HOW ARE WE TO UNDERSTAND THE 'INTERCULTURAL DIMENSION'?
AN EXAMINATION OF THE INTERCULTURAL DIMENSION OF INTERNATIONALISATION IN THE CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

Jonathan Crichton, University of South Australia

Jonathan Crichton is a research fellow in the Research Centre for Languages and Cultures Education, University of South Australia. His interests include language and culture in professional practice and the internationalisation of education.

Correspondence to Jonathan Crichton: Jonathan.Crichton@unisa.edu.au

Angela Scarino, University of South Australia

Angela Scarino is director of the Research Centre for Languages and Cultures Education, University of South Australia, where she has developed an extensive research program focusing on languages and interculturality.

Correspondence to Angela Scarino: Angela.Scarino@unisa.edu.au

The internationalisation of education has become a major focus of international, national and institutional attention, reflected in a substantial and expanding literature on how internationalisation is manifested, how it might be promoted, its implications for areas such as government policy, strategic planning and management, educational quality, student mobility, teaching and learning, and the place of language and culture in teaching and learning. There is also general agreement in the literature on the need for internationalisation to include an ‘intercultural dimension’.

In this paper, we examine how we are to understand the ‘intercultural dimension’ in higher education. Our approach is based on an analysis of current constructions of this dimension, to argue that these constructions are neither individually nor in combination capable of meeting the challenge of internationalisation. Drawing on recent studies undertaken at the University of South Australia, we propose culture as ‘intercultural’ as an alternative construction.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper we examine what the ‘intercultural dimension’ means for teaching, learning and research across disciplines in the context of the internationalisation of higher education. First we explain the need to elaborate the intercultural dimension in international education because language and culture are central to any process of teaching and
learning, and because international education necessarily involves not just one language and culture but moving between at least two. We then identify and critique four constructions of ‘the cultural’ in teaching and learning which seek to address this need. We argue that an alternative construction, that of the cultural as ‘intercultural’, provides a more appropriate response to the challenge of internationalising teaching and learning. While we consider these as constructions mediated through language, we also emphasise that such constructions are meaningful only when understood within the context of human ethics, values and interactions – in other words, when they are held and animated by people.

The paper is based on the findings of two recent studies conducted at the University of South Australia (Crichton et al., 2004; Crichton et al., 2006).

THE NEED TO ELABORATE THE INTERCULTURAL DIMENSION

Knight (2004), a frequently cited scholar in the field of international education, has argued that the definition of internationalisation and related terms is itself a key problematic in understanding current developments in the internationalisation of higher education. In the most commonly quoted definition in the literature, Knight (2003, p.2) identifies the internationalisation of higher education as “the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education.” However, Knight (1994, 2004) also stresses that in this literature the meanings of internationalisation and the associated notion of globalisation are diverse, contested and dependent on the particular contexts in which they are experienced. She states that the internationalisation of higher education can best be understood as a response to globalisation, in terms of: the growth and increasing influence of knowledge-based societies; information and communication technologies (ICTs) and systems; market based economies; trade liberalisation; and new supra national systems of governance in areas such as quality assurance, accreditation, and student mobility.

While there is general agreement in the literature on the need to include an ‘intercultural dimension’ in the internationalisation of teaching and learning (and similarly for research) (see, for example, Knight, 1994, 1997, 1999, 2003, 2004; Gallagher, 2002; Crichton et al., 2004), there is little development in this literature, in either theory or practice, of a connection between the internationalisation of teaching and learning and the role of language and culture which are integral to conceptualising both learning and the intercultural.
Where language and culture are referred to in the context of internationalisation, it is primarily in relation to the English language and associated linguistic and cultural challenges faced by international students; and as foreign language learning as a way to develop local students’ capacity to meet the demands of the globalisation.

In relation to teaching and learning more generally, a gap exists between the international and the language/culture literature across which, at best, questions are raised. For example Knight (2004, p.49) has argued that we need “to deal with the intersection of ‘international’ and ‘intercultural’”; and a prominent writer in Australia, Gallagher (2002, p.4) has warned that:

we have a long way to go on some of the cultural dimensions of education internationalisation. And these cultural dimensions can be seen to underpin our national economic competitiveness and social openness as well as enabling opportunities for personal growth.

At the same time, the concept of the ‘intercultural’, as an interdisciplinary notion, is conceptualised in different ways. For example, Bodycott and Walker (2000, p.92) express a concern that for many tertiary teachers “the onus is often placed on students to adapt to the cultural context in which they are studying” with the result that “the quality of teaching and learning can suffer, or at worst, become irrelevant”. They describe the development of intercultural competence in learning and teaching as a self-reflective process which prompts learners and teachers “to rethink and confront their beliefs and biases” (Bodycott and Walker 2000, p.87). Paige et al. (2003, p.177) describe intercultural competence as:

the process of acquiring the culture-specific and culture general knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for effective communication and interaction with individuals from other cultures. It is a dynamic, developmental, and on-going process which engages the learner cognitively, behaviourally, and affectively.

In another study, Liddicoat et al. (2003, p.16) recommend that an educational program aiming at intercultural awareness:

means moving well beyond a static approach to learning isolated facts about an individual culture and involves the learner in a process of transformation of the self, his/her ability to communicate and to understand communication and his/her skills for on-going learning.
Notwithstanding differences in terminology and emphasis, the underlying message of the literature on the language/culture is that the development of intercultural awareness relates ultimately to learning that contributes towards better awareness of our human world, and ‘knowing’ in its multiple and diverse linguistic and cultural contexts. As Alred and Byram (2002, p.351) point out:

in any society which expects its education system to prepare people for living in an internationalised culture and globalised economy, and also for the interaction between people of different cultures within and across national boundaries, the process of tertiary socialisation and the acquisition of intercultural competence are clearly desirable.

At issue in discussing the development of intercultural awareness in teaching and learning is understanding that all learning, across all disciplines, is a social, linguistic and cultural act that involves dialogue, a process which is central to intercultural awareness. Constructing knowledge through social interaction, understanding knowledge acquisition, recognising different ways of knowing, developing multiple perspectives and using multiple sources of knowledge, mediating knowledge, applying knowledge in different cultural contexts, and recognising the ethics of the application of knowledge all involve the use of language to interpret and create meaning in dialogue within and across cultures. It is this in vivo interconnecting of language, culture and knowledge within and across cultures that is central to understanding ‘intercultural awareness’ as a goal of internationalisation, a goal whereby students learn to construct, act upon, use, and communicate their disciplinary knowledge through dialogue across diverse linguistic and cultural contexts.

It is based on this understanding of the intercultural that we seek to address the gap between the international and the intercultural dimensions of higher education by highlighting the integral relationship between language and culture in learning, and the reality of the continuous presence of at least two languages and cultures in international education.

**FOUR CONSTRUCTIONS OF THE ‘CULTURAL DIMENSION’ IN RELATION TO THE INTERNATIONALISATION OF TEACHING AND LEARNING**

In recent studies we have investigated theoretical and practical aspects of the relationship between the international and the intercultural. In one study (Crichton et al., 2004), we sought to develop an account of how the ‘culture dimension’ is constructed in relation
to the internationalisation of teaching and learning in higher education, nationally, internationally and at University of South Australia. Data gathered for the studies included the current literature on internationalisation, relevant texts produced by the university and interviews with a sample of university staff and colleagues involved in different ways in the implementation of the university’s internationalisation policies. The interview sample comprised 13 participants, including teaching staff, senior managers, educational support staff, and administrators. A more recent study (Crichton et al., 2006) has extended the focus of the earlier study in an investigation of how, across a range of disciplines, interaction between students, both local and international, and between students and staff, can contribute to the development of intercultural awareness, and how this contribution can be assessed. The study was based on collaborative research methodology and involved participation over one year between researchers, lecturers and students in business, psychology and foundation studies. Data for the study included participant observations of lectures and seminars, interviews with lecturers, course documentation and teaching materials, assessment tasks and samples of students’ work and lecturers’ assessments.

Based on a meta-analysis of data yielded by the two studies, we have identified four constructions of ‘the cultural’ in teaching and learning in the context of internationalisation:

- the cultural as content
- the cultural as communication skills
- the cultural as relocation; and
- the cultural as diversity.

All of these constructions seek to address a challenge of how to recognise and work with the reality of multiple languages and cultures in teaching and learning in any discipline. In identifying the four constructions we do not mean to imply that these uses of the cultural are discrete or that they exhaust current constructions of the cultural. Rather, our aim is to highlight these four constructions as influential tendencies, ways of understanding the cultural which are routinely drawn on, textualised in and frame attempts to internationalise teaching and learning in the context of internationalisation in higher education. Each construction represents a different and, in our view, a partial response to this challenge. While these cultural are influential in shaping decisions, choices and actions in education, change towards intercultural learning necessarily involves critically examining these constructions.
THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AS ‘CONTENT’

As ‘content’, the cultural in teaching and learning is constructed as a body of knowledge to be analysed and acquired by the learner. This construction was evident across the data sets, including educational policy documentation, literature on teaching and learning, interviews and teaching materials. It involves the representation of culture as a discrete focus of study textualised as, for example, ‘issues’, ‘case studies’, ‘examples’, ‘values’ ‘perspectives’, and ‘aspects’, and ‘practices’, which students are required to ‘analyse’, ‘explore’, ‘compare’, ‘consider’, and ‘examine’. The following examples are drawn from data gathered for Crichton et al. (2004). The first example comes from an interview with a lecturer:

When we do a presentation in that class, which you tend to do in graduate seminars, their presentation was always on “compare this aspect of Australian media law with Bangladesh press freedom”, for example, because it was an easy one in Bangladesh coming away from a fairly controlled or a moving toward a more open media in Bangladesh. This student wrote a terrific paper on where this was going and made comparisons with Australia.

The lecturer had been asked how he includes a cultural dimension within the internationalisation of the curriculum. He describes an activity in which students investigate and present aspects of life in Australia and other countries. The task constructs culture in teaching and learning as content to be reported on and compared.

The second example is drawn from an interview with a professional development specialist. She explains how she would advise lecturers in computer science about how to include a cultural dimension into their teaching:

one of the questions you could ask your students... would be to say where does Java come from, why have we got Java, why is it so useful within computing now, where did it grow from, what were the needs that began its development – that's a bit of history for you... it might be a long time before, it might be recent. But that's about understanding where things come from... which society developed Java, why was it important to that society, what were the political-socio-economic reasons that it was driven to develop a program such as this. What
was important to this society that it might have developed there rather than somewhere else that didn’t develop it? That’s how you can introduce [a cultural dimension] into something as dry as programming, and into engineering and bridge building and whatever.

In the first extract, the task is to identify and compare differences in aspects of life between countries; in the second, the cultural dimension consists in identifying the conditioning effects of historical differences as background to the content of the course.

A further example comes from an influential guide to internationalising the curriculum (Whalley, 1997) in which the author recommends that the three “formal aspects” (p.13ff) of the internationalised curriculum – “global skills objectives”, “course content” and “instructional resources” – emphasise the development of students’ knowledge of, and skills in, identifying and analysing culturally diverse issues and examples presented in course content and resources.

In these three examples, the cultural is made tractable as content, to be studied as an object distinct from learners themselves. While we would stress that this way of understanding the cultural is of some value, it is not sufficient. Constructing the cultural only as content separates it from how learners are themselves situated in relation to, and potentially transformed by, their understanding of and engagement with that content within and across cultures. As an attempt to address the reality of multiple languages and cultures, we could call this a ‘monologic’ view of content. The limitation of constructing the cultural in this way is that it does not focus on the learner as an interactant, understood as someone whose mode of engagement in any interaction both shapes and is shaped by the particular linguistic and cultural context in which the interaction is situated and the particular intra-cultural makeup of the participants. Furthermore, this means that a person’s success or failure in interaction is dependent on the perceptions of the members of this particular culture. The need, then, is to understand content in a way which prioritises the learner as an interactant, and therefore a need to recognise that what we and others understand by ‘content’ is itself mediated through the interaction between languages and cultures.

**THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AS ‘COMMUNICATION SKILLS’**

As ‘communication skills’, the cultural in teaching and learning is typically constructed as mono-linguistic and is associated with ‘training’ in communication ‘skills’ in which
the language of communication is English. This monolingual view implies that communication can be simplified or reduced to a single language, when in fact, we would argue, the opposite is needed: that a recognition of complexity is required where multiple languages are in play. The first example below comes from an interview (Crichton et al., 2004) with a lecturer who is explaining how he understands the relevance of the cultural dimension to teaching and learning:

I think the cultural issue is such an important one that, what I try to do in my job, is where I have responsibility for other staff, is I try to make sure - we actually force them now to have some kind of cross-cultural training. We have cross-cultural workshops and we’re continually looking at the issue in teaching. And so some of the things that I believe are really important for us to do, in the places where we go and in perhaps the things I do, are actually looking at language. Looking at the language I use in my teaching, trying to simplify where necessary.

The second example is drawn from Cross-cultural communication: The essential guide to international business (Mattock, 2003), a popular textbook. In the following extract, the author is explaining how to communicate to speakers of other languages in what he terms “offshore English” (p. 134). In addition to advice which includes “accentuate the positive…. show warmth; show willingness” (p. 137), and “use big, bold signposts” (p. 140), the author advises readers to:

Place stress on key words and punch your message out. After all, there is something in the nature of English that lends itself to the rhythms of rock music. Lennon and McCartney’s classic world hits were delivered in Offshore – simple, direct language delivered with great affect. Make greater use of significant pauses, giving your audience time to digest what you have just said, creating an appetite for what you are about to say (p. 136).

The implications of this construction are significant for teachers and learners. When international education takes place in an English-speaking country, such as Australia, communication is understood essentially as a monolingual process. In this scenario it is assumed not only that communication occurs only in English but that students have already acquired the language they need to develop communication skills (i.e. techniques
for using language). Language is cast not as integral to but as a prerequisite for learning how to communicate, thereby separating language learning and development from communication. This separation removes as a focus of learning both the particular linguistic and cultural profile of students themselves and the complexities raised by the interplay of at least two, if not multiple, languages and cultures.

This construction leaves Australian students situated in their own language and culture, without the capacity to understand and manage their interactions in response to the linguistic and cultural expectations of others, and therefore with limited ability to take responsibility for their actions. At the same time, the construction leaves international students with the need to develop English as the key to learning, rather than recognising their bilingual or multi-lingual repertoire. It also assumes that developing their English language proficiency involves communication (i.e. language using) rather than involving both language development and language using.

This construction does a disservice to both Australian and international students. Australian students remain monolingual rather than developing a sophisticated communicative repertoire that recognises the linguistic and cultural profiles of all students, and prepares them for the reality of multiple languages and cultures in a globally interconnected world. On the other hand, international students are constructed as having a language deficit, typically treated as a ‘problem’ that requires remediation, when in fact they have a potentially more sophisticated linguistic and cultural repertoires incorporating at least one language in addition to English.

These consequences for students highlight the need for a construction of the cultural in teaching and learning which addresses the reality of multiple languages and cultures by acknowledging that communication involves the interaction between them, within students’ overall linguistic and communicative repertoires.

THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AS RELOCATION

As ‘relocation’, the cultural in teaching and learning is constructed as a matter of moving between culturally defined locations. The terminology associated with this construction includes ‘study abroad’, ‘mobility’, ‘interchanges’, ‘exchange experiences’ and ‘immersion’. This example is taken from our data, from an interview (Crichton et al., 2004) with a lecturer who is explaining the value of exchange programs as a way of raising students’ cultural awareness:
You know, someone that goes “well I’ve never been out of Adelaide or out of Australia” is not going to be someone you would choose for a position for a company that had a global kind of outlook, even a multiskilled, multilingual people, you know, that have got some knowledge of international affairs, politics… I think that’s the, for the university, that’s the, I think the most fundamental rationale… if you’re going to ‘educate professionals’, this is the crucial part of that process…

The following example is taken from a university website, typical of many tertiary institutions, promoting the value of the cultural experience offered by studying in a foreign country:

Study abroad is a life changing experience. Living and studying in a foreign country provides an extraordinary opportunity for you to learn about another culture from firsthand experience. You will visit new places, make new friends, learn a new language, and experience life in a new environment. Studying overseas offers you a different perspective on global events and prepares you for a lifetime of learning (Ohio State University, 2002).

Both examples tend to construct culture as a geographical space, into which learners are exported. It is undeniable that the experience of living and studying in another culture may provide opportunities to develop a cultural dimension to learning. The risk, however, is that this construction reduces the ‘experience’ of culture to a matter of co-presence, with limited incentive to reflect on one’s own cultural identity in relation to others, or on the reciprocal nature of interaction between languages and cultures and no clear link to learning. We might call this a ‘mono experiential’ construction of the cultural.

As with the constructions of the cultural as content and communication, then, the ‘mono experiential’ construction of culture in teaching and learning does not address the reality of engaging with multiple languages and cultures. What is needed is a construction of the cultural which acknowledges that the experience of languages and cultures essentially involves the interaction between them in any context of relocation.
THE CULTURAL DIMENSION OF INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION AS DIVERSITY

As 'diversity', the cultural in teaching and learning is constructed as a matter of raising awareness of and promoting values of cultural diversity and equity, with a particular focus on how these apply to international students. This construction is associated with terminology such as ‘inclusivity’ and ‘multicultural education’, “teaching for cultural diversity’ and ‘teaching for social justice’ which ‘promote’ ‘social inclusion’ and ‘cultural pluralism’ and ‘understanding’ by ‘representing’ ‘cultural’ ‘difference’, ‘identities’ and ‘backgrounds’. The following example comes from an interview with a professional development specialist (Crichton et al., 2004). She explains approach to the cultural dimension in curriculum development:

And I do find that, when you start to modify or adapt a curriculum to be more culturally sensitive, you actually tend to make the whole course better, and it perhaps seems to me that good teaching is inclusive teaching, where everybody’s involved, and it goes back to the student-centred leaning I think.

In a further example, this time from the literature on international education, Haigh (2002, p.51) exemplifies this construction in his recommendation on how to internationalise the curriculum. He states that:

Internationalisation of the curriculum is the process of designing a curriculum that meets the needs of an international student body (cf. Callan, 2000). Ultimately, the process is about ‘fair play’. The ideal international curriculum provides equably for the learning ambitions of all students, irrespective of their national, ethnic, cultural, social class/caste or gender identities. It values social inclusion, cultural pluralism and ‘world citizenship’ ahead of partisan links to any smaller geographical, cultural or social unit (Surian, 1996).

The two examples illustrate how the cultural as diversity reflects the fundamental importance of respecting other cultures. However, while this construction may promote ‘justice’ and ‘fairness’ in teaching and learning, what it does not do is develop students’ understanding of themselves as examples of cultural diversity, and of how they are to understand and negotiate their own and others’ cultural differences in interaction mediated through different languages and cultures. In this sense culture as diversity involves,
paradoxically, a mono-cultural construction of culture and underscores the need for a construction of cultural diversity which acknowledges that this involves the interaction between languages and cultures.

AN INTERCULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF THE CULTURAL IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

The construction of the cultural as intercultural is one which we have developed over the last four years (Liddicoat et al., 2003; Crichton et al., 2004) but here we draw particularly on the most recent (Crichton et al., 2006). This involved three case studies of courses at The University of South Australia, in which we have worked with lecturers and students on the assessment and evaluation of intercultural learning. In this study we have instantiated and refined a construction of the cultural as intercultural in international education which involves five generic principles of intercultural awareness which are equally relevant to all disciplines. These principles, which were developed through our previous studies, seek to acknowledge the interrelationship between language and culture; in particular, 1) that this interrelationship shapes all aspects of experience in education and more generally, and 2) that it essentially involves the interaction between people, and 3) that it is multiple and variable. The five generic principles include:

- **Interacting and communicating:** acknowledging that our understanding of others is not “given in advance”, but that interaction and communication involve the continuous interpretation and making of meaning between individuals.

- **Connecting the intracultural with the intercultural:** understanding that it is not only “others” who are culturally variable/different, but that we each have a variable linguistic and cultural identity which we draw on and manifest in interaction.

- **Constructing intercultural ‘knowing’ as social action:** considering our knowledge, values and beliefs not as “uniquely” or “self evidently” true but in relation to our particular cultural and linguistic backgrounds and practices.

- **Reflecting and introspecting:** recognising that only by understanding and monitoring our own linguistic and cultural identities can we engage with different ways of knowing, and reflect sensitively and critically
on successes, failures, uncertainties and future developments in interacting with others.

Assuming responsibility: developing an ethical stance which recognises that we and others have identities which are linguistically and culturally variable, and that this implies a responsibility to respect and seek to develop sensitivity towards multiple perspectives and needs.

Having deconstructed (albeit briefly) diverse conceptions of the cultural in international education and provided a formulation of the cultural as intercultural, our study also signals a necessary shift from deconstruction to construction (see Luke, 2005). This shift also represents a turning point in our series of studies on the internationalisation of education from a desire to observe, analyse and interpret to a desire to intervene/interact with others in considering the processes of designing and enacting the curriculum through teaching, learning and assessment.

In designing and enacting the curriculum two interrelated questions need to be addressed:

1. What knowledge do we want students to develop (including: What knowledge is valued? How is this knowledge conceptualised? What is the substance and process of the desired knowing and learning?)

2. How do we know that students have developed that knowledge? (including: How do we elicit their knowing? How do we appraise or judge knowing and how do we warrant the judgements we make?)

In the context of international/intercultural education the curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment need to be culturally responsive to the diversity of students and their role as interactants. For both ‘international’ students and ‘domestic Australian’ students this requires interacting across languages and cultures. Similarly, addressing the two interrelated questions requires an understanding of the interrelationship of language and culture, with knowing, learning, teaching and assessment.

Knowing (developing knowledge) in any discipline and across disciplines is socially, culturally and linguistically constructed. Knowing language and culture are fundamental to being able to communicate successfully and provide the basis for the ways in which speakers of a language establish shared meanings, communicate concepts and ways of seeing the world.
For ‘international’ students, as interactants in the Australian university educational context, this means developing and using English to develop/extend the substance and process of learning, while continuing to conceptualise and compare through the medium of their first language. Both languages and cultures, then, constitute their linguistic and cultural repertoire that shapes learning. For domestic students, this means using English as their first language (in the majority of cases) to connect with the substance and processes of learning, and to connect with the knowledge, languages and cultures of diverse sources, including ‘international’ students, as a way of coming to learn diverse ways of understanding concepts and processes through direct experience. They also learn to interact as users of English with users of English for whom English is a learned language, thereby coming to understand diverse ways of knowing and of communicating.

For lecturers engaged in intercultural curriculum design and enactment through intercultural teaching, learning and assessment, this means creating pathways for interaction that require acting upon and with diverse knowledge and ways of knowing in diverse sociocultural contexts. It also involves interacting with the diversity of students themselves and creating a learning culture that draws out, connects with, challenges students’ conceptions of the world and invites them to reflect on their knowing and understanding of the world. Through these processes students come to understand that these are based on experiences that are socially, culturally and linguistically constructed.

The culture of knowing becomes reciprocal, developmental and ever-changing.

![Figure 1: The culture of knowing](image)

**AN EXAMPLE OF INTERCULTURAL LEARNING**

The following example illustrates an instance of intercultural teaching and, more importantly, it illustrates how through facilitated interaction a lecturer comes to perceive the difference between the cultural as diversity and the cultural as intercultural. The example is drawn from Crichton et al. (2006).

The aim of this study was to identify and raise awareness of how intercultural interaction between students, both local and international, and between students and lecturers, and the research team (including the authors), can contribute to the development of ‘intercultural awareness’; and how this awareness can be assessed and evaluated.
The study focused on how intercultural awareness is developed, assessed and evaluated at “sites of intercultural interaction”. This focus on interaction follows Liddicoat et al. (2003) and Crichton et al. (2004) in acknowledging interaction as a key principle in both the practice and development of intercultural awareness. It also recognises that the intersubjective reality of teaching, learning and assessment is accomplished and sustained through participants’ ongoing negotiation of their perceptions of themselves and others through their use of language in interaction. ‘Sites of intercultural interaction’ refers to opportunities provided on courses and taken by students and lecturers to participate in the practices of their disciplines and to thereby negotiate and develop new cultural understandings of themselves and their ways of knowing. It is important to stress that this definition does not prejudge the nature or scope of such opportunities: sites of intercultural interaction may, for example, constitute an episode or a number of episodes within a course; a part or whole of a course; a strand or strands running through a course; combinations of these.

To achieve this aim, the study sought to develop, elaborate and communicate accounts of the experiences of the three lecturers in their courses in dialogue with the research team. Each of these accounts was a case study in collaboration. The accounts were supplemented with exemplars and lecturer reflections, as well as each researcher’s reflections.

The three courses were from the disciplines of psychology, business and the example included here, which is taken from the course Individual and Group Skills. This a core course of the foundation studies program at The University of South Australia, and is run in Australia in internal and external modes and also in Malaysia, where it has been taught by the lecturer in conjunction with local tutors. The course is designed to develop students’ understanding of communication in a diverse range of study, personal and professional, and cross-cultural contexts.

The text that follows is a transcript of an interview in which the lecturer was invited to reflect on her own consideration of intercultural teaching and learning. The annotations to the side of the transcript trace the themes which emerged as the lecturer reflected on how she had come to reconceptualise her understanding of the cultural, a reconceptualisation that led her to design the task that follows the transcript. The transcript offers an explanation of the task which exemplifies the lecturer’s emergent understanding of the cultural as intercultural.

How are we to understand the ‘intercultural dimension’? Articles 04.15
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<th>Transcript</th>
<th>Commentary</th>
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<td>Lecturer: That I had made assumptions about not only the way students would work with the activities and the readings but the way I worked with them and the way other staff [in Malaysia] would work with them.... I just made this assumption, and it’s very self-centred and probably ethno-centric that people taught it and and their students learned from it in the way that I expected it would happen. And Malaysia was such a stark contrast that that was not the case that it then made me think: O.K. even though I’ve said that the whole basis of the course is student-centred, it obviously wasn’t because you could actually teach the course and students could be doing the assessment activities and be involved in it but just going through the motion and not engaging in the issues. And it’s interesting that what I’ve done, almost unknowingly, this study period, is that absolutely everything I’ve asked students to do and all of the assessment tasks ask the students to be the centre of their learning. They can’t actually do a task without being the centre of the discussion.</td>
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<td>Interviewer: So what’s the connection between that and the intercultural?</td>
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<td>Lecturer: The stuff that we, you know, came to think about and it basically came about in the second interview that we did last year, was that instead of looking at the intercultural, or diversity, as something external, that we needed to look at it as becoming something internal, and that the staff and the students were themselves an example of diversity, rather than us looking at the external for the variations.</td>
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<td>Shift in the lecturer:</td>
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<td>Lecturer: .... last year the assessment task that I set them was that I put them in this hypothetical situation where they had to represent either Malaysia as a student here in Australia i.e. they were a Malaysian student coming here representing their country or that they were coming from here and going to Malaysia to participate in a debate and so they didn’t have to internalise anything about the intercultural in that context. They just had to kind of regurgitate the information that they had read whereas this time and I think I was just probably going for the big and the obvious rather than the subtle and the stuff that</td>
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<td>Critical reflection on initial attempt to engage with diverse students</td>
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would challenge them as individuals whereas this time for example, one of the assessment activities that I got them to do was I pulled out a personal ad from Adelaide Review and it was ‘Vivid Venus’, and ‘Vivid Venus’ gave very little information about herself but students actually had to record their perceptions of ‘Vivid Venus’ and then ask somebody else, you know, not in the class, but somebody else to record their perceptions. And they had to think about why the perceptions might be different and the things that would influence that difference, i.e. their society, their culture — including their age, their gender, you know, their background.

Lecturer: .... so they actually had to internalise and make it real for them. And I’ve still got students who are talking about ‘Vivid Venus’ and all of the possible variations of what ‘Vivid Venus’ might be. It’s just been amazing.

Interviewer: .... so presumably there’s a sense in which you’ve changed what you’re looking for.

Lecturer: Yeah, it’s really hard to answer that question, but I guess probably more than anything else, it’s the way that students are talking about their learning. For example last night in teleconferences, I had a student who...we were talking about who we were going to interview for our second assignment, and nailing a purpose for that interview and we had one student who is going to interview another student in the course who is a prisoner because...and I thought well, “What does she want to know here?” And I tried to pin her down in terms of the purpose of her interview — was she just being a sticky beak about, you know, this other young woman’s crimes and therefore her retribution or was she being a sticky-beak about what it’s like to be a prisoner? But when I asked her the question she said, “Oh well I’m not interested in that. I’m interested in the culture of freedom. You know, here’s this young Turkish woman who found herself in a terrible situation where she was involved in crime who lost all of her freedom and she lost the freedom of her Turkish culture by being within the culture of a prison and later in the year she’s going to be released and I want to know about her feelings...what she thinks in relation to the culture of freedom, having had it, having it taken away and about to be released back into it again.”

| The cultural as not only information about others |
| Inviting students to reflect on themselves as examples of diversity |
| Participation versus acquisition metaphor of learning |
| Shift in students: the cultural as intercultural |
The task that follows is referred to in the transcript as “Vivid Venus”. The task exemplifies the changes that the lecturer made in her own conceptualisation of the cultural as intercultural and to the course.

**Vivid Venus**

The following personal ad is taken from *The Adelaide Review* No. 273, July 22 – August 4, 2005, p. 35.

VIVID VENUS PORTRAYED BY DA VINCI
Seeks to compare codes and intellectual, passionate pursuits with considerate counterpart
Circa 44

Describe (according to your perception) Vivid Venus. Ask another person to do the same. (physical, intellectual, emotional, interests, values etc etc)

Record and compare your perceptions. Explain why the two perceptions of Vivid Venus might be similar or different.

(In doing so be sure that you demonstrate your reading, understanding of perception, and how it is influenced by culture and society.)

When responding to this task, be aware that your actual perception (and someone else’s) could become lengthy.

I recommend that you use a table format to record your perceptions. See the format below. This will keep the 1st part of the task manageable and won’t be considered in your word count.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My perception of Vivid Venus</th>
<th>‘s perception of Vivid Venus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Add or delete lines as you need to

Once you’ve completed the lists (using a table format) then you can concentrate on your explanation (of similarity / difference and why), defining perception, and outlining the influence of culture and society.
The task illustrates the change towards the intercultural by asking students to discover, explore and reflect on their own intraculturality and the different meanings of their own culture for others. The task thereby invites students to take themselves in interaction with others as their starting point in developing intercultural awareness.

CONCLUSION

The overarching message of this paper is that in any construction of international education consideration of content, communication skills, offshore experience and diversity must be referenced to the interaction of language and culture, and that:

- this interrelationship shapes all aspects of experience;
- interaction is essential;
- the interaction is multiple and variable; and
- above all, this interaction is essentially ‘peopled’; that is, it is social, interactive and reciprocal.

The key implication of this way of understanding the intercultural for teaching and learning described above, is that the internationalisation of the curriculum is not only a matter of what content, materials, skills, tasks or other items to add to or ‘include’. It is also a matter of how to integrate these aspects of the curriculum as a matter of routine teaching and learning practice, drawing on, and raising awareness of, the fact that both learners’ and teachers’ are themselves reflexively engaged with languages, cultures and in ongoing learning in their own lives, and, together, in relation to ‘internationalisation’.

In the context of the internationalisation, then, the development of the intercultural dimension is integral to learning in all disciplines and across disciplines. With respect to disciplinary knowledge, for example, students are inevitably exposed to the profound debates that exist within their fields of study, as well as within the paradigms that inform their respective sciences. They discover that the disciplinary canons are regularly scrutinised and refined, methods of investigation are constantly under review, and the sources of knowledge are many and varied. Moreover, teaching staff and students often find themselves learning from and with each other in linguistically and culturally diverse communities where different perspectives abound. The students’ intercultural development within the context of the disciplines and across disciplines, then, can be seen in terms of enhancing their capacities to work with their own and others’ languages and cultures, to recognise knowledge in its cultural context, to examine the intercultural dimension

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of knowledge applications, and to communicate and interact effectively across languages and cultures.

Constructions of the cultural are influential in shaping decisions, choices and actions, in education and change towards intercultural learning necessarily involves critically examining these constructions.

ENDNOTES

1 We use ‘the cultural’ as a generic way of referring to the variety of terms (e.g. ‘cross-cultural’, ‘multicultural’ and ‘international’) and the diverse meanings associated with ‘culture’ and its relationship with language, in the context of seeking to internationalise teaching and learning. We distinguish these in this paper from the ‘intercultural’.

2 In identifying this use of ‘diversity’, we do not mean to imply that the term is only used in relation to the cultural in teaching and learning in the context of internationalisation.

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