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2 Dealing with *Educational Baggage* in the Language Classroom: Developing Autonomy among International Students

Internationalization, student mobility and language learning

Internationalization is an important feature of today's higher education (HE) landscape with student mobility central to this process. Increasing numbers of students are engaging in education in a country other than their own, encouraged by initiatives such as the Erasmus / Socrates exchange programme. Many partake in foreign language courses at host institutions. This may include learning the language of the host country or one that is used elsewhere, for example, learning English or Spanish in Ireland.

International students enrolled on language courses in Irish HE institutions are often expected to take more responsibility for their language learning than may have been the case in their home institution(s), i.e. to develop a higher degree of learner autonomy. Learner autonomy, which entered the field of foreign language education in the 1970s and has been highly influential ever since, can be defined as 'the ability to take charge of one's own learning' (Holec 1981: 3). Tools such as the European Language Portfolio (ELP) and the *Common European Framework of Reference* (CEFR) (2001) have played an important role in promoting the concept in the European context. However, bearing in mind that 'approaches to knowledge, learning and assessment can be highly culture-specific' (Brown and Joughin 2007: 58), learning a foreign language in a host institution in which learner autonomy is an explicit pedagogical goal may pose significant challenges for international students, particularly perhaps for those coming

from educational contexts in which its promotion is not a priority. Such student groups may be used to more teacher-centred modes of learning and have different expectations of their educational experience. Based on the findings of a qualitative case study, this chapter discusses the negative impact that such *educational baggage*, or expectations around learning arising from previous learning experiences, may have on the development of learner autonomy, while also suggesting possible ways of reducing it.

International students in Ireland: Background and context

There were just over 32,000 international students in Ireland in 2011–12, a figure which represented an increase of 2 per cent on the previous year (ICEF 2013). 70 per cent of international students can be found in HE, a sector which has seen an increase of approximately 35 per cent of those engaged in PhD research and of 6 per cent of enrolments on undergraduate degrees between 2010–11 and 2011–12 (Education in Ireland 2012). Even though the figures for exchange and short-term international students including Erasmus students show a 1 per cent drop on the previous year, the figures for 2011–12 remain above those of 2009–10 (Education in Ireland 2012) at approximately 9,110¹.

In a recent interview, the President of one of Ireland's Universities stressed that internationalization was a key element of the strategic plan for the university and spoke of an ambition to double the number of international students on campus by 2017 from 850 to 1700. He also confirmed

1 In addition, there is growing Irish involvement in the provision of Transnational Education (TNE), whereby education is delivered by an institution based in Ireland to students located in another country (HETAC 2010). TNE includes online and distance learning as well as joint degree programmes and branch campuses located outside of Ireland. The focus of this chapter, however, is on international students physically present in Ireland.

that between 10 and 15 per cent of the student cohort in Irish universities, in general, is international (Devane 2013).

International students are increasingly perceived by HE institutions as a key source of revenue (Andrade 2006: 132–3) and many countries, including Australia, Canada, the U.K. ‘recruit [them] to earn profits by charging high fees’ (Altbach and Knight 2006: 28). Ireland does not appear to be an exception to this trend as international students, especially those from outside the EU, pay fees that are approximately double those paid by students from within the EU. The annual financial contribution of this sector to the Irish economy is currently estimated at €1 billion euro with foreign students in HE contributing approximately €700 million and those in the English language sector approximately €300 million (Education in Ireland 2012).

There is also an inherent assumption in the internationalization process that the presence of international students on campus will help to promote intercultural learning (see Andrade 2006: 133). In an Irish context, there is considerable potential for such learning given that international students studying in Ireland in recent years come from more than 170 countries including the USA, China, France, Germany, Malaysia and the UK (Education in Ireland 2012). However, such diversity brings its own challenges. These include possible difficulties caused by a potential gap between international students’ expected and actual learning experience in terms of the teaching and learning style prevalent in the host classroom.

Teaching foreign languages in an Irish HE context: Focus on learner autonomy

In many educational systems, the transition from secondary to higher education is expected to facilitate a move from a teacher-dependent towards self-directed learning. As pointed out by Moir (2011: 1), ‘[t]he step-change from school education to the first year of HE is often considered as a transition point in [the] direction [of independent learning]’.

In the Irish HE context, a desire to promote learner autonomy is manifest in the National Framework of Qualifications (NFQ 2013). The NFQ is composed of ten levels outlining what students can be expected to know, understand and be able to do following successful completion of programmes of education in Ireland. Levels 7 and 8 in the NFQ relate to undergraduate degree programmes, also known as ‘Bologna first cycle qualifications.’ This term refers to the Bologna framework, which is designed to be an overarching framework for qualifications within the European HE Area (EHEA). The ‘Dublin Descriptors’ (National Qualifications Authority of Ireland 2013, Appendix; emphasis added) for the first cycle state that those completing it successfully will among other things ‘have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study *with a high degree of autonomy*’.

In line with the Bologna framework, the levels within the Irish NFQ identify a number of key competences to be developed over the course of Irish undergraduate degrees, the most relevant here being ‘learning to learn’. This is defined as an ability to ‘take initiative to identify and address learning needs and interact effectively in a learning group’ as well as to ‘learn to act in variable and unfamiliar learning contexts’ and ‘to manage learning tasks independently ...’ Thus, in general terms, there is a focus within Irish HE on the development of learner autonomy.

In the context of foreign language teaching and learning more specifically, the concept of learner autonomy has been researched for over three decades. However, its definition, implementation and assessment remain challenging. Although conceptualizations of learner autonomy abound, Holec’s (1981: 3) definition of the term as ‘the ability to take charge of one’s own learning’ is still one of the most popular. In his view, the autonomous learner accepts responsibility for the learning process in that s/he takes control of specifying the objectives and contents, selection of methods and techniques, monitoring the acquisition process and evaluation of both what s/he has learnt and of the learning process itself (ibid.). However, there is growing recognition that the concept of learner autonomy is more complex than the above definition suggests and that, in addition to Holec’s ‘technical’ view of learner autonomy, it encompasses three further perspectives: psychological, socio-cultural and political-critical perspectives

(Oxford 2003). Sudhershana (2012) therefore recommends that research and practice should acknowledge its complexity and begin to align it with the emerging intercultural approach to foreign language teaching and learning.

Efforts in Europe to promote learner autonomy in foreign language education received considerable boost with the emergence of CEFR (2001) and the ELP. The latter is a tool designed to foster both plurilingual and pluricultural competences as well as learner autonomy (Council for Cultural Cooperation 2000: 2). The fact that between 2001 and 2010, 118 ELP models were validated and accredited by the Council of Europe (Council of Europe ELP website) can be seen as evidence of its growing popularity. The two functions of the ELP, reporting and pedagogical (Council for Cultural Cooperation 2000: 2), are realized in the three sections of the portfolio: the Passport, the Biography and the Dossier. All three sections support the development of learner autonomy as conceptualized by Holec (op.cit.). In the Passport, the learner records his or her language competence by assessing it with reference to a self-assessment grid developed originally for the CEFR (2001). The self-assessment grid has two dimensions: a vertical scale comprising six common reference levels of foreign language competence (i.e., in ascending order, A1, A2, B1, B2, C1 and C2) and a horizontal dimension subdivided into five skills: listening, reading, spoken interaction, spoken production and writing (see Council of Europe 2001: 26–7). The distinctive feature of the grid is the fact that language competence is described in positive terms using *Can do* descriptors with their emphasis, as the name suggests, on what the learner *can*, rather than *can't* do. The Biography in turn enables the learner to plan, monitor and evaluate their language learning (Council for Cultural Cooperation 2000: 3) through self-assessment checklists that are also in the form of *Can do* descriptors, as well as reflection on language and intercultural experiences. Finally, the Dossier gives the learner the opportunity to include examples of work that best reflect their competence (Council for Cultural Cooperation 2000: 3).

As touched upon in the introduction, the emphasis on the development of learner autonomy can pose a challenge for Irish and international students alike but perhaps particularly for international students from

educational backgrounds in which there is less of a focus on this aspect of their study, something which may result in *learning shock*. This term refers to ‘unpleasant feelings and difficult experiences that learners encounter when they are exposed to a new learning environment’ (Gu and Maley 2008: 229) and can be more acute in study abroad settings, particularly when a student lacks foreign language competence and prior exposure to alternative modes of teaching and learning (*ibid.*). The latter is especially problematic when a student has moved from a teacher-centred and textbook-based educational system to an academic environment that promotes autonomous learning (*ibid.*: 230). This brings us to the research project behind this paper.

International students and the development of autonomy in intercultural language learning: An introduction to the case study

The purpose of this study was to investigate how international students can be supported in the development of autonomy in intercultural language learning in a multicultural foreign language classroom with such autonomy understood as ‘the capacity to take responsibility for one’s own language and intercultural development’ (Sudhershana 2012: 2).

As we have seen, the concept of learner autonomy has been extensively researched. However, the discussion has tended to focus on its association with the development of learners’ communicative competence with less attention paid to the fact that learning a foreign language should also involve the development of intercultural competence, even though the development of the latter is now widely recognized as an important goal of foreign language teaching and learning (e.g. Byram 1997). This study attempted to redress the balance, by focusing on the experiences of international students as this student group is perhaps most likely to benefit from the development of autonomy as it relates to intercultural language learning. This is

due to the fact that international students often do not exploit the potential that a period of study abroad offers for the improvement of language and intercultural competence, as demonstrated for instance by their failure to seek contact with host culture members (Llanes and Muñoz 2009).

The focus here is on the obstacles identified as potentially preventing international students from developing learner autonomy in the foreign language classroom. Data was collected using interviews, classroom observation and documents from 30 international students (four male and twenty-six female) attending a twelve-week English language module (LAN01) offered by the Irish University² (IU). LAN01 was a Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) module in that the students were expected to develop their English language skills as they critically explored the topic of globalization. In addition, the course also aimed to foster learner autonomy by means of journal writing and engagement with the LOLIPOP ELP, a version of the ELP with an enhanced intercultural dimension, and collaborative learning in the form of peer teaching in which in groups the students prepared and delivered a teaching session on a topic of globalization of their own choice. The module was open to international students with a minimum of a B1 level in English. In-class instruction comprized a weekly two-hour seminar and one-hour session in a computer laboratory. The students were also expected to spend almost forty hours on independent study including course assignments. The class was highly heterogeneous, comprising students from fifteen different countries, with students from Japan comprising the single largest national sub-group (Table 1). The data was analysed using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, NVIVO8, and involved the preparation of a database, coding, and the development of categories and themes.

2 All names are pseudonyms.

Table 1: LANo1 class composition by country of origin.

Country of origin	Number of students
Japan	9
Spain	4
Poland	3
Germany	2
Lithuania	2
Denmark	1
Ukraine	1
Bolivia	1
Italy	1
Kenya	1
Switzerland	1
France	1
Latvia	1
Columbia	1
China	1
Total: 30 students	

International students and their *educational baggage*: Findings from the case study

In discussing learner autonomy, a dichotomy between a *passive* (i.e. teacher dependent) and an *active* (i.e. autonomous) learner is often drawn upon. It is argued, for example, that learners ‘are accustomed to *the passive role* that school traditionally assigns to [them]’ (Little 2007: 17; emphasis added), and the commonly held belief is that it is the former that somehow reflects the *default setting* of the vast majority of learners in HE.

The data gathered from the students who participated in the case study indicate that for at least some of them the above held true. Indeed, five

students emphasized that the *education systems in their countries of origin did not support the development of autonomy*. For example, Katia wrote:

I think that my country (Lithuania) *not giving an opportunity for learners to feel independence*³, even in universities, in comparison with Ireland-IU practice it everywhere⁴.

That the students' previous educational experiences were quite different from those in LANTO is evident from several issues that they raised in the course of data collection, for example, in their *being used to a significant power differential between the teacher and themselves*, as well as *being accustomed to the teacher telling them what to do*. With regard to the former, Agata commented:

Comparing my experience of studying at university at home in Lithuania and here in Ireland I can definitely say that there are quite a few differences. What strikes me most is the interaction between lecturer and student. In Lithuania I found the 'relationship' very formal and 'cold'. I had never called any of my lecturers by their first name. *The barrier was clearly defined and that did not make me feel at ease*. I think because of that *I felt less confident asking questions*.

As far as the latter is concerned, in a telling reflection, Olivia, one of the six students to mention this issue, wrote that '*We were like robots that did whatever the teachers say to us to do*', while Lisa juxtaposed being told at school to be autonomous and being '*basically fed everything we needed to know and study for the exams*'. In a similar vein, five of the students in this study mention *being used to taking a passive role in class*. For example, classes in the Japanese educational system were described by three of the Japanese students as 'lecture style' (Keiko), with students using English only when 'asked to speak by a teacher' (Aiko), with their role in the classroom limited to '*listening to the lecture quietly, taking perfect notes, and trying to memorize all things*' (Noriko). These issues are significant from the perspective of this paper as the notion of learner autonomy presupposes that the learner assumes the responsibility for the learning process. This idea is

3 All italics have been added.

4 The students' comments are as expressed.

captured in Little, Ridley and Ushioda's (2002) principle of learner empowerment, one of the three principles that the authors propose in relation to the development of learner autonomy in the foreign language classroom. Consequently, it is argued that the teacher must abandon the role of an autocrat and instead become a facilitator, sharing the responsibility for the learning process with the learners. In practical terms, this should involve 'sharing the power' with learners, e.g. in relation to the identification of their needs, the specification of learning objectives, the design and implementation of learning tasks, and assessment (Myers 1990).

Furthermore, in light of above-mentioned dependence on the teacher, it is not surprising perhaps that according to two of the students, the emphasis in their country of origin was placed on *regurgitating knowledge*. Agata observed, for instance:

in Lithuania *I was given information*, required to learn it (usually *I learned by heart*) and than *write that information down* on paper in a form of an exam. *I was even given the exam questions*. For example, I was given 20 questions and told that 5 of those questions I will get during the exam.

In addition, three students also mentioned *not being used to studying the language by themselves outside the classroom*. This fact is important if we consider that developing autonomy involves studying by oneself in one's own spare time, as Dam's (1995) account of making homework an integral part of her teaching clearly shows. This point is illustrated by the following comment from Kaori:

In my country, in Japan, independent learning do not consider as important. Most teachers just teach language in the class and *there are little homework* and that it.

Another important issue, mentioned by two students, concerns the fact that English language classrooms in their country of origin *lacked communicative focus* and that lessons were characterized by *textbook dependence*. The following two quotes illustrate those two issues respectively:

In most of Japanese junior high or high schools, students study mainly *grammar and reading*. There are *little time for practicing speaking*. (Makoto)

However, the system of learning English in Japan is not good for encouraging independence of students. Because English classes are usually lecture type which *a teacher just teaches English using textbooks* in junior high schools and high schools. (Aiko)

According to Sawir (2005), such a *scholastic* approach to English language teaching which emphasizes grammar, reading and writing at the expense of the development of oral communication among language learners still dominates in East and Southeast Asia. Yet, as underlined by another of the three principles of learner autonomy identified by Little, Ridley and Ushioda (2002), the principle of appropriate target language use, a foreign language should be used by learners from the outset for both ‘genuine communicative purposes’ (ibid. p. 19), as well as reflection on both the target language itself and the learning process.

Finally, the comments from four of the students indicate that the educational systems in their countries of origin encouraged *extrinsic*, rather than intrinsic, *motivation*, a significant fact given that it is the latter that seems to be required for the development of autonomy (Scharle and Szabó 2000). For example, Noriko mentioned that in Japan ‘many students study English just for the exams or tests’, accusing the educational system of ‘killing’ students’ motivation for learning the language.

Even though it would be misleading to claim that such experiences were common to all the students in LAN01, as six of them did claim to have been encouraged to develop autonomy in learning⁵, the above discussion shows that at least some of them lacked prior exposure to learner-centred modes of teaching that the module tried to promote and, consequently, may have experienced a *learning shock*. The purpose of the next section is to consider ways in which the impact of such *educational baggage* can be reduced in the foreign language classroom.

- 5 Interestingly, three of these students expressed the view that what they perceived as inadequacies of their former educational systems made them actually more independent learners. For instance, Keiko thought that the fact that the students were not required to work hard at her university encouraged her to take the initiative: ‘So in that university if I want to study then *I have to work hard* because anyone else doesn’t study’.

Reducing the potentially negative impact of *educational baggage*: Facilitating the development of autonomy in the international student

It is generally expected that in an autonomy-oriented classroom environment students will undergo a 'transformation' (Nix 2007) from passive into active learners. However, one of the key issues that emerges from this case study concerns whether those international students who have had little or no opportunity to develop learner autonomy in their own countries of origin can do so when abroad.

Encouragingly, empirical evidence suggests that such a transformation is possible (Gu and Maley 2008), and that international students used to the *scholastic* mode of teaching and learning (Sawir 2005) can become more responsible for their learning (Sudhershnan 2012). For instance, Gu and Maley (2008: 238), reporting on the outcomes of their research project, observe that, 'the most profound [academic] change in Chinese students appears to be in their greatly enhanced sense of self-responsibility and independence in managing the progress of their study'. The findings of Amuzie and Winke's (2009) investigation into the impact of study abroad on international students' language learning beliefs lends credence to this conclusion. The authors found that learner beliefs were dynamic in nature, i.e. both short-term and long-term sojourners became more committed to the need to take responsibility for their language learning⁶. Furthermore, it appears that the main reason behind the learners' stronger commitment to the idea of taking control of their language learning was dissatisfaction with their own involvement in seeking opportunities for contact with members of the host culture and progress they had made:

- 6 The authors found in particular that the latter group had not only held stronger beliefs in learner autonomy to start with, but also demonstrated a greater shift in their beliefs. Consequently, they pose an interesting question as to whether 'those [students] with stronger beliefs in learner autonomy chose to study abroad for longer periods of time' (ibid: 375).

Though unfortunate, the paucity of meaningful communication in the face of an abundance of potential opportunities seems to play a role in helping learners realize what their own role and responsibility for learning should be, resulting in *a significant increase in beliefs about learner independence*. (Amuzie and Winke 2009: 375; emphasis added)

It seems therefore that although some international students may find the notion of learner autonomy challenging initially, due to lack of prior exposure to it, they can learn to recognize its importance, particularly in light of missed opportunities for interaction with native speakers of the language they are learning. However, the development of learner autonomy and higher-level cognitive processes are some of the skills that international students may need assistance in mastering (De Vita 2007). This brings us to the question of what language teachers can do to minimize the impact of students' *educational baggage* on the development of learner autonomy.

One possible solution concerns an implementation of 'an ELP-oriented pedagogy' (González 2008). As explained above, the ELP has been used as a tool to promote learner autonomy, particularly as it encourages learners to identify their strengths and weaknesses, set goals based on the results of self-assessment and in the light of objectives, select materials, monitor and self-evaluate progress. These elements are designed to encourage a higher degree of ownership of the learning process on the part of the learner. It is further recommended that the ELP should be carefully introduced to students; including the explanation of the principles behind it (Bruen and Sudhershnan 2009) and that its introduction should be preceded by 'an ELP-oriented pedagogy'.

Based on the outcomes of this study, we argue that such a pedagogy should first of all involve developing an awareness of international students' learner beliefs which are formed on the basis of their prior learning experiences (Krishnan and Hwee Hoon 2002). Understanding such beliefs can signal to the teacher some of the problems that students may encounter when asked to work with the ELP (e.g. lack of self-assessment experience) and develop learner autonomy in general (e.g. not being familiar with the use of English for communicative purposes in the classroom). In the words of Sawir (2005: 578), academics in charge of teaching foreign languages to

international students 'need to understand better the root causes of their language learning problems, by familiarizing themselves with students' prior learning experiences and with their beliefs about learning'.

In practical terms, this means that language professionals should attempt to probe students' 'readiness for autonomy' (Cotterall 1995), which may be achieved by means of questionnaires such as BALLI (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory) (Carter 1999). However, as demonstrated by this study's findings, language professionals may get a deeper insight into students' beliefs, attitudes and expectations by encouraging them to engage in a guided process of written reflection. This is because, as concluded by Sakui and Gaies (1999: 486; emphasis added) in their study of learner beliefs among Japanese learners of English:

There are limits to what can be learned about language learners' beliefs from questionnaire items. Questionnaires consisting of closed items allow respondents only to state their beliefs – and then only the beliefs which are included in the questionnaire.

An activity that was used in this case study to elicit students' beliefs about learning (including the role of learner autonomy and their own experience thereof) involved a class discussion on the qualities of a good language learner. During this session the students were prompted to consider a number of factors relevant to this topic before listening to a recording on the same subject, according to which independence from the teacher was the most important factor. This in-class activity was then followed by the students' individual written and guided reflection on the topic.

According to Wenden (1998: 530–1), teachers should use carefully designed activities to gain an insight into learners' metacognitive knowledge and improve it so that they can develop autonomy. Such activities should *elicit* learners' metacognitive knowledge and allow them to *articulate* it, while also providing them with *alternative views* and encouraging them to *revise* their existing knowledge base if required. The in-class activity, combined with journal writing, managed to achieve these goals as it allowed the lecturer to both elicit the students' metacognitive knowledge as well as expanding it. In relation to the latter, five students acknowledged the fact that the exercise raised their awareness of what it means to be a good

language learner and / or offered suggestions with regard to what they could do to improve their learning. Michiko wrote for instance: 'It was also very good that we had opportunity to learn what the good language learner is, *so that we could have some strategies to improve our English skills*'. Furthermore, the activity encouraged the students to modify their existing beliefs, although this was not always the case. More specifically, whereas Sakura felt the need to revise her belief about the role of personality in language learning, Ana was not convinced by the argument made in the recording according to which intelligence was not among the most important qualities of a good language learner.

Furthermore, the activity allowed the students articulate their beliefs about learner autonomy in general, both verbally in class and subsequently in writing as well as their self-beliefs, both positive and negative, on the issue. The fact that nine students experienced difficulty, at least initially, in verbalizing their beliefs in relation to whether or not they considered themselves to be good language learners would suggest that the students' metacognitive knowledge may have been underdeveloped. Encouragingly, being autonomous appeared most often, alongside being motivated and not being afraid of making mistakes, in their reflections on the thirty different qualities that made a good language learner, with eleven out of the twenty-eight students who submitted their reflections on the topic acknowledging this factor as important. Kaori observed, for example: 'It is no wonder that we are asked to take responsibility for our own learning. People who just go to class and take it cannot improve their skill of language'. In addition, nine students considered themselves to be autonomous language learners. However, in their self-analysis the students were able to identify their positive qualities as well as their deficiencies in relation to their capacity for autonomy. In fact, four students mentioned specifically that they did not feel autonomous. For example, Isabel had this to say about her own capacity for autonomy:

If there is something I do know, is that I do not feel completely independent nor dependent on the teacher. That is, I like doing things which could help me learn on my own, but *I do not feel ready* to take most of the responsibility of my learning process. I guess this is *influenced by the system in which I have studied languages*. (emphasis added)

Isabel's observation draws our attention to the role played by the students' prior learning experiences in the development of learner autonomy as well as demonstrating the kind of insight into students' *educational baggage*, that teachers can gain by employing metacognitively oriented tasks in their classrooms. That is, whereas the above-mentioned data seem to indicate a generally positive attitude towards the concept in approximately one-third of the students, at least seven out of the eleven students who considered autonomy to be an important factor came from educational systems that can be described as traditional as far as the teacher's and learner's roles are concerned.

It is argued that the process of development of autonomy in the classroom should not be radical; rather, it should involve three consecutive stages (Scharle and Szabó 2000: 1). In the final stage the teacher should allow learners to *gradually* assume responsibility for parts of the learning process. This in turn should be preceded in the first stage by raising students' awareness of what language learning involves and of their own role in the process, as well as in the second by attitudinal change (*ibid.*). In relation to this chapter, it appears that guided reflective writing can be particularly beneficial both in the early stages of the process and in relation to language teachers developing an understanding of 'the underlying causes' (Sawir 2005: 570) of the problems that international students may experience in the host institution.

Conclusion

Study abroad is potentially one of the most impactful activities of a well-rounded educational experience (Streitwieser and Light 2010). However, as demonstrated by the findings of this study, international students may face particular challenges as a result of their prior learning experiences which may impact negatively upon their study abroad experience. This has been recognized by the Irish government and the Irish university sector.

According to a recent report by a High Level group reporting to the Irish Department of Education and Skills (2010), Ireland's success in this field 'will be judged by who we have educated and *how well* rather than simply by how many'. Similarly, the President of one of Ireland's universities spoke of the existence of 'an ethos of care' for the international student in all Irish universities and emphasized 'We're interested in them, they're not just a commodity. They're not just here because they're paying high fees' (Devane 2013: 14). Thus, as well as increasing the number of international students in Ireland, there is an acknowledged need to monitor and where necessary improve the quality of their experience. This involves focusing on the voices of international students particularly in relation to the difficulties that they face when studying in host institutions, and addressing them using initiatives such as those described above.

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