

Educating the Business Graduate of the 21st Century: Communication for a Globalized World

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This article examines current business communication education in higher education, particularly in regard to English as a global language. The discussion is situated at the intersection of business communication, intercultural communication, and internationalization of higher education, and the article draws on research from all three fields. The article questions why not enough use is being made of existing cultural diversity in university classrooms, and it suggests a variety of pedagogical strategies which will enable teachers to build on the cultural and linguistic strengths of their students to develop intercultural communication competence. These new directions for intercultural business communication will equip business graduates to operate successfully in a globalized world.

This paper examines current business communication education at higher education, particularly in regard to the use of “English as a global language” (Crystal, 1997). The discussion draws on the findings of two case studies undertaken for doctoral research (Briguglio, 2005), which identified some quite specific skills in regard to the use of English as a global language for a business context. One case study was based on observation in two multinational companies and the other on research undertaken with a class of undergraduate business students. The analysis of the language practices in two multinational companies, one in Malaysia and the other in Hong Kong, provided insights into the way “global English” is used and identified the sorts of intercultural communication skills graduates would need to operate successfully in such contexts. The case study undertaken with a typical business class in an Australian higher education institution sought to establish whether students were developing the identified intercultural communication skills in the course of their studies. This case study showed that while students are equipped with quite sound knowledge of cultural and linguistic matters, they may not have the necessary intercultural communication skills to enable them to work effectively in multinational teams. The student case study also showed that deliberate intervention to raise awareness of cultural and linguistic issues can be effective in developing students’ intercultural communication skills.

This article draws a link between business communication, intercultural communication, and internationalization of higher education. The article will briefly examine the effects of globalization and internationalization in education, and it will discuss how they might impact on future business communication education at the higher education level. More particularly, it will indicate directions for intercultural business communication, which, coupled

with other abilities and attributes, will enable business graduates to operate successfully in a globalized world.

Globalization and Internationalization of Higher Education

Maidstone (in Whalley et al. 1997) identifies the trends of internationalization and globalization impacting on Canada as follows:

- the emergence of a global political economy and a new international division of labor;
- the greater global interdependency with regard to political, environmental and social issues and problems;
- the reconfiguring of international relations and new definitions of global security that have developed with the end of the cold war; and
- the substantial demographic changes in Canada and other Western industrialized societies resulting from changing patterns of immigration. (p. 5)

Maidstone makes it clear that these trends are universal, and therefore their influence is inescapable.

In the context of higher education, Altbach (2004) defines globalization as “the broad economic, technological and scientific trends that directly affect higher education and are largely inevitable. Politics and culture are also part of the new global realities” (p. 3). Altbach reminds us that globalization in regard to universities is not something new. Indeed, the earliest universities (Bologna, Paris, and others) were very much “global institutions” serving an international clientele and functioning with a common language, Latin, and with professors from many countries (Altbach, 2004). Altbach points out that globalization cannot be completely avoided if universities are to remain relevant. Internationalization, in the context of

higher education, includes “the specific policies and programs undertaken [by universities] to cope with or exploit globalization” (Altbach, 2004, p. 3). Knight (1999) indicates there is some slippage in the way the two terms are used to refer to higher education. She distinguishes between them by stating that “global” refers to “education which involves the whole world and relates to world issues”, whereas “international” refers to “education which involves/relates to the people, cultures and systems of different nations” (p. 27). Knight argues that internationalization implies respect for, and understanding of, differences and similarities between and among nations, whereas globalization probably does not. In higher education, as in trade, globalization can bring access, but, as Altbach (2004, 2005) warns, it can also reinforce existing inequalities. Both Altbach (2004) and Knight (1999) point out that the providers of international education are largely Western developed countries which deliver education, most commonly in the English language, and from a “Western” perspective:

Now, multinational corporations, media conglomerates, and even a few leading universities can be seen as the new neocolonists – seeking to dominate not for ideological or political reasons, but rather for commercial gain (Altbach, 2004, p. 6).

Altbach (2004, 2005) also reminds us that, historically, academe has always been international in scope (and characterized by inequalities), and the strong globalization thrust merely makes it impossible to resist internationalization. What we need to do, he suggests, is to recognize inequalities and then try to overcome them “in order to ensure that globalization does not turn into the neo-colonialism of the 21st century” (Altbach, 2004, p. 18). Other researchers in the field of internationalization have also offered similar cautions (Haigh, 2003; Jackson, 2003; Van Damme, 2001).

Internationalization is conceived and defined in various ways. Trevaskes, Eisenchelas and Liddicoat (2003) differentiate between weak and strong perceptions of internationalization, with the first showing a superficial engagement with the concept (and perhaps more concern for the marketing of education to international students) and the latter a much deeper understanding and exploration of the concept, with the emphasis on internationalization of curriculum. Stier (2004) also informs us that internationalization is perceived by some as a *state* of things, by others as a *process*, and by others still as a *doctrine*, with these approaches reflecting very different motivations. Although many Australian universities have incorporated internationalization policies which would reflect strong perceptions of internationalization

as a transforming policy for all those engaged in teaching and learning, the truth, say Trevaskes et al. (2003), is that in many cases the rhetoric far outweighs reality. Trevaskes et al. (2003) feel that Australian universities have merely acknowledged the presence of large numbers of international students on local campuses but have not utilized this phenomenon to develop “a culturally literate, interculturally capable society in Australia” (p. 10). However, Australia is not alone in finding rhetoric easier than implementation. A world-wide survey of internationalization by the International Association of Universities (a UNESCO backed body) in 2003 found, among other things, that “while two thirds of the institutions appear to have an internationalization policy/strategy in place, only about half of these institutions have budgets and a monitoring framework to support the implementation” (Knight, 2004, p. 4). The survey also found that internationalization is largely driven by faculty – that is, those academic staff members who are committed to making a difference – rather than initiatives coming centrally from university leaders.

Internationalization of Curriculum

Internationalized curricula have been defined as:

Curricula with an international orientation in content, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally/socially) in an international and multicultural context, and designed for domestic students as well as foreign students (OECD, 1994, p. 7).

The typology suggested by the OECD (1994) covers formal and informal curriculum and includes the following categories:

- curricula with an international subject;
- curricula in which the traditional area is broadened by a comparative approach;
- curricula which prepare students for defined international professions;
- curricula in foreign language or linguistics which address cross-communication issues and provide training in intercultural skills;
- interdisciplinary programs covering more than one country;
- curricula leading to internationally recognized professional qualifications;
- curricula leading to joint double degrees;
- curricula in which compulsory parts are offered abroad; and
- curricula in which the content is specifically designed for foreign students. (p. 7)

Although this definition and typology are now more than ten years old, some would claim that very little progress has been made in that time. The disappointment with the failure of universities to truly internationalize curricula is fairly common not only in Australia (Eisenchelas et al., 2003; Liddicoat, 2003; Nesdale & Todd, 1997; Smart, Volet, & Ang, 2000; Trevaskes et al., 2003), but also in the United States (Hayward, 2000) and elsewhere (Stier, 2004). And yet if we compare present university curricula to those of ten years ago, we might find that, at least on the surface, some things have changed. For example, more units carry “international” in their title, and this usually reflects some change in content to include international perspectives (Briguglio, 1999). However, deep level changes that would equip graduates with intercultural communication competencies would require awareness of language issues across the curriculum. Such changes would be tackled more effectively at the broader university level through the development of language policies integrated with internationalization policies, thus providing a more coherent framework for developments across the curriculum.

A number of universities around the world already have language policies. For example, the policies of Stellenbosch University (2004) and Cardiff University (2005) relate to the rights of minorities; others, such as those at Lingnan University Hong Kong (2000) and the university policies of the European Union (European Language Council, 2001), are tied more closely to political and strategic, as well as identity, issues; others, such as Curtin’s (2004) “Language of Instruction Policy,” aim to clarify language of instruction issues, particularly for offshore campuses; and still others, such as those of Monash University (2002) and Wollongong University (2005), are more broadly related to curriculum. The Monash University “Language Policy,” in particular, seems very far-sighted, promoting the sort of student development that is advocated in this paper, and offering a good example for other universities:

In adopting a University Language Policy, Monash University recognizes the centrality of language in academic, professional and social life, the rich linguistic resources available within the institution, and the language needs generated by globalization. (Monash University, 2005)

Of course, the development of clear and far-sighted policies is only a first step, with implementation often proving more challenging.

Internationalization and Graduate Attributes

Recent moves in articulating and developing graduate attributes may be another way to foster internationalization, since the graduate attributes that are indicated for the future often overlap with those that will/can be developed through internationalization of the curriculum. As Barrie (2004) states, “[G]raduate attributes sit at a vital intersection of many of the forces shaping higher education today” (p. 263).

Graduate attributes (also variously called graduate qualities, generic skills, generic attributes, core skills, and core capabilities) are those skills and qualities that we expect students to have developed through undertaking their degree. This topic has attracted much attention in the last 20 years or so, with many universities all over the world formulating statements of graduate attributes they aim to develop in their students, and even attempts internationally to develop international standards (Knight, 1999). These developments have led to discussion about the sort of knowledge, skills, and abilities that students will require to function professionally and socially in future scenarios, among them, of course, the world of business. The debate seems to move between two major orientations: an instrumental/economic orientation, which argues that university education should prepare graduates for the workforce; and a more liberal orientation, which posits that undergraduates need to be prepared to contribute more broadly to cultural and social development, including their own personal development. Candy (1994), in his study of lifelong learning, takes the view that not only are these orientations not mutually exclusive, but indeed both are necessary for continuing learning throughout life.

Barrie and Prosser (2004) and Barnett (2004) state that we are educating students for an extremely uncertain future. One could argue that the future is always uncertain, but, as Barnett (2004) states, the current unprecedented *pace* of change, “its character, its intensity [and] its felt impact,” make the situation at the beginning of the 21st century somewhat different (p. 248). Barnett thus expresses the need for a curriculum that will prepare students for “supercomplexity.” Barrie (2004) describes a recent process adopted at the University of Sydney to establish and implement a set of graduate attributes. The three “holistic” overarching attributes which staff identified were scholarship, global citizenship, and lifelong learning. And although the number and variety of graduate attributes developed by universities may differ, the theme of preparing students for operating in global scenarios is seen repeatedly in higher education literature, with competencies in intercultural communication a priority.

Whalley et al. (1997) refer to a new set of skills that graduates of the future will require which are variously referred to as international literacy, international consciousness, global awareness, or a global perspective. Sadiki (2001) states that we should aim for a curriculum that will develop a form of global citizenship and will prepare its recipients everywhere for global community. Knight (1999), who undertook several studies in Canada, found that respondents from education, government and the private sector all agreed that the number one rationale of importance for higher education was “to prepare students and scholars who are internationally knowledgeable and interculturally competent” (p. 13).

In short, the impact of globalization and internationalization has placed global citizenship capabilities at the forefront of graduate attributes. Nowhere is this more evident than in relation to business graduates. Knight (1999), for example, states:

The globalized marketplace and economy have resulted in increased interest and opportunities for graduates to be employed by multinational companies. This requires that the higher education sector be prepared to provide relevant training and education to ensure that graduates are well prepared to work in a more globalized economy even if the majority of them may never leave their home country to work. (p. 5)

In this sort of context, intercultural skills, and particularly intercultural communication skills, are at the core of a university education for the 21st century:

The preparation of graduates who have a strong knowledge and skill base in intercultural relations and communications is considered by many academics as one of the strongest rationales for internationalising the teaching/learning experience of students in undergraduate and graduate programs (Knight, 1999, p. 17).

Altbach (2004, 2005) reminds us, however, that the (fairly young) field of business and management studies is particularly dominated by American perspectives and that even the literature in intercultural business studies has tended to be presented largely through American/Western eyes. If we really want to prepare graduates for work in multinational settings, we would do well to eschew many of the ready-made materials and simplistic courses for intercultural development and concentrate on more carefully considered processes. As Stier (2004) indicates, “Intercultural competence is not something that is easily accessible or achievable by using a manual [...], but requires the hand of time and a vast personal investment” (p. 87).

Implications of Data Obtained from Two Recent Case Studies

A study undertaken by the author in 2004 (Briguglio, 2005) explored the use of English as a global language in two multinational companies, one a cargo inspection company in Malaysia and the other a producer of a famous American soft drink brand in Hong Kong. An ethnographic approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data-gathering techniques, was employed. An analysis of the language practices helped to identify the English and intercultural communication skills that business graduates will require to operate successfully in such multinational contexts. Among the skills that were found to be important were: the use of English for email communication; greater tolerance for and accommodation of the different accents and varieties of English; the ability to write informal reports in English; development of both oral and written communication skills in English to high levels; and the ability to work collaboratively with people from different national, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. More importantly, the case study highlighted the need for employees in multinational companies to develop *interpretability* as well as *intelligibility* skills (Candlin, 1982) in global English. That is, in the world of business communication, where the dominance of English as global language is undisputed (Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 2006), even if regretted by some (Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992), the responsibility for successful communication lies not only with second language speakers of English to make themselves understood (intelligibility) but also with first language speakers to develop skills for interpreting different accents and varieties of world English (interpretability).

The same study also included a case study with a “typical” business class in an Australian higher education institution, in order to gauge whether students were developing the communication skills identified in the two multinational contexts described above in the course of their studies. This case study showed that more needs to be done to develop in students the communication skills they will require to participate confidently in international business contexts and, more particularly, to operate effectively in multinational/multicultural teams. Both case studies highlighted the fact that future business communication education needs to:

- provide deliberate, structured intervention to help students to acquire interpersonal communication skills for multicultural/multinational settings and for working in multicultural/multinational teams;

- have a greater focus on teaching and learning processes that will develop student attributes, skills, and competencies in the above areas, rather than simply on content; and
- aim to develop interpretability skills as well as intelligibility skills in intercultural communication, thus placing the responsibility for successful intercultural communication on *all* students, be they first or second language speakers of English.

It is not enough for students to have knowledge and awareness of cultural and linguistic issues (useful though these may be). Students need to be involved in teaching and learning processes which engage them and develop them. As Barnett (2004) states:

Learning for an unknown future cannot be accomplished by the acquisition of either knowledge or skills [but rather] certain kinds of human qualities. They are qualities such as carefulness, thoughtfulness, humility, criticality, receptiveness, resilience, courage and stillness. The pedagogical journey [for engaging students as persons and not merely as “knowers”] will be one of encountering strangeness, of wrestling with it, and forming one’s own responses to it. (p. 257-259)

Barnett could well be describing the journey to acquiring intercultural competence, for Scollon and Scollon (1995) give us very similar advice:

We conclude with what might seem a paradoxical concept, that is, that the professional [intercultural] communicator is the one who has come to realize his or her lack of expertise....Intercultural professional communication requires outgroup communication in which one is never likely to take on full group membership and expertise....A person who understands the outlines of the pattern of differences and commonalities, but fully recognizes his or her own lack of membership and state of non-expertise, is likely to be the most successful and effective communicator. (p. 252)

Future Directions for Business Education

It would appear, therefore, that there is much scope for universities to implement strategies which will equip business graduates to operate confidently in a global context. Business education will need to take students on a journey which will make them more self-reflexive about their own learning and develop their capacities. This will mean, above all else, that teaching

staff need to focus on teaching and learning processes which will promote this sort of student development (Leask, 1999; Liddicoat, 2003). The following suggestions, then, are made particularly with the classroom and teaching and learning in mind, and with the emphasis on intercultural communication skills. They refer less to content changes and additions, which may need to be made to some units/courses, and more to teaching and learning processes that can be incorporated into aspects of a business course. They can be introduced simultaneously or gradually, depending on the receptiveness, enthusiasm and energy of teaching staff and the resources that academic leaders are prepared to infuse into such developments.

Curriculum internationalization initiatives for business students, with the particular aim of developing intercultural competence, could include one-off or one-time, carefully structured components, such as teaching a special unit in “Intercultural communication for global business.” In an ongoing way, however, higher education business courses should include structured intervention processes (Smart et al., 2000; Volet & Ang 1998), which should extend across the curriculum to raise student awareness of intercultural and linguistic issues, and teaching and learning processes, which can enhance student capacity to communicate intercultural, particularly in multinational groups/teams (Roberts et al., 2001). Teaching and learning strategies needed to prepare business graduates for the 21st century will require greater attention than they have attracted in the past. Initiatives such as the following would do much to promote the learning goals espoused above:

- a unit in “Intercultural communication for global business” or similar;
- carefully structured and managed student group work;
- development and careful use of international business case studies (with greater input into the curriculum from students themselves);
- facilitation of electronic communication between students in different countries/contexts; and, most importantly
- a classroom pedagogy which allows students to develop interpersonal/ intercultural communication competencies.

Initiatives such as these, implemented systematically across a business Faculty, School or course, would do much to promote the sorts of graduate attributes discussed above. These initiatives are explained more fully below.

A Unit in Intercultural Communication for Global Business

Teaching a compulsory foundation unit to all students would be a reasonably easy option, in that a single unit is far easier to implement than some of the other strategies suggested. However, a unit by itself has its limitations, nor is it a simple matter to determine the sort of content and processes that such a unit might embrace. Nevertheless, such a unit might cover at least some of the following areas:

- expectations for oral and written communication in the tertiary context;
- a “grammar of discourse” for a major variety of English (or of the variety of the country where the course is being undertaken);
- aspects of university discourse;
- aspects of business discourse;
- varieties of English dialects or “world Englishes”;
- the rise of English as a global language;
- the concept of culture;
- aspects of cultural, organizational, gender, professional, generational, and other discourses;
- issues in cross-cultural communication; and
- business negotiation in cross-cultural contexts.

Most importantly, the teaching/learning *processes* used in such a unit would be just as important as the content. Such a unit would make extensive use of seminars, class and small group discussion, group work in mixed cultural groups, case studies based on cross-cultural issues, and tasks that would require students to probe each other’s cultural perspectives. This sort of approach seems to be reflected, for example, in a B.A. in English for International Business (Global) offered by the University of Central Lancashire (2003), which lists typical classroom activities for a unit in English for International Communication as follows:

- structured discussions, simulations and case studies;
- problem-solving and decision-making tasks;
- text and video-based analysis of international and regional varieties of English and their use in international communication;
- guided project work leading to portfolio tasks;
- presentations and seminars based on individual research; and

- input, practice, and feedback focused on language and communication skills.

In such a unit, care would need to be taken to ensure that all cultural perspectives are valued, so that international students’ cultural knowledge is seen as valid and expert and not merely acknowledged in a superficial way. For example, students could be asked to research some aspect of “world Englishes” in such ways that the many international students become the experts.

Crosling and Martin (2005) point out that students need to be clearly informed of the purposes of various activities in order to maximize their learning. For example, it is too easy from a first language speaker’s perspective to perceive that international students “have an accent”. However, if students are made to realize that everybody has an accent of one sort or another, and that in multinational contexts, they will have to deal with a number of accents in English, then all students might make more effort to acquire greater *interpretability* skills. In other words, the classroom opportunity to engage in intercultural communication, with all its difficulties and complexity, should be welcomed as valuable experience that will enhance one’s intercultural communication skills, for as one student put it when interviewed about the multinational student teams case study: “[T]his is like a small portion of the real world; this is like a small introduction” (Briguglio, 2005, p. 159). And real or realistic exemplars of varieties of English for analysis, including the language of business scenarios, could be obtained through the media. Such texts would provide a rich source of authentic material that could be analysed and would no doubt have much more impact than information in books, which, well intentioned though they might be, tend to have their limitations.

In implementing such a unit, issues to be addressed would include: whether the unit should be a core or elective unit; devising teaching and learning activities to enhance the development of interpersonal/intercultural communication skills, which are not normally assessed, nor are they easy to assess; and determining who should teach such a unit: staff with business qualifications, or those with linguistic expertise, or (in an ideal world) both? Certainly many of the strategies described above would seem to require at least some knowledge and understanding of applied linguistics, with which those teaching business communication in Europe would seem to be better equipped than those in similar teaching situations in America and Australia, for example, for, as Bargiela-Chiappini (2004) indicates, intercultural business communication in Europe represents a more “language-centred approach to interculturality” (p. 33).

Carefully Structured Student Group Work

Many group or team projects and assignments are undertaken in business studies. However, instead of providing an excellent opportunity for deep learning, group experiences can, in some cases, build resentment and unhappiness among students (Caspersz et al., 2002; De Vita, 2001; Volet & Ang, 1998). We know that there is very little mixing between local and international students on Australian campuses and indeed on U.K. and U.S. campuses. This separation seems to continue to a large extent within university classrooms. Smart et al. (2000) and Volet and Ang (1998) found that, if students were left to their own devices, very little would change. They advocate, as do Crosling and Martin (2005), a deliberate interventionist approach to encourage both local and international students to learn from each other. However, too often students are asked to form their own teams and are not given much preparation for working in groups. De Vita (2001), too, reports that when group work is used as a quick and easy solution to assessment without adequate preparation of students, the results can be bad group experiences.

This is unfortunate, because student multinational teams present the greatest opportunity for students to acquire significant cultural learning from each other (Caspersz et al., 2004; Crosling & Martin, 2005). The student case study undertaken by the author (Briguglio, 2005) showed that students are very well disposed to learning about other cultures and acquiring deeper cultural understanding. Our Australian classrooms, certainly in the business faculties, which provide around 46% of international students on Australian campuses (DEST, 2004), have enough cultural diversity to provide the ideal laboratories for authentic cultural and linguistic learning. We have seen, too, that future graduates need to be able to deal with different varieties of English and different accents. Indeed, Alptekin (2002) proposes that “a new notion of communicative competence is needed, one which recognizes English as a world language [encompassing] local and international contexts as settings of language use” (p. 57). Well-structured group work offers students the possibility to become more familiar with world Englishes and competent in dealing with different accents. Offshore campuses and programs also offer the possibility for virtual multinational teams, for which electronic chat sites provide students with the possibility to also improve their intercultural email skills.

Caspersz et al. (2005) stress that student teams need to be well-managed for the best results. They propose a holistic approach encompassing six principles that academic staff should follow in order to obtain the best results from student teams. These principles

include integrating the team project into unit curricula, preparing students for team work, generating team members’ commitment, monitoring team progress, managing fairness in teams, and managing cultural and linguistic diversity.

However, care will need to be taken to convince students that the extra effort required to work in multinational teams is worth it, because students have also indicated their natural tendency to form groups with those with whom they feel more comfortable, usually people from similar cultural backgrounds. Volet and Ang (1998) found that even when students had a positive experience in a culturally mixed group they expressed a preference for returning to homogenous groups which they felt required less effort. So staff need to be very explicit with students about the reasons for organizing culturally mixed groups and the sort of learning they promote. Students might then be more prepared to make the extra effort required if the benefits are made explicit (Crosling & Martin, 2005). Indeed, students have expressed to the author (Briguglio, 2000) that, left to their own devices, they will often go for the soft option, which is to culturally homogenous teams. They do, however, want to gain the benefits of culturally mixed teams and want staff to “force” them into such teams (Briguglio, 2000; Smart et al., 2000). And some (particularly postgraduate) students are aware that working in mixed teams on projects is also beneficial academically, allowing students to learn from different perspectives and different (cultural) points of view:

I like the teamwork as well. We sometimes have an assignment as a team, four or five people. I think it’s one of the best points. Because to be understood and to understand at all, you have to speak, just to convince others. You have to express your opinions, you can’t be shy and not say anything. And when you meet people from another culture, overseas people – I mean from Indonesia or even France – they have a very different way of thinking. It’s a good way to learn about another culture. They feel, they react in a different way (international postgraduate student, in Briguglio, 1998).

Thus teams need to be structured so that they are culturally/linguistically mixed and carefully managed by teaching staff to ensure the best learning results. Some of the management steps and strategies could then involve:

- explicitly informing the students of the learning objectives and reasons for culturally mixed teams, pointing out the learning

advantages and also some of the difficulties that may be encountered;

- implementing an initial workshop to raise awareness of language and cultural issues early in the piece;
- having each student develop an assessable journal, which records the group's progress and interactions, as well as cultural and linguistic observations (to encourage reflection);
- monitoring the progress of groups, in terms of group member contributions to the set group project; and
- having students develop a portfolio containing written and/or audio and/or visual media "texts" illustrating particular cultural and linguistic aspects relevant to intercultural/business discourse.

With staff intervention to form structured groups, careful selection of team members, preparation of students to work in multinational teams, and the development of challenging tasks and processes that allow students to learn from each other's cultural perspectives, group work can produce wonderful results and prepare students for working in real multicultural settings. As Crosling and Martin (2005) remind us:

Collaborative learning activities have the potential to foster both students' and teaching staff members' intercultural and international literacy [and to] promote intercultural communicative competency and critical thinking abilities for the global workplace. (p. 11)

Development and Use of International Business Case Studies

In business studies, the case study is a very common teaching and learning tool and presents a good opportunity for designing appropriate teaching and learning tasks. Many commercially produced materials already exist, but, as indicated above, there is the problem that many such materials are developed from a Western perspective. Such texts recognize difference, but only in relation to the assumed centrality of dominant cultures. They tend to want to train the Western "we" to learn about the cultural values and business practices of other countries relevant to them (the "they") in a bid to gain a business advantage (Munshi & McKie, 2001). We have seen, on the other hand, that true competence in intercultural communication will allow people to view things from diverse perspectives, all equally valid once a single dominant cultural position is removed. Munshi and McKie (2001) avoided the pitfalls in their business

communication course by employing a critical pedagogy: this included using both mainstream and alternative readings (from literature, as well as business) that allowed students to develop a critical perspective, and analysis and discussion of students' own experience of crossing cultural borders.

Alternatively, students themselves can develop case studies. Commercially produced case studies could serve as a starting point, and then students could be asked to adapt the case study from their own cultural perspective. Also, students could be asked to work in their "national group" to develop case studies that reflect their cultural perspectives. Case studies could then be pooled so that students in the class address the issues from different cultural perspectives. Students could also work in multinational teams to produce original case studies based on cultural dilemmas and problems that they themselves have experienced, and teams can be asked to adapt them to a business context. The complexity that students are likely to meet in the real world is already existent in many classrooms, which form a microcosm of the real world. Unfortunately, in most cases, such diversity is ignored and even resented by some staff and students as an impediment to learning, when in reality, it could, and should be, the very opposite – a font of real intercultural discovery.

A case study based on the research with multinational companies undertaken by the author (Briguglio, 2005) might be designed as follows:

You are a middle level manager who heads up a small team that is part of a multinational drink company with subsidiaries in Asia. The head office of the multinational company is in the USA, and your company is based in Hong Kong. Some of the top representatives from the American head office (as well as others from subsidiaries in Germany and Spain) will be visiting your HK company for a week to discuss progress over the last two years and to develop a strategic plan for the future. Your section has the responsibility of organizing the meetings as well as social functions that are required for the planning week. What factors will you need to take into consideration in order to organize a successful week for all concerned?

This sort of case study does not have a neat solution; there is no one correct answer that will solve all the inherent problems. The open-ended scenario it proposes is useful because if students are placed in culturally mixed groups to discuss this case study, they will be forced to address, amongst other things: the cultural dilemmas that might arise in the above scenario, the misunderstandings that might arise due to the use of English as a *lingua franca*, the expectations that

different groups may have for the meeting, different meeting procedures that might be expected, how different groups might view work and socializing, what would be considered polite and appropriate behavior by different participants, what language issues might arise, and what “face” considerations may need to be taken into account. Feedback from groups after addressing this sort of case study would also bring up a rich array of issues that can be pooled and discussed with the whole class in order to build on students’ cultural knowledge and understanding.

Facilitation of Electronic Communication Between Students

The multinational companies case study (Briguglio, 2005) highlighted the fact that English was used most in email communication. As well, email is likely to become, according to some, the dominant interpersonal communication medium in the new millennium (Waldvogel, 2001), “approaching if not overshadowing voice” (Negroponte, 1995, p. 191). Moreover, many firms, now aware of the importance of email to their business, are investing money in teaching their employees how to write (Waldvogel, 2001). It would be advisable, therefore, to develop students’ email skills to high levels.

Apart from formal teaching about email communication in business communication courses, other strategies can be used to develop students’ skills. Email communication could be built into units, for example, as part of teamwork projects or for class chat sites, with the lecturer, with outside clients, and so on, so that students come to understand levels of formality and informality required for different types of email communication and acquire necessary email protocols.

However, email communication needs to be taught and assessed in order for students to take it seriously. The belief that “anyone can do it” simply because it is easy technically ignores the fact that email communication requires quite sophisticated understanding and writing skills in order for people to communicate effectively and sensitively. As Waldvogel (2001) states: “[B]ecause email communication lacks many of the cues present in other communicative forms it is open to wide interpretation. Where it is used indiscriminately and without the discipline and thought that goes into other forms of written messages, it can generate bad feeling and result in ineffective communication” (p. 9). Moreover, because the need for cultural adjustments may be less obvious in long-distance communication, email can increase the potential for intercultural misunderstandings (Gundling, 1999). For all these reasons, then, it is important for email communication to be encouraged, but also to be

taught and assessed, as an integral part of business courses.

A Classroom Pedagogy That Promotes Development of Interpersonal/ Intercultural Competency

Often the inclusion of content relating to other countries/cultures represents what is understood by internationalization of curriculum in many universities. However, as Smart, Volet and Ang (2000) state:

While such content reform at program level is beneficial...it is likely to be in the area of instructional methods and classroom intercultural interaction that the most promising innovations will emerge. (p. 37)

Several authors (Cheney, 2001; Eisenchelas & Trevaskes, 2003; Smart et al., 2000; Volet & Ang, 1998) recommend an emphasis on structured intervention processes in teaching and learning as well as the provision of experiential learning for students. As Eisenchelas and Trevaskes (2003) state, “[I]nternationalization is a process that impacts on the whole individual, and thus we need to look at cognitive and affective factors” (p. 87). Since it has been argued in this chapter that intercultural communication, in particular, is the aspect of internationalization that should be most strongly promoted for business students, it follows that processes which enhance interaction among the already existent diverse student populations in our classrooms are those that should be strongly promoted.

Bell (2001) suggests a number of processes involving pair work that can involve students from different cultural backgrounds over an extended period (at least for the duration of a unit of study) to acquire deep cultural learning. Bell mentions, for example, a “live” case study in which two students over a semester are asked to research each other’s cultural backgrounds and relate what they learn to cultural theories they have studied; or field trips into the wider (multicultural) community where one student interacts with different members of the public (say shop assistants) while the other observes differences in behavior, particularly linguistic behavior; or involving students in paired activities which enable both parties to examine their own cultural biases, beliefs, and values. Students could also record and analyze each other’s “ways of speaking” for a linguistic analysis of different ways of “making meaning.”

Crosling and Martin (2005) suggest utilizing student diversity fully for collaborative learning in which students become active participants in the teaching and learning process rather than just passive

recipients. They advocate, among other things, creating mandatory culturally mixed groups and informing students of the reasons for this, providing activities that will allow students to reflect on different learning styles and how culture affects the way we process and use information, making students aware of the problems inherent in multicultural interactions, encouraging students to reflect on the group processes in which they engage, and making clear to students the purpose and function of group tasks.

The School of Design at Curtin University of Technology has used some of these techniques in a pair work project, and the results have been truly impressive (Smart et al., 2000). In one assignment, for example, students from different cultural backgrounds work in pairs, and each in turn acts as client and designer. Over a semester students must probe each other's cultural background in order for the designer to design a poster for a particular event that will please the client and be in tune with that client's cultural expectations. Apart from the poster, the assessment also includes diary entries describing what each student has learned about the other's culture. What is particularly valuable about this sort of task is the fact that it carries over a whole semester, involves students exploring each other's cultural values and tastes, has students reflecting on what they have learned, allows students to adapt their design product to please the client, and channels them into developing a design that is a blend of their own ideas and those of another cultural perspective. Another example in the School of Information Systems at Curtin University of Technology has students plan all aspects of a wedding, as it would be carried out in their country of origin. This brings up all sorts of cultural dilemmas and differences, and students learn much more than abstract theory from this project. Similar tasks could be developed and adapted for other business courses.

A broader cross-cultural input into the curriculum can come from students themselves. International students have sometimes complained that in Australian classrooms they are not presented with opportunities to discuss previous experiences and knowledge that relate to their own country. Swiss students, for example, were surprised that in a finance unit, their opinions were not sought on the banking system in their country (Briguglio, 2001). Eisenchelas and Trevaskes (2003) argue that an ethos of internationalization and interculturality should pervade our classrooms "as a process through which individual students or groups learn better to communicate their aspirations, values and attitudes in inter-group situations. This process of communication can occur at the level of less formal one-on-one interactions, or more formal classroom interactions" (p. 89).

The above processes imply extensive dialogue in (and outside) the classroom among students and among

teachers and students. Such processes require classrooms that are living laboratories in which students question issues from a number of perspectives, exchange opinions freely, negotiate meaning, confront and deal generally with difference, grow aware that they are sometimes interacting in English as a global language, and discuss and analyze cultural differences. The student multinational teams case study showed that students are interested in discussing such issues; the classroom atmosphere simply needs to be conducive to allow this to happen. One common complaint from teaching staff is that international students, at least undergraduates, are reluctant to speak out in class. While some may find speaking out in class a daunting prospect (Briguglio, 2000), the multinational student groups case study showed that students are more than willing to discuss such issues in pairs or in small groups. If the classroom atmosphere is conducive to such practices, then students will surely acquire more confidence over time. Moreover, this is the sort of language (the informal language of everyday interaction) that they will require for future operation in multinational/multicultural business teams and contexts (Crosling & Ward, 2001).

Conclusion

This paper has examined the current preparation of business graduates in higher education. Undergraduate business education has been discussed in the context of globalization forces in higher education and, more specifically, in regard to the trend of internationalization of curriculum, which has become more pronounced in the last 15 years or so. The other major impact on undergraduate business education has come from a growing emphasis on learning outcomes or graduate attributes that university courses are expected to develop in students. Both internationalization of curriculum and the move to graduate attributes highlight the fact that intercultural competencies will be crucial, not only for business graduates, but for all graduates in future. The multinational companies case study undertaken by the author (Briguglio 2005) indicated that in the business sphere, intercultural communication skills will be increasingly necessary for success. Although the importance of knowing other languages is by no means diminished, the ability to communicate interculturality in English would seem to be a requirement for success in the future world of business. This paper has discussed some ways in which more carefully considered teaching and learning processes, in particular those informed by applied linguistics, can assist the development of business graduates who will be more culturally sensitive and able to operate in international/ intercultural contexts. There is much

scope for further research in applications and evaluations of classroom pedagogy which will allow students to develop strong intercultural communication skills and greater understanding of cultural and linguistic issues involved in successful intercultural communication.

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