University of
Bedfordshire

Guide No 14

A Guide to Teaching International Students

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Centre for Learning Excellence

Contents

1   Introduction

1.1   About this Guide

This guide has been created in order to give tutors an insight into teaching international students with a view to improving the learning experience for all. It is designed to provide practical advice and ideas to consider when teaching international students. It is not an exhaustive directory; rather it is focussed on drawing attention to real issues and scenarios that tutors and teachers can face in the classroom and ideas for tackling them. There will be frequent signposting to resources that you can refer to in order to inform your teaching practice and approach.

Before approaching any class with teaching international students the following key guidance notes should be considered:

Teaching International Students - A Summary for Busy Academics

1. Make expectations clear from the start so international students know what to expect in a UK classroom in terms of behaviour, interaction, questioning, group work etc.

2. Make it clear if notes are on BREO and be specific about what to write during lectures and classes i.e. not to copy slides verbatim

3. Encourage international students to speak and introduce them to the idea that asking and responding to questions is 'normal' from the start

4. Whatever you want or expect, tell them and ask them what their previous experiences are – don't make assumptions about how / what they may or may not have been taught

5. When in any class consider your language, tone, pace, diction; having to 'tune in' to a foreign language with a potentially strange accent can take time. Pronounce and enunciate words clearly and carefully and explain key terms

6. Avoid jargon, slang or idioms e.g. "Piece of cake", "Back to square one", "Thinking off the top of my head", "Method to my madness" (or explain them if you decide to use them)

7. Fill in background knowledge and use short chunks of delivery with frequent re-capping and summarising

8. Ask questions but consider internal translation time and don't hurry international students, particularly in the early days

9. Put notes on Blackboard (BREO) in advance so international students can read in advance and prepare for the class. This can aid their confidence and participation in the class as reading takes international students longer than native English speakers

10. Encourage group working in class with mixed nationalities in order to develop cultural communication and language confidence

1.2   The Higher Education Academy Teaching International Lifecycle Resources Bank

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) International Student Lifecycle Resources Bank is a "must visit" website for anyone involved in teaching international students in higher education in the UK. The Resources Bank provides a wealth of detailed, research and practice informed advice and guidance with a real emphasis on practical applications. This Centre for Learning Excellence (CLE) guide has been designed to sit alongside the Resources Bank and to draw attention to key, real classroom issues faced by tutors at University of Bedfordshire with suggested solutions and further reading.
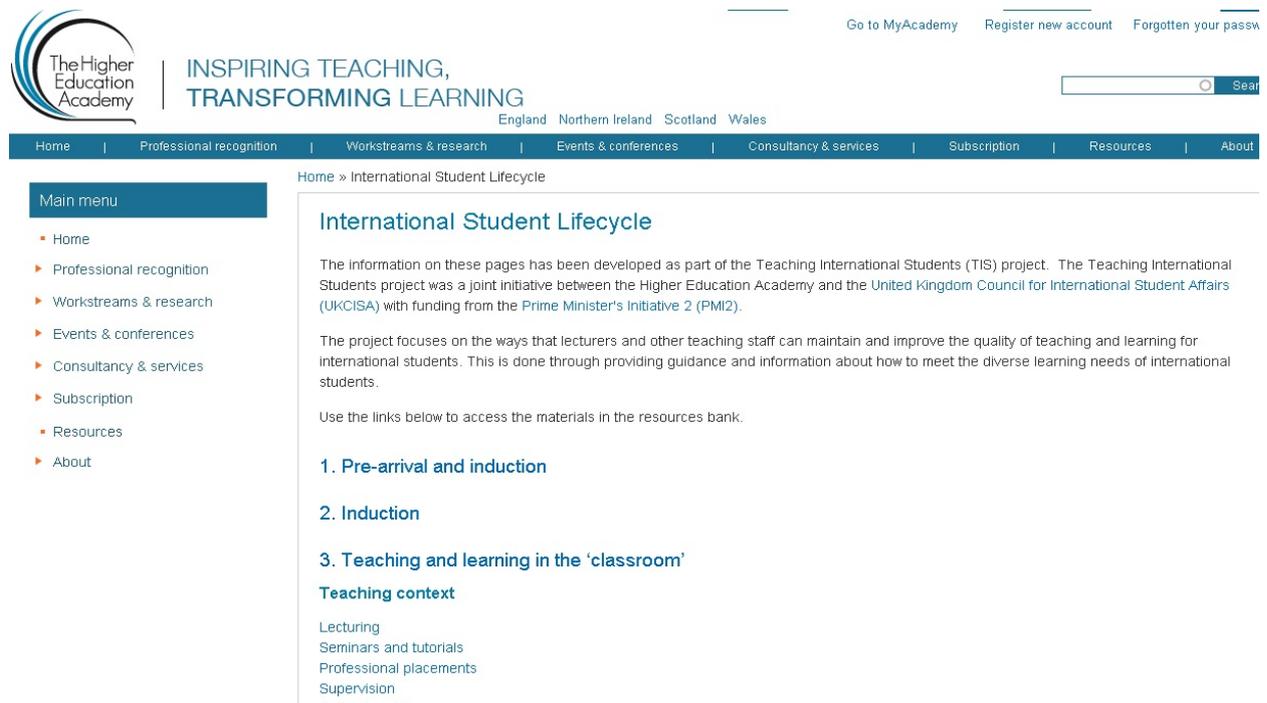
To access the Resources bank https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/node/10190

Figure 1 International Student Lifecycle Resources Bank
(https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/node/10190)

1.3   International Students in context

Having an appreciation of the previous educational backgrounds and experiences of international students and the transitional problems they commonly face will help tutors in their understanding of, and interactions with, international students. Working out the way we assess and run classes will take time. It is important is that we do not devalue the academic background and experiences of international students with the opinion that 'the UK way is the best way'. There can be a tendency to consider international students as being 'deficient' in some way, rather than looking upon them in terms of their cultural capital and the benefits that they can bring to our UK classrooms and to everyone within it.

Difference is not deficit. It is worth remembering that international students have all enjoyed academic success in their home countries prior to arrival at the university. Quite simply, if they were not 'up to it' they would not be eligible for entry into UK higher education. For those undertaking postgraduate study they are already graduates and have demonstrated their academic capabilities and competences during an extended period of undergraduate study. It needs us to spend time to get to know our international students. Obviously, this can be

difficult when teaching large groups and if you do not see international students regularly. However, making small adjustments can ensure that even in these situations, your encounters with international students can be more meaningful. For a more detailed outline of tips in the classroom go to the Ten Tips for Teaching International Students by Philip Warwick in section 5.4.

1.4   What are International students?

International students are part of the landscape for all universities in the UK. They may only share one feature i.e. they are not from the UK so are, by definition, "international". Whilst there is value in looking at countries in terms of generic approaches to teaching and learning and using it as a guestimate to get an idea of what an international student may be coming with, beware of stereotyping and treating all international students as a homogenous group. They are as different and diverse as a group of indigenous, UK home students in terms of their backgrounds, motivation and academic achievement and aspirations.

1.5   International students at University of Bedfordshire

The University of Bedfordshire has a high proportion overseas students and they account for around 25% of the total student population with countries including China, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Nigeria. The majority of our international population tend to study Marketing, Accounting & Finance, Business Systems and Strategy and HRM. Computer Science, Language and Communication, Biosciences, and Healthcare, Nursing and Midwifery are also popular international student destinations.

The Culture Crossing Guide has some informal background information on each country and a useful section on Higher Education: http://guide.culturecrossing.net/index.php

The largest proportion of the university's international students come from China and there is a useful guide from Monash University: www.monash.edu.au/lls/China/index.xml

> **Activity – Your expectations:**
> Write a list of expectations and assumptions you have which relate to your teaching of international students and a list of expectations and assumptions students might have about their experiences in the following areas:
> - Teaching Methods
> - Teacher – student interactions
> - Academic Writing
> - Academic Reading
> - Assessment

2   Pre-arrival to the UK and the university

This section provides an overview of the specialist support and guidance that we offer to all international students. Whilst every effort is made by the university to ensure that international students are recruited with appropriate levels of English language proficiency, there will occasionally be cases of international students who arrive and are unable to cope with the language demands of the course. In these instances students should be referred to the Language Centre immediately to ensure that appropriate steps can be taken in order to manage their situation as quickly and effectively as possible.

The International Office provides international students with extensive information and advice before they arrive in the UK. Services and support include:

Pre-arrival guide

Orientation week and social guide

International Students Guide

Visas and immigration

Police registration

For further information go to http://www.beds.ac.uk/international/international-student-support
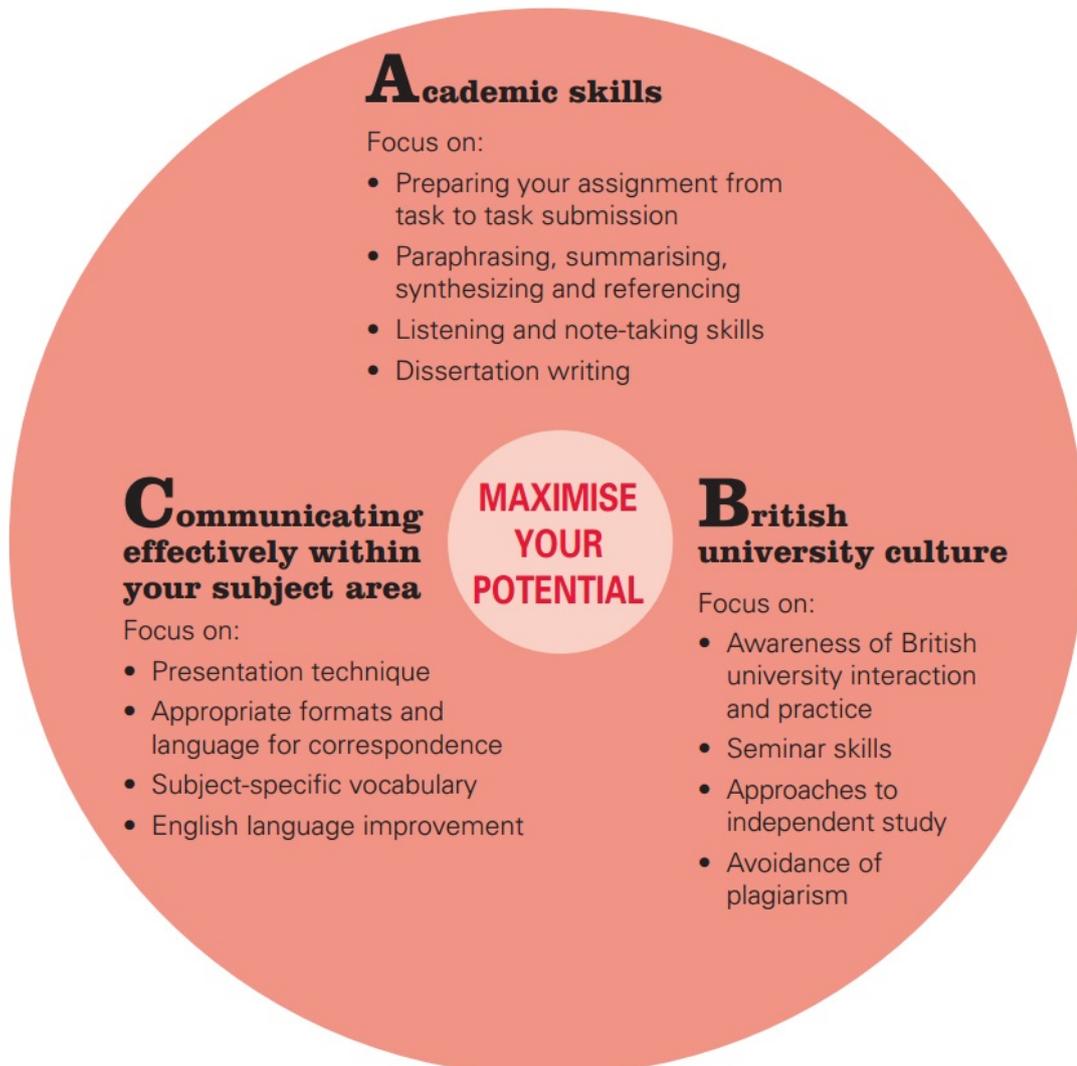
2.1 Language Testing and Proficiency

All international students applying to the university are required to demonstrate English language competence. The university admissions requirement is IELTS (International English Language Testing System) Grade 6.0 (with a minimum 5.5 in all bands) or TOEFL Internet-based test - overall score 87 (Listening: 21, Reading: 22, Speaking: 23, Writing: 21) (see www.beds.ac.uk/international/apply/english). For information about English language competence tests go to www.ielts.org/ and www.ets.org/toefl.

2.2 Language and Culture Support upon Arrival

Upon arrival at the University and irrespective of the English language test they have already passed (IELTS, TOEFL etc.), academics in the Language Centre (based in Vicarage Street, Luton (languagecentre@beds.ac.uk) test all international students with the Password Test (www.englishlanguagetesting.co.uk/). The test is used as a filter to ascertain quickly those who need additional English language support. International students are re-tested at the end of the academic year as a means of assessing how much progress has been made.

The Language Centre also runs a mandatory Communication Skills Programme for all international students. Communication Skills is an innovative integrated programme of development and enrichment for international students with 3 strands:

Academic skills

Focus on:

- Preparing your assignment from task to task submission
- Paraphrasing, summarising, synthesizing and referencing
- Listening and note-taking skills
- Dissertation writing

MAXIMISE YOUR POTENTIAL

Communicating effectively within your subject area

Focus on:

- Presentation technique
- Appropriate formats and language for correspondence
- Subject-specific vocabulary
- English language improvement

British university culture

Focus on:

- Awareness of British university interaction and practice
- Seminar skills
- Approaches to independent study
- Avoidance of plagiarism

Substantial on-line support is also available through BREO and the drop-in services of the Language Centre. The communication skills component of an international student's study programme may have 2, 4 or 6 hours a week according to needs, as well as homework tasks to support and enrich their studies. They operate in conjunction with lectures from students' chosen subject area with subject specialists working with the Language Centre to ensure the assignment types and dates are integrated in the communication skills curriculum to ensure skills and language improvement are developed in the context of students' broad subject areas.

This short video explains the course - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GINdAj5v6L8

International students' language confidence and proficiency will develop as they progress through their studies. This development can be aided by referring to and making use of the 10 key pointers (Teaching International Students – A Summary for Busy Academics) which can be found at the front of this guide.

2.3 General Academic Support

As well as specialist language support, all international students are able to benefit from the general academic support offered by the Professional Academic Development (PAD) team. PAD can help international students develop academic skills in a range of areas:

- The quality of written assignments

- Understanding of mathematical or statistical concepts

- Organisational skills and how to approach studying

- Time management and prioritising

- Effective reading strategies

- Language skills

- Aspects of IT skills

- How to prepare for exams

For more information about the services PAD offers go to http://lrweb.beds.ac.uk/studyhub

Activity – Language Standards:

"We must keep up academic standards. That means if I see poor English, poor grammar, poor vocabulary, it's a poor mark or a fail. Simple as that."

How would you respond to this quote?
Would you argue for or against this view?
How would your international students respond to this quote?

3 Empathy and Understanding Difference

"Think strange, make strange". Put yourselves in the shoes of an international student …..consider how you felt the first time you went abroad? The first time you went somewhere with a different culture to your own? Excited, curious but perhaps anxious or intimidated?

Initial concerns and problems for international students:

Regional accents, local dialect and slang can all make it difficult for International students to understand what is being said. International students may have been taught English using a formal register by specialist English for Academic Purposes (EAP) tutors alongside other non-native English speakers.

Constantly speaking in a new language can be exhausting. Locals will often speak much more quickly than the trained English language teacher they may be used to. This can cause confidence issues which can make some international students feel as if their English is 'not good enough' and that they won't be able to cope with studying in the UK.

Even for students coming from countries where English is an established language such as India or Nigeria, there will still be huge differences between the English they have grown up with and the English they will come across here. Bear in mind that students may come from these countries with relatively good spoken English but this proficiency and fluency may not be borne out in their reading or writing so do not assume they have parity in these areas.

International students may find UK food strange and different. Many cultures place a high value on creating and sharing a meal together and the UK 'rushed sandwich at your desk' culture is often alien to international students.

3.1 Culture Shock and Transitioning from home to the UK

Culture shock (see Figure 3) is simply a term to describe the emotions one gets when moving into an unfamiliar culture – inclusive of the shocks of being in a new environment, meeting new people, using a foreign language, separation from family & friends. It is relatively common amongst international students and can take many forms and have differing levels of severity.

Some common symptoms:

- Homesickness

- Headaches or stomach aches

- Easily tired

- Loneliness or a sense of hopelessness

- Distrust of people

- Withdrawal from people and activities

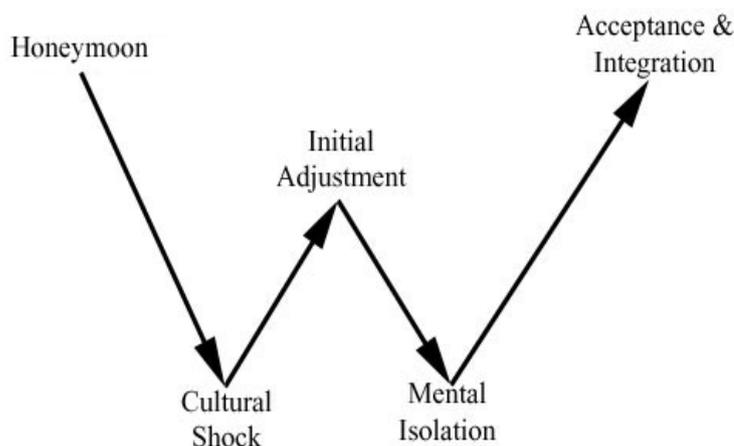- Lowered work performance

- Anger, or anxiety and suspicion

Figure 3 The W-Curve – Stages of Cultural Adjustment

Honeymoon Phase – occurs when students first arrive in a new culture and brings with it feelings of excitement at being somewhere new and different.

Cultural Shock/Disintegration - may be noticeable after a few days or weeks. Those initially exciting cultural differences may now cause students to feel insecure or confused, as students struggle to understand the rules of the new culture they find themselves in. At this stage, students may find they miss their family and home support structures the most.

Initial Adjustment - students may find they feel irritated, or frustrated with the cultural differences they come across in daily life: perhaps with the learning and teaching environment, or in relationships with staff or other students, or with their accommodation. They will probably find they make comparisons with their home culture and decide they prefer home. Students

may be consciously or unconsciously assessing their own cultural values and trying to make sense of them.

Mental Isolation - students will by now probably worked out how to operate in their new cultural environment - how to satisfactorily interact with people and make friends, where to shop, eat and socialise, as well as to understand and cope with their new learning environment. They will most likely start to accept the differences between their home culture and those of the new culture and to feel more relaxed.

Acceptance and Integration - brings with it a feeling of self-assurance and more complete understanding of their home and the new culture. Differences and similarities are valued and important and they feel confident about handling most or all situations

N.B. Not everyone will experience the above, some will for differing lengths of time, and some may only experience part of the W-curve. It can take international students at least a term/semester to settle in though for some students it can take an academic year. On top of all of the practical day to day issues of living, eating and getting around the place, translating in their heads in class and working out what tutors and peers are saying will all take time. The W-curve of culture shock describes the initial honeymoon stage followed by disintegration before international students develop autonomy and independence so bear this in mind. This can have significant impacts upon Masters students who may well only be in the UK for a year and are required to 'hit the ground running' with their studies.

The UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) has a downloadable PDF concerning culture shock available at:

www.ukcisa.org.uk/student/info_sheets/culture_shock.php

> **Activity – Cultural Bump:**
> Think about an event where you and a student (or group of students) held different assumptions and beliefs about teaching:
>
> What was the difference?
> What happened?
> How did you respond?
> What would you do differently today?

4   Higher Education Culture and Etiquette

The UK Higher Education system can be very different from many higher education cultures in other countries. Our culture of self sufficiency, independence and promoting autonomy, as well as the relative informality between students and staff can be confusing and unsettling for international students.

The academic discourse which we are all familiar with is not always known and understood by international students and our norms regarding attending classes, punctuality, using and referring to academic sources, in class behaviour, working in groups, academic writing etc. may be quite different to norms and values in their home country.

4.1   International Students – a Problem or a Prize?

Much is written and said about international students much of which can have a problematising effect. You may have heard or said yourself things like:

They can't write English properly

They don't speak in class

They don't mix with home students

They copy and plagiarise

They memorise and learn by rote

They can't think critically

Consider their previous educational background and experiences which could include:

- Having a very didactic approach, reliance on one or two text books where copying is accepted and is seen as sign of respect to the authors

- Coming from a culture where helping a friend with their studies is a noble and worthy pursuit (as opposed to us considering it to be collusion or cheating)

- No culture of questioning or challenging the teacher (this could be seen as being rude and disrespectful)

- Greater emphasis on theory rather than developing practical skills

- Teacher reverence issues and discomfort with using given names as opposed to Professor, Dr or Sir/Madam

- Issues with facilitation rather than traditional lecturing approaches

- Lack of familiarity with working in groups and the notion of peer assessment and evaluation

It can be useful to think about why international students might behave in a particular way and make adjustments. Simply adopting an inflexible "they have to fit in the UK way" is neither helpful nor productive. Yes, they need to operate within our framework but they need to be told the rules rather than us assuming they should know them and expect them to hit the ground running from day one.

> *"New game, new rules"* – International students adjust and adapt
>
> *"New game, new players"* – UK tutors adjust, adapt and accommodate (Carroll, J 2002)

Make expectations clear from the start:

- Do you want students to take notes? It is usually helpful for all students to jot down a few key points but make it clear if notes are on BREO and be specific about what to write i.e. not to copy slides verbatim

- Do you want them to ask questions? Encouraging international students to speak and to introduce them to the idea that questioning is 'normal' should be done right from the start

- Whatever you want or expect tell them and ask them what their previous experiences are – don't make assumption about how they may or may not have been taught

- When in any class consider your language, tone, pace, diction; having to 'tune in' to a foreign language with a potentially strange accent can take time

- Avoid jargon, slang or idioms e.g. "Piece of cake", "Back to square one", "Thinking off the top of my head", "Method to my madness". If you do use them explain what they mean.

- Fill in background knowledge and use short chunks of delivery with frequent re-capping and summarising

- Ask questions but consider internal translation time and don't hurry international students, particularly in the early days

- Put notes on Blackboard (BREO) in advance so international students can read in advance and prepare for the class. This can aid their confidence and participation in the class as reading takes international students longer than native English speakers.

Making small adjustments such as these will benefit everyone in the class, not just international students. Consider international students (and indeed all students) in terms of cultural capital – how can their previous knowledge and experiences add richness to your class? Part of the university's internationalisation agenda focuses on all students getting an internationalised experience so consider ways of harnessing this in class.

Whilst avoiding stereotyping and tokenism, getting students from all international backgrounds to work in class together can help them to develop cultural communication skills and the confidence and ease to productively work alongside anyone irrespective of their language, culture or background.

Home students can complain that international students don't talk or work well in groups. It is worth pointing out that very few professions operate with a purely homogeneous group of employees; exposure to a diverse mix is useful jobwise and interesting and stimulating from an academic and cultural perspective. Reinforce the view that being in class with international students should be seen as a positive rather than a negative.

4.2 Previous Educational Experience and Attitudes to Learning

Making a successful transition to UK higher education from overseas is a steep learning curve. Underlying principles of good teaching apply for all so don't look at international students as being especially difficult or time consuming or requiring specialist skills. Having an approach where expectations are clear and unambiguous and students are supported and encouraged to talk and share will yield positive results for everyone.

Previous experiences may well include sitting in lectures "at the knee of the master" in order to have knowledge transmitted and imparted to them with little or no questioning (either in class or in terms of questioning and challenging the literature). With this in mind, consider how unsettling and potentially frightening it can be for a new international student to be in a class where they are asked (in front of their peers) to answer a question or give their view. Having to think and translate quickly and under pressure can pose all manner of language, confidence and cultural issues.

5   International Students in a UK classroom

This section aims to address the top 'problems' noted by UK tutors when teaching international students and offers suggestions and solutions.

International students are often quiet in the classroom and can be seen as being unwilling to participate. In Western culture silence is often associated with the negative values (lack of interest; unwillingness to communicate, rejection; interpersonal incompatibility; shyness). If international students are quiet in class it is not necessarily because they lack language skills, knowledge or motivation.

Potential reasons include:

- Little idea how to react or to be sure of doing themselves justice (feeling "shy" and "embarrassed")

- Insecurity about their listening comprehension and verbal command of English

- Worries about pronunciation

- Difficulty quickly choosing words; choosing the right words

- Not feeling confident of appropriate interaction strategies e.g. interrupting, taking turns, disagreeing, offering opinions, signalling the wish to speak

- Taking time to shape an answer … by which time, it's too late

- No value on challenging authority (e.g. the teacher's or the theory's or the text's)

- An assumption that there is "nothing to discuss" - the task is to fully understand what is transmitted

- Assuming a large social and power distance between student and teacher and deference expressed by listening (Scallon, R 1995)

When working with international students it is vital to give students space and time to think and respond in class. As their language command and confidence grows so will their personal comfort and their ability to respond, to ask and to take part. This takes time and will be hindered by rushing them or by failing to ask them in the first place.

For some international students, particularly those from China, the issue of "saving face" is one which can bring about issues. In their Working with International Students: A guide for staff in Engineering, Dr Kay Bond and Dr Rachel Scudamore talk about this in more detail (https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/sites/default/files/working-with-international-students.pdf)

Coming from a collectivist, rather than an individualist society puts great value on respect for the group and the notion of not behaving in a way that could upset the group i.e. by causing embarrassment, can take precedence of the feelings over the individual. In wishing to avoid any situation where someone could have their "face" threatened, Chinese students may not be as explicit or participative as they (or indeed, you) may want them to.

5.1 Seminars and Workshop Groups

When working in seminar or workshops international students may be initially uncomfortable about working in groups, particularly with those outside of their own ethnic and language group. This is not unusual or unsurprising and can be tackled effectively with some thought and planning. Whilst it can be seen as the path of least resistance, avoiding mixing groups does nothing to solve the problem, so judicious group manipulation is a good idea. Allowing students to migrate to their comfort groups (this goes for home and internationals) does not necessarily do anything for them in terms of developing cross cultural awareness, sensitivity and confidence. Initially, if you can plant "good home students" (as in ones who you know to be friendly, participative and reliable) with internationals this can help develop their verbal and group skills confidence. Doing this for all is a good tactic to employ. Students often complain about not being able to self select groups but in terms of their future employability, it will help them to work with a range of people who are not necessarily friends which is vital to any employee in the workplace.

In order to minimise conflict in multicultural group work tutors need to plan by:

- setting ground rules for participation and discussing how the group will manage conflict

- making clear what the group will do should conflict arise

- planning ahead for addressing conflict

- observing or tracking group activity to spot the signs, if possible, before the situation becomes serious

Managing 'difficult moments' in a diverse group will never be easy but if the emphasis remains on learning from the experience and gaining useful cross-cultural communication skills, students can develop skills they can use next time (Carroll, J & Ryan, J 2005).

> **Activity – Group work Tasks:**
>
> The type of task you set is probably the aspect which matters most for collaboration. Think about what kinds of tasks / assignments bring the group together and how do they do that? Which sorts encourage isolation? How can you create one that brings people together and avoid the sort of task which students can simply chop into pieces and do serially rather than collaboratively?

5.2 International Students in Lectures

The lecture room is likely to be one where international students have greatest familiarity. What they are likely to be less familiar with is interactivity, questioning and the pace of delivery. During the early weeks post arrival international students may have difficulties segmenting the stream of sound from the mouth of tutor into recognisable words. When teaching to a large group with international students it is worth considering the following:

- Assume nothing regarding background knowledge – give a context that is not culturally specific

- Signpost key points. Students (home and international) can struggle with note taking i.e. they either write nothing or try to copy slides verbatim. Highlight what is really important for them to know and read up on after the lecture and use repetition to ensure that if missed the first time, they get it on a subsequent occasion

- Pronounce and enunciate words clearly and carefully and explain key terms. Even if you think everyone will know the chances are someone (particularly an international student) may not

- Speak steadily and use frequent re-capping – one of the biggest criticisms of UK tutors by international students is that they speak too quickly making it impossible for them to understand what they are saying

- International students can struggle with listening to English spoken with a heavy accent (be it from a tutor with a regional UK accent or a tutor from outside of the UK). Bear in mind that many international students have been taught English by a specialist tutor who has taken great care in their delivery. Having to tune into a voice with a very strong accent can take time as well as seriously testing the listening skills of the international student

- Put slides on Blackboard/BREO in advance and encourage international students to read prior to the lecture and bring to them in order to annotate them

- Give time if asking an international student a question and warn in advance that you will be asking questions. Bear in mind translation time, vocabulary searching time and lack of linguistic confidence which they may be experiencing

- Pause between delivery topics in order to allow students to think

- Explain acronyms fully – do not assume all students will know what they mean

- Whilst using discipline specific vocabulary is fine, be aware of over using jargon, particularly without explaining fully what it mean

- Always summarise at the end of a session and give students information of what is to be covered in the next class so that they can be prepared for what they will hear. It is useful to augment this is a glossary and vocabulary list of key words and terms which can be put on the unit Blackboard site

- Consider using video capture as a means of recording classes for students to access and re-visit. Doing this enables students to listen again to content, language and vocabulary. For more information about facilitating this contact Mark Gamble and the Learning Technology team (Mark.Gamble@beds.ac.uk).

- Adopting these ideas will benefit all students in the lecture irrespective of their nationality and background and are straightforward to implement and use in a lecture.

5.3   International Students; Surprises and Challenges

Whilst teaching and working with international students can be exciting and rewarding, it can sometimes be confusing and can cause some genuine concerns and worries.

Dr Margarida Dolan and Dr Irene Macias (University of Bath) have written a comprehensive and very informative guide covering many aspects of teaching international students including potentially sensitive issues e.g. giving and receiving gifts, respect and the student:staff relationship and cultural sensitivities Although written with Economics academics in mind, its content and focus is sufficiently generic that it has relevance to anyone teaching international students in a UK university. To access their guide go to:

(www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/handbook/printable/motivating_international.pdf)

Viv Edwards from The University of Reading and An Ran from the South China University of Technology have put together a detailed and user friendly guide for those teaching and working with Chinese students which offers some valuable insights into Chinese culture and education. To access their guide go to:

(https://blogs.shu.ac.uk/internationalnetwork/files/2013/07/MeetingTheNeeds.pdf)

International students can also have different expectations regarding meeting and talking with tutors. Whereas we may consider it the norm to have office hours and appointments, some international students may not understand this and consider that it is ok to come anytime and seek help in accordance with their previous experiences in their home country. When told this is not the system some may get upset. Students can perceive lecturers as being too busy and uncaring whilst tutors can see attempts by international students to 'ambush them' outside the classroom and office hours as demanding.

Similarly, there can be a mismatch between expectations regarding marking and grading. In cultures where students routinely gain 90%+, coming to the UK and getting 50% may be devastating. In this case international students can be shocked and amazed and may come back to the tutor repeatedly to ask that the mark be changed. This can be quite disconcerting and can take a good deal of time and patience to explain to the student that the mark cannot be changed.

5.4 Ten Tips for Teaching International Students

There are many sources with practical guides for working with and teaching international students. The following tips by Philip Warwick (The York Management School, University of York) are especially useful and cover the key issues we can face when teaching international students. He has also written a useful working paper series around the subject of international students, which can be accessed at www.york.ac.uk/media/tyms/documents/research/workingpaper/51%20Working%20Paper%20Warwick%202009.pdf

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Ten Tips for Teaching International Students (Philip Warwick)

1 Preparation

Try to read one of the several guides to teaching and learning for international students, particularly anything written by Jude Carroll and Jeanette Ryan. If you only have half an hour to spare, try Carroll (2002). If you have a little longer, try Ryan (2000)* or if you have a bit of time leading up to teaching, look at Carroll and Ryan (2005). These provide a range of practical suggestions and some detailed guidance about course design and institutional arrangements.

2 Consider your assumptions

What assumptions are you making about the knowledge of your students? What are you expecting that they can, and cannot do? What expectations do you have of your students? They will have all done well in their own educational system, however they will not all share the same knowledge and skill and may have different life experiences to your own. Do not necessarily expect them to understand all the academic conventions you may take for granted, know how to prepare for a seminar or case study.

3 Manage expectations

Where possible, through websites, pre-arrival documentation, email briefing, the VLE and induction week; help students to understand what to expect from your course or unit and also what you expect of them. What will be the class size? How will the module be assessed? How many lectures will there be? What formative tests are there? How much reading do you expect them to do each week? What is the structure of the unit and what topics will be covered?

4 Gentle paced introductions

If you are teaching students at the start of the academic year, try to set off at a gentle pace to allow those who are studying in English for the first time to get accustomed to your use of language and your accent. Be careful with your use of metaphors. If you

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use them, remember to explain them.

5 Group work

I suggest you manage group composition, even though this may not initially be popular. Nevertheless this benefits students because they are forced to have experience of cross cultural group work. This requires preparation in advance of the first exercise to set up the groups. Once the students are in their groups, encourage them to stay in these groups for a meaningful number of sessions. Ensure that the initial group work is formative and give the group the opportunity to get to know each other. Let the students know that you expect them to learn from the process of working in a group and that, in the first few exercises, the process is as important as the end result.

6 Encourage speaking in class

The way you receive the first few class contributions is very important for the class dynamics as the module develops. Welcome all contributions and try not to be critical of any comments made. If a student has misunderstood the point, thank them for their contribution and try to encourage another student to offer an alternative point of view. Be explicit about encouraging all contributions and remind students that obtaining a range of view points is helpful to them because they need to understand there are always arguments for and against different approaches in business. Students who are reluctant to give their own views might be prepared to feedback an idea which they have talked about with peers.

7 Case Studies

It might be tempting to use case studies with which you are familiar. But if you use case studies that are based in the UK, home students will always be in a stronger position respond than international students. Wherever possible, use cases with a multi-national context that do not favour the contextual knowledge of the home students. Alternatively, use a case that forces home students to seek contextual understanding from international students.

8 Assessment Strategies

Be clear about what you want students to do in assessments. Try to set assessment questions in a way that does not favour one group over another. For example, if you want an assignment to be in report form, make sure that you have been explicit about what you consider to be an appropriate format during the module or in the assessment guidelines (preferably both). Write your assessment questions (especially examination questions) in straightforward language. Those with English as a second language may waste valuable time during the examination trying to understand exactly what the question means, if you write in a complicated academic style. You can generally convey the same meaning in plain English using fewer words.

9 Get to know your students

Acknowledge and celebrate the diversity of the class. For example, you can ask the group to comment on the activities of multi-national companies in their home countries or ask the students to provide examples of multi-national organisations that operate in their countries of origin. This may make for more active participation and a more rewarding experience for the student.

10 Make time to reflect on how it went

Talk to colleagues about what was successful and what was less so. They may be able to assist you in the process of review and reflection

* full reference listed in the Selected Bibliography at the end of this guide

6   Academic Writing and Plagiarism

Much has been written about international students and plagiarism. Jude Carroll is an internationally renowned expert on both international students and on plagiarism. Her book, A Handbook for Deterring Plagiarism in Higher Education, is well worth looking at as is a podcast of her explaining plagiarism and why students can struggle with it. (www.brookes.ac.uk/library/podcast/wheatley/ep6.html)

International students have and do continue to fall foul of academic misconduct and plagiarism charges. Some may have come from a culture where copying of texts is accepted practice at school. The notion of changing anything written in a book could be perceived as being disrespectful or unnecessary. Coupled with language proficiency lacking sophistication and/or limited text manipulation skills it is perhaps, unsurprising that international students can struggle to get their heads around referencing and attributing the work of others.

There will be students from all backgrounds who will intentionally plagiarise and this is typically as a result of poor time management (assessment overloading, part time working etc.) and being under pressure to submit something before a deadline. It can also reflect the level of commitment and motivation to their studies.

International students can be unintentional plagiarists as they often lack the language skills in order to paraphrase the work of others. They often are unclear about what constitutes plagiarism and why it is so important not to do it. They can also be confused about what collusion is and may come from cultural backgrounds where helping a friend by letting them borrow their notes or having a look at their essay is accepted practice. These cultural norms can be deep seated and will not change overnight.

As tutors in the UK the following actions can lessen the impact:

- Be explicit about what plagiarism is and is not and why it is so important not to do it.

- Back this up with opportunities for international students to practise writing in a safe way i.e. for formative feedback. Being able to write according to western academic conventions will not happen over night; it is a skill that will take time to develop (as it does for UK students too).

- Simply "telling" students not to plagiarise will not stop it. Plan in short, non-assessed writing activities from the start of their course.

- Try to design out plagiarism by ensuring assessments are sufficiently different from ones set in the previous year and use a range. Where practicable try to avoid standard "write a report about the causes of……." tasks and aim to use:

- personalised assignments e.g. have essays with same topic but different emphasis or have different titles of a range of related topics

- use technology for individual data sets to be generated for students to use (particularly useful in science, engineering, accounting areas)

- create fictional case studies (particularly useful in social work, nursing and health areas), use oral elements

- consider allocating marks for the process as well as the final report e.g. marks for writing a draft, minutes of group meetings etc.

We in the CLE have a useful, quick guide to avoiding plagiarism which can be accessed at http://www.beds.ac.uk/learning/teaching-and-learning-guides

When designing assessments consider background and cultural knowledge; can someone from outside of the UK will be able to tackle it as effectively as someone who has lived and grown up in the UK?

7   A Final Word

Teaching international students can bring challenges but with thought and an open mind, they can bring rewards to you and to all students in your class. Applying maxims of good teaching such as being supportive, inclusive, explicit and transparent will be as relevant to a home student as to one from overseas. Teaching international students does not necessitate a sea change in our approach to teaching. If you already espouse these values then you are most likely enjoying a rich and positive classroom experience. Taking the time to consider why an international student may be behaving in a particular way and making a few adjustments to the way you deliver your classes can create a more illuminating and harmonious for everyone.

"Adaptation is what is expected of the two parties [students and teacher] – significant development in the case of the students, a greater awareness and sensitivity in the case of the teachers. It is an important caveat that one seeks to develop or adapt the students, not transform them. Underlying the interactional ethos of the academic discussion … is a system of beliefs and values deeply rooted in the host culture, a system certainly different from and in some respects hostile to the world view most non-native English speakers hold. …[T]o prepare students, it must be plain (and perhaps made plain to students) that the students' own cultural values are not being challenged or threatened. Students who find that their notion of social role or their native conversational style is being dismissed are not going to develop a positive attitude towards new pragmatic and discourse norms."   (Jones, 1999)

Activity – Student Performance:

You have a mixed cohort with most of the students coming from outside the UK - from the European Union, from the Middle East, from India, South East Asia and from China. The annual course review, covering all units in the course, shows that students' overall grades were in the 60-65. However, analysis of some subgroups of students based on their nationality shows a more mixed picture.

Two subgroups, both from outside the UK, are significantly lower overall, with all students averaging just above or below the 'pass/fail' boundary. The top four students are all UK students.

- Is this a cause for reflection or likely to be a reasonable variation?

- Should you call for further investigation and if so, what warrants exploration?

- What questions might you ask yourself if you noticed this situation?

- What action might be needed by the course team?

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