

International and Intercultural Communication for Academic Purposes

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Topic of our talk

‘Step back from viewing the issue of language as being solely about English and consider the role of communication as a whole’ Dafouz and Pagèze (2021, p. 95).

Students come to the international classroom with different cultural backgrounds, academic experience and content knowledge: all these factors need to be taken into account (Aguilar, 2018).

Academic Purposes for Academic Contexts

Intended Learning Outcomes for the University of Bristol Pre-sessional courses (accredited by BALEAP in 2021):

By the end of the pre-sessional course, you will be able to demonstrate:

1. Skills and strategies to communicate effectively in academic contexts.
2. Skills to access and critically question knowledge in academic contexts.
3. Choices of content, organisation and language to communicate with different audiences for different purposes.
4. Autonomy through active reflection on feedback and self-evaluation to enact learning goals.
5. Collaborative participation in local and global communities of practice.

Internationalisation of Higher Education

Leask (2009, p. 209, cited in Leask, 2015, p. 10):

“An international curriculum will engage students with internationally informed research and cultural and linguistic diversity...”

“... and purposefully develop [students’] international and intercultural perspectives as global professionals and citizens.”

Global competencies

Skills gap employers often perceive (Hardman, 2021):

- Intercultural agility
- Communicative skills
- Problem-solving skills
- Collaborative teamwork
- Enterprise

What is needed?

Spencer-Oatey and Dauber (2021): facilitate transformative learning through guided support. Help students:

- acquire new perspectives - move out of comfort zone
- interpret and reflect on those experiences
- overcome linguistic and cultural barriers: language, academic culture, communication styles
- build confidence

Dialogic pedagogy: create a culture of mutual valuing

- Create awareness of diversity as a positive resource: different learning experiences and knowledge base.
- Offer space for students to share their experiences

Hardman (2021): Promote interaction, allow students to engage meaningfully with diversity.

- group work: multinational teams doing authentic tasks
- collective, reciprocal, cumulative and purposeful
- supportive: lecturers and students work together
- a safe, open and inclusive space

- ‘Purposeful interaction’ and language mediate the learning process (Haines, 2017). Language is learnt through interaction about the subject; the subject is learnt through interaction using the language.

e.g. in the (virtual) Chemistry or Industrial Design lab

Communication for Academic Purposes: international and intercultural

Facilitate dialogue between/with:

- Content lecturer and students
- Home students and international students
- EAP tutor and content lecturer (Galloway and Rose, 2021)
- Oneself: decolonisation of the tutor
 - Critical cultural awareness of the self (Wimpenny et al, 2021)
 - Move out of the comfort zone

CPD: are we sufficiently equipped?

- Focus increasingly communication for academic purposes, less so on just English.
- Teaching international students does not equate international experience.
- Intercultural training needed?

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