word of Mouth Fundraising Team Activities	This includes an established NGO or local cause and requires out of class time talking to people on the street, on the phone or having an event stand.	Fundraising conversation with a potential local donor recording meaningful and spontaneous dialogues that students can formatively self-evaluate followed by a summative speaking test where the examiner role plays as a potential donor.

Conclusion

My answer to 'Is teaching and learning enough?' is yes, when we are teaching for social change, and learning how to contribute to a better world. My answer to 'how can we motivate and have the capacity for this?' is that in every course, every curriculum, every university – through aligning social engagement goals with competences and utilising the strengths and interests of Foundation staff and students – we can inspire a new generation of students who start to make a difference before they step into their first undergraduate seminar: students who have the confidence to turn their social ideas into action through involvement and transformative leadership.

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Show or tell? video for living and learning

About the author

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Adjusting to life in a different country is a challenge for many international students and one that may concern them more than success in their studies, at least in the early stages after their arrival. The University of York has, therefore, developed Access UK, an online, video-based resource focusing on practical and social situations international students often encounter. Its primary focus is on language, but it also provides a wider cultural context. This paper identifies the need for such a resource and explains the ways in which it has been addressed in the project. Video techniques such as active viewing and structured improvisation are outlined. Feedback from learners and teachers is cited and, finally, opportunities to share skills developed in the project are offered.

The Niche

'Life outside the classroom' has been identified by the *Higher Education Academy* as one of five key stages in what they describe as the 'International Student Lifecycle.'

'For international students travelling to study in the UK … their success depends not just on what happens at university but also in the broader university or local community; they travel to study not just for an academic qualification but also for the language and cultural experience … They need to feel a 'sense of belonging' in their new environment and access to good support services and networks to ensure their academic success and positive experiences during their study.' (HEA, nd.)

However, many international students whose first language is not English find spoken communication for practical and social purposes particularly challenging. Indeed, there is evidence that some regard this as a more significant need than language skills for study itself (Jordan, 1997) at least in the initial months after their arrival.

Many language centres in Higher and Further Education, therefore, run courses in 'Survival English.' However, there is little published learning material available of direct relevance to the campus setting or which is offered in the modular format in which such courses are often presented. One of the few relevant resources is the University of Southampton's website, *Prepare for Success.* Although impressive, this focuses primarily on the study situation and its audio visual material is restricted to 'talking head' interviews.

The Project

Over the past three years, two members of Centre for English Language Teaching (CELT)

at the University of York, Huw Llewelyn-Jones and Chris Copland have, therefore, been developing a series of video-based teaching and learning materials to fill this niche. What began as a personal project, squeezed in between the authors' 'real' work, and intended only for CELT students, quickly gathered momentum and in the Spring of 2011 Clarity English, the ELT software consultants, offered the team a publishing contract. The result, *Access UK,* is now available online as a commercial product to both institutions and individuals.

There are two strands to the programme. One is for use in the classroom and provides a full set of lesson material from a single online location: streamed video and audio, printable task sheets for learners and notes for teachers. The other strand is for individuals working independently and supports the videos with interactive activities, as well as practical and cultural briefing on the themes the films illustrate. At York, the self-access version is being used both to consolidate classroom sessions and as a stand-alone resource for new arrivals.

Why video?

The dimension this medium adds to spoken language is that of context. Body language and action can give insight into the relationship between characters, while the location, whether in a pub or on a bendy bus, provides an overall cultural backdrop.

From the advent of VHS tape, the technique of 'active viewing' (Stempleski, 1990) became a staple in English language teaching. This used simple techniques, such as freeze-fame and silent viewing, to stimulate discussion of enfolding video scenes and, through follow-up activities such as role play, challenged the perception of video as a passive educational medium. Ironically, though, there are fewer video materials available now for language learning, despite the ease of production and delivery of digital materials and the familiarity with the medium of the *YouTube* generation.

The scenes featured are not scripted but generated through a process of 'structured improvisation.' Actors work to a plan but do not have a script; rather they ad-lib the language and behaviour they might use. Most scenes involve interaction between native and non-native speakers and all roles are played either by students or by those with direct experience of the situation. Thus, for example, a doctor agreed to play himself conducting a consultation at the university health centre.

Local Response

The reception from learners at York has been a positive one. Forty learners from four different in-sessional classes were surveyed and a clear majority agreed the materials were useful, stimulating and user-friendly. One teacher gave this verdict:

'I think the slickness of the materials presented a good image of the lesson and attracted learners to the work. A video is a particularly engaging way of engaging!!

Very user friendly – really enjoyed the fact that there were teacher worksheets and a student version online, that could prep from home easily, that I could project the answers so students could see correct spelling etc.'

Over the past year, *Access UK* has become a standard part of pre-sessional and in-sessional courses at *CELT* and is now being rolled out through other university departments. *Education, Health Sciences* and *Human Rights* feature the self-access version on their transition sites. It is featured on the Welcome pages for new undergraduates and *International Recruitment* are making it available to every applicant who accepts a place.

Widening the Picture

The next stage of the project is to share skills that have been developed with colleagues in the sector. In November, CELT are offering a one-day practical workshop in *Making Video for ELT*, in collaboration with the *Centre for Languages, Linguistics and Area Studies.*

Full details of the LLAS Video Training Day can be found on: **http://www.llas.ac.uk/events/6643**

For a demonstration of Access UK, go to: **http://www.clarityenglish.com/program/accessuk.php**

Alternatively, contact: **chris.copland@york.ac.uk huw.llewelyn-jones@york.ac.uk**

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International foundation student conference

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For two consecutive years, we have run a conference for students on International Foundation programmes at Leeds Metropolitan, Teesside and York St John Universities. This feature of our three programmes has proved to be highly beneficial for students in terms of presentation skills and study skills more generally.

Background

The literature relating to EAP teaching is full of references to the need for authenticity, but this tends to refer mainly to the use of authentic materials in the EAP classroom and to the assessment process (see, for example, Jordan, 1997). However, in general, as Flowerdew & Peacock note, 'speaking in EAP remains a relatively neglected skill' (2001:188). Alexander, Argent & Spencer (2008) argue for graded presentation tasks in a supportive environment in order to prepare students and help them overcome their anxiety. This may well be appropriate on relatively short presessional programmes, but it has been our experience that on longer foundation programmes, presentations in the classroom quickly become routine and relatively 'safe' events. In order to provide students with a more authentic and challenging experience, we co-operated to run conferences for students where they would give presentations to previously unknown audiences. Through the conferences we have tried to promote experiential learning in a way recommended by Montgomery (2010), who makes it clear that learning outside the confines of the classroom plays a key part in student development.

The conferences

We have now held two conferences, which we try to run like 'real' conferences, with overarching themes, plenary and breakout sessions where students present in groups, delegate packs with programmes, campus maps and name badges. Students present to a mixed audience of staff and students from all three institutions, including some staff from wider university communities who are invited to participate. The student conferences differ from their more authentic versions in some respects though, in that we prepare the students during class time over several weeks on our respective programmes, and we determine the make-up of each group to ensure a mix of nationalities and genders. Because all three of our institutions have students heading mainly for Business programmes, we have opted for themes relevant to that subject area, but broad enough to be of interest to others (last year, for example, we asked students to research and develop new ideas for the market in the style of 'Dragons' Den').

Challenges and benefits for students

For students, presenting at the conferences has clearly been challenging, but for many it has been referred to as the most rewarding aspect of their entire programme for the sense of achievement they experienced.

Managing anxiety is perhaps the most difficult aspect of participating in such an event, but the amount of preparation does generally prevent any disasters in this respect, and the sense of achievement from overcoming 'nerves' and completing a public presentation is significant.

Given that many undergraduate programmes today involve group work, the preparation mirrors the requirements of those future programmes. Students learn through experience how to work together to produce a presentation, which often entails overcoming obstacles of various kinds and requires a degree of 'professionalism'. Post-conference reflection has revealed that most students learn valuable lessons in terms of the amount of preparation and rehearsal time that is required for a successful presentation and about time-management skills more generally. This has been particularly evident for the more confident students who often assumed they would perform better than they actually did, and post-conference reflection has repeatedly referred to the need for better time-management.

Other considerations

The main issue for staff concerned students who were not being formally assessed. Two of our institutions tied in the presentations with formally assessed course work, but the third was unable to do so. In the event, on each of the two years, there were numerous absences amongst the non-assessed group, but 100% attendance for the assessed students. We would therefore strongly recommend that wherever possible, conference presentations should be tied in with assessment.

Perhaps the most significant issue has been the timing of the conference, in that for all of us, the end of the first semester was the optimum fit for the content of all three programmes. However, the conference was perceived by most students to be the high-

light of their entire programme, and returning to the more routine classroom experience for a further semester was something of a let-down; there were even some anecdotal reports of a reversal of progress made. We will therefore be examining ways in which we can incorporate the conference into the second semester in future, and would recommend this for anyone else.

Organisation and costs have not proved to be stumbling blocks at all. In fact, there has not been a great deal of organisation required beyond booking rooms or coaches and preparing delegate packs; costs have been kept to refreshments on the part of the hosting institution and coach travel for the others.

Other than seeing the development of skills in students, the main benefits for tutors have been in sharing ideas about teaching presentation skills and promoting effective group work; in our annual meetings to plan the events, there has been a flow of ideas surrounding good practice, helped along by the focus of working towards a specific event.

One area where adaptations would be needed relates to issues of scale: Our three programmes represent a relatively small number of students, and adjustments would undoubtedly be required for larger cohorts. One approach could be to pursue the authentic

conference idea further, with a selection of students presenting rather than all students, but with all being audience members.

Conclusion

Staff and students alike agreed that the conference experience was a highly effective way of developing presentation skills, as well as other related study skills. We fully intend to continue to include a joint annual conference as a feature of our three programmes, and would thoroughly recommend it for others where practicable.

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The language lunch: 'bite-sized' and creative ideas for additional language support

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Foundation programmes help students to develop the necessary academic and linguistic skills for successful degree progression, and a range of methods are employed, both within and outside the classroom, to support this progress. For some students, however, certain errors appear to become fixed and inflexible, as if a kind of 'ossification' has taken place. Although this is less of a problem with some minor errors, it is of particular concern with language errors that impede communication. In these situations, it can be difficult to observe and measure progress, leaving both students and staff feeling frustrated. Moreover, while there are some identifiable patterns of errors (e.g. verb tense or errors in word choice/ form), the errors themselves are often very individual. This study evaluates a range of strategies which tutors can employ to help students improve the accuracy of their writing.

Background

To provide a context for this study, the Foundation Centre at Durham is a growing programme which provides access to degree-level study for over sixty international and one-hundred home students across two campuses. Although our cohort comes from a wide range of backgrounds, it has been noted that our students have similar needs, particularly with regards to academic writing and literacy. This year, we have tried to be more creative when providing language support by offering a wider range of flexible methods, including lunchtime workshops, on-line support and field trips. Questionnaires and focus groups have been used to evaluate these, and

the resulting feedback was used to identify which methods seem most effective. Particular emphasis has been on support for these 'ossified errors'.

The questionnaire was administered to over fifty of our Foundation students. The results highlighted which methods were most used, as well as which the students found most useful. What was particularly notable was that popularity (e.g. self-access materials, glossaries, VLE) was not necessarily perceived as most useful. In fact, students clearly felt that all additional support mechanisms were at least somewhat useful. Students indicated that support from their academic advisor, written feedback on assignments, and Lan-

guage Lunches (a drop-in session available outside class time where students could bring a packed lunch and any questions or problems) were most useful.

Qualitative data from focus groups with our international students was also gathered and supported these findings. Students had two main areas of concern: their social integration, and their academic support. International students expected to interact with home students, and wanted more opportunities for interaction outside of class that did not involve alcohol, which is also indicated by the literature (Montgomery, 2010, 90). Some students had tried societies but felt uncomfortable, and there was a suggestion that pairing up would help, something we intend to support next year. In terms of academic support, students wanted more opportunities to work in groups (formally and informally) on assessments. Generally, students liked the idea of Language Lunches, but not missing their lunch hour. They liked themed sessions, but also wanted to retain drop-in sessions where they could access more individual support.

The 'Question Mark in the Margin'

Because of the individualised nature of the support we could offer, the Language Lunch was an ideal opportunity to develop strategies for combatting what we identified as a key issue in our students' progress: 'the question mark in the margin'. The problem occurs when students may have the necessary content or understanding, but lack the necessary linguistic skills to express their ideas fully. That is to say, language errors impede communication, so that it is difficult to assess and evaluate their work. This can result in reduced marks or even failure for students who are otherwise bright and capable. Although we have chosen to focus on written expression in this paper, the issue impacts speaking as well, with consequences for the development of other important aspects of student experience, such as friendship networks and group work (Montgomery, 2010).

A closer look at this issue in writing suggests that the majority of errors are with word choice/ form/ order, and sentence structure. This is complicated by the fact that these types of errors, especially in more sophisticated forms of writing, are less 'rule-bound' (Ferris, 2003). In order to provide better support and feedback for students, which was viewed as extremely useful in both our questionnaire and the focus groups, it is useful to look more closely at error correction.

Background views on the effectiveness of error correction reveal a controversy between those who perceive fluency as more important than accuracy, and vice-versa. As Ferris (2003) notes, with the movement towards process-writing in EAP from the mid-1980s, there has been a reduced emphasis on sentence-level accuracy to improve the overall standard of writing produced. Meanwhile, our international students indicated in focus groups that they often receive little more than 'I can't understand this' as language feedback in content modules, and tutors on content-based modules regularly tell us that accuracy is an issue,

'good practice involves a range of mechanisms.'

but they lack the linguistic awareness to provide good feedback.

It appears that there is no clear strategy for dealing with this type of 'resistant' grammatical error (Ferris, 2003). However, an overview of findings from four studies suggests that, according to students, not only is linguistic accuracy in writing important to overall effectiveness, but also teacher feedback on errors is a vital ingredient for students to improve the accuracy of their writing (ibid).

Good Practice

From our perspective as tutors as well as from the research we consulted, good practice involves a range of mechanisms. Both formal and informal tutorials or workshops outside of class should be offered to discuss feedback (e.g. Language Lunch), before, during and after assessment. Writing as a process should be emphasised as well, so that students receive feedback at these various points. The timing of feedback is also important: 'quick and dirty' can be more effective than detailed feedback, which may come too late. Methods of providing feedback should be varied (e.g. 'dialogic', peer correction, student-tutor workshops or writing conferences, reflective tasks, email/ track changes, etc.), and oral feedback can be employed. In fact, Ferris (2003) questions the efficacy of written feedback, particularly if the feedback is not understood by the student, indicating that jargon can mislead students, and feedback which is overly positive, questioning or rhetorical should be avoided in favour of feedback which is strong, specific, clear and direct (ibid).

Conclusion

Thus, a number of questions are raised within this context. Firstly, what is more important for Foundation students: accuracy or fluency, and how can accuracy be improved? Likewise, how can those errors which are 'ossified' best be dealt with? For us, the answer seems to be by providing a range of flexible support mechanisms, such as the Language Lunch. In future, we intend to trial other ideas, such as a buddy system and an increased awareness of the effect of first language interference.

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The challenges of critical thinking

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The role of critical thinking in EAP has been the subject of heated debate among scholars and practitioners for at least twenty years. In the centre of this debate are several principal issues: whether critical thinking is a culturally-specific phenomenon, what role is played by language in critical thinking and whether critical thinking is a generic or a subject-specific skill. This article will discuss issues related to teaching critical thinking skills in International Foundation Programmes in a way that will prepare international students for the challenges of university studies.

A culturally-specific phenomenon? Western vs. Confucian reasoning

There is a widespread view that the major difficulties some international students experience with writing critically are rooted in cultural differences in their approach to learning in general and to reasoning in particular. It is often said that the Western type of knowledge acquisition based on questioning, reasoning and logical argumentation goes back to the Greek tradition of adversarial dialogue – Aristotelian, Platonic and Socratic – where proof and evidence are highly valued. Eastern traditions, often narrowed down to the term 'Confucian', on the other hand, avoid confrontational debate and strive to achieve deep understanding through memorising and repetition. (See, for example, Biggs, 2003, Egege & Kutieleh, 2004, Ennis, 1993, Floyd, 2011). Chuanyan Zhu (2011), who has conducted a project at Huddersfield University on the socio-cultural context of international students from China, explains that '…individuals in China are not encouraged to present opinions …openly to those who take charge of them'. As a consequence, Asian students are often stereotyped as passive rote-learners. The alleged passivity of Chinese students, however, often stems from respect for elders – it is impolite to contradict or interrupt.

Biggs (2003) tries to challenge the assumption made by some Western educators that rote learning is memorising devoid of thinking and understanding. He explains that memorising, usually associated with the Confucian tradition, is based on achieving deep understanding of the subject matter. Respect for a teacher steeped in Eastern traditions limits the student to offering opinions only on achieving an intellectual and spiritual status comparable to the status of the teacher (Elsgood, 2007).

The universalist approach which represents culturally-specific Western critical thinking as universal has been strongly criticised (Egege & Kutieleh , 2004). This approach may lead to the assumption that only critical thinking is good thinking, and can in the long run become counterproductive for the learning process (Egege & Kutieleh, 2004). The authors offer a sensible solution: teaching critical thinking by putting it in a social, historical and cultural context so that other thinking styles are not seen as deficient, but as different and equally valid. At the same time the rationale and advantages for the 'Western style' critical thinking are explained and training in it given to the students early in the International Foundation Programme.

Language vs. logic debate

Difficulties experienced by international students in critical thinking are often attributed to reasoning and logic rather than language. Davies comments that 'being critical *at least in part* is less a facility with language than a facility with *logic*' (2003, p. 2). This view is challenged by the data from an experimental study by Floyd (2011) which shows that Chinese students performed better when they took a critical thinking test in Chinese. Students were tested on a so-called split-test version of the *Watson Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal ®Short Form A.* Students were randomly divided into two groups. The first group took the first half of the test in Chinese and the second half in English, whereas the second group was tested the other way round. The students of both groups showed significantly better results in the Chinese half of the test. Language thus presents a multifaceted problem for international students.

Firstly, as the findings of Floyd's study demonstrate, students may find it difficult to express their ideas in a second language, which may be interpreted by teachers as a lack of critical thinking skills. Secondly, students often have difficulty with both the concepts and language of critical thinking. Language and logic are closely connected. 'Language is … the *bearer* of logic – one cannot make logical moves without using a linguistic medium of some sort …' (Davies, 2003, p.2). A similar view is shared by Felix and Lawson: 'Poor English and poor argument or analysis [are] inextricably linked' (1994, p.67). Words as well as concepts such as *argument, claim, evaluate, infer* may need elucidation.

'to provide culturally-sensitive IFP teaching, it is important not to assume that critical reasoning is the only universal way of thinking.'

Finally, the very meaning of the word critical can be confusing. Consider the three main meanings of the word *critical*:

1 containing or making severe or negative judgments

2 containing careful or analytical evaluations,

3 of or involving a critic or criticism (*Collins Dictionary*)

Students are often more aware of meanings 1 and 3, and often ignore meaning 2 which is crucial to understanding the concept of critical thinking.

Generic vs. specific debate

There has been a conspicuous divide among scholars on the question of whether critical thinking is a generic or subject-specific skill. Davies, for example, points out that students ought to be taught general principles of reasoning which they should be subsequently able to apply to any subject-specific discourse (2006). Opponents of the 'generalist' model claim that it is unlikely to fit the variety of discipline-specific thinking models and maintain that teaching of critical thinking should be discipline-specific. McPeck (1981), for example, argues that '… it is difficult to be a critical thinker in the domain of nuclear physics if one knows very little about it.' There are also attempts to marry these opposite points of view: Davies (2006), for example, suggests an 'infusion' approach where general skills are taught in the discipline context.

Conclusions

It is not uncommon for international students to have difficulties in Western-style critical writing and reasoning. These difficulties are often rooted in their own cultural background. In order to provide culturally-sensitive IFP teaching, it is important not to assume that critical reasoning is the only universal way of thinking. Language problems related to understanding

some logical concepts of critical thinking should be addressed early in IFPs by clarifying both the actual concepts and vocabulary specific for critical analysis. Ideally, IFP practitioners ought to collaborate with subject specialists in order to develop comprehensive critical thinking skills – both generic and applied to a particular subject area, skills which will become and invaluable tool for students' further university study.

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Putting the global citizen into international foundation programmes

About the author

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Global citizenship education is becoming recognised as essential for preparing students with the knowledge and skills they need to function in an interdependent global world. While international foundation programmes typically prepare students to function in an academic world, this article examines how employing a global citizenship approach can not only ensure foundation students have the necessary academic skills for their future degree courses but also prepare them for their lives beyond that.

Introduction

The challenges of globalisation have brought a new global dimension to many education systems based on growing recognition of the need to prepare young people for a changing future, in which we are all interdependent. Yet traditional conceptualisations of education for developing human capital tend to place more focus on equipping

people with global skills for work (Sen, 1999; Osler and Vincent, 2002; Newell-Jones, 2007). Higher education is no exception. Priority strategies in UK universities at the moment are employability and internationalisation, although views on what these both mean can differ. In response to the need to equip people with the skills they need for a more globalised life, global citizenship education is

increasingly being promoted as a new approach to education.

The principles of global citizenship education

Global citizenship education is based on recognition of our shared rights and responsibilities as global citizens. Oxfam's global citizenship education curriculum has provided the accredited framework for global learning in the UK. It defines global citizenship education as equipping young people with knowledge, skills and values to participate in and take responsibility for their actions at a range of levels in their local and global communities with the aim of making the world more equitable and sustainable (Oxfam, 2006). The knowledge, skills and values of global citizenship education are relevant to all areas of the curriculum and include:

- Acknowledging the complexity of global issues
- Revealing global issues and connections as part of everyday life
- Understanding how we relate to the environment and to each other
- Valuing and respecting diversity
- Being committed to social justice and equity
- Believing that people can make a difference
- Asking questions and developing the ability to think critically
- Having the ability to challenge injustice and inequalities

Teachers of English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in particular may be thinking this is nothing radically new. Global issues are already used as content on EAP modules on many international foundation programmes as they provide an ideal forum for making connections, exploring viewpoints and values and developing critical thinking.

However, although elements of global citizenship education are probably already evident in many international foundation programmes, the real aims may require teachers to become potential agents of change alongside students, and redress the knowledge base often used in higher education. For Shiman, allowing students to evaluate needs and rights is an educational practice which 'requires that teachers not present students with a world view to absorb, but involve them in creating one of their own' (1991 p.192). This approach is underpinned by a Freirist philosophy in which teachers learn *from* and *with* learners (Freire, 1996). Freire is critical of traditional systems which use a 'banking' concept of education where 'knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing' (1996 p.53). In other words, knowledge is a form of power and begs the question; whose knowledge is of value? Global citizenship education encourages 'an open-mindedness to listen to different voices, especially those of the disadvantaged and oppressed' (Steiner, 1993 p.3). Promoting the voices of

those who are marginalised in society is a pedagogy aimed at redressing social inequalities (Freire, 1996), which is at the core of global citizenship education.

Teachers on international foundation programmes can promote these voices, and deliver what internationalisation of higher education *should* be. Baumfield (2012) argues that internationalisation in UK universities should centre on the curriculum and value the diversity of perspectives on knowledge and presenting an argument which international students bring to a UK university. Teachers can engage students in exploring these views and values through global citizenship education. The following section gives examples of how this can be done.

Practical Examples

1 Global issues lend themselves to exploring multiple perspectives, including minority voices, in particular those who are often affected most by the negative impacts of these issues. For some students this can involve raising their awareness of marginalised communities in their own countries. Learning to Read the World Through Other Eyes (**www.throughothereyes.org.uk**) is a project which focuses on promoting indigenous knowledge systems as opposed to Western mainstream cultures. The site offers a free online programme of study and resources.

2 Evaluating sources of information should include developing students' media and critical literacy, in recognition of the growing influence of online sources which can be less academic. A cultural perspective can also be applied by exploring alternative ways in which contemporary issues are presented around the world. Possible sources are:

Al Jazeera www.aljazeera.com

Chinese News TV (CNTV)
http://english.cntv.cn/01/index.shtml

Iran: Voice of Justice IRIB World Service
http://english.irib.ir/voj/

World Newspapers www.world-newspapers.com

3 Making connections between different parts of the world and valuing diversity should happen naturally on any course with a mix of nationalities. However, it can also be beneficial for students to see connections between subjects they are studying and the real world. Suggestions include:

- relating historical examples to contemporary events. Examples could be comparing past and present conflicts and the reasons for them or the different forms of and impacts of globalisation over time. Oxfam Education has sample lessons on conflict (**http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/resources/making_sense_of_world_conflict/?6**)

- exploring the social impacts of Maths and Science or the impacts of design or technology on the world. Examples of the way technology is improving lives in resource-poor areas of the world can be found in Positive News (**www.positivenews.org.uk**)

'Teachers on international foundation programmes can promote these voices, and deliver what internationalisation of higher education should be.'

- exploring the influence of different cultures on Maths and Science. For example, the role of Islamic and Hindu scholars in developing the decimal system, zero concept and trigonometry could be presented (Oxfam, 2006)

Another general source for exploring global issues and perspectives is the Open Spaces for Dialogue & Enquiry (OSDE). The Critical Thinking course they developed with Nottingham University for use with international students is a good starting point and can be applied to different subjects (**http://www.osdemethodology.org.uk/highered.html**).

Conclusion

This article has presented a case for implementing a global citizenship approach to international foundation programmes. Teachers on these courses are best placed to explore multiple perspectives on content across the curriculum such as global issues, Maths or Science, which can develop students' ability to think critically, value the diversity of knowledge that international students bring to a university and prepare them to participate in an increasingly globalised world.

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Reflective learning: seeking metacognition in reflective practice

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The research presented here is one aspect of a larger piece of research designed to examine many elements of reflective learning in connection with aspects of metacognition. In this paper, only a small sample of the data (one participant) is used as a case study of an academic semester (12 weeks) to provide a glimpse of what the rest of the set might contain. Therefore, the findings are tentative at this stage but nevertheless offer the chance to understand the way in which students on international foundation programmes think and focus on particular aspects of their studies and study life.

Research Design

This paper will focus on findings taken from a daily student blog where the students were asked to record their performance in relation to the sessions over an academic semester. The specific question set for this micro activity was: do any of the reflections within the blog itself indicate aspects of metacognitive thinking or procedural knowledge? The data itself consists of qualitative data, the source of which is a personal electronic blog. The case study uses time as one of the factors against which the other aspects will be measured in order to establish an idea of when any metacognitive reflections are taking place and if this fluctuates at all. The students initially received some prompts to get them used to blogging at the end of classes, after which this became a habit for most. Once all the data were collected the next step was to conduct the analysis with an independent party using an open coding approach followed by a thematic coding based on the main themes and subthemes identified. The coding was done on the basis that every clear mention / instance was recorded and a second stage of coding was used to determine this further. The participant was chosen by a combination of both purposive and random sampling (Bryman, 2008). The participation took place from September 2011 until January 2012. The student is a young Chinese female (23 at the time of the research), studying abroad for the first time.

Some Limitations

The blog was done Monday to Friday every week over 12 weeks; therefore, for the micro analysis a selection of three weeks (at the beginning, mid-way point and the end of the
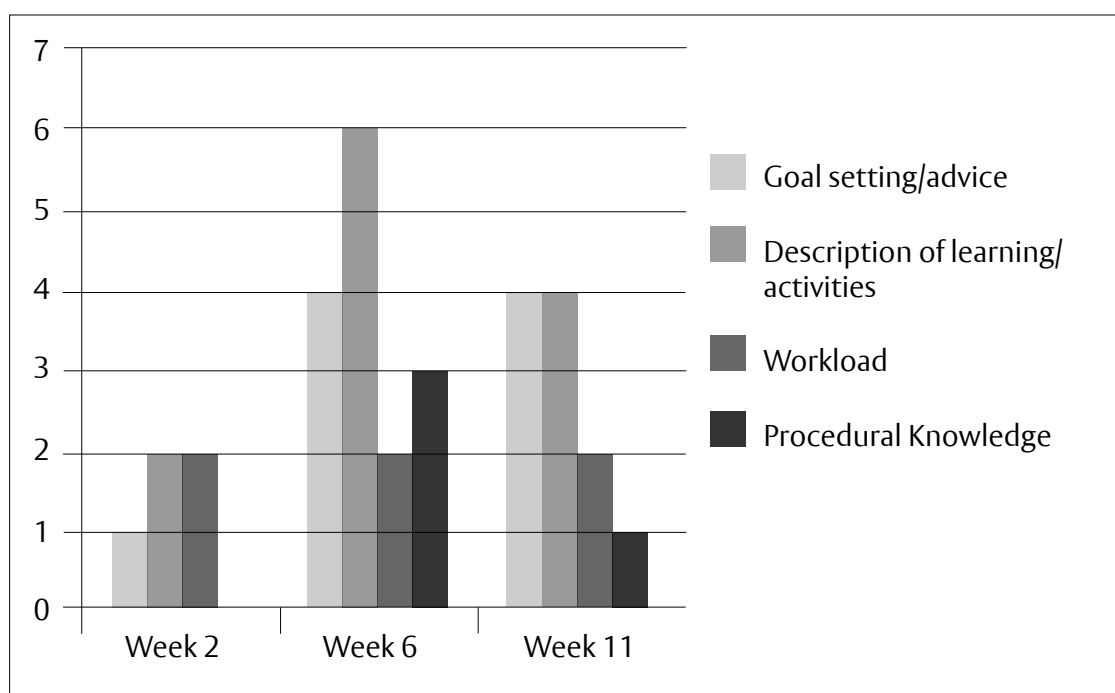
Figure 1: Subthemes of reflection

semester) was used. Hence, any findings drawn from this data set do not include all the entries. Another limitation is the agreement of data coding resulting in some less clear aspects being left out.

Results and some analysis

Figure 1 shows that metacognition is generally quite high despite less reference to this in week 11 and, interestingly, has a high occurrence in the early weeks of the programme. It also illustrates that from the mid way point of the semester there is a much higher frequency of most of these subcategories, particularly the goal setting and descriptions of the learning activities. The mention of workload is the only constant and one of the few constants through all of the coding. Overall, much emphasis was placed on the theme of friendship and social interactions. It is clear that, for this student, learning was not just about a traditional behaviourist

'for this student, learning was not just about a traditional behaviourist structure.'

Sub theme	Theme	Total
Caring about teacher input	Friendship and social interaction	13
Metacognition	Reflection	13
Teamwork and groups	Friendship and social interaction	12
Self Criticism	Learning performance	12
Description of learning/activities	Reflection	12
Goal setting / advice	Reflection	9
Happy	Feelings and emotions	7
Achievements	Learning performance	7
Caring for peers	Friendship and social interaction	6
Weather / climate / surroundings	Environment	6
Workload	Reflection	6
Time (of day and of year)	Environment	4
Procedural Knowledge	Reflection	4
Friends and social interactions	Friendship and social interaction	3
Tired	Feelings and emotions	3
Relaxed	Feelings and Emotions	2
Anxious / concern	Feelings and emotions	2
Temperature	Environment	1
Upset	Feelings and emotions	1
Encouragement	Feelings and emotions	1

Figure 2: Ranking of all categories in order of subcategory

structure whereby the classroom input would be a linear transmission with the learner modifying their approach to improve by following teacher input. Instead, a whole different side came out of the blog, with the main two factors being about working with peers and caring about their welfare and reactions to learning situations (such as positive or negative feedback).

In terms of how all the categories were ranked by their occurrence, Figure 2 (previous page) illustrates that many feelings/emotions feature less often than the other themes; whereas the areas that do feature much more prominently are all generally about how the individual works, thinks and also interacts with her peers. It is interesting that the top five subthemes are generally elements that teachers would look for in students. It seems to indicate that a combination of aspects connected with theories of behaviourism (teacher input), cognitivism (metacognition – in this context focuses mainly on awareness of the concepts and how to improve them) and constructivism (some of the group work activities) are the most important factors for this particular student. This is interesting as often one of the generalisations about students who have studied in China is that they will be more used to a behaviourist approach and may struggle to adapt to other approaches, especially constructivism, even in micro form such as an individual lesson.

Conclusion

Overall, there are aspects of metacognition and procedural knowledge as factors that have been acknowledged by the student during their recordings. The variances in these need further exploration to further understand their relevance to our understanding of how our learners think during our programmes.

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