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Intercultural Learning for International Students in a Cross-Cultural Environment: A Qualitative Study with a Relational Cosmopolitan Lens

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts

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INTERCULTURAL LEARNING FOR INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN A CROSS-
CULTURAL ENVIRONMENT: A QUALITATIVE STUDY WITH A 'RELATIONAL
COSMOPOLITAN' LENS

(Thesis format: Monograph)

by

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Graduate Program in Education

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

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Abstract

Because of market-driven globalization and reduced public funding brought on by neoliberal government policies, western universities have dramatically increased international student enrolment and consequently face pressures to internationalize educational programming. Navigating international learning environments can build cross-cultural understanding and integration, leading to a more productive university community. This research seeks to illuminate how English for Academic Purposes programs in western universities prepare students from diverse backgrounds to be globally aware individuals with intercultural sensibilities that engage new and creative ways of understanding the world in relation to others.

Cosmopolitanism provides a critical epistemological frame for understanding and engaging difference in the modern world of hyper interconnectivity. It recognizes the multiplicity and subjectivity of our unique spaces-times while enabling us to imagine culture and cultural exchange relationally, historically, critically, and reflexively. A ‘relational’ cosmopolitanism lens in education positions individual identities in local, national and international spaces, while oriented to building a critical global imagination and a sense of ‘situatedness’ in the world, not confined to singular communities or nations.

This research employs a naturalistic approach to a critical analysis of themes that emerge in student narratives centered on intercultural learning experiences in the cross-cultural English for Academic Purposes classroom of a post-secondary English language school in south western Ontario. The goal is to deepen understandings of how intercultural learning is conceptualized and supported. Understanding the attitudes and behavior of international students offers insights to help close the gap between the rhetoric and reality inherent in the internationalization of post-secondary institutions.

Keywords: intercultural, cross-cultural, globalization, internationalization, cosmopolitanism, relational cosmopolitanism, post-secondary education, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), international students, Simon Marginson.

Dedication

To my lovely wife, Xuan, for your unending love, support, and inspiration.

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I would first like to thank the participants of this study, whose experiences and insights provided the substance of this research. I owe so much to my supervisor, Dr. Paul Tarc, whose continuous support has been critical in the completion of this thesis. Thank you for your wisdom and guidance as I navigated the many struggles and obstacles along the way to completing this work. I would also like to thank Dr. Suzanne Majhanovich and Dr. Steven Bird, my committee members, for all the time and effort spent reviewing my work and providing constructive feedback. Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to all the faculty, staff, and students in the Faculty of Education at Western University. Learning within the environment that you sustain has been an enriching and rewarding experience.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| Abstract | i |
| Keywords | ii |
| Dedication | iii |
| Acknowledgements | iv |
| Table of Contents | v |
| List of Tables | ix |
| Chapter 1 Introduction and Research Questions | 1 |
| Rationale | 2 |
| Coming to the Research | 3 |
| Operationalization of Key Terminology | 5 |
| Purpose and Objectives | 7 |
| Thesis Organization | 7 |
| Chapter 2 Literature Review and Conceptual Framework | 8 |
| Literature Review | 8 |
| Dominant Theoretical Assumptions | 8 |
| Cosmopolitanism | 15 |
| Relational Cosmopolitanism | 17 |
| Conceptual Framework | 19 |
| Conclusion | 23 |
| Chapter 3 Methodology | 24 |
| Introduction | 24 |
| Research Approach | 24 |
| A Naturalistic Approach | 24 |
| Case Study | 26 |
| Research Plan | 28 |
| Context: class schedule | 29 |
| Participants | 29 |
| Inclusion Criteria | 31 |
| Compensation | 32 |

| | |
|---|----|
| Data Collection Methods | 32 |
| Consent, Confidentiality, and Data Security | 32 |
| Class Observations | 33 |
| Interviews | 35 |
| Data Analysis | 36 |
| Challenges | 38 |
| Ethical Issues | 45 |
| Conclusion | 47 |
| Chapter 4 Findings | 48 |
| Introduction | 48 |
| Context of the Case: English for Academic Purposes | 50 |
| Objective 1: Facilitating Intercultural Learning | 53 |
| Classmate Interaction | 54 |
| Comparisons | 54 |
| Challenges | 58 |
| Benefits | 61 |
| Outside Influences | 66 |
| Comparisons | 67 |
| Challenges | 69 |
| Benefits | 72 |
| Objective #2: Success in Cross-Cultural Learning Environments | 76 |
| Nurture and Development | 77 |
| Cross-cultural Partnerships | 78 |
| Classroom Atmosphere | 80 |
| New Pedagogical Approaches to Learning | 84 |
| Challenges | 86 |
| New Pedagogical Approaches to Learning | 87 |
| Cross-Cultural Conflicts | 92 |
| Language Learning | 96 |
| Objective #3: Opportunities for Identity Formation | 97 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Personal | 98 |
| Frame of Mind | 98 |
| Behavior | 103 |
| Professional | 108 |
| Western Education | 108 |
| Cross-Cultural Experience | 111 |
| Conclusion | 113 |
| Chapter 5 Discussion | 114 |
| Introduction | 114 |
| Objective 1: Facilitating Intercultural Learning | 118 |
| Classmate Interaction | 118 |
| Comparisons | 118 |
| Challenges | 122 |
| Benefits | 126 |
| Outside Influences | 130 |
| Comparisons | 130 |
| Challenges | 132 |
| Benefits | 133 |
| Objective #2: Success in Cross-Cultural Learning Environments | 136 |
| Nurture and Development | 137 |
| Cross-cultural Partnerships | 137 |
| Classroom Atmosphere | 140 |
| New Pedagogical Approaches to Learning | 143 |
| Challenges | 146 |
| New Pedagogical Approaches to Learning | 146 |
| Cross-Cultural Conflicts | 150 |
| Language Learning | 153 |
| Objective #3: Opportunities for Identity Formation | 155 |
| Personal | 156 |
| Frame of Mind | 156 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Behavior..... | 159 |
| Professional | 161 |
| Western Education | 162 |
| Cross-Cultural Experience | 163 |
| Conclusion | 164 |
| Chapter #6: Introduction | 165 |
| Revisiting the Research Questions | 166 |
| Intercultural skills / sensibilities | 166 |
| Foreign and cross-cultural learning environments | 167 |
| Limitations | 168 |
| Recommendations | 170 |
| Implications | 172 |
| Concluding Thoughts | 175 |
| References | 177 |
| Appendix A Intercultural Factors Manifesting in Cross-Cultural Classroom | 184 |
| Appendix B Questions for Student Interviews | 187 |
| Appendix C Teacher Interview Questions | 188 |
| Appendix D Administrator Interview Questions | 189 |
| Appendix E Student Letter of Information..... | 190 |
| Appendix F Administrator / Teacher Letter of Information | 194 |
| Appendix G Consent Form | 198 |
| Appendix H Ethics Approval | 199 |
| Appendix I Curriculum Vitae | 200 |

List of Tables

| Table | | Page |
|-------|---|------|
| 1. | General biographical data on student participants | 42 |
| 2. | Frequency of themes emerging in objectives | 62 |

Chapter 1: Introduction

As cross-cultural encounters intensify on a global scale there is a growing need to deepen our understanding of the intercultural dynamics at play in educational settings towards fostering (greater) intercultural learning. But, what does intercultural learning entail? How is it facilitated? In what ways are the desirable intercultural sensibilities nurtured and developed? What needs to be considered when learning to cope with, and thrive alongside, foreign expectations? In what ways does intercultural learning transform how we identify ourselves? What opportunities for academic and personal growth are made available in cross-cultural settings? How can educators take full advantage of these opportunities? This thesis positions intercultural dynamics as part of an ecology of human learning embedded in local, national, and international conditions and contexts.

By acknowledging that the societies and cultures as well as particular spaces-times (Dervin, 2011, p. 38) people inhabit are dynamic, power-laden, and shape who they are becoming, this study's framing transcends prevailing psychological perceptions of intercultural learning as an individuated-self adapting to relatively fixed and bounded externalities (i.e. culture) constitutive of the outside world. With this orientation, I seek socio-cultural inflected answers to the following primary research questions:

1. Given that intercultural learning (i.e. the sharing of cultural knowledge and perceptions) and the development of intercultural sensibilities result from encounters with different cultures, in what ways does intercultural learning manifest in a cross-cultural classroom?
2. Understanding that international students are globally mobile individuals undergoing transformational experiences involving foreign and cross-cultural

learning environments, in what ways is their intercultural learning fostered by such a learning environment?

Answering these questions will shed light on how the learning environment initiates/ galvanizes intercultural learning and how participants' intercultural learning manifests in my research case.

Rationale

Market-driven globalization and reduced public funding brought on by neoliberal government policies have pressed western universities to dramatically increase international student enrolment as a form of revenue generation. In turn, universities are working to internationalize educational programming (Tarc, 2013, p. 2). Navigating international learning environments builds cross-cultural understanding and integration, leading to a more productive university community (Shannon-Little, 2013, p. 270). International students face challenges transitioning into unfamiliar learning environments that place foreign expectations on their classroom performance (Hernandez, 2012, p. 45). Globally recognized English for Academic Purposes (EAP) guidelines approach such challenges by detailing EAP program aims and outlining the intercultural-competencies necessary for instructors (BALEAP, 2008, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org>). Meanwhile, experts in post-secondary education are debating the validity of new paradigms defining the internationalization of western universities (Ryan, 2013, p. 9).

The literature on international students' experience indicates that few existing programs nurture the authentic cross-cultural relations necessary to build cosmopolitan learning communities vital to the transformational experiences for students (Marginson, Sawir, 2011, p. 169). Moreover, there is a growing gap between the rhetoric around internationalizing post-secondary institutions and the sociocultural reality experienced by students (Kozulin, 2003, p. 6).

Given that the number of international students is expected to grow significantly by 2025 (Guruz, 2010, p. 29), and if Canadian universities want to continue their upward trend in international student enrolment (She, 2013; Wotherspoon, 2013), it is vital that Canadian researchers participate in deepening understandings on how best to accommodate the interests and aspirations of international students.

Specifically, my research centers on intercultural learning in post-secondary English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classrooms. It seeks to illuminate how these EAP programs prepare, and might better prepare, students from diverse backgrounds to be globally aware individuals with intercultural sensibilities that engage new and creative ways of understanding the world in relation to others. My reasons for focusing on EAP specifically are threefold. First, it is the arena in which I am most comfortable and experienced since I have been teaching in Canadian post-secondary EAP programs for more than a decade (in addition to a previous five years of adult English language teaching in South Korea). Second, EAP classrooms in Canadian universities, generally speaking, provide a rich cross-cultural environment in which the student body is not only culturally diverse but also potentially motivated to engage, and learn from, difference. Further, the instructors are typically well versed in facilitating cross-cultural encounters and mediating the misunderstandings and conflicts that emerge. Third, Canadian universities are internationalizing at a quickening pace and EAP programs are a vital part of the endeavor that serve as fresh starting points of intercultural contact and learning for international students.

Coming to the research

I have been teaching English Second Language (ESL) / English for Academic Purposes (EAP) in Canada (University of New Brunswick / Saint Mary's University) and overseas (South Korea and China) since 1998. My teaching qualifications include a Diploma of University

Teaching (DUT) from the University New Brunswick (2004), a CELTA (Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) certificate from Cambridge University (2011), and a TEFL (Teaching English as a Foreign Language) certificate (2005) from Winfield College in Vancouver. Since coming to London, Ontario I have taught part-time/supply in the EAP programs of two language schools. One of these schools also served as the site for my research. Establishing a solid network of relationships with faculty and staff, building a reputation for professionalism, and nurturing a rapport of trust and respect, were vital not only in gaining access to the research site, but also key to understanding the nature of the school, its program, and its people.

With my experience in hand, I have returned to graduate school as a mature student ready to engage with, and conduct, my own investigations into post-secondary education. I relish opportunities to research, collaborate, write and teach directed toward global change in a democratic and inclusive way. I am motivated by the opportunity that institutions of higher education render to develop: communities with a cosmopolitan perspective towards learning; an internationally focused curriculum; and instructors who can ably support cross-cultural learning. My general focus is informed by this cosmopolitan perspective as it searches for equal grounds on which to engage transnational relationships without defining a dominant cultural paradigm but nonetheless acknowledges that nothing exists outside of culture or fields of power (Tarc, 2013). The motivation for this study derives from my reflections on teaching and interacting with international students in Canada. Through these reflections I have often perceived ‘something’ missing, misunderstood, or ignored in my teaching, a particular curriculum or program, and/or the students’ experiences. Feeling a need to identify and pedagogically respond to these ‘gaps’ pushes my research investigation forward.

Operationalization of Key Terminology

The key terminology utilized in international and intercultural education research is often operationalized interchangeably (e.g. global / international) or modified conceptually.

Recognizing that such vagary can cause confusion and contention, Marginson and Sawir (2011) work to establish clear definitions of terms (e.g. cross-cultural / inter-cultural) central to their work on cosmopolitanism and intercultural competencies which provide a common ground necessary for a focused discussion (p. 13). The first key term, globalization, refers to the world level of space that students inhabit. In this space increasingly extensive and intensified human activity engages, integrates and converges across a global space/time. It is a tangible network where nations and people link their relations and identities in 'global flows' (Appadurai, 1996, p. 47) of communications, transport and financial systems.

The second term, internationalization, describes the action that happens in these places. It is the process of creating and enhancing cross-national relations, movements or comparisons with no normative presumptions about the contents or significance of the relationship (i.e. more foreign students means the internationalization of enrollment) (Marginson and Sawir, 2011, p. 14). As nuanced as this difference may seem it is important in differentiating the local (i.e. where cross-cultural interactions actually happen / the manner in which inter-cultural interactions actually happen) from the global (i.e. the context in which cross-cultural / inter-cultural interactions happen). It is equally important to acknowledge that within the modern concept of 'global' are both the international (i.e. relationships between nations) and the trans / supranational (i.e. relationships existing above or below the level of national governments as aided by transnational corporations or global flows of population and media).

Going deeper into how global and international, as modifiers, inflect education requires operationalization of the terms cross-cultural and intercultural. Marginson and Sawir (2011) define cross-cultural in a neutral sense as an interaction that does not necessitate change for anyone involved. It describes the indifferent, hostile, or friendly interaction or relationship between two or more separately identifiable culture sets (i.e. language, nation, religion or self-identified group) (p. 17). Intercultural on the other hand involves the potential for mutual transformation through interactions that engage similarities or differences between culture sets. Cross-cultural describes the context in which encounters with difference occur while intercultural refers to the learning and understanding of others that emerges from the encounters. Rizvi (2009) explains that, “In the current context of globalization, groups, while they are culturally marked, are not entirely separated from each other, and are constantly re-shaped by cross-cultural encounters” (p. 262). Thus, the terms are inseparable since intercultural learning cannot happen without some sort of cross-cultural encounter, and cultural encounters cannot occur without resulting in some sort of intercultural learning.

In order to have desirable results in these interactions all parties need to be willing to open themselves up to be influenced by the reciprocity of others (Marginson and Sawir, 2011, p. 17). With an intercultural mindset international students can recognize that the shaping of their individual identities (i.e. who we decide we are) is grounded in personal agency (i.e. our ability to act on our own behalf), facilitated by cross-cultural encounters, and instilled with the interconnected and interdependent (i.e. cosmopolitan) features of the modern world. Such transformation is challenged by the ability and willingness of stakeholders at every level (i.e. local, national, and international) to acknowledge larger inequalities while establishing a common ground where they can communicate toward clarity and openness.

Purpose and Objectives

Through classroom observation and administrator/teacher/student interviews, this study seeks to illuminate how a cross-cultural learning environment in a western post-secondary institution, such as an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program, prepares students from diverse backgrounds to be globally aware individuals with intercultural sensibilities that engage new ways of understanding the world in relation to others. Thus, the purpose of this project is to enhance understandings of how intercultural learning is both conceptualized and actually supported in a cross-cultural learning environment. The objectives are to: first, identify how spaces of cross-cultural encounter facilitate intercultural learning; second, to clarify how spaces of cross-cultural encounter nurture and develop the intercultural sensibilities necessary to understand foreign learning expectations; and third, to shed light on how spaces of cross-cultural encounter prepare students to take full advantage of the growth opportunities for personal and professional identity formation encountered in cross-cultural learning experiences.

Thesis Organization

My MA thesis will be comprised of six chapters. The first chapter introduces the study's purpose/rationale, and operationalization of key terminology. The second chapter presents the literature review and conceptual framework, while the third chapter lays out the study's methodology and research plan. Organized around the study's three objectives, the fourth chapter reports the findings from the student interviews and classroom observations. The fifth chapter, augmented by teacher and administrator interview data, analytically discusses the findings according to the conceptual framework outlined in chapter two. The sixth, and final, chapter presents the key conclusions and implications of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

Literature Review

Under intensifying globalization there is an expanding need to identify an ethically sound means of understanding and engaging our differences with others. This need manifests prominently in scenes of international education as the demographics of students and teachers in individual schools / classrooms are becoming incredibly diverse. To decipher how a culturally diverse student body interacts, Marginson and Sawir (2011) conducted a seven year research project involving international and domestic students attending a variety of universities in Australia. Drawing on their approach, I ground my theoretical framework in their conceptualization of relational cosmopolitanism and, as they did, I position my research in tension with the dominant theoretical assumptions in cross-cultural studies. The remainder of this section frames the tension between these two approaches by reviewing their predominant literature.

Dominant theoretical assumptions

Until recently, the most influential cross-cultural research has emanated from the field of psychology and has taken on its own concepts (e.g. adjustment and adaptation) and norms (e.g. measuring individuals' capability to relate to their new environment) (Marginson and Sawir, 2011, p. 22). Oberg (1960, p. 177), echoed by Adler (1975, p. 13), envisions cross-cultural learning as a rational progression of stages that an individual experiences in their journey into a foreign culture by adapting and adjusting to its socio-cultural expectations. Bochner (1972) goes further to say that 'sojourners' experience a process of 'cultural learning' where their previous culture-knowledge is augmented, not replaced, by the new (p. 65). Thus, sojourners need not

become intricately immersed in the new culture but simply become functional within it. Berry (1997) adds to this line of thinking by explaining that individuals implement varying degrees of ‘acculturation strategies’ (i.e. assimilation, integration, separation/segregation, and marginalization) whereby each individual negotiates and shapes their relationships to both their original and new culture-group (p. 9).

The work of Church (1982) not only criticizes earlier research for ignoring the bias of applying western concepts and standards of cross-cultural adjustment to non-western sojourners, but also argues that a universal theory of cross-cultural adjustment is implausible (p. 540). Pedersen (1991) argues further that since conflicts arise between established theories of post-secondary student development and the inherent values of each sojourner’s home-culture, every international student experience must be considered unique (p.15). Church (1982) adds that in addition to the adjustment issues experienced by local students, international students face unique culture-based problems (p.544). Pedersen (1991) agrees that these culture-based problems emanate from the host-country’s social norms (e.g. ethnocentric attitudes, stereotypes and judgmental perceptions) and not solely from the international students (p. 45). Church and Pedersen are not criticizing the host-country for these problems but simply pointing out that international students have more to adjust to than local students. Finding themselves in this situation, international students struggle to find creative ways to adapt/adjust. Both Church (1982) and Pedersen (1991) support the notion that interaction with locals (which enhances adjustment and academic/non-academic success) reduces exponentially as the cultural distance between home and host-country increases. They argue that the greater the cultural difference between a sojourner’s home-culture and host-culture, the more difficult it will be for the sojourner to manage a thorough and effective adjustment to their host-culture. Church and

Pedersen add that adjustment is particularly challenging for sojourners who do not possess the aptitude to overcome the culture gap.

While Church and Pedersen do engage with certain complexities experienced by international students in the west (e.g. western bias, host-country social norms), their analysis of international students' adaptation / adjustment to foreign environments falls short nonetheless. Church and Pedersen oversimplify the dynamic nature of cultural identity and the role it plays in how well or poorly sojourners adapt/adjust to their host-countries. As a result, their views stand in contrast to more current concepts of multiplicity and hybridity of identity which advance a more flexible interaction with culture. Moreover, while Church and Pedersen acknowledge that local host-culture can negatively affect international students' adaptation/adjustment, they ignore how international students' socio-economic positioning in the larger global context influences their identity, as well as how host-cultures imagine them - and thus how international students choose to portray themselves and how host-cultures treat them.

The generalizing nature of cultural distance is reinforced by Ward (1997, p.531) who argues that a 'cultural fit' (i.e. degree of similarity between cultures) is less challenging to international students' successful adjustment when the cultural differences between home and host-cultures are small; and increasingly challenging when the differences are large. Moreover, evidence of well-adjusted cross-cultural competencies (Deardorff, 2008, p. 40) should be prevalent with international students who enjoy a close *cultural fit* with their host-culture. However, Ward's results consistently run contrary to such predictions (Marginson & Sawir, 2011, p. 44). Marginson and Sawir (2011) further debunk 'cultural fit' theory by suggesting that it disqualifies itself by assuming that international students with a close cultural fit to their host-culture experience less adjustment than international students with a more distant cultural fit (p.

34). The evidence does not support such an assumption. Marginson and Sawir (2011) add that cultural fit deems anyone different from the social norm as ‘others’, especially those far from the social norm (i.e. international students from a non-western country with a poor cultural fit for western culture), and isolates them as a danger to social order until they have sufficiently adjusted to their new culture (p. 35). Mix this ethnocentric demand for equilibrium with the notion that cultures and identities are static or fixed and the result is the perpetual likelihood of conflict between entrenched and diametrically opposed sides. Marginson and Sawir (2011) also suggest that, “The cultural fit argument ... coincides with the desires of educators ... to normalize [international students] so as to manage them and process them in standardized ways” (p. 35). In other words, the poorer the cultural fit the more challenges this causes already stressed educators tired of bridging a variety of language and cultural gaps.

Another major thrust of dominant cross-cultural research is presented by Hofstede (1980, 1998, and 2007). Hofstede (1998) bases his research in a cultural essentialism that continues to treat culture as a static and fixed entity and defines individual identities by the values deemed representative of their home country or region (p. 8). This is supplemented by the application of five binaries that define the parameters of Hofstede’s (2007) research and essentialise the identities of his research subjects by categorizing them into narrow culture-based roles and personality traits. Those five binaries are: individualism / collectivism; large / small power distance; long / short term orientation; masculinity / femininity; and, yes / no uncertainty avoidance (p. 16). Using the individualism / collectivism binary (i.e. the most frequently applied Hofstedian binary in international education) as an example, a variety of other research (Gudykunst, 1989, p. 11; Hui, 1988, p. 17; Triandis, 1995, p. 107) supports the notion that

students from collectivist cultures (e.g. China, and Vietnam) have substantial difficulty with international education sojourns in the individualized West.

These sojourns isolate and detach students from the home social-network and cultural-base upon which they are dependent. The assumption is that students from collectivist cultures tend to adjust / adapt less to their host-culture because of their need for support and security from a group of like-minded (i.e. home-culture) people. Moreover, their difficulty to adjust/adapt is exacerbated by their inability to escape the socio-cultural expectations of their home culture. This is problematic not only because it defines individual identities with static generalizations of national/regional culture, but also because the approach to collectivist / individualist societies provides a superficial analysis that can gloss over the real internal social dynamics of the places and people being observed. A student from modern China or Vietnam, for example, might have grown up being exposed to notions of individualism through western music, movies and internet content. It is likely that other Chinese and Vietnamese students have been isolated and independent from their family while acquiring a coveted private boarding school education in the west (or a western international school), and they are thus quite comfortable self-identifying as individuals. Especially in the 21st century ‘globalized’ world, individual circumstances are too complex so as to box identities in cultural binaries or culture-wide generalizations.

There are more broad-minded approaches to cross-cultural research in psychology that approach culture and identity in a much more flexible and egalitarian manner. The identities of individuals and cultures are seen as changeable, dynamic, and reflexive entities that perpetually form and reform themselves according to their own circumstances, desires and historical development under larger conditions. International students are seen as possessing a highly influential personal agency and are thus able to employ judgment in guiding cross-cultural

experiences and developing intercultural competencies. In the same way, home and host-cultures retain not only the capacity but also the tendency to broaden their social norms in response to changing conditions. However, despite their more progressive intentions, much of this psychology-based research continues to use Ward's cultural fit theory, Hofstede's binary categorization of personality traits, and/or some variation thereof. However, as Marginson and Sawir (2011) point out, it is a step in a positive direction that more broad minded insights begin to, "... breakthrough in those studies in psychology ... that attempt to model aspects of self-directed personality, such as the capacity to manage plural identity" (p. 41). Leong and Ward (2000), for example, find that international students who perceive discrimination in the host-culture are less likely to build relationships with host-nationals (p. 771). The work of Hullett and Witte (2001) shows that self-confident international students tend to interact with host-nationals and thus adapt to the host-culture more than international students who tend to isolate themselves because they are overly anxious about the negative consequences of making mistakes in a foreign culture (p. 137). The impetus here is on the international student to initiate and foster cross-cultural relationships with host-nationals and difficulties adapting are perceived as a personality deficit (e.g. they are overly sensitive) that must be overcome. There is little to no acknowledgement that both international students and host-nationals are mutually contributing participants to intercultural relationships.

This focus on personal adjustment and agency is carried further by Matsumoto (2004) who argues that, "... adjustment involves an active involvement of the self with others, a tolerance of differences among people including an absence of intolerance and bigotry, empathy for others, [and] a healthy level of adjustment to one's own culture..." (p. 299). Tolerance, empathy, and ability to adjust are fine attributes for anyone to acquire but such research ignores

the challenge that international students should build tolerance in a host-culture that in certain ways is intolerant to them; that they should develop empathy for others despite being segregated by their hosts for being different; and, that they are encouraged to be cross-culturally adaptable in a host-country that sees no need to adapt itself. Li and Gasser (2005) extend Matsumoto's thinking by noting that as international students broaden their socio-cultural adjustment to the host-culture, they tend to have more interaction with host-nationals (p. 563). They suggest this has a positive effect on their cross-cultural self-efficacy which in turn tends to bolster socio-cultural adjustment. More importantly, Li and Gasser's study implies that international students live and work within a complex network of various cultural affiliations and do not simply fluctuate between home and host-cultural domains. Thus, while personal adjustment and agency are important factors in determining how international students interact with others, the complex nature of the cross-cultural landscape they inhabit can have a significant effect on the shape of those interactions.

An increasing amount of research attempts to bridge Ward's cultural fit and Hofstede's binary categories while rectifying a relationship with individual agency. Yang, Noels, and Saumure (2006) examine how individual students (albeit with uniquely culture-based identities) relate to their host-culture. They conclude that a wide variety of international students' experiences are affected by their own agency, communicative competence, and cross-cultural practices (p. 501). Adding to this contribution, Kashima and Loh (2006) find that an international student's bonds with home / university / host-culture, as well as their particular ability to endure cultural ambiguity, can significantly affect their adjustment to the host-culture. Kashima and Loh's evidence shows that an international student's social identity has the potential for dynamic change during their sojourn - particularly when they take an active role in shaping their cross-

cultural experiences and intercultural learning across diverse affiliations in both their home and host-cultures (p. 478). Of course, as Marx (2001) observed with social relations and other catalytic forces, human agency is complex, self-development occurs in a context, and both are significantly influenced by pressures larger than the individual (p. 108).

Cosmopolitanism

The past thirty years have witnessed the end of the cold war and the rise of a hegemonic capitalist paradigm. Globally pervasive, this capitalist paradigm has transformed and continues to transform the economic and political realities of individuals, localities, nations, and international relationships. Driven by the proliferation of modern technology, globalization involves an intensifying mobility of capital, people, ideas, information, and ideologies with the potential to profoundly affect social identities and cultural formations (Rizvi, 2015). As a result, our contemporary reality is becoming defined by increasingly complex interconnections, interdependencies, and cultural diversities on a global scale. Cosmopolitanism has materialized as a strong viable approach to negotiate living, studying, and working peacefully and productively in one's interconnected local in such a dynamic reality.

There are multiple forms of cosmopolitanism and each is defined by the unique historical conditions that have nurtured it. The influential cosmopolitan approach of Immanuel Kant embraces a liberal-humanist universalism (i.e. universal moral ideals managing human behavior). Kantians assume that although cultures are defined and segregated by national boundaries, the moral codes that shape and guide them are fundamentally the same (Marginson and Sawir, 2011, p. 55). However, as Hall (2002) argues, Kantian cosmopolitanism ignores the dynamic nature of culture in the modern world of mobility. Also, since Kantians hold a rigid definition of cosmopolitanism embedded in Eurocentric modernity, this form is inherently

exclusionary; consequently Kantian cosmopolitanism is an inadequate means to enable fair and equal dialogue in a world of increasing cultural diversity and hybridity (p.28).

Cosmopolitans in the modern era generally seek a more egalitarian approach that recognizes humanity's common aims, aspirations, and values while accepting and engaging substantive difference (read: challenging hegemony of Eurocentric modernity). One modern egalitarian approach, globalism, has come to shape international education by preparing students to be 'global citizens' with 'global competencies' intended to help liberate them from a particular national or cultural identity. Globalism is founded on an ecological imaginary (i.e. the world taken as a whole) that professes a cultural neutrality (Marginson and Sawir, 2011, pp. 55-56). The world is imagined as a single domain where a network of diverse traditions intersect and whose intercultural inhabitants, adept at handling intercultural encounters appropriately, move openly while evolving their own identities and pursuing life trajectories free from the controls and limitations imposed by a specific culture.

For Marginson and Sawir (2011) cosmopolitan notions of globalism seem akin to a 'normative exhortation' that asserts the global setting is both already defined/thriving and at the same time an imagined reality on the verge of becoming. For them globalism, effectively, is less about individuals devoid of an ancestral home or a fixed cultural identity, and more about aggrandizing and romanticizing notions of confident culturally-grounded English speaking professionals adept at using modern technology (e.g. airports and the internet) and free to come and go as they choose (p. 56). With this in mind, it seems absurd to transform students into ideal 'global citizens' when most do not share the highly mobile and culturally diverse globalist lifestyle. For Marginson and Sawir (2011), at its heart the globalist position is unreal since not many people have the choice of opting out of a nation-state (p. 59). It may be a solution for a few

privileged people, but untenable for most since they are unable to completely “liberate” ourselves from the culture that has shaped us and grounds our becoming (Hall, 2002, p. 30).

Relational cosmopolitanism

Cultures (and the people constituting them) are dynamic and not solitary but intermixed with others (i.e. hybrid) – especially in our accelerated globalizing reality. Our cultural identities are neither static nor defined by one nationality but spaces of ceaseless becoming partly free of territorial limitations (Rizvi, 2008, p. 23). Also, in order to fully understand how these spaces of ceaseless becoming, our positions in them, and their effect on us, function in our lives, we must acknowledge that, as Bhabha (1994) reminds us, for most, movement between such spaces often involves struggling with contexts of uneven power. Further, movement between these spaces entails changes of identity highlighted by perpetual instability, complexity, and tension (p. 171). Rizvi (2005) sees cosmopolitanism as a worthy opportunity to face such challenges and shape an intercultural reality based on an accurate and more well-founded history of relations. In order for cosmopolitanism to succeed it must be approached as an awareness of and an ethical attitude toward global connectedness and cultural plurality. Moreover, individual identities must be able to explore as many intersecting cultures as they like and to experiment with hybrid identities without choosing/adopting all the values and practices of one culture in particular (p. 332). A cosmopolitanism such as this one (i.e. one that is relational in nature) seems both descriptively appropriate of our contemporary reality and normatively appealing to an egalitarian sensibility.

Relational cosmopolitanism seeks to describe the spaces people inhabit according to where they are, where they are from, who they currently identify themselves as, and what larger social, economic and political forces are at work (Marginson and Sawir, 2011, p. 60). In describing the relational space in which different cultures and identities are related to each other,

relational cosmopolitanism considers one's locality, nationality, changing cultural identity, global systems, and imaginings. For Rizvi (2009) the need for such an approach is continually expanding as the world becomes more integrated and interdependent through heightened global flows and connections. He defines global connectivity through the heightened role of forms of the social imagination, which are constituted organically in popular consciousness (p. 253). Steering these social imaginations in a global transformation towards a cosmopolitanism that is empirically informed and ethically grounded involves understanding how people relate and might relate to one another. Rizvi sees that many of our emerging problems require global solutions because they are global in origin and nature. Lives are being shaped and reshaped at the local level by global processes and connections saturated with deep inequalities. However, most people cannot order their lives at the local level let alone shape global relations. For Rizvi (2009), local and national attachments continue to be important but in a more dynamic manner (p. 254). These attachments are articulated in new ways, in a setting in which both problems and solutions are inter-connected and transcend national boundaries.

The problem, as Rizvi (2005) sees it, is that intercultural relations involve a fluidity, indeterminacy, and open-endedness that are inherently unstable and prone to misunderstandings and conflict (p. 337). He goes further to say that, regardless of globalization, people draw on multiple reservoirs of ever changing identity. Moreover, culture is not entirely inherited within clearly definable boundaries and norms but always in a state of becoming that defines its practices relationally – in contrast with others that are different (Rizvi, 2008, p. 30). In the context of globalization, Sen (1999), by examining multiple personal affiliations and cross-border linkages, explains identity as plural and potentially hybridized (p. 117). Vertovec and Cohen (2002) agree that people are no longer inspired by a single culture that is coherent,

integrated, and organic (p.3). Held (2002) suggests relational cosmopolitanism has the capacity to mediate such challenges by helping people see above their national cultures without abandoning their chosen/given values and lifestyles (p. 58). Towards achieving this goal, Marginson and Sawir (2011) suggest that the role of educators is to help form in students the capacity for imaginative mediation amongst difference (p. 61). Rizvi (2009) would agree that there should be a curriculum that enables students to enter into direct relations with different perspectives and contexts in an attempt to help students undertake their own formation (p. 263). Hall (2002) puts forward that humanity inhabits a new globally open space that requires a ‘vernacular cosmopolitanism’ which celebrates difference, and acknowledges and understands the limitations of any one culture/identity while helping people become radically self-aware of their culture’s insufficiency in governing a wider/global society (p. 30). Relational cosmopolitanism provides a frame for such a concept.

Conceptual Framework

Given the growing predominance of international travel, work, and education, cross-cultural encounters have come to shape the daily routines of our social realities. Living peacefully and productively requires an intercultural sensibility with the potential for mutual transformation through interactions that engage similarities and/or differences (Marginson and Sawir, 2011, p. 59), as well as mutual understanding of positioning and negotiation, between individuals who come from different spaces–times (rather than, or as a way to view ‘cultures’) (Dervin, 2011, p. 38). Psychology (the historically dominant field for literature on interculturality) takes a pragmatic and expedient approach to intercultural development that examines individual cognitive, behavioral, and affective competencies / skills for living in foreign environments (Bennett, 2008, p. 16). However, intercultural learning must also be

approached from an epistemological and philosophical frame of reference. It is this supplemental approach that informs and shapes my research.

Intercultural learning can be understood in contrast to problematic assumptions that ground dominant intercultural conceptualizations. First, intercultural learning should not essentialize cultural groups as rigid and tangible entities (Hofstede, 1998, p. 8). Second, generalized cultural distinctions (e.g. national identity) alone cannot explain the differences between people in various spaces-times. Third, intercultural learning must go beyond simply adapting to new cultural environments and extend towards deeper critical understanding of difference and its negotiation with dominant culture. And, fourth, identities and experiences are neither generic, uniform, nor static, but personal, diverse, and dynamic (Tarc, 2013, p. 51). Tarc (2013) goes further to suggest that intercultural learning can be fundamentally transformative for those immersed in international (i.e. cross-cultural) undertakings. The intensity and difficulty of challenges faced in such experiences are, instead of obstacles to adaptation, the catalytic material through which over time one comes to know and understand not only spaces-times beyond their own but also their positioning in the phenomenological world (i.e. not the world as idealized – “flat” and conflict-free) (p. 54). Such learning is unpredictable, complex, and slow as it does not follow a constant linear pattern of development [e.g. from ethnocentric to ethno-relative (Bennett, 1993, p. 25)] but a singular, irregular, and indeterminate path to understanding and engaging difference.

Thus, intercultural learning requires a critical epistemological approach for understanding and engaging difference. In fact, as Trilokekar and Kizilbash (2014) put it, “Intercultural learning is a pedagogy of difference” (p. 112). One such approach, cosmopolitanism, is particularly suited for understanding and engaging difference in the modern world of hyper interconnectivity as it

recognizes the multiplicity and subjectivity of our unique spaces-times while enabling a pedagogical project to understand and imagine culture and cultural exchange relationally, historically, critically, and reflexively (Rizvi, 2009, p. 264). For Rizvi (2008) cosmopolitanism offers an opportunity to critically analyze the political meaning of intercultural experiences by focusing on the ways in which global pressures are creating conditions of economic and cultural exchange that are transforming our identities and communities (p. 21). Marginson and Sawir (2011) go further to say that the cosmopolitan view of international education has a global perspective that involves notions of plural identity that are inherently individual but *positioned and performed in the larger relational space* in which individual personality and behavior (i.e. the core preoccupations of psychology) can be gleaned (p. 72).

In this sense relational cosmopolitanism offers an egalitarian approach to international education as it imagines individual identities (i.e. their personality, behavior, attitudes, circumstances, etc.) positioned in local, national and international spaces, while it also attempts to increase opportunity for, and enhance the quality of, intercultural experiences. In doing so, it avoids Immanuel Kant's Eurocentric universalism and the more hypothetical terms of 'globalism' (i.e. being culturally neutral and free of a particular national / cultural identity). Relational cosmopolitanism embraces a relational description of the spaces people inhabit according to where they are, where they are from, who they currently identify themselves as, and what larger social, economic and political forces are at work (Marginson and Sawir, 2011, p. 55). This complexity is particularly challenging to capture in a hyper-connected globalizing reality since the identities of the individuals involved are not only plural and potentially hybridized (Sen, 1999, p. 117) but also transferential - one's past unresolved conflicts with other and within the self are projected onto the meanings of new interactions (Britzman and Pitt, 1996, p. 117).

Indeed, individual relationships are dynamic, unpredictable, and open-ended (Rizvi, 2005, p. 337).

A relational cosmopolitanism lens in education focuses on modes of learning about and ethically engaging with new cultural formations – in particular cultural formations vectored by global interconnectivity and impacting and implicating the self. Pedagogically it can support students with a critical global imagination and a sense of ‘situatedness’ in the world (i.e. positionality in relation to the social networks, political institutions, and social relations not confined to particular communities / nations but connected up with the rest of the world). Such learning should develop in students a set of ‘epistemic virtues’ based on understanding local issues in the context of globalization (Rizvi, 2009, p. 264). The desired approach, oriented to historical and relational thinking, acknowledges that knowing is partial and tentative and requires continued critical exploration and imagination. Relational cosmopolitanism emphasizes understanding relationships, investigating differences, and imagining alternatives by equipping students to make their lives in a relational environment marked both by local grounding and interconnectedness in which everyone’s positions and affiliations are both given and chosen (Marginson and Sawir, 2011, p. 60). It offers understanding of the effects of global transformations in people’s lives and opens the question of how they should work with and potentially steer these transformations (i.e. with creativity, progressiveness, and equality).

Relational cosmopolitanism, as an approach to intercultural learning, requires teachers who have re-invented themselves as intercultural and cosmopolitan. Further, it obliges teachers to shift between local, national, and international realms in order to identify and interact with the people, practices, and knowledge of the present historical moment (Luke, 2004, p. 1429). The cosmopolitan education these teachers provide fosters their students’ ability to engage and

maintain multiple, intersecting, diverse, and constantly changing relationships across the three dimensions of global connectivity, national culture, and local day-to-day life (Marginson and Sawir, 2011, p. 72). Yuval-Davis (2006) suggests society should align with a ‘transversal politics’ bound by common political values, both informed by acknowledging our unique identity place in the world, and led by a global discourse using translation, rather than a single standardized language (e.g. English) (as cited in Marginson and Sawir, 2011, p. 73). Marginson and Sawir (2011) add that ‘transversal politics’ should be based on three mutually accepted understandings. First, from each positioning the world is seen differently (i.e. knowledge from one point of view is incomplete) and no one positioning is given privilege. Second, notions of difference encompass rather than replace notions of equality (i.e. respect for other positionings). Third, it is important to distinguish between social position, group identity, and values (one cannot be read from another) (p. 74). The goal is to create spaces in the classroom where students negotiate new identities and relationships in active cooperation with others based on a mutual willingness to listen and perhaps change.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter is twofold. First, the chapter has provided a literature review framing the tension between the dominant theoretical assumptions in cross-cultural studies (i.e. based in psychology) and relational cosmopolitanism. Second, this chapter has provided the conceptual framework that serves as the foundation for this thesis research. The next task, taken up in chapter 3, is to introduce the methodology and methods employed in this study.

Chapter 3: Methodology

To engage the primary research questions (below) this naturalistic study centers on a critical analysis of themes that emerge in a case study of student narratives (Cohen, et.al. 2011) on intercultural learning experiences in the cross-cultural English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classroom of a post-secondary English language school in south western Ontario.

1. Given that intercultural learning (i.e. the sharing of cultural knowledge and perceptions) and the development of intercultural sensibilities result from encounters with different cultures, in what ways does intercultural learning manifest in a cross-cultural classroom?
2. Understanding that international students are globally mobile individuals undergoing transformational experiences involving foreign and cross-cultural learning environments, in what ways is their intercultural learning fostered by such a learning environment?

This chapter describes the research approach; lays out the research plan; introduces the research site and participants; and explains the research methods, as well as the challenges and ethical issues considered.

Research Approach

Naturalistic Approach

To answer the primary research questions, a naturalistic approach was used in the qualitative methodological tradition for investigating, understanding, and substantiating the personal perspectives expressed by participants in their unique context (Cohen *et al*, 2011, p.293). The purpose of the naturalistic approach is to portray as nuanced an image as possible of the culture or group involved in a particular study (LeCompte and Preissle, 1993, p. 235).

Gonzales *et al* (2008) describes the focus of naturalistic research to be, "... an in-depth, intricate, and detailed understanding of meanings, actions, non-observable as well as observable phenomena, attitudes, intentions, and behaviors" (p.3). Naturalistic research must be mindful not to follow positivist tendencies (i.e. to predict, enumerate, and deduct results, or to seek facts to substantiate a pre-determined theory). Instead, researchers must pay careful attention to describing, constructing, and inducing toward building one's own theory from collected data (Cohen *et al*, 2011, p.221). Capturing the diversity inherent to social interactions (i.e. variability, creativity, individuality, uniqueness and spontaneity) requires a committed search for the irregularities, order, and patterns constituting such diversity (Dobbert and Kurth-Schai, 1992, p.150).

Naturalistic enquiry engages such efforts by observing people in their environment as well as understanding who they identify themselves to be historically and psychologically (Baker, 1994, pp. 241-244). Epistemologically, the naturalistic approach is a paradigm based in understanding that: people devise meaning from their social environment based on their personal view-point and often espouse interpretations contradictory to others in their group; there are numerous conceptualizations of reality and these are constructed, holistic, and in a constant state of emergence; social research should be conducted in natural, un-contrived, real-world settings; and, all facets of a culture group must be considered. As such, a naturalistic approach is multilayered and full of rich and complex descriptions of the connections and disconnections that develop in society. Therefore, in order to reach a broad and deep understanding of the world that participants inhabit, effective naturalistic research needs to expand its context beyond particular social niches to consider participants' relations to the world as a whole (Cohen *et al*, 2011, pp. 219-220).

The naturalistic approach aligns directly with the primary purpose of my study in that it nurtures a deep understanding of how intercultural learning is both conceived and actually supported. The approach also facilitates in the identification, documentation, interpretation, and description of the attitudes and behaviors unique to international students attending western universities in the globalizing modern era – as well as the particular context of the institution they are attending. Moreover, the naturalistic approach offers insights to help close the gap between the rhetoric and reality inherent in the internationalization of curricula in post-secondary institutions.

Case Study

Case studies help define and explain general principles by examining distinct scenarios, situations, and environments (Nisbet and Watt, 1984, p.72). Yin (2009) adds that theory helps to focus case studies and case studies test the plausibility of theories that in turn help researchers understand other similar cases, phenomena, or situations (p. 35). It is important to recognize that a case study must always consider the context of the situation. Thus, since in case studies there are often grey areas between what is happening and the context of the situation, it is necessary to provide as much detail and as many rich descriptions as possible (Yin, 2009: 18). Further, since each context holds unique and dynamic characteristics, case studies examine and chronicle the complex reality of daily life as events unfold in their own distinct way (Cohen *et al*, 2011, p. 289). Hitchcock and Hughes (1995) argue that, "...case studies: a) are set in temporal, geographical, organizational, institutional, and other contexts that enable boundaries to be drawn around the case; b) can be defined with reference to characteristics defined by individuals and groups involved; c) can be defined by participants' roles and functions in the case." (p. 319) Moreover, a robust understanding of a person, situation, and/or context must include the

infrequent but critical incidents that may only happen once but are important because they hold the potential to illuminate a particularly significant aspect of a person or situation (Cohen *et al*, 2011, p. 293).

For this study the phenomena under investigation are themes that emerge in student narratives on intercultural learning experiences in the cross-cultural classroom. The case (i.e. the specific area of focus), for this study includes fifteen students, four teachers, and one administrator involved in an intermediate / advanced level EAP classroom in a private English second language program preparing students for learning in an Ontario post-secondary institution. The data was collected through classroom observation (two hours per day, four days per week, for four weeks) and semi-structured interviews (approximately 30 to 50 minutes in length) with twelve students, four teachers, and one administrator. Specifically, classes were observed for critical incidents of intercultural learning to inform the interviews. The interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed into word documents, and the transcripts were coded for emergent themes based on the study's three objectives.

The case study for this thesis is designed around Yin's (2009) five component plan, which includes: 1) research questions; 2) objectives or purpose of study; 3) unit of analysis; 4) the logic linking data to objectives/purpose; and, 5) criteria for interpreting the findings (p. 27). First, asking the questions "how" and "why" are the most appropriate questions for a qualitative case study. Specifically, I asked about existing or developing intercultural skills students perform in cross-cultural encounters. Additionally, I inquired as to how the generation of new intercultural sensibilities are invited and attempted by the students, and cultivated by their EAP classrooms and program. Second, the purpose of this project is to enhance understandings of how intercultural learning is both conceptualized and actually supported in a cross-cultural learning

environment. Third, the unit of analysis for this study is an intermediate / advanced level EAP classroom in a private English second language program preparing students for learning in a south-western Ontario post-secondary institution. Fourth, once data was collected (i.e. interviews and classroom observations) analysis connected data and findings to the study's objectives (and themes that emerged in those objectives) that helped answer the primary research questions. Fifth, findings were interpreted by coding the data (i.e. interview transcripts) according to the study's stated objectives. Once this fifth stage was complete, recommendations for practice and future research were extracted from the findings and analysis.

Research Plan

This study involved observing and interviewing participants in an intermediate / advanced level EAP classroom of an English second language program preparing students for learning in a post-secondary institution. After completing the ethics approval process required by The Office of Research Ethics at Western University prior to initializing research, this research plan was approved by Western University's Research Ethics Board (REB) in December, 2014 (see Appendix H). Preparations (i.e. discussions with school administration / teachers) began in December of 2014 and continued through February, 2015. Classroom observations and student participant interviews were conducted in March of 2015. Teacher and administrator interviews were conducted in April of 2015. Data gathering continued for four weeks (4 days / week, 2 hours / day). Research findings and analysis were completed at the end of June, 2015.

The remainder of this section includes participant demographics, data collection methods, data analysis, research steps, goodness and trustworthiness, researcher positionality, as well as limitations and delimitations.

Context: class schedule

The weekly schedule for the class in this study was divided between distinct (yet somewhat overlapping) reading, writing / grammar, listening/speaking, and IELTS¹ classes. These classes centered on helping students broaden their consumption and production of English. In addition, each student's Thursday schedule varied between a number of elective courses that were more conversational in nature and that were intended to allow students to explore both the local host-culture as well as the home-cultures of their classmates. Classroom observations did not focus on the elective courses because each student participant had a different schedule and it was not possible to observe the class interacting as a whole.

Participants

This study involved gaining permission to enter, observe, and interact with an upper-intermediate / advanced-level EAP classroom of an English second language program in Ontario. The administrator participant holds a senior position at the language school and was particularly valuable in garnering support and approval for this study with the upper management of the company that owns the school.

The class consisted of fifteen international students and four teachers. The observational data needed required as much interaction between students as possible. When choosing the class, consideration was given not only to the language level but also to the general rapport in the class (as identified by teachers and administrators). Thus, extra attention was given to choosing a class with students that actively engaged each other, the teachers, and the course material. The goal

¹ IELTS – International English Language Testing System (a standardized test for English language proficiency developed by Cambridge English Language Assessment).

was to ensure as much as possible a rich data source with maximum opportunity to record the sharing of ideas, values, and attitudes of the students both in the classroom and the interviews.

There were 15 students in the class (6 women and 9 men). Of the women, there were 2 from Saudi Arabia and 1 from Libya, and all three self-identify as Muslim. The 3 other women are from China and did not self-identify with any religion. Of the men, 5 are from China and do not self-identify with any religion. The other 4 men all self-identify as Muslim – 3 are from Libya and 1 is from Saudi Arabia. All of the students from Saudi Arabia and Libya speak Arabic as their first language and all of the students from China speak Mandarin as their first language. The students’ ages ranged from early 20’s to mid-30’s. I mention religion in this introduction of student participants because as the findings (chapter 4) show, religion had a significant influence on the cross-cultural relationships that developed. For more information on student participants see figure 1 below². Regarding the teachers and administrators, 3 were women and 2 were men. All of them are Canadian citizens who speak English as their first language and range in age from 19 to 39. Whether or not the teachers and administration have a religious affiliation did not come up in conversations or interviews with any of the participants in the study. They all have significant international experience.

Figure 1. General biographical data on student participants

| Name | Gender | National Origin | Age Range ³ | Previous International Experience ⁴ | Time in Canada |
|-------|--------|-----------------|------------------------|--|----------------|
| Steve | Male | China | 20’s | Some | 3 months |
| Andy | Male | Saudi Arabia | 20’s | Significant | 3 months |

² Information on four of the student participants is limited to gender, nationality, and age range because they did not consent to an interview. Also, note that all names of participants have been changed in order to protect their privacy.

³ 20’s (ages 19 – 29) / 30’s (ages 30 – 39)

⁴ ‘None’ means zero international experience before coming to Canada; ‘some’ refers to international travel for tourism; ‘significant’ means less than one year but more than 6 months; and, ‘a lot’ means more than 1 year.

| | | | | | |
|------|--------|--------------|------|-------------|-----------|
| Joe | Male | China | 20's | None | 3 months |
| Bob | Male | China | 20's | None | 3 months |
| Jane | Female | Libya | 30's | None | 6 months |
| Sam | Male | Libya | 30's | Some | 6 months |
| Roz | Female | Saudi Arabia | 20's | Significant | 2 years |
| Mike | Male | China | 20's | None | 3 months |
| Sue | Female | Saudi Arabia | 20's | Some | 10 months |
| Al | Male | China | 20's | None | 3 months |
| Andy | Male | Saudi Arabia | 20's | Significant | 8 months |
| Liz | Female | China | 20's | Some | 3 months |
| Amy | Female | China | 20's | N/A | N/A |
| Rose | Female | China | 20's | N/A | N/A |
| Kyle | Male | Libya | 30's | N/A | N/A |

Inclusion criteria

Participants had to be an administrator, teacher, or student in an English for Academic Purposes / English Language Training program at a post-secondary institution in Canada, or at an English language school, that specializes in preparing international students for the English language demands of an English-speaking post-secondary institution in Canada. All participants had to be part of the same program. Students: must have been brought up primarily in a non-English-speaking country. Teachers must have had at least 5 years of EAP or ELT (English Language Teaching) teaching experience. Administrators: must be responsible (directly or as

oversight) for the structuring / organization / implementation of curriculum as well as the management / mediation of student issues. All participants in this study have met these criteria.

Compensation

Each administrator and teacher participant was compensated with a \$20 gift card, and student participants were compensated with a free 2 hour English lesson. The compensation is justified by the fact that by taking time out of an intensive schedule, all participants (administration, teachers, and students) are sacrificing time and energy that would otherwise be utilized toward their work/study obligations.

Data Collection Methods

Consent, confidentiality and data security

Written consent⁵ to conduct interviews and classroom observations was obtained by all participants of the study according to ethical protocol. Consent was also obtained to collect participants' names, approximate age, nationality, religion, and/or other cultural self-identifiers in order to effectively analyze and interpret classroom interaction and interview responses. In addition, email addresses from consenting participants were logged in order to facilitate scheduling observation and interview times. All student, teacher, and administrator participants gave consent for each of these requests except for consent to participate in interviews. Initially, four of the sixteen student participants did not consent to interviews. After three weeks of classroom observation and efforts by the research observer to build a friendly rapport with the class, one additional student participant consented to an interview. In the end, 12 students, 4 teachers, and 1 administrator consented to an interview.

⁵ According to Western University's Ethics Board. See Appendix G for Consent Form.

Participants' identifiers collected with their written consent are stored on a master list separate from the observation and interview data and linked to the data with a unique ID. Each participant has been given an English nick-name different from what appears on their letters of consent and in the transcript data in order to mask their true identity.

Password protected data is stored electronically on a laptop, a separate hard-drive, and a memory stick. Only the primary investigator and members of the research team have access to the data. The data will be stored for five years after the publication of research (and thereafter deleted) and housed in pass-word protected folders archived in the network drive of the University of Western Ontario. Only the primary investigator and members of the research team will have access to the data. All electronic documents will be deleted and all paper documents will be shredded and recycled after five years.

Class Observations

Qualitative research involves becoming immersed in the complexity of participants' lives in order to observe and record the dynamic nature of phenomena as they unfold. (Cohen *et al*, 2011, p. 458). The distinctive feature of observation as a research process is that it offers an investigator the opportunity to gather live data in naturally occurring social situations (Cohen *et al*, 2011, p. 456). Observations also have the potential to yield valid or authentic data that illuminates, as Robson (2002) says, "...that what people do may differ from what they say they do" (p. 310). Also, observations enable a researcher to look afresh at every day behavior that might otherwise go unnoticed (Cooper and Schindler, 2001, p. 374), as well as enable them to gather data on the physical setting, the human setting (i.e. the group's distinct characteristics), the interactional setting (i.e. formal and informal interactions), and the program setting (e.g. resources, curricula, pedagogy) (Morrison, 1993, p. 80).

My study's classroom observations involved embedding a researcher in a classroom (i.e. a natural setting) for two hours/day, four days/week, for four weeks. Observations were 'semi-structured' which meant that the researcher was not a member of the group, but participated a little on the periphery in the group's activities in order to more richly understand situations as they developed (Cohen *et al*, 2011, p. 457). The goal of immersing the researcher is to facilitate the generation of thick descriptions, particularly of social processes and interaction, which lend themselves to accurate explanation and interpretation of events rather than relying on the researcher's own inferences. Of interest for this study was: the physical layout of the classroom; the curriculum content; teacher-student / student-student dynamics; privileged forms of teaching and learning; contestations (particularly between different cultures); overt lessons of intercultural learning; how cultural difference is defined by classroom practice and student interactions. By staying in a situation over a long period the researcher is also able to see how events evolve over time (Cohen *et al*, 2011, p. 466). Of particular importance in this study was the need to observe and identify critical incidents (Tripp, 1993, p. 24) in the classroom involving intercultural learning and support for such learning.

Throughout the classroom observation process I kept field notes that served as: (a) a place to record my observations and thoughts on classroom interactions, and (b) a place to reflect on the study's objectives based on what I was observing. The field notes also helped to hone interview questions around my participants' experiences. This guided the interviews towards more realistic and relatable scenarios in order to more easily elicit how participants' account for particular situations and behavior (Cohen *et al*, 2011, p. 466).

Interviews

An interview is an exchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest. As such, they illuminate the significance of human interaction in knowledge production, and emphasize how research data is situated within the social realm (Kvale, 1996, p. 14). Because interviews are constructed and usually specifically planned event (i.e. not naturally occurring), they are significantly different from an everyday conversation (Cohen *et al*, 2011, p. 409). The research interview has been defined as a conversation organized and initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant content specified by research objectives (Cannell and Kahn, 1968). As a distinctive research technique, the interview may serve three purposes. First, it may be used as the principal means of gathering information directly related to research objectives. Second, it may be used as an explanatory device to help identify variables and relationships. And third, the interview may be used in conjunction with other methods in a research undertaking (Cohen *et al*, 2011, p. 411).

The second stage of this study involves conducting individual interviews (approximately 30 minutes to 45 minutes) in order to draw out rich narratives for analysis. Patton (1980) would identify this study's interviews as a blending of two different interview types. First, they are 'informal conversational interviews' in that some of the questions emerge from the immediate context and are asked in the natural course of things. Also, the interviews are conversational in they are somewhat built on and emerge from classroom observations and individual circumstances. Second, the interviews in this study take an 'interview guide approach' in that the topics and issues covered were somewhat specified in advance (i.e. participants were given a number of pre-determined interview questions two or three days in advance). This made the data collection a little more systematic than the conversational interview but is flexible enough to

allow the interviewer to decide the sequence and working of questions in the course of the interview (p. 206).

Interview participants consisted of 12 students, 4 teachers, and 1 senior school administrator. Each of the interviews was audio recorded and transcribed. These interviews consisted of open-ended questions intended to encourage students to produce reflective narratives of their experiences with cultural difference. See appendix 2a, 2b, and 2c for the interview questions. Further questions emerged from classroom observations and the interview context that allowed for a richer investigation of research objectives. Four students were interviewed at the end of the second, third, and fourth week of observation. The main objective of student interviews was to draw out their distinct perspectives / narratives on intercultural learning experiences in a cross-cultural classroom. The four teachers were interviewed the week following the end of the observational period. Of particular interest were the teachers' curricular intentions; understandings of intercultural learning; practices that support intercultural learning; retrospective reflections; and insights for future reflection. The senior administrator participant was interviewed the same week as the teachers with the intention to clarify / identify the expected outcomes, orientation, and parameters of the particular course observed and the larger EAP program that encompasses it.

Data Analysis

Analysis of qualitative data is most likely interpretive through the lens of the researcher. Hence the analysis is a more reflexive and responsive interaction between the researcher and the de-contextualized data that are themselves largely interpretations of social encounters (Cohen *et al*, 2011, p. 427). In my analysis of the data from classroom observations and one-to-one student interviews (i.e. field notes and interview transcripts) I sought to identify critical incidents (Tripp,

1993, p. 24) of intercultural teaching/learning and to match (i.e. code) those incidents to the research objectives laid out in chapter 1 of this thesis.

There is no denying that the administrators and teachers of the language school in this study play an important role in not only facilitating but guiding intercultural learning for its students. However, I am looking for evidence of intercultural learning from within both the international student experience and the international student voice. Thus, in reporting and analyzing this study's findings (see chapter 4) I have focused on the interview responses from student participants. Data from the teacher/administrator interviews is used to augment the discussion around intercultural teaching and learning in chapter five of this thesis.

A specific challenge for my data analysis is put forward by Marginson and Sawir (2011) who provide a distinct criteria for how to study and analyze intercultural learning. They also show how the learning environment initiates and galvanizes intercultural learning, and how participants' intercultural learning is manifested. For example, when watching for intercultural learning in a cross-cultural classroom one might observe various attempts to: cultivate intercultural communication and awareness; understand one's own socio-cultural location; and/or, build awareness of the politics of classroom participation (see Appendix A for further listing of criteria). The purpose of establishing such criteria is not to simply identify when intercultural learning has occurred but, perhaps more importantly, to inform researchers' reflections on why critical incidents of intercultural learning occur and how such critical incidents affect the participants. Interviewing students allows for a deep/rich exploration of such reflections on critical intercultural learning incidents.

Challenges

Due to some of the inherent qualities of this research's naturalistic approach a number of challenges arose that admittedly might affect the reliability and validity of my data and analysis (Cohen *et al*, 2011). First, the participants were asked to explain, or give an opinion, on their personal cross-cultural experiences / intercultural learning, but many of them seemed unaware or unsure (to various degrees) as to what they had really experienced or learned. In fact, a number of participants honestly admitted that my interview with them was the first time they had thought about the notions brought forward in the interview questions. Second, my presence in their classroom may have altered participants' (i.e. students and teachers) behavior in an attempt to avoid, impress, direct, deny or influence my research (i.e. the Hawthorne effect). I believe this may have been true initially but by the second week I felt that my presence was less obtrusive and more benignly perceived.

As a third challenge, because I developed strong relationship bonds with many of my participants, I needed to be particularly vigilant not to prejudice my participants before I interviewed them. I also needed to be particularly careful in my data analysis so as not to be overly selective with the data in order to present an unduly positive portrayal of my participants (i.e. the self-fulfilling prophecy). And, fourth, as I worked my way through observations, interviews, and data analysis I had to remind myself of the wider social reality of my participants beyond the EAP classroom context I was investigating. In fact, as data in chapter 4 shows, when asked about cross-cultural experiences or intercultural learning many of my participants (the young students in particular) relayed stories and analogies from outside the classroom that involved a spectrum of influences from local encounters with cultural difference to personal responses toward pressures to get a western education. If I were to ignore the significant effect

that the outside world has on the microcosm of the classroom then I risk excluding a number of factors that influence the moment by moment decisions and behavior of my participants (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, p. 246).

Although qualitative research is less concerned with the reliability of collected data, if the observer stays with the same group of students long enough he or she will see repeated intercultural incidents and behavioral responses and this recursive nature can establish reliability in the results and analysis. Trustworthiness, although never a guarantee, can be supported by the depth and prolonged-time of observations. By getting to know the subjects involved not only will they be more comfortable with the observer, and thus more authentic, but the observer, in turn, will also be better able to differentiate the more honest and sincere student articulations as well as judge whether or not data gathering efforts have managed to gain deep and meaningful reflections. Trusting the student responses means getting to know the students and reflexivity vis a vis the researcher's positionality.

Case studies have their distinct challenges as well. Perhaps the most significant drawback for Nisbet and Watt (1984) is that case study results are difficult to generalize except when/where applied by other researchers. My study partly sidesteps this gap by filtering its data through a theoretical framework (i.e. relational cosmopolitanism) that engages a broad range of phenomena (e.g. the internationalization of post-secondary education in response to globalization) and circumstances (e.g. financial, technological, and cultural mobility on a local, national, and global scale). Thus, that data speaks to the validity of the theoretical framework, which in turn appeals to a larger (i.e. more general) scope. Nisbet and Watt (1984) also warn that no matter how reflexive a researcher becomes, case studies are often criticized as subjective (i.e. biased) as their data are not easy to cross-check. Shaughnessy *et al.* (2003) go further by

suggesting that, "... case studies often lack a high degree of systematic control and thus it is difficult to draw inferences and cause-effect conclusions from them" (pp. 290 – 299). In some sense this "difficulty" only accentuates the necessity for strong personal judgment by users of case study research. Still, I have attempted to face these issues by corresponding clear objectives with interview data as evidence upon which to build an intelligent discussion around issues of cross-cultural encounter / intercultural learning facing western post-secondary institutions struggling to internationalize.

Observations face the same challenges inherent to the naturalistic approach but in a more nuanced way. More precisely, Cohen *et al.* (2011) explain that the validity and reliability of a researcher's observations is often called into question by a number of factors that potentially manifest bias (p.473). First, how a researcher interprets what they observe is profoundly affected by who, what, where, and when she directs her attention in situ. Also effecting bias is what a researcher is thinking about while making observations, as well as how a researcher's own experiences and interests influence/interpret what they choose to see. In my research the daily observation periods were only two hours long with a ten minute break in the middle. So keeping focused on the task at hand was not laborious. Moreover, my years of teaching experience were invaluable in making good choices as to who, where, and when to observe. Thus, although complete reliability in this regard is impossible, more often than not my experience led me, it would seem, in the right direction. I will admit, however, that the conclusions an experienced teacher might jump to (consciously or not) about particular situations, ones that might never have been reached without experience, can both benefit and deter productive data gathering and analysis.

Another factor that calls into question the validity and reliability of observations is the importance of consciously choosing to remain distant from who and what is being observed, as well as maintaining reflexive awareness of when/how one's conclusions are affected by one's own intellect / point-of-view (Cohen *et al*, 2011, p. 473). Remaining distant in my observations was accomplished by first completely removing myself from all other involvement (i.e. teaching) at the language school as well as (during the entire research / writing period) discontinuing all relationships (personal and professional) I had formed with faculty and staff. Moreover, relationships with student participants were limited to classroom observation and interview time. Maintaining reflexive awareness was a daily struggle and played out in my personal journal as well as in some the more conversational segments of interviews with participants. And finally, Cohen *et al.* (2011) explain that observation alone is not a reliable means of judging participants' behavior. Additional evidence (i.e. interviews / interview transcripts) is needed in order to accurately infer why a particular behavior occurred (p. 473). In this sense, my one-to-one interviews with student, teacher, and administrative participants included discussions of events and behavior I observed in the classroom. Participants were often asked to explain or reflect on things said or done in the classroom that might add to or detract from intercultural learning opportunities.

When conducting interviews it is crucial that researchers be mindful of the fact that the socio-cultural context in which they are engaging their participants is not a neutral space. Thus, particular socio-cultural factors (i.e. conducting interviews in a language that is not the participants' first language and, moreover, in a language that participants are learning) can dramatically influence the outcome of an interview (Cohen *et al*, 2011, p. 421). In my research this was particularly true when engaging the student-participants. All of the student-participants

were international (i.e. not born/raised in Canada) and were studying English as a second language. Although participants were more or less at an intermediate level of English ability (as designated by the school), communication difficulties did occur. Student-participants did have some difficulty in English regarding: complex lexical and grammatical structures; listening comprehension; reading comprehension; writing skills; and, pronunciation ability.

As guided by the researcher's personal ESL / EAP teaching experience, language was carefully chosen (and adapted) to reflect the language level of the student-participant(s) being engaged. Also, student-participants were not only encouraged to ask questions but were in turn asked questions to confirm whether or not they comprehended their participation in research tasks. Regarding listening comprehension, words/sentences/questions were repeated and the pace of speech was sped up or slowed down depending on what was deemed language-level appropriate for the student-participant being engaged. Regarding reading comprehension, sufficient (or extra) time (i.e. a week) was provided for student-participants to read the research parameters and interview questions, and student-participants were not only encouraged to ask questions but were in turn asked questions to confirm whether or not they comprehended the research / interview questions. Regarding writing skill and/or pronunciation ability, when the researcher was not sure what they read/heard a student-participant write/say, a further (clearer) question was asked to confirm whether or not the researcher understood the student correctly.

The interpersonal nature of interviews and, in particular, the intercultural nature of engaging international student-participants from various cultural backgrounds must also be considered. Miltiades (2008) adds that just as, "... a researcher brings his or her own cultural background into the interview, so do the respondents (p. 278) ... [and] this might affect the nature, substance, and amount of data given (p. 283). This was particularly true for my research.

I compensated for this challenge in two ways. First, I remained vigilant of this challenge throughout each interview and asked many follow-up questions on key points or descriptions from student-participants that I felt I did not fully understand. Second, as I made my way through the data analysis process I emailed participants to clarify or expound on parts of the interview transcripts where I felt a misunderstanding may have occurred.

As I conducted the interviews I faced two more challenges as cautioned about in methodology literature. First, as Kvale (1996) points out, "... the interviewer is responsible for considering the dynamics of the situation, for example, how to keep the conversation going, how to motivate participants to discuss their thoughts, feelings, and experiences, how to overcome the problems of the likely asymmetries of power in the interview" (p. 126). In the interviews for this research, Kvale's advice was particularly challenging with the younger international student-participants whose interview responses often seemed limited by both their English language ability and life experience. Second, as Cohen *et al.* (2011) suggest, I was concerned with building and maintaining a positive rapport with my participants. This involved: asking clear questions and making plain conversation; being polite and sensitive to what I sensed was most appropriate or respectful for participants (e.g. not offering to shake hands with the Muslim female participants); keeping a non-threatening and friendly demeanor help the interview seem more like a conversation; and staying on track with the interview questions and purpose without being so rigid that I limit participants' freedom to express themselves comfortably (p.422).

Once data from the observations and interviews has been collected, the next stage involves analysis. As I worked my way through the analysis of interview transcripts there were two challenges that stood out. First, as Gadd (2004) points out, "In qualitative data the data analysis is almost inevitably interpretive, hence the data analysis is a reflexive, reactive

interaction between the researcher and the decontextualized data that are already interpretations of a social encounter” (p. 385). A significant amount of the interviews I conducted contained not only reflections on ideas emerging from the ongoing conversation but also a great many recollections of events that had happened earlier in class, or even in previous years. In addition, the cultural, generational, and experiential lens that each participant employed was distinctly different from my own. Thus, in my analysis I imagined the participants as a multi-dimensional lens or filter through which thoughts and descriptions are transmitted. In this way, participants’ personal information (i.e. age, nationality, religion, international experience) become important to understanding the thoughts / opinions they expressed in the interviews.

A further challenge involved understanding my analysis of participants’ interview responses as its own filter. My history as an ESL/EAP teacher, as well as my biases as an English native speaker from a western country, and an education researcher with a particular interest in promoting intercultural learning, have to be taken into account when considering my findings and analysis. My goal is to provide an honest portrayal of participants’ opinions and reflections and not manipulating their voice to suite my research needs/wants. As Cohen *et al.* (2011) explains, “The great tension in data analysis is between maintaining a sense of holism of the interview and the tendency for analysis to atomize and fragment the data...in interviews often the whole is greater than the sum of the parts” (p. 427). This was especially challenging when analysing interview transcripts of the student-participants who tended to make a wide variety of grammatical errors and often struggled to find the appropriate vocabulary to express their ideas / opinions.

Ethical Issues

A variety of ethical issues came up during the course of my research. My work was guided by the premise that, as laid out by Cavan (1977), “Ethics are a matter of principled sensitivity to the rights of others, and that while truth is good, respect for human dignity is better” (p. 810). The primary ethical concern of my research is to do no harm to the school, administration, faculty and (most importantly) student-participants involved in the collection, analysis and reporting of my data. Moreover, it is wrong to expect access to any research site (let alone a school) without proving that both the research and the researcher are worthy of being allowed to utilize their facilities for investigation (Cohen *et al*, 2011, p. 81). In gaining access to the school in this study, the school’s corporate and administrative leadership was made aware of the research purpose, plan, methods and goals. Other school administrators (i.e. principal and vice-principal) were also aware of who I am, as well as why, how, when, and where I was engaging the faculty and students in this research study.

My ethical approach to faculty and students was more complex since I engaged them in a more frequent and personal manner. However, I was equally honest and open with them regarding the research. Most importantly, this honesty and openness included obtaining informed consent from administrator, teacher, and student participants to conduct observations and interviews. As Howe and Moses (1999) state, “Informed consent is a corner stone of ethical behavior, as it respects the right of individuals to exert control over their lives and to take decisions for themselves” (p. 24) In this study I ensured that all participants understood and agreed to my research of, and participation in, their classes. Moreover, I paid particular attention to ethical interviewing techniques (e.g. appropriate questioning in a safe and previously agreed

upon place) (Cohen *et al*, 2011, p. 442) to ensure that the evidence gathered is not only accurate and reliable, but also a fair representation of the participants' thoughts.

The probability and magnitude of possible harms implied by participation in this research is no greater than those encountered by participants in everyday life. Participation entails being observed in normal everyday classroom learning and reflecting on cross-cultural learning experiences and offering these reflections to a research interviewer. First, participants are all adult age and have taken on the challenge of living and studying in a foreign country. It can be assumed that not only are they willing to engage cross-cultural encounters but that they also have sufficient interpersonal communication skills to navigate challenging discussions about their cross-cultural experiences. Second, in classroom observations participants are not being engaged directly and, in fact, the goal is to minimize the researcher's presence in (and effect on) the classroom so as to acquire the most natural impression possible as to what normally happens in their daily studies. Third, in one-to-one interviews (approximately 30 minutes), students are being asked questions that encourage them to reflect on their cross-cultural learning experiences - they could face such questions in their daily conversations with classmates, teachers, administration, and friends.

When analyzing and interpreting student behavior, responses and reflections I needed to be particularly faithful, vigilant, and accurate in conveying / portraying their unique voices. This is complicated further with international students in an EAP program since they are involved in the ongoing development of English as a second language and cross-cultural encounters may lead to misunderstandings that are easily undetected. I also need to be aware of any effect (direct or indirect / intentional or unintentional) that my collection, analysis and reporting of data (i.e. interaction with students and their views) may have on the participants in the study.

Moreover, being sensitive to issues of confidentiality and anonymity is necessary (Cohen *et al.*, 2011, pp. 91-92). Not only did participants offer me their personal time and thoughts, but giving voice to the international student body, which is often marginalized in western post-secondary communities, must be done with international students' unique interests, concerns, vulnerability, and positioning in mind. In fact, special care must be taken not to further alienate, marginalize, or exploit the student participants any more than they already are (Swain *et al.*, 1998, p. 25). If anything, my goal for the student-participants was to help them work toward understanding and transcending the social and cultural challenges they face.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has introduced the methodology and methods used to engage my primary research questions (below) which focus on themes of intercultural learning immersed in student narratives.

1. Given that intercultural learning (i.e. the sharing of cultural knowledge and perceptions) and the development of intercultural sensibilities result from encounters with different cultures, in what ways does intercultural learning manifest in a cross-cultural classroom?
2. Understanding that international students are globally mobile individuals undergoing transformational experiences involving foreign and cross-cultural learning environments, in what ways is their intercultural learning fostered by such a learning environment?

Along with a research approach, research plan, and research methods, this chapter has introduced the research participants and the research site. Also considered are the challenges and ethical issues involved in this study. Next, chapter 4 reports the findings of student interviews.

Chapter 4: Findings

Through classroom observation and administrator, teacher, and student interviews, this study seeks to illuminate how cross-cultural learning environments (i.e. EAP programs) prepare, and might better prepare, students from diverse backgrounds to be globally aware individuals with intercultural sensibilities that engage new and creative ways of understanding the world in relation to others. There is no denying that the administrators and teachers of the language school in this study play an important role in not only facilitating but guiding intercultural learning for their students. However, I am looking for evidence of intercultural learning from within both the international student experience and the international student voice. Thus, in reporting and analyzing this study's findings I have focused on the interview responses from student participants. Data from the teacher/administrator interviews is used to augment the discussion around intercultural teaching and learning in chapter five of this thesis.

To more fully apprehend how a cross-cultural learning environment initiates or galvanizes intercultural learning, and how participants' intercultural learning is manifested in my research case I pose the following questions:

1. Given that intercultural learning (i.e. the sharing of cultural knowledge and perceptions) and the development of intercultural sensibilities result from encounters with different cultures, in what ways does intercultural learning manifest in a cross-cultural classroom?
2. Understanding that international students are globally mobile individuals undergoing transformational experiences involving foreign and cross-cultural learning environments, in what ways is their intercultural learning fostered by such a learning environment?

The objectives of this study are to: first, identify how spaces of cross-cultural encounter facilitate intercultural learning; second, to clarify how spaces of cross-cultural encounter nurture and develop the intercultural sensibilities necessary to succeed in cross-cultural learning environments; and third, to shed light on how spaces of cross-cultural encounter prepare students to take advantage of the growth opportunities for personal and professional identity formation encountered in cross-cultural learning experiences.

This research is a naturalistic study that develops and analyzes themes that emerge in a case study of student and teacher / administrator narratives (Cohen, et.al. 2011) on intercultural learning experiences in a cross-cultural English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classroom of a post-secondary English language school. In my analysis of the data from 17 one-to-one interviews (12 students and 5 teachers / administrators), augmented by 30 hours of classroom observations, I seek to identify critical incidents (Tripp, 1993, p. 24) of intercultural teaching/learning and to match (i.e. code) those incidents to the research objectives (See Appendix A2 for the distinct criteria used to identify intercultural learning). As the critical incidents of intercultural learning were coded to one of the three objectives, more specific themes were developed within each objective. Of the themes that emerged I have chosen two for each objective based on the frequency of their occurrence (See Table 2).⁶ For each theme I have identified a number of significant trends that more thoroughly exemplify the themes' contribution to the objective. The remainder of this chapter first introduces a deeper explanation of the EAP context (to help frame participants' interview responses and facilitate later discussion

⁶ Not every 'interview appearance identified' is discussed in the findings. I have included only the critical incidents that significantly add to our understanding of the related objective and intercultural learning in general.

in chapter 5) and, second, reports my findings according to the objectives, themes, and trends that emerged.

Table 2

| Objective | Theme | # of interview appearances identified |
|-----------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | Classmate interaction that facilitates intercultural learning | 45 |
| | Outside influences that facilitate intercultural learning | 22 |
| 2 | Nurture and develop intercultural sensibilities necessary to succeed in cross-cultural learning | 33 |
| | Challenges to intercultural sensibilities necessary to succeed in cross-cultural learning environments | 24 |
| 3 | Growth opportunities for personal identity | 46 |
| | Growth opportunities for professional identity | 10 |

Context: English for Academic Purposes

As its strong affiliation with a number of universities would suggest, the language school in which this research was conducted focuses almost exclusively on English for Academic Purposes. This program, like most other EAP programs over the past 20 – 30 years (Hyland, 2006, p. 1), emerged and continues to develop in response to the demands brought on by universities intensifying efforts to internationalize (Benesch, 2001, p. 23). In its most basic sense, EAP is a gateway through which many international students (whose first language is not English) pass through in order to enter English speaking universities Hyland, 2006, p. 1). This

gateway introduces English Language Learners (ELLs) to the English language and academic skills they will need to succeed in university.

EAP programs in general take a practical approach to identifying international students' English language learning needs. More specifically, EAP educators place most of their energy and attention on developing teaching materials and instructional techniques (Benesch, 2001, p. ix) that, as Hyland (2006) points out, speak directly to improving what students need to communicate and succeed in university learning environments (p. 2). Benesch (2001) provides the example that, "If the content class relied on lecturing, EAP taught listening and note-taking skills. If the lectures were too difficult for students to understand, the EAP teachers rewrote them to enhance their comprehensibility" (p. xvi). The language class I researched followed this general premise by focusing primarily on reading, writing / grammar, listening/speaking, and IELTS classes.

In fact, Flowerdew and Peacock (2001) point out that the goal of EAP is to facilitate students' ability to not only study but to ultimately conduct and communicate their research in English (p. 8). Hyland (2006) goes further to include any/all forms of communication in the university learning environment from undergraduate to graduate studies and (possibly) beyond (p. 1). Developing such broad academic communication skills requires, as Hyland (2006) tells us, "... specialized English-language teaching grounded in the social, cognitive and linguistic demands of academic target situations, providing focused instruction informed by an understanding of texts and the constraints of academic contexts" (p. 2). It should be said that although the program I investigated focused on the 'linguistic demands', the design and rigor of assignments and daily tasks also sought to expand students' 'cognitive development.' Also, the interactive nature of their classroom work, not to mention this particular class' friendly social

dynamic, encouraged open communication guided (by teachers and course material) along academic lines (e.g. topic choice and vocabulary usage).

As strong and developed as EAP programs have become, there remain some inherent weaknesses, one of which is significant for my study. First, as Benesch (2001) explains, “Although EAP attends to the social construction of knowledge (i.e. how academic discourse communities construct their tasks and genres), it has, for the most part, overlooked sociopolitical issues affecting life in and outside of academic settings” (p. xv). The deficiency that Benesch discusses relates to the research field of EAP and the development of EAP curriculum. Not mentioned are the significant efforts by educators in their particular programs / classrooms (certainly in the program / classrooms involved in this research) to not only acknowledge but, at times, confront issues of difference both inside and outside the school. The language school in this case study, for example, holds non-academic elective classes every Thursday (each semester every student chooses two electives – all run on Thursdays) with the understanding that one purpose of the electives is to broaden the students’ awareness of the local culture beyond the academy.

Second, as Benesch (2001) suggests, is the limited amount of time (i.e. one year) in which a student is encouraged / expected to move through the program (i.e. from beginner to advanced English language speaker) (p. ix). The students in this study are no exception, however their program administrators and teachers are well aware of this issue. The school’s staff work hard to condense as much learning into as short a time as possible, as well as coach students on coping with the rigors of such pressure. One way the program addresses the problem of a limited time frame is by maximizing teacher-student classroom contact time. In this case, students have 25 hours of class time per week augmented with approximately 10 – 15 hours of at-home study

per week. Moreover, each student is assigned a teacher-advisor who they meet with one-to-one at least three times a semester. Their discussions focus on personal challenges students may have regarding their studies or coping with day to day life inside and outside of school.

Objective 1: Facilitating Intercultural Learning

The first research objective is to identify how spaces of cross-cultural encounter facilitate intercultural learning. In regards to this study, the ‘spaces’ I speak of are not only the real-world places, times, and contexts of participants’ cross-cultural interactions, but also the social and cultural spaces that each participant inhabits in their daily reality. Facilitating intercultural learning refers to events involving participants, and participants’ interpretations of events, that involve the potential for mutual transformation through interactions that engage similarities or differences between culture sets.

Since this is the broadest of the three objectives it could envelop most of the findings in this chapter. There is no denying, for example, that the administrators and teachers of the language school in this study play an important role in not only facilitating but guiding intercultural leaning for its students. However, I have limited the findings for this objective to two themes (i.e. classmate interaction and outside influences)⁷ because the student participants (i.e. the main focus of this research) tended to respond to questions / discussions around intercultural learning by relating anecdotes and reflections on cross-cultural encounters that took place either in-class with classmates, or acquaintances outside of school entirely. Despite the fact that the student participants rarely commented on their school’s administrators, teachers, or

⁷ Classmate interaction occurs both inside and outside of the classroom (i.e. both academic and social interaction) and involves two or more students originating from two or more cultures, nations, and/or language groups. Outside influences do not include interactions with classmates, teachers, or administrators from the language school in this study. The outside influences are cross-cultural encounters that involve both same-culture and other-culture family, friends, acquaintances, or chance meetings / occurrences that happen external to school.

curriculum (unless explicitly asked to do so in their interview), it must be said that (as we see in discussing the findings for the second objective) without effective instruction or classroom management and organization much of the interaction between classmates may never have taken place.

Classmate interaction

Within the ‘facilitating intercultural learning’ objective the two themes I have identified are classmate interaction; and, outside influence. Within these themes I have identified three trends, including: cross-cultural comparisons; challenges with cross-cultural encounters; and, benefits of interaction. Cross-cultural comparisons refer to moments in the interviews when participants reflected on the similarities and differences between their own culture and the new ‘other’ culture(s) they engage. Challenges with cross-cultural encounters, figure participants’ reflections on some of the difficulties they face when working with classmates from a different culture. The final trend, the benefits of cross-cultural interaction, shows what participants view as the positive aspects of their cross-cultural experiences (i.e. what they learn from those experiences).

Comparisons

By enabling participants to compare home-culture to host-culture and other-cultures, cross-cultural encounters allow an opportunity to move beyond preconceived differences to discover similarities in attitude, behavior, and perception. Roz explains that interacting with her classmates from different cultures allows, “...[us] to learn about each other and common things with each other...we share some ideas and maybe some activities...so we do have common things.” Some student participants, especially the more mature participants, envision one basic

universal similarity. Sam, when reflecting on religious differences between Muslim and Chinese students says that, "...even if the Chinese all of their life it's their choice to live without religion...but we are still human...we share concern about many thing." Even Joe, one of the younger Chinese men, acknowledges that, "...except for the religion problem we're the same." This focus on a fundamental unchanging similarity (i.e. we are all human) is fostered by putting faces to names in real-world relationships.

Finding similarities through cross-cultural comparison helps students from different cultures feel more comfortable when interacting. Bob explains how students often feel in new encounters with different cultures when he says,

Sometimes I feel uncomfortable...because I enter a new situation and maybe all of the people come from [not China]...and I don't know well about them...I don't know what to talk about...or what they're interested in...I'm not nervous...it's just a little bit strange...but when you get to know them you'll find most of them are friendly.

Once the ice has been broken students begin finding similarities in attitudes towards study or interest in the same hobbies. As Steve says,

I live here right now, I have to adapt...so if I have a couple of people look like good at study...study everyday 24/7...I will try it but only for a while because it's not fit my hobby...if I find a couple people fit my hobby...good for me and we're happy together all the time...that will be another story...because we have a lot in common we can do it together...we can play together and study together.

For many of the student participants having the same hobbies/interests becomes the catalyst for exploring cross-cultural relationships. It is through these relationships that deeper intercultural learning is fostered.

By learning about other cultures from the perspectives of people in those cultures one is better able to understand the differences perceived and focus on similarities when interacting with others. Liz exemplifies this focus on similarities when reflecting on working with students from the Middle East.

...they change my mind my impression about them because I just always confused about them...I don't have too much information about them...so when I get along with them I think oh that's not that bad...they are nice...and they also have the life same as you...not that difference...and you just think they are the same people as you...make you think you can get along well with them...also because my classmates are so nice make me feel confident to communicate with them...and they will also talk about something daily life no matter the age or gender difference...they don't mind and they're open minded...they help you have some new idea and that's interesting.

Feeling comfortable helps breaks down barriers of insecurity and this allows people to get to know each other. This comfort, in turn erodes distrust and initiates a deeper understanding and possibly long term relationships. Bob later said that, "When I first came here I felt lonely and that's when I make some new friends and we have same common interest...then I think that's fine...I find myself a new country." These 'new friends' Bob refers to are from both his home-culture and other-cultures but they are all strangers to him. What's important about Bob's comment is his focus on building relationships based on similarities as a means to deal with feeling alone and isolated.

Comparing home-culture to host-culture and other-cultures also allows an opportunity to explore differences in attitude, behavior, and perception. Although all of the participants find it easy to identify cultural differences, by openly discussing comparisons and questions about differences many of the participants begin to find a deeper understanding for why those differences exist. Bob explains that when he met his other-culture classmates for the first time,

I was nervous...maybe afraid of them...but when they talk with me I know Libya is a good country...free study...free medical...and very low price of oil...I think it is really a good country...maybe it's better than mine...but I also know there is some war in Libya and that's not very good...it's a little bit dangerous.

Within cross-cultural spaces students develop a better understanding of other classmates' point of view and how this time and place may be a better or worse experience for them.

Cross-cultural spaces also allow students to compare and question differences in each other's motivations for studying in Canada. Al, a young Chinese man, conveys some the common notions held by his Chinese classmates when he says, "...as I know...most Chinese want to immigrate to Canada...the Saudi...their country is rich so they maybe they came to Canada to learn the new culture...to see the different world from their country." When asked if he thought his classmates had the same motivations he did, one of the Libyan men said that,

The Libyan and Saudi want a good education first...but Chinese...I think people want travelling from China...because government in China very no freedom...very strong for people...but when go in Canada free Chinese people...free about born any baby...because in China one baby or you pay tax a lot.

Whether or not Al and Herb are making accurate observations or reinforcing preconceived misconceptions, being in an intercultural learning environment (i.e. a space where cultural perceptions and knowledge is shared) allows them to explore, discover, and question what motivates others.

The most significant difference that continues to emerge centers on religion. Within this class half of the student participants are Chinese and either openly state they are atheists or remain neutral on the subject with no declared religion. Two or three of the Chinese students spoke of being curious about the Christian and/or Muslim religion. The other half of the student

participants are practicing Muslims from Libya and Saudi Arabia. Joe, a young Chinese man, states quite directly that, "...the Middle East I think it's big difference from China... maybe I think the biggest difference is religion... we don't have the religion." Whether or not the student participants have a religion did not overtly interfere with classroom work.

Through the interviews, however, I sensed the religious divide always present in some subtle way. Sam from Libya describes his feelings on the matter this way,

We [Middle Eastern Muslims] don't know a lot about Chinese culture or the Asian culture...to experience or meet people they don't have religion...how they live their life?...which thing rule their life?...it's good experience for me to learn that...and the Chinese...because they are comfortable asking questions ask a lot of questions about the tradition...they wondered about religion role in our life.

The students' cross-cultural spaces allow for discussion, questions, and getting/giving first-hand explanations. This sharing not only builds understanding but also provides an opportunity for everyone involved to question the validity of their own culturally endowed values by imaging the cultural values of others.

Challenges

There are unavoidable challenges for students when working with classmates from other cultures. These challenges rarely stopped the students in this study from exploring relationships with their classmates but they often limited the extent of their exploration. For example, when others hold a strong position and view us as deficient in some way it can either be a barrier between 'us and them' or it can push us to question which view is right/wrong and why. Bob tells us that,

When I talk to students in class...they have different religion...one guy told me everyone in his country has religion...but I am atheist...and he told me you're nothing in our country...I don't mind what he's talking about...but I think religion holds [back] people freedom.

Bob's strength in this situation is being able to separate a culturally defined attitude from the person making the comment. Bob feels conflicted because the classmate speaking to him is being open and honest and friendly, but at the same time that classmate labels Bob a non-person.

Addressing these challenges by questioning and investigating their origins can potentially lead to substantial intercultural learning.

In relation to Bob, Herb's particular difficulty in cross-cultural encounters is being open and accepting of others who are challenging his strong cultural norms of right and wrong. As Herb puts it,

Sometimes I enjoy working with students from other cultures...but sometimes I don't enjoy...for example...discuss about religion...no problem...but sometimes Chinese students works somethings not good...I think in his cultures no problem but in my culture problem...for example I cannot kiss cheek of man and woman.

Despite accepting that others define good and bad behavior differently, Herb chooses to limit his contact with those who, from his cultural perception, behave inappropriately. Overcoming this hurdle has been difficult for Herb and he tends to isolate himself from cross-cultural encounters both in and out of the classroom.

Learning to deal with a classmate who is being culturally inappropriate is another significant challenge to successful intercultural learning. As Roz explains,

...so one of my classmate...he had breakfast and I know it's bacon and you can eat bacon this is up to you...but you cannot say that for me...he touch the bacon and come in front

of my face and told to me...oh bacon...it's delicious bacon... okay.....it's up to you if you like it...for me I cannot eat it so I didn't know how can I explain for him?... he thinks he's just being funny...but for me it's not funny...it's impolite...you have to respect my culture because if you respect other culture then other people will respect your culture.

Intentionally offensive or not, such scenarios risk offending classmates to the extent that cultural stereotypes are strengthened or, worse, created. The fact that Roz responded the way she did speaks to her maturity, but it is difficult to tell if this experience will have a long lasting negative effect on her future cross-cultural encounters.

Finally, students in cross-cultural classrooms are often asked to choose a partner(s) for various learning activities/assignments. Some of the student participants immediately choose a partner from another culture or language group, while others choose a partner from the same culture or language group whenever possible. When asked who he would choose as his partner Joe explained that,

to be honest...I would choose the Chinese guy...you know the same culture the same language you are easy to talk with each other...and sometimes you just feel more friendly...it's hard to explain the feeling that you are from the same country the same culture...because even if it's bigger experience [working with other-culture classmate] you just see that is the same face ...a familiar face...you got a good feeling...you know if I just want to focus on my study I would choose another culture guy...because it push me to speak English...the biggest mission here is to speak better my English...but if I'm tired/angry maybe I just give up...I don't have the patience.

The honesty of Joe's comments is inspiring. When he is focused on his studies and feels the need to work hard on developing his English he chooses an other-culture partner but he admits that if he is feeling tired, bored, or apathetic about his studies and just wants to take the easiest path, he selects a same-culture partner. Working effectively in cross-cultural groups takes significant

time, energy, and effort. Moreover, the students are engaging a foreign learning environment and studying in and about a second language. And, finally, since students are instructed, evaluated, and graded on their English language progress (not intercultural learning), it is no surprise that the students' priorities are to focus on their English language learning at the expense of cross-cultural relationships that, according to Joe, would actually help them learn English faster and more efficiently.

Benefits

Perhaps the most significant benefit to cross-cultural encounters is learning to value difference without relegating it to a theoretical realm. This rather grand ideal (i.e. valuing difference in real-world encounters) can have a very simple beginning. For example, when asked if he enjoys studying with students or teachers from other cultures, Mike explained, "...yes, we can share the different experience which is totally different from what I experience...sometimes I feel it will be very fresh." Through his classmates Mike is learning new information and ideas that peak his interest and encourage him to continue. Al agrees that he enjoys working with students and teachers from other cultures because it gives him the chance to, "...think about why they are thinking in that other way." It is likely that neither of these young men can fully explain what, why, or how their classmates from other cultures do, say, or think. But, like many of their classmates, both Mike and Al are able to recognize that when they are confronted with different cultural perceptions they feel compelled to find some value in those differences. There is some evidence that student participants are perceiving, engaging, and thus valuing difference on a more profound level. Joe, for example, explains that,

...sometimes we have different opinions...but it's a good influence...after all we are studying in Canada...a lot of the same people like them [other-culture classmates]

studying in Canada too...so we should get used to them...maybe that will help me get to know more difference.

Joe has not only developed a rationale for valuing difference, but he has also imagined future opportunities to learn.

Moreover, previous cross-cultural experiences lead some student participants to place such a high value on engaging difference that they get upset when they see other students isolating themselves in their same-culture group. As Andy says, "...we came here with the purpose to study among other culture...I get bothered by people sitting in different [read: same-culture] group...we should be sitting with other cultures...its better... 'cause we will learn more." In fact, students like Andy have learned to value cross-cultural encounters for the inherent power of the experiences to transform the people involved. As Andy explains, I have been to [another western country]...I did the same thing [stayed in same-culture groups]...so when I got back to [home country] I didn't learn a lot to be honest...so when I first came [to Canada] I wanted to change that...to learn and speak with other cultures." Andy positions his encounters with difference as a catalyst for personal change.

A second benefit that cross-cultural classmate interaction has for facilitating intercultural learning is that it becomes necessary for students to manage how they process and understand the differences they encounter. As Sam tells us,

I found that when you understand people and how they act and how they live their life it's easy to manage your differences between them...what they believe in some areas...don't touch some areas...and the rest you can manage that differences...you can interact without any problems.

Most participants speak of accumulating knowledge about other cultures in order to clarify what is and is not appropriate behavior. As Roz says,

I have Chinese friend but I cannot eat with them because they like to make noise when they eat...but for us [Saudi] this is not polite...one of my friends told me they have to do it if the food is delicious and someone make it for you...he will hear it and know you like the food.

Students collect such cultural knowledge to both know what to do/say in particular situations and understand how to properly perceive what others are communicating in their words and actions.

There are also signs that as students accumulate their understanding of cultural differences there is a deepening awareness that when conflicts arise all participants need to be accepted and respected in order to get along with each other amicably. Joe exemplifies this in the following anecdote, "...something they want to share with me but I don't like it...I feel embarrassed if I don't accept it...for example I try like the Arabic coffee...the taste was so weird...actually I can't stand it...but they give me a little cup so I must try." Sam explains the significance of this acceptance / respect when he says,

...the big thing that I have learned here in Canada is to respect others... as you know I come from one culture country so we don't have that variety in culture...okay there is no problem with the other exist...I don't have to change it...but I don't have to like it...I can live what I want to live.

Sam's cross-cultural experiences have not only nurtured his growing awareness of cultural difference with a 'live and let live' motto, but more importantly, he acknowledges that those experiences are what motivate him to accept difference and cope with change.

A third benefit to cross-cultural encounters is that they provide an opportunity to explore and experiment with different cultural perspectives. Andy says that,

...at first to be honest I stayed 100% in my culture...and there was no improvement...then I tried talking people of other cultures...China...experimenting to

see what would happen...and I saw that this is the way I like it...now I mix with other cultures and it's been going pretty well.

Having to change how we speak or behave with classmates from different cultures can free us from home-culture norms that may limit potential personal transformation. Sue expresses this when she talks of her English studies in class, "I like to change with different culture...in class I feel more comfortable speaking English people from different culture...I feel less pressure to say the correct things." The 'correct things' Sue refers to involve both language and ideas. She often feels uncomfortable expressing what she really thinks about a topic to people from her home-culture because she fears offending them more than people from other-cultures.

Cross-cultural encounters with classmates offer the opportunity to recognize how taboos in one's home-culture differ from another's culture and to experiment with ways to deal with such difference. Andy puts it this way,

...at first I had some difficulties communicating with the girls because I'm from Saudi Arabia and in Saudi Arabia you have a different way of acting in front of the female gender...I tried to talk with the girls from Spain or even Saudi Arabia but for me it was too informal...so after a while I changed my way of speaking with them and made it better...like we're friends.

Andy feels that a cross-cultural space offers him the freedom to begin questioning and even transcending the social rules of his home-culture. As he alluded to earlier, Andy has come to realize that staying completely within his home-culture does not offer him the chance to develop the larger international perspective he desires. This larger perspective needs a culturally rich environment to grow.

From the students' perspective, probably the most important benefit that classmate interaction has for facilitating intercultural learning has more to do with the people they meet.

This is particularly true for Andy and Steve who, despite coming from different cultures and having different first languages (Andy from Saudi Arabia and Steve from China), developed a strong friendship that involved spending much of their time together both inside and outside the classroom. Steve explains how the relationship started,

I can remember when I first started to be here...I didn't even talk...I just sit over here and look at my book...take my notes...then after class we take a cigarette [with Andy]...then I know this is my classmate...we have lunch together...we just talk a little bit...small talk...about 3 or 4 days later me and Andy we hangout...have dinner together, go to the gym together...then its changed...our conversation is more open.

By being classmates in a cross-cultural learning environment Andy and Steve have had the opportunity to become very good friends and through their willingness to confront the 'strangeness' of each other's culture they have begun to transcend the cultural barriers between them. As the following exchange between Andy and Steve shows, previous experience (in this case Andy's) can help initiate and guide relationships between classmates.

Interviewer: So when you first went to [another country] to study English were you quiet like Steve?

Andy: yeah...I had the same experience...well...at first I was quiet and I only make friends born from the same country as me...I didn't interact with others...after a few months I began to hang out with different cultures.

Steve: but you know...I think our experience...the first experience...is totally different because we always hang out each other and always I can see him and talk to him.

Andy was able to see a similarity between himself and Steve because of his previous experience. Andy imagined this similarity without realizing that he had already transcended some of the barriers Steve was facing and was thus able to feel more comfortable to approach Steve and this in turn allowed Steve to begin transcending the barriers faster and more smoothly. This would

not have happened if Andy had not had previous difficulties with cross-cultural experiences and then used those experiences to reflect, transcend, and change.

Relationships can have a profound effect on the depth and quality of one's intercultural learning. For Sam these relationships require one element in particular, "...when we respect each other belief then it's easy to interact...it's easier to accept the difference...I don't really have to accept it or like it...but this is what he believe and I respect that." Seeing others show their respect for your culture can create trust. As Roz explains,

I have a Chinese boy....he's like a friend...just a regular friend...he usually put his hand on my shoulder and ...you know...come on...you know my culture ...you know my life...it's okay...he cannot make it...but one of my Columbian boys he told him you have to respect her culture...so the Columbian like for me to feel comfortable for him to contact...so for me it's very nice ...I can make a nice clean friend with them...so they like to respect culture and something like that.

Building understanding and trust helps Roz feel comfortable and thus more willing to open up to classmates from other cultures. Interactions between classmates based on this 'respect' are vital to seeding successful relationships.

Outside Influence

Compared to classmate interaction, cross-cultural encounters outside of class can have an equal, and often larger, effect on students' intercultural learning. In fact, during the interviews with student participants I sometimes had to struggle to bring the conversation back to their experiences in the classroom. When asked to reflect on particular aspects of intercultural learning the students would often relate anecdotes of family and friends or describe incidents with roommates or homestay parents and families. The students' preoccupation with outside influences was significant enough that I felt it necessary to include them in my definition of

spaces of cross-cultural encounter that facilitate intercultural learning. The outside influences that emerged fell nicely into the same trends that outlined classmate interaction: cross-cultural comparisons; challenges with cross-cultural encounters; and, benefits of interaction. This study primarily focuses on students' experiences in a cross-cultural learning environment, and as result readers will notice fewer student comments and anecdotes reported under this theme. This is not meant to diminish their value but simply to reflect their relevance to this study.

Comparisons

When sojourning to a new country/culture one often feels distant, even isolated, from the local culture. Developing a deep understanding for why or how things are done takes time and patience. When reflecting on cross-cultural experiences they had outside the classroom student participants often compared what they saw/heard to a similar experience from home. As Al says, "...not always feel a kind of distance...like they [Canadians] will go shopping with their friends and have fun with their families...they're the same in China...and so I think most of things is similar...because we are all the human beings." For the students, finding commonalities with others seems necessary in order to bridge cultural gaps. To this point, Sam explains that,

...when I first came here I thought I know a lot about the western culture...but when I arrived here it's completely different...just what I know just is a small things that I know...living with the culture when you know the details that you will learn more and how the people think...and sometimes I feel the western culture is so far from us...the one thing that we share is we both believe in God we both have religions...but right now they are regular people...they have concern about children...they have small home concern about have to clear your house....we share that things as a human... we are still human...we share concern about many thing.

Being somewhat overwhelmed by the cultural differences he sees, Sam seems preoccupied with finding commonalities between his home and host cultures more than understanding how/why the differences he sees/hears are unique. For many students finding commonalities is how cross-cultural engagement begins. By identifying what they have in common with the new cultures they encounter students feel more comfortable, confident, and positive with people from those cultures. Later, as students become more established, they can better deal with cultural differences that may be puzzling or scary.

Stepping beyond distant observations of others, the cross-cultural relationships students form outside the classroom allow them to engage more nuanced cultural differences. For Liz, having a roommate from a different culture has introduced her to some unfamiliar daily rituals. As Liz says,

I am living with Saudi Arabia roommate now...because I'm living in a homestay...the first week is so difficult because I don't know so many custom of them and I'm not sure what I need to pay attention...but now is better...I think Saudi Arabia and Chinese people are the same...there's no difference...actually their daily life the same...but their religion make them need to pray five time per day...and they will wear the hijab...and no more difference.

Although she doesn't fully understand why her roommate is different, Liz's regular exposure to new daily rituals has put her at ease with them feeling foreign. Al is also in a homestay and he has noticed that his host-parents relate to food different from what he is used to in China. As Al explains,

In China we usually have the big lunch...in Canada you always have the big supper and so I want to put my supper as a lunch and in China you know we have a lot of different foods...so if you ask my parents to prepare a little more for another people he said it's

okay it's not a problem...but in Canada if I ask my homestay could you please prepare more than one for me?...he said no because sometimes for example we have steak...in China we cut in small pieces...but he said he can't prepare more than one for me because it's too big and expensive.

Understanding such differences and how they feel about them help Al and Liz manage their relationships with others from those same cultures.

Challenges

Cross-cultural experiences are challenging, and misunderstandings can lead to aggressive posturing and even confrontations. In particular, if such confrontations happen with students' initial experiences in a new culture there is often a residue feeling of distrust. Despite happening over two years ago, Roz's experience with what she perceived as an unfair and aggressive Canadian immigration officer remains a negative impression at the forefront of her mind. As Roz tells it,

I face some problems when I come here first days for me...I know English but little bit English but the first problem I face was in the immigration ...the woman who speak with me she was very...I don't know how can I explain that...but she told me...where is your money? ...where is....? ...I have everything my papers my father gave to me...I told her if she want to speak with me I told her I cannot speak with you...my sister and my brother downstairs you can speak with them...this is enter in the airport...and she told me....no...who is the student you or your sister/brother?... I have misunderstanding...all of us are student...don't speak with me like that...and I was so angry but everything was okay...and the final talk she told me I am a bad student...I talk with her thank you so

much...so we have to face many problems in culture and in people behaviours...but it's okay [i.e. I can deal with this].

Such experiences not only discourage Roz from further cross-cultural encounters but, as we see in her next anecdote, because Roz is particularly aware of when non-Muslims treat her badly, she seems increasingly disinterested in learning about other cultures beyond what she needs to cope in this foreign environment.

When I walk in the street sometimes people when they saw to me I thought by myself why they take a look for me like that... sometimes they think I am like the Iran's people or terrorist when they make the wars or something like that...they think I like them...but I cannot explain that I am not so...they put the bad behavior for all the Muslim...all the Muslims have this bad behavior...and that make us feel very nervous...but that's okay...but they have not to do that for us...because each person have a different situation a different opinion in their life...but I don't know...and sometimes we go to café and I order something and I'm waiting I'm waiting...and the waiter told me...I don't want to help you...I ask her why?...she told me because you're Muslim...I was surprised but it's okay...if you come from different culture ...not all people the same I know...but you will face some hard things and easy things.

Compartmentalizing challenging cross-cultural experiences, in this case Islamophobia, from the cross-cultural classroom is difficult since all of our experiences shape who we are, what we do, and how we do it.

Hearing about a friends' cross-cultural encounters helps students reflect on their own intercultural learning. As Steve conveys below, sometimes shaping our behaviour and

perceptions in the present has less to do with our current situation or circumstances and more to do with our reflections on others' experiences.

I want to share a story about one of my good friends...he studied here in Canada about 1.5 years...in Vancouver...he said where you going?...I said London...oh...but there's not too much Chinese people there...come to Vancouver...I said no...I come here to study, I'm not come here look for Chinese people...his idea is when I get here I have to try my best to find Chinese people...and I still can remembers when he stayed here for one years he back to China...he looks like a lion...the hair style...his hair before he go is short...I said what's happened?...he did his best to just go to university directly and he did his best to get IELTS point 6.5 and then he go to university...and then he didn't talk to other people at all...he only try and find Chinese people...meet with Chinese people...everything with Chinese people...he don't even use English without class...sometimes in class he just need to ask the question for one or two times and that's it...and after time his hair is getting too long he don't know how to say it to get a haircut...this is a problem...and now when he is home and talk English with me he said 'I is a farmer'....I said 'yeah I know you are a farmer, I'm the farmer too, but I AM the farmer'... I is a farmer? ...and he has stayed here for 1.5 years.

Steve's frustrated and sarcastic tone while telling this story was a clear indicator of his intentions to model his own foreign experience radically different from his friend's. Steve clearly understands that cross-cultural encounters are challenging but because he places a high value on them he embraces that which his friend worked so hard to avoid – engaging people from different cultures.

Benefits

It is often not the experiences immediately outside the time/space of the classroom that influence students' perceptions of difference. It is important to remember that our past experiences can have a significant effect on how we engage others today. Liz reflects on how her earlier travels helped prepare her for the cross-cultural classroom in the following exchange:

Interviewer: Did you do any international travel before coming to Canada?

Liz: Yeah...I have been Thailand before for short time...just for travelling.

Interviewer: Do you think that your experience before helped prepare you for this cross-cultural experience?

Liz: Yeah...exactly...because if I don't know some culture of the western country or some other country I will be afraid about that ...afraid...I just ...if I understand just a little bit it make me feel more confident...and you will find they're all almost like that way...they are considerate...and culture is similar like that and I will be more confident that I can live in here and I can get along well with them...and that will help me.

Liz's memories of travelling in Thailand inform how she engages the cultural knowledge she gains from others. Having had some success merging her knowledge of a different culture with interaction involving locals from that culture, Liz not only feels more secure engaging people from a variety of backgrounds but she is also better able to identify and appreciate the commonalities that bridge cultures.

Another benefit that outside experiences have on intercultural learning in cross-cultural spaces relates to the choices made in arranging and managing our daily lives. Sue explains that when she and her husband and two children first moved to Canada from Saudi Arabia, "...there was a place all Saudi people...but we don't want to live with them...we live away because we

cannot learn anything if your friend is Arabic...the same thinking...the same language...we came here to learn...and not only English...different things.” The lifestyle choices that Sue and her family have made are somewhat unique, but by choosing to engage with individuals outside their home-culture they have better positioned themselves for intercultural learning opportunities.

Another benefit to engaging difference outside the classroom is that by maintaining relationships with friends/roommates/acquaintances from other cultures students learn to better respond to cultural differences by building understanding of other cultural viewpoints. As Bob tells us:

Bob: I feel comfortable in class because my roommates they all comes from Libya...we play soccer on the weekend and we play very well.

Interviewer: ...so you're learning a lot about other cultures both in school and at home....

Bob: Yeah...I seen not all the Muslim are horrible...because we always see that on the TV...I mean...ISIS or some terrorists they are Muslim...but most of them they are smart...they are friendly.

Bob's experiences with his roommates/friends has challenged some of the preconceived notions he had taken in from mass media. Like Bob, Liz's encounters with her homestay and roommate have helped her transcend the apprehension she felt towards different cultures, and Muslim people in particular, when she first came to Canada. Liz says,

Canadian consists of so much different countries people...like Libya and Saudi Arabia...and I just don't know much about that so I feel confused...now is better because my homestay is Turkish people and my roommate is Saudi Arabia and we always mix.

By choosing to have cross-cultural relationships in her daily life, Liz is able to gain a firsthand awareness of how people from other cultures, who once perplexed her, perceive the world.

Relationships with difference outside the classroom provide students an opportunity to develop an ability to negotiate complex, culturally diverse spaces. Moreover, reflecting on how their friends/roommates engage these culturally diverse spaces can shape how students interact with difference in those spaces. Steve gives this analysis:

We were talking about being in same groups at lunch time and I think it's not a big deal because I think it's a good thing...you know... sometimes everyone has hobbies that are different...like if I wanna talk about hip-hop can I sit with people from Libya who are over 35?...of course not...and ahhh...can I talk with [Andy] about the hip-hop in front of these guys?...of course not...and ahh...I can't understand about Arabic ...and you know the first time I come to Canada...at lunch time I sit with [Andy, Herb, and Sam, and Sue...they're from Libya...they speak Arabic....I don't know what are they talking about and it's not my business....and then I realize if I wanna talk with Andy it's real hard because he has to speak with other people in Arabic and speak with me in English...Like me...if he sit with me and Chinese people...I have to listen and speak in Chinese first and then in English...and I remember this one time we went to this bar Andy feel so disappointed because I always speak Chinese with them and he cannot understand. So I think the best way is we sit together to talk about our topic and the best thing is we can communicate with English...this is the best way...and because I don't have in common with the Chinese people in our class...so at lunch time I think the best way is sit with Andy....we sit together we can watch the movie, we can listen to music. Think about it...all of the class they are from the country all of the world...if we sit together what we talk? About the pray? About the government? Of course not...that will be boring...you know...my roommates at homestay he is Chinese guy from Beijing and he hang out with his classmates every day because in his class there's 15 and 13 of them are Chinese...and all of them are 19...if we don't have class he hang out with these guy...every day... every night....they have buffet...go to karaoke...but in my class it's different... so if we have this group it's a bad thing....think about if we have to get together all the time....oh that'd be horrible.

There are both positives and negatives, and limits to cross-cultural participation. Having the opportunity to confront cultural differences allows people to explore how best to manage the cross-cultural relationships they engage and build. Moreover, informal spaces allow for more spontaneous language learning and introduce an element of fun to the time and effort students invest in intercultural conversations.

Cross-cultural experiences outside the classroom have led to friendships and their new shared experiences that further build and strengthen those relationships. Roz has found a circle of friends outside school that she is both comfortable with because they are Muslim and that she can learn from because they were born and raised in Canada. As she explains it:

Here in Canada I find girls...they are Canadian but they are Muslim...so it's okay...and I challenge myself to invite them to my house and we speak together to practice English also...and sometimes we go outside to the café to talk and practice English also...so we help each other...they help me feel more comfortable...and I help them understand Islam.

Finding friends with the same religion is helping Roz cope with the intersections of cultural and language differences. The intercultural aspects of these relationships may seem less diverse compared to the cross-cultural relationships some of her classmates have formed. However, given the difficulties she has encountered in Canada as a young Muslim woman (see earlier in this theme) it should come as no surprise that Roz has felt the need to compromise on the sort of cross-cultural relationships she engages.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the student participants experience a wide variety of serendipitous encounters with other cultures that often inspire the transformation of personal perceptions. The following anecdote refers to Joe's first few days in Canada.

I didn't have a car so I just can only use the bus...that time was half past four I think...and there were #9 bus and #10 bus...and 9a, 9b, 9c...I didn't know about that...anyway I needed to get the 9a and I got the 9c actually...and I also took the wrong side...I should go this way but I took the other way...then after a while I got the wrong bus so I got off and I didn't know what I can do...because my phone also power off I think I will die...so I just ask a stranger...because the weather that day so cold there's few people on the street...but I said 'oh hey sir... can you help me?'...he said 'oh yes yes'...oh that man is so kind....just give me money to have a phone call....just lead me to a shop...let me buy a ticket and show me the map where can I get the bus and just together with me and wait for the bus.....then we noted that there was no bus on that time because the last bus was stopped...and then he called the taxi...and the bad weather caused the taxi late so he stand out with me in the so cold weather and just wait for the taxi almost half an hour in the cold...so kind man...so from this I think Canadian people are kind.

Encounters like Joe's build pre-emptive trust between strangers, not to mention an empathy and understanding that bridges cultures. Having looked beyond language and cultural challenges, the stranger in this anecdote has both shaped Joe's reflections on cross-cultural encounters and inspired how he responds to cultural differences.

Objective 2: Success in Cross-Cultural Learning Environments

The second research objective is to clarify how spaces of cross-cultural encounter nurture and develop the intercultural sensibilities necessary to succeed in cross-cultural learning environments. Admittedly, a cross-cultural learning environment can be any space (real-world, virtual, or personal imaginary) involving cross-cultural encounter(s) and an opportunity to reflect on (and share reflections on) that encounter. For the purpose of this study I have limited the space of cross-cultural encounter to the EAP classroom. More specifically, my findings focus on ways (as perceived by the students in this study) that teachers organize and manage their lessons

and classrooms in order to help nurture and develop the intercultural sensibilities necessary to succeed in cross-cultural learning environments. The teachers' efforts cover a range of teaching methods/techniques that involve maximizing cross-cultural encounters, guiding students through complex cultural differences and conflicts, and regularly requesting their students compare/contrast and reflect on the cultural differences they engage. Nurturing and developing students' intercultural sensibilities can be a daunting, diffuse, and often bewildering task to place on teachers already responsible for demanding regular curriculum expectations (i.e. language teaching). Thus, the findings for this objective also include a 'challenges' theme that outlines some of the difficulties that emerged from student interviews in regards to intercultural learning.

Nurture and Develop

Within this theme I have identified three trends including: cross-cultural partnerships; classroom atmosphere; and, new pedagogical approaches to learning. The first trend, cross-cultural partnerships, describes how partnering students with other-culture classmate(s) nurtures the valuing of cultural difference from a personal perspective. The second trend, classroom atmosphere, refers to how a general feeling of openness and honesty in the classroom augments appreciation for cross-cultural encounters and intercultural learning. The third trend, new pedagogical approaches to learning, relates to how students' experiences with new pedagogies facilitate a better understanding of the foreign learning expectations of western academia.

Cross-cultural partnerships

Helping students nurture and develop the intercultural sensibilities necessary to succeed in cross-cultural classroom sometimes requires teachers to coerce students to interact with different cultures. As Sue shows us in the following exchange:

Interviewer: If your teacher gives you the freedom to work with someone from either Arab culture or a different culture...do you think you will usually find a Arab partner or would you find a partner from somewhere else?

Sue: no...different...I like to sit withmy friend always [Roz]...but when we have to work ...the teacher give us topic and talk about it...I prefer to do with different person...

Interviewer: so when you come into the classroom you sit with your friend....but when your teachers asks you to find a new partner you choose a different culture?

Sue: yes...

Sue values interacting with people from different cultures but this is not always typical. Notice that it is when her teachers instruct her to work with a classmate on a structured task that Sue feels prompted to find a partner from another cultural group.

The value of such cross-cultural exchanges extends well beyond language practice. As Sue explains, “I have to talk English with [Chinese students] and different opinion...but when I talk with Libyan or Saudi we have same idea same thinking...but when I talk with different maybe there is different answer...also learn the opinion for every culture and every students...their opinions and stories.” Al agrees as he explains, “...sometimes I think the two culture to solve one problem is better than just the one culture...we have two different opposite minds so I think it’s better for us to solve the one problem...variety...different points of view.” We can see therefore that language learning might be the student’s purpose for study, but an awareness and appreciation of other cultural perceptions is also being nurtured.

Nurturing intercultural sensibilities involves a classroom that gives a sense of purpose to cross-cultural encounters by removing many of the students' social pressures to be with home-culture classmates. Andy explains that:

The classroom environment does a couple of things...it forces everything to happen in English...so it's an even playing field that way...everyone's speaking English...so it takes away that pressure for you to speak Chinese or Arabic with friends...and also you have a teacher who says... you will work together now...and also your common purpose is to learn a language...so the classroom might in a way give you a kind of freedom you don't have in a social environment.

Similarly, Steve uses his work in the classroom to help him look past many of the differences between himself and his classmates that, in a less structured social relationship, either participant might use to ostracize the other. As Steve says it:

In class you know its different culture... is really hard for we try to communicate each other...cooperate each other...in my opinion that's it...and we can do it well...maybe I'm not interested about your culture...your family...but we didn't talk about it in class...we just talk about the topics that is necessary...like the work...and after class I can find they guy I love to talk with and we can talk together.

Some students, like Steve, compartmentalize work and social interaction as a means to cope with difference.

In the end, the cross-cultural classroom serves as a place where engaging difference is required in order to succeed and each student must find a way to relate well enough with others. Fortunately, Steve explains how he chooses to engage his other-culture classmates:

You know....sometimes it's really weird...it's just like... how can I talk with them? And the way, the best way in my mind I can think about...first of all I have to talk quietly and then smile, wave, and nod...I really love this way to cooperate or communicate with

others ...sometimes I'm not that guy who loves to talk with people ...kinda shy maybe...but in my mind sometime when we cooperate with other people ...like people from Libya....from Saudi Arabia....in my mind actually I just have one idea...but the key word is peace...and sometimes we don't have common...like Sam and Herb they're older than me and like I don't have something in common...they've already be father and our mind is so different ...I just think one...peace....just cooperate and we just talk ...then we start to work ...and I start to show my mind and they just...shows their mind...and we find it in common we can work it together...so this is my mind how to cooperate with different culture...and you know if I cooperate with Andy it will be much easier...we have same age...same hobby...same interest.

Through his cross-cultural experiences Steve is becoming increasingly aware of how people from different cultures approach not only their English language study but also problem solving in general. His choice to focus on completing the study-tasks he shares with others while listening to and respecting other-culture perceptions has led Steve to experiment with how best to dialogue across difference.

Classroom atmosphere

When focused on nurturing and developing intercultural sensibilities in a cross-cultural classroom, perhaps the most significant factor in an educator's teaching repertoire is knowing what are, and are not, considered appropriate behavior and language exchanges by the cultures represented in each particular class. Roz expresses a deep appreciation for this in the following exchange:

Interviewer: It seems that, as far as people's behavior in class, most of the time most of people are respectful...polite...understanding.

Roz: Actually yeah....especially if they are teachers....so they know everything...so the Canadian teacher they are very respect because before they let me work with a group men they ask me 'it's okay for you to work with man?' ...and I have this choice yes or no...so

they are very respectful...and they never tell me to do something very dangerous or hard to do...

Interviewer: What do you mean they know everything?

Roz: they know everything about the cultures...so for example...before I talk about my culture they know...one of my best teachers is here in [this school]...before I say anything about my culture he told me I know that I know that...and he will stop to do it with man or something like that...because he knows that...

Interviewer: Has there been any time where you say / do something and the teacher is not aware of that?

Roz: A little things...unusual things...sometimes they surprised...oh really you don't have this? Or ...oh really you don't have that?

Thus, Roz suggests that even when previously unaware of cultural nuances, teachers can exhibit an appreciation for new cultural knowledge and a valuing of cultural difference. This appreciation of culture manifests by not only showing interest in a student's culture but also by giving students a time/space to share and compare cultural points of view.

The relationship between teachers and students plays a particularly important role in building a classroom environment that nurtures intercultural sensibilities. Teachers having an open, honest, and friendly rapport with students helps lower the anxiety and social barriers that sometimes stop students from engaging others. Andy says that, "We went on a trip in the beginning and I talked to all of the teachers...so they like know me...then it was fine...and I felt like more open so I talked with other people around me." Intercultural learning is often unscripted (i.e. not a part of a formal lesson plan or curriculum) and unpredictable, but by establishing a more relaxed relationship teachers allow space/time for students to go beyond academic goals. As Mike suggests, "In Canada I think [teachers] are more friendly and more like a friend than a teacher...so we can share a lot of deeper things which is not just academic." For

Mike, sharing these ‘deeper things’ usually means listening to entertaining anecdotes from his teachers or classmates, or being able to ask questions about things he has seen or heard that confuse him or spark his curiosity.

Having a teacher willing to open up about herself enabled Sam to engage differences between his preconceived notions of his host-culture and a new understanding of his teacher’s reality. As Sam describes it:

Yeah... I have learned something interesting and it’s important...the family value...in mind when I came to Canada in my opinion I thought all of my life people in the West don’t believe in family...family is not have virtue in their life...in our thought in Libya most my friends think that after 18 Canada people leave home and they don’t ask mother or father for ever...but when I came here I remember in the second class my teacher start talk about her mother...her mother cooking...her sister...her father...I wondered the body of the family still strong here in this area....so that wondered me and surprised me.

A friendly and personal demeanor from teachers builds a classroom atmosphere of sharing and regardless of how deep or shallow inquiries might be, this sharing is a gateway to further understanding.

Nurturing and developing intercultural sensibilities in cross-cultural learning environments requires teachers to diffuse students’ anxiety and fears. As Liz explains, one way to accomplish this is by envisioning the classroom as an environment in which students have a recognizable relationship with one another:

Interviewer: Were you nervous when you first met your roommate and your classmates?

Liz: Yeah...I’m afraid...actually classmate not that bad because you not live with them...but roommate I just worry about I do something wrong....

Interviewer: ...because it’s a more personal relationship?

Liz: yeah...

Although students may not know each other's language or culture, they share common expectations as to teacher and student behavior. Providing a familiar point of reference for new relationships has helped Liz engage other-culture classmates on what feels like a more stable playing field.

Exploring a range of topics in class allows students the opportunity to discover a larger scope of knowledge and encounter a wider variety of opinions from different cultural perspectives. Moreover, such exploration also helps students shape and express an evolving understanding of new ideas. As Sue tells us:

I like the topic is I don't know about it before...but like this curfew ...we don't have curfew in Saudi Arabia...because the family they put the rule for their children...but the government they don't do that...and some of topic is first time I heard ...I'm interested in that...when I study I was interested and surprised about the topic...like sometimes there was a topic in level b listening about teenager and they can do anything they want but I was surprised from other students say yes they can...but I think they cannot do anything with the parents they don't know...for example...she said they cannot do without the parents they don't know about ...they don't have to know about the childrenthey want to do....but I said yes they have to know...

It is crucial to the nurture and development of intercultural sensibilities that teachers strive to maintain a classroom environment where students are less fettered to express and explore different ideas. It is in this communicative searching that intercultural sensibilities are formed.

New pedagogical approaches to learning

When students experience an approach to learning that is different from their previous study experiences they further develop the intercultural sensibilities needed in academics. Sue explains that,

...here in Canada we don't depend on the book...in Saudi it depend on the book...we don't go out of the book....but here you can express your opinion as general knowledge and learn something and I have to research....sometimes as in level b...there was a topic and I don't have any idea and I have to research and know everything...sometimes interesting and new.

The act of doing her own research and becoming a more independent learner are important steps in developing the self-efficacy necessary for success in western academia.

The nature of what students are asked to do in class and the manner in which they are expected to accomplish their learning tasks nurtures learning beyond the intended language targets. Liz expresses the value of new learning approaches and then exemplifies learning beyond intended targets when she says:

In China we will always focus on the book...and you don't have to do some research about the whole environment....you only focus on the book and the information / knowledge in the book...and you feel you just remember the knowledge and you don't have time to know more things about society...I think topic...like the slow food topic [covered in class]....or language topic like in reading class....I think that's helpful because when you are learning this topic the teacher will give some discussion to you and give more critical thinking to you and you can learn more things about this topic...you are not only learning the grammar, vocabulary, the sentence...you can also learn

something you don't know before...the culture...or something else...information you don't know...and I think that's helpful.

By reflecting on past and present learning experiences, Liz is becoming aware that exploring material in relation to broader contexts, instead of just memorizing it as an independent block, helps her develop a better understanding of others and the experiences they are having.

By immersing themselves in cross-cultural encounters, students recognize the limitations of learning from a monoculture frame of mind. Steve expresses his frustration with a myopic approach to learning in the following anecdote about an English language lesson in China:

You know I have to tell you one thing...a really funny thing...I can make sure that students at my age or much older than me in primary school it happened... you know I still remember in my primary school English class ...1 unit 1 lesson 1... we learned vocabulary...that vocabulary word was p-e-n-c-i-l... at that time we had tape... put it in the radio play it and the radio will speak the words...I still can remember this first in the vocabulary... they pronounce 'pain-kul'... at that time because I have studied English... I know this pronounced 'pencil'... I can be sure all Chinese people heard it...the textbook said it 'pain-kul' ... and I said no it's 'pencil'... and the teacher just listen to it and say 'pain-kul' and then I have to say 'pain-kul'... this is China... and this is why I wondered...ohh...I have to study abroad... it's not only to learn about English... it's about learning new things.

In a very subtle way, Steve's anecdote exemplifies how a 'textbook only' approach that helps students accumulate knowledge/information about another language or culture, does not prepare the learner to cope in 'real-life' encounters. It was only through Steve's wider exposure (i.e. extra-curricular English study) that he was able to begin to perceive and understand the limitations and misconceptions that myopic approaches to study can have.

Cross-cultural classrooms encourage students to explore ways to combine different approaches to learning in order to come to terms with their foreign learning environment. Al has concluded that:

The western education is very different from Chinese education...the students and teachers in western country will feel very relaxed in the class...not very serious...and in China's ...the students will must remember a lot of things....a lot of knowledge ... memorize a lot of information...so if the person who can combine the two different systems together to create a new system I think that new system is the best one...world is a network...world of connection...and we need someone to put it together to create a new one.

These 'connections' that students make are a sign that intercultural sensibilities are emerging through students' practice of merging what they already know with the demands of new/different classroom expectations.

Challenges

Within the 'challenges' theme I have identified three trends including: new approaches to learning; cross-cultural conflicts; and language learning. The first trend, new pedagogical approaches to learning, describes how classroom learning experiences can often hinder the better understanding of the foreign learning expectations they are meant to facilitate. The second trend, cross-cultural conflicts, explains how cultural differences in the classroom can sometimes cause misunderstandings that lead students to feel more isolated and ostracized than included and accepted. The third trend, language learning, refers to how second language learning can inhibit cross-cultural relationships and discourage engaging difference.

New pedagogical approaches to learning

The most significant challenge that new approaches to learning make for nurturing and developing intercultural sensibilities is that EAP students are not only acquiring new knowledge and information about language and culture, they are also experiencing new ways of learning.

Mike tells us that as opposed to teachers in China, his EAP teachers in Canada:

...want me more depend on myself...be more independent...so maybe he want to ...I mean in western culture I can't interrupt your life...your value about that...some students in China very clever but he is not willing to study...and so sometimes teachers think oh what a pity to let that happen...to let him just abandon himself...or he will maybe interrupt your life...you must do this you must do that...if you do that it will seem like punishment ...I think it's culture difference.

Students often have preconceived notions of what it means to be a good teacher. Such students may expect their teachers to take a more active / controlling role in the classroom. Moreover, it might be particularly confusing for such students with classmates from other cultures who have different expectations.

Andy is somewhere in between these two extremes of student perception. The following exchange shows that while he is eventually able to manage his own intercultural development, Andy is also critical of language teachers who do not take a more active role in directing their students' cross-cultural encounters.

Interviewer: If you took an IELTS test in your home country and got a high score and you came here and you didn't have to do language studying....do you think you'd have a similar experience as far as meeting other cultures?...or develop the same attitude of openness towards other cultures?

Andy: It depends....in university you're forced to interact with other cultures and at first it's hard but then you get used to it...but language school...they usually let you work with who you want to...and so Saudi students group with Saudi students....in English institutes it's your choice...if you want to interact with other cultures you can...other mentalities and way of thinking....or you can just stay by your own and not take chances...afraid of change.

Interviewer: Does the language program that people get involved with help to facilitate or encourage people coming here how to work with other cultures or become comfortable working with other cultures (on top of language study)? And another question is...do the language programs do that directly or indirectly?

Andy: well...let's answer the second question...it's indirectly. For example...in my experience...when I was studying in the U.S. all of my friends were Saudi's...so I didn't learn about other cultures...after 10 months I went back to Saudi Arabia and to be honest I didn't learn English...I came back with the same English...the speaking improved a little bit by just being in class but not as much as it would with someone participating as much as possible and learning other cultures...I was totally different [than now]...so when I first decided to come here I needed to change that...so I changed it and I saw some advantages....every person is developed by his mistakes...not his accomplishments.

Despite the difficulties associated with cross-cultural encounters and intercultural learning, Andy implies that it would have been helpful if his language teachers had taken a more directive role in bringing the classrooms' cultures together. The paradox is that Andy is becoming an independent intercultural learner more because he chooses to engage people from different cultures and less because he is coerced to do so.

New approaches to learning may also involve being exposed to classroom codes of behavior that challenge not only previous learning experiences but deeper held cultural norms.

For Sam this means watching classmates behave in ways that, although condoned by his teachers, he simply cannot bring himself to accept. As Sam tells us:

Honestly...I still don't adapt to eating in a class or go outside the class without permission from my teacher...until now I cannot adapt to that behaviour...our teacher said feel free...you can eat...you can call me by my first name...you can go and come without permission...but until this moment I can't adapt with that behavior.

On the surface such behavior may not seem significant, but for students like Sam it is a clear sign that deeper cultural expectations are at work.

Encountering behavior fundamentally different from what students assumed were well established standards for effective learning and classroom decorum can be a turning point where students' awareness of intercultural sensibilities expands, stagnates, or regresses. Which path is taken often depends on what behavior changes students are asked to consider, and the manner in which students' behavior expectations are challenged. As Joe explains in the following exchange, it is important for him to understanding how to respect his teachers:

Joe: ...in high school in China...every time we want to answer some questions we should put up our hand and stand up...the stand-up is important to show our respect to teachers...but in Canada we don't need to ...we just sit casually...

Interviewer: So...by not raising your hand and standing do you feel you are being disrespectful to your teachers here in Canada?

Joe: Well...at the beginning I think so...but now I know they don't care about that...I also ask this question to my teachers and they said they don't care.

Interviewer: Is there some other way you can show respect to teachers here in Canada?

Joe: Yeah...like some habits like always say thank you...and give things in double hands...and use polite language like sir.

Although Joe agrees that behaving differently in class can be disconcerting initially, he is able to accept the different behavior and replace it with another way to show respect. Other students, however, have faced much more challenging scenarios. During her interview Roz conveyed a number of anecdotes about her friends' experiences. The following did not take place at the language school involved in my research but it is a significant reflection of Roz's understanding of how differences in classroom behavior are sometimes approached in Canada.

You know what?...last year when I was in [another school] there was some girls they wear niqab [veil]...some teachers told them they have to open it...why?...so they didn't wanna open it...so some of them go back to Saudi Arabia because they don't want to change their things.

In this anecdote the behavior the students were being asked to change is a deeply held belief regarding appropriate dress for Muslim women in their home-country. Since the only alternative afforded the students (i.e. not wearing the veil) was unacceptable to them, the women chose to disengage and walk away. Although extreme, this scenario exemplifies how expectations and demands of classroom behavior can have a dramatic effect on the nurturing of intercultural sensibilities in cross-cultural classrooms.

Another challenge that new approaches to learning bring to intercultural learning is in relation to topics that are not only unfamiliar but counter intuitive to the beliefs deeply rooted in one's home-culture. Roz provides an example in the following exchange:

Interviewer: Do you find anything that your teachers want you to study that you totally disagree with? Where you think this is just a crazy idea...why are they teaching me this?

Roz: Yeah...the 'bucket-list' presentation...in my culture we don't have something its' name bucket list...they told us plan you wanna do it before you die....I didn't think anything I want to do before I die...in our belief we think any time ...any moment... we

will be die any time... so we don't think about anything...a little you have to think...no you have to have 5 things to do before you die...what I have to do?...it's crazy topic...I can't find information enough to understand and something like that yeah...and each person have different opinion...so in my opinion...what things I have to do before I die? How I think? I can do anything but maybe ...I don't know...I don't know when I die so why make list?

We can see that even in what her teacher might see as an easy topic, Roz is conflicted by the shape of her presentation assignment's central topic. Having an open and honest conversation around any conflicting perspectives of the topic provides an opportune intercultural teaching moment. Moreover, ignoring or being unaware of such opportunities can have the opposite effect of building or reinforcing barriers of cultural misunderstanding.

A final challenge that new approaches to learning has on the nurturing and development of intercultural sensibilities in the classroom is the fact that students are often overwhelmed with the amount and variety of difference they engage in cross-cultural language classrooms. Liz provides the following exchange:

Interviewer: So, I have these two images...one hand there's the idea that it's interesting to meet new cultures with different ways of thinking...and on the other hand when students walk into the classroom every day they choose to sit with students from their home culture. What do you think about comparing those two things?

Liz: Actually, I think different thinking way will make you feel that it's interesting but sometimes you don't want that be difficult...you want to solve the problem in the simple way...and when we are in the same language some of the word we don't know we can change them to Chinese ...also because of the difference I think of the culture or the custom or something else ...the Chinese people will understand you so easier ...but you need to waste a lot of time to explain to other countries people....so I think it's why Chinese student want to sit together because it's easier.

Interviewer: So what I hear you saying...is that when you say ‘the problem’ you mean you have to learn the language

Liz: yeah.

Interviewer: That’s your job...your job for yourself is to learn English so you can go to university and do well.

Liz: Yeah.

Interviewer: Learning new ways of thinking and meeting / learning about other cultures is very interesting ... but it’s kind of an extra...but learning the language and all the cultural difference and how to live with these cultural differences at the same time is too much.

Liz: Yeah...I think people will avoid something difficult if they feel oh that’s too difficult to overcome...we want to improve ourselves... but we also the difficult in here we are used to by the simple way.

From Liz we learn that English language learning is the primary task for most students in EAP programs. In fact, engaging cultural difference increases the difficulty level of learning and sometimes students step back from their investigations of cultural differences in order to focus their energies on their primary goal. Sometimes it is too much to ask students to learn a language, and adapt to a foreign learning environment / foreign curriculum content, while simultaneously and proactively engaging the variety of cultures in the classroom.

Cross-cultural conflicts

One of the challenges to intercultural learning that emerged from student interviews relates to the notion, often preconceived, that success in a foreign learning environment is improbable because studying with people from other cultures is too difficult. As Sam explains, “...it’s my first time to work with someone from different culture...so before I came here I don’t imagine that I can easily adapt to that situation where I work with someone who from different

culture...he believe in different concepts.” The students who have chosen to study in a foreign learning environment have already confronted many of the challenges posed by cross-cultural encounters.

However, a student’s ability/willingness to engage others can be paralyzed by their: insecurities regarding inadequacies (imagined or real) they may have when engaging different cultural perspectives; anxiety over making mistakes in cross-cultural encounters; and, fears of how others may respond to their behavior. Al tells us, “I’m afraid I do something make them think I am not respect them...so I’m worry about that.” In class, Sam and Al often choose each other as partners and they work well together. We can see that ‘respect’ resonates with Sam as well as Al when Sam says, “...when I came here...because I see the others respect me...respect who I am...that’s feeling make me comfortable to work with other people from different culture.” In fact, Sam, being the older of the two, has likely helped shape Al’s understanding of respect as an appropriate response to the challenges inherent to cross-cultural encounters. However, despite Al’s awareness of respect, he still perceives engaging cultural differences as a risk.

Perceiving the engagement of cultural difference as a risk stems from feeling insufficiently aware of the other cultures we encounter to make good judgements as to what is appropriate and what is not. Andy explains that,

...the only difficult thing for me is the interact with [other cultures] because I wanna find out what’s their culture....it's like...for example I know my culture but I don’t know the other culture is...like what this mean in this culture...what they do what they don’t do... like in occasion I’m not them...I wanna see what they like and what they don’t ... and what are the pros and cons...not pros and cons but...the think that they use... I wanna

learn about like for example the Chinese... it would be perfect if we hang out like 100% all the time... then I can learn how they like interact with each other.

Thus, the initial challenge seems to be nurturing a broader form of cross-cultural respect until one learns enough about the other cultures they are engaging to know what is, and is not, appropriate.

This time in between knowing and not knowing what is, and is not, culturally appropriate for others is a particularly precarious time to engage others who are equally inexperienced with cross-cultural encounters. Students are often unaware that their behavior can have a much larger effect on others than they expect. As AI describes it:

I think sometimes [students from other cultures] are very stubborn...maybe because of their [culture/background] they believe themselves strongly...sometimes when you told your opinion they will not accept your opinion they will focus on their opinion...so when you want to explain it ...they explain it very well but in the end they won't believe you...they don't listen.

Also, students in cross-cultural learning environments often have a tendency to isolate themselves in same-culture groups. In the following exchange Sue exemplifies how this is perceived by others outside these same-culture groups:

Interviewer: So you've had a few experiences like that [isolated from same-culture groups] and so now you feel uncomfortable with Chinese students in any situation.

Sue: yeah...uncomfortable...yeah...

Interviewer: Do you think they don't want to meet Muslim people?

Sue: No...I think they want only Chinese...they want to deal with Chinese person more than other person.

Interviewer: I notice at lunch time...the Arab students all speak Arabic and so they'll stay together...and then the Chinese will all speak Chinese at another table. What do you think about this situation?

Sue: I don't like this situation...I want talk with them...but maybe problem not language...because I have friends from Brazil and also my neighbour she is Canadian...and I talk with her...so I think language is not the problem...but maybe because they know each other and we as Arab student we know each other and we talk to person who comfortable more.

By isolating themselves in same-culture groups, students send a message, intentional or not, that they are less open to cross-cultural encounters. The end result is that classmates from different cultures can feel ostracized and disrespected.

Another challenge students have in cross-cultural encounters in the classroom are the mixed feelings that emerge over topics covered in class. Joe provides a good example in the following exchange regarding studying in a classroom with other cultures:

Joe: ...ahhh...I can't say I don't enjoy it...but sometimes I get a bit uncomfortable...because difficulties...you know we don't have the same opinions...we don't have the same rules to obey...usually we feel comfortable...but sometimes we have problems...like when teacher says something about religion or a country's system...how your country treat problems of religion.

Interviewer: When you're in a group with someone from another culture is that okay?

Joe: it's okay.

Interviewer: So where/when does the uncomfortable feeling happen?

Joe: Well...topics...just some religious problems...maybe just for me I just feel uncomfortable about religious problems...maybe others not...but sometimes teacher will ask 'do you have religion? What's your religion?'...but I don't have religion...I don't care about religion...but maybe some Libyan or Arabic will think ...oh what a nut, that's weird...it sometimes makes me feel embarrassed...if you're the only one that don't

have the religion....the other guys all have the religious...sometimes you follow them...you don't want to follow them...but you have to...you can't argue with them every times.

Joe's anxiety over what others may think of him, as well as his fear to confront the differences he discovers between himself and his classmates, often leads Joe toward both misunderstanding others and disengaging from cross-cultural encounters at the same time.

Language Learning

Although my research involves EAP students, the purpose of this thesis is not to analyse or prescribe solutions for learning the English language (in part because this aim dominates in the research literature). However, the challenges posed by English language learning significantly affect students' ability to develop the intercultural sensibilities necessary to succeed in cross-cultural learning environments. In fact, students often blame their lack of English skills for most of the difficulties they have in Canada. Regarding her difficulties in Canada Liz says, "When I study in Canada the language different and the most bad thing about myself is every time I want to say something I will translate from Chinese to English...so I will slow." Such feelings of inadequacy in English often deters students from engaging others with first languages different from their own.

As Al explains in the following passage, the feelings of inadequacy induced by insecurities with English extend well beyond the EAP classroom where classmates share the same challenge:

Interviewer: What do you think is your biggest challenge?

Al: It's English language I think...when you communicate with the real Canadian...other foreigners ...native speakers ...they will use the native language...local language that I

don't know....so I can't ...like when they tell joke I'm not really understand it...so I can't join their communication...I feel frustration...and separate...so that's I need to learn.

Cross-cultural encounters in English can be especially intimidating to a student uninitiated to both the language and cultural aspects of these encounters. Herb admits that:

...the difficult thing...study...difficult in that I am current English language study...because in my country I don't study English language in my country...the first school or the first experience in [this school]...I start before nine month...in my country I don't have any experience with this kind of school....this very difficult...very difficult.

Students are often under pressure to interact with others in English despite not feeling ready to do so. Overcoming their insecurities and feelings of inadequacy towards their English ability can be debilitating for initiating or participating in cross-cultural experiences, let alone embracing cultural difference.

Objective 3: Opportunities for Identity Formation

The third research objective is to shed light on how spaces of cross-cultural encounter prepare students to take full advantage of the growth opportunities for personal and professional identity formation (i.e. who the students are becoming) encountered in cross-cultural learning experiences. As emerged from the student participants' interviews, personal identity formation is defined as how the students perceive, position, and portray themselves as participants in local, national, and global society. Alternatively, students' professional identity formation is defined by how their cross-cultural learning experiences are expected to bring professional careers that will enable the students to assume socially, economically, and politically advantageous and desirable positions in the global economy.

Discussions around opportunities for personal identity formation were by far the more significant of the two in student participant interview transcripts (see Table 2) primarily because most of the student participants had little or no work experience and thus opportunities for professional identity formation were more the formation of personal aspirations than the definition of who they are as professionals. As explained in earlier in this chapter, EAP programs are largely concerned with helping students attain a general range of academic language, skill, knowledge that will sustain them through the often broad scope of first year university courses. Moreover, in my experience as an EAP teacher it is uncommon for the students to see their EAP studies as progress towards success in their chosen areas of study. Thus, EAP students' sense of professional identity often remains understated or even dormant during their language study.

Personal

Within the 'personal' theme of identity formation I have identified two trends from the interview data, including: frame of mind; and, behavior. The first trend, frame of mind, discusses how students' cross-cultural encounters (and reflections on those encounters) are shaping their attitude towards the ways others' perceive the world around them and how these new perceptions effect who the students are becoming. The second trend, behavior, examines how cross-cultural encounters (and reflections on those encounters) are encouraging students to change (or think about changing) their behavior – especially when encountering cultural difference – and thus how they imagine themselves functioning in cross-cultural spaces.

Frame of mind

Most students expect their foreign sojourn will change them in some fundamental way.

Bob, for example, desires an opportunity to explore beyond his limited view of the world. As Bob says:

When I was in Beijing I met a French guy and he had told me he has travelled to a lot of places a lot of countries...and he has the same age as me ...but I think maybe we have different life he always travel...he always experience a lot of things but...what do I know?...maybe I just know how to solve problems of the mathematic...what about other things? I think I should experience more and improve myself...and these experience help me do that.

Further, as he explains in the following exchange, Bob expects his foreign experiences to facilitate his desire to be a more globally minded person.

Interviewer: Did your family want you to come to Canada?

Bob: No...I insist. They don't want me to study in Canada...because I was already university student in China...but I wanted different thinking...I wanted to more internationalize.

Interviewer: What does that mean to you?

Bob: When we talk about something in class the teacher always focus on things like poverty in Africa...or democracy somewhere else...but in China we just focus on ourselves...what happen in our country...that's the difference.

As Bob is finding out, desiring a broader understanding of the world is important for shaping our attitude toward taking advantage of personal growth opportunities.

Cross-cultural classrooms are often rich with opportunities to explore one's identity. Sue imagines a future in which she will be able to respond to various situations no matter what culture she is engaging. As Sue says:

I think...because if I live here in Canada I will see different...and when you talk to different person not from your country you will learn different things about their life and

everything about their life and deal with the problem or with another people...because this is normal...it's happen every day.

Having acquired a knowledge of living and working with others, Sue imagines being more comfortable dealing with difference. Mike is also interested in exploring the differences he perceives between himself and his other-culture classmates.

I wanted to experience a different life...I'm very interest in the people different all around the world...where they're living...what ...they're quite different from us so it's kind of curiosity...there're big difference between western people and eastern people so I really want to learn how ...know how they think about...learn how they know about some certain thing...maybe the same thing.

Mike is trying to imagine himself in the minds of others (particularly, western others) in order to better understand the differences between his home-culture and the other-cultures he encounters. By knowing how/why others make sense of the world differently, Mike is shaping a more international identity for himself.

Often, students' desire to understand difference is tempered by previously held beliefs on how to engage different cultures. Sam's experiences have shaped his expectations of both himself and others.

[Canadian] people are peaceful and tolerant...so important for me...if the people are tolerant they can accept me who I am ...I want to live who I am...I respect who ever religion...whoever customs ...traditions...and I expect the same thing from other peoples...so there is other people with their culture with their concepts...they are exist...you have to respect them...and you don't have to change them...you just have to change yourself...so you can more easy adapt if you respect the other.

Throughout his interview Sam commented on how he identifies strongly with notions of peace, tolerance, and respect for others. A cross-cultural classroom environment cannot guarantee that Sam's ideals will be reciprocated, but it does give the space to explore one's personal altruisms.

Sometimes being able to explore differences in their own culture helps students scrutinize the cultural norms they already identify with. For the Libyan and Saudi Arabian students in this study having Muslim classmates from a different country allowed them to compare cultural and religious norms. Roz discusses this in the following exchange:

Roz: We are all Muslim...the Libyan and Saudi students in the class...so we have cultured things Libyans can do and Saudi's cannot do...and a lot of things some people can do and some of the cultures are country cultures or family cultures...so for in my family cultures it's okay to eat with man and woman so I have for example my sister husband...all together we can eat ...it's okay....but for one of my friends she cannot eat man with woman...so if she have her husband sister or something like that ...they have to make two tables for food and two tables for food...but for us it's okay...and sometimes we change the language from English to Arabic. ...and ask why you have this? Why you have that?...as a Saudi's girls or Saudi boy's in the class...and after that we find it is a family culture ...not a country culture...so everyone have a different...sometimes even cities cultures.

Interviewer: So different Muslim people from different places in the world ...are coming together...comparing lifestyles...understanding what is religion and what is culture.

Roz: Yeah...exactly...some of these people go into the religion and taboo and something like that...but who don't have something like that?...we usually say okay our religion say you have to follow these things...but our God don't mention something to have to do it...so we know what we do and we know what we have not to do.

While some of the Chinese students are curious as to the purpose of religion, question the value of believing in God, and perhaps see Muslims as a homogenous religious group, Roz and her

Muslim classmates are trying to better appreciate the geographic distinctions of what it means to be Muslim.

There are a few students who identify with the freedom to make choices outside of the cultural norms they were raised in. For example, having built a strong friendship despite barriers of cultural difference, Andy and Steve have begun to transcend the identity imposed on them by the cultural norms of their home countries. Andy exemplifies their shared attitude in the following passage:

In the U.S. I talked to some strangers who are not Saudi Arabians they say....you're not Saudi...they don't think I'm Saudi because they've experienced Saudi people with the same belief, behavior, communication with them...you know....I wanted to be different...like I wanted to be more open...to be honest Saudi culture is...not really closed but...somehow it's closed environment...so I was trying to change that cuz I don't know...I see it's...like I'm an open-minded person so I know what other people think of me when they see me...you know I had this feeling the U.S. that's why I wanted to change it...that's why I'm not part of this society any more...a part of only Saudi Arabia... I didn't want that to happen so I try to change... that's why I don't mix a lot of Arab people ...chat up/work with others... see other cultures...so I try and learn more and more...actually when I talked to different cultures I cannot think that there's blocks...I mean I can see them putting up blocks... until I break the ice and then they will tell me dude you're not Saudi...you don't act like them...that's what I want...I want them to picture that we fit together.

Andy's declaration that he no longer feels 'Saudi', in addition to his desire for everyone 'to picture that we fit together', shows movement towards a more cosmopolitan identity. By stepping outside established norms of identity, Andy is able to independently fashion his identity as an individual. Moreover, Andy sees that difference is only a matter of perception.

Behavior

Encountering different notions of appropriate behavior compels students to change how they interact with others. In the following passage Mike explains how some of the behavior that has caught his attention in Canada is shaping how he imagines his present and future ‘self’ behaving in both Canada and China.

Mike: The big thing I learned [in Canada] is if you want to do something you must care about others...these things may influence others. In China we always talk a lot when on the bus or in public and we allowed to smoke in the supermarket...even it can influence/affect others ...others maybe feel uncomfortable. In here you have to more care about the other’s feeling before you do something...

Interviewer: Do you think that when you go back to China that you will continue feeling like that?

Mike: Yeah...definitely...because...like when I was at home and making a lot of noise eating...but in Canada my homestay say you have to keep your mouth closed...at first I’m not used to that...so...it take me a lot of time to change it.

Many students, like Mike, might imagine their behavior changes as becoming a permanent part of their identity, but these same students are often not fully aware of the cultural-hybrid identity they are shaping and being shaped into.

Some students seek to compartmentalize different behaviors based on the culture they encounter, but they are not seeking to change what they see as the fundamental nature of their identity. Roz explains how wearing her hijab in Canada is different than in Saudi Arabia:

I’m here in Canada and my father told me...it’s up to you if you want to wear a hijab/abyaa or not...it’s up to you...you know our ideas...and you know what to do...and you know your religion...but you have to put ...we say ‘red-line’ to your life...so if you wanna go above this line you will have some dangerous things to follow it...but if you

want to go behind it or you wanna put at it...you will ...so for me I have to wear my hijab and it's okay. But for example my mom will come here and she will told...I feel comfortable when I wear my abyaa, can I wear colours abyaa in Canada?...I told her it's up to you...you will come to multi-culture country so I say it's up to you...you will see people also wear niqab or something like that.

While maintaining a strong Muslim identity, being in a cross-cultural learning environment has given Roz the space/time to explore differences in her own culture and developing a sense of self-efficacy when it comes to defining who she is as a Muslim woman.

In Sam's case encountering different notions of behavior and identity have encouraged him to strengthen previously established identity markers. Sam tells us that:

So right now I have experience living in Canada so I have a new behaviour or new kind of a new life so going to shopping with my family....going outside together a lot...so that's right...but we're still different...like right now what I have learned is have to manage that difference...how can I accept that difference...we have difference....they can have relationship with girls and they can drink...that's okay for them. How I can manage that? How I can interact with you without touching what you are believe? What's my limit to that I should not avoid in interacting between us?

Honestly...if you live without all of those rules [talking about religion] it will comfortable for you...you can do everything...honestly they more limit your freedom or limit your behaviour....most don't like living with that limitation with behaviour...you have to see every behaviour that you do...even when you alone you have to manage your life with what you believe in...and I believe in God...God send the messenger (the Prophet Mohammad....Peace Be Upon Him)...to teach us that rule...and I believe in that rule so I have to respect that rule...even if I'm alone...even here in Canada...if I drink when I'm alone no one will know about that...but inside myself I believe the rules so I have to respect that actually....even no one saw me...but God saw me.

His experiences engaging difference in a cross-cultural learning environment have given Sam an opportunity to at least examine why he identifies with Islam. Moreover, such experiences are a catalyst for his exploration of how best to ‘manage’ both his relationship to his religious faith and his encounters with a culturally dynamic/complex world. Although Sam does not sympathize with his Chinese classmates and Canadian acquaintances who openly question the value of religion (indeed, Sam’s religious faith seems to have strengthened), he seeks to reconcile the conflicts that arise in his relationships with others from different, even conflicting, cultural viewpoints.

Experiences with cross-cultural encounters foster growth in students’ personal identity by allowing them to step into different cultural spaces where they are less bound by many of the social / cultural norms of their home-cultures that limited how they could behave and who they could become. Herb exemplifies this in the following exchange:

Interviewer: Do you think you are now different because of your experiences in Canada? Are you different now?

Herb: Yes...I think different idea...for example in Libya my wife cannot clothes the same clothes as [Sue] in Canada...like jeans ...in Libya no...she must have hijab very long and niqab ...this is different...I am different...in Libya a lot of people when see my wife wear jeans...talk about Ibrahim...him wife wear...some people see...but here no problem...I give her all freedom...but she know religion rules in Libya.

Interviewer: So she has more freedom in Canada.

Herb: Yeah.

Interviewer: And you have more freedom in some ways?

Herb: In some ways...yeah...it’s different but freedom...don’t have worry talk about her or me or children...because in Libya very controlling...for women especially....

Interviewer: So in Libya it controls your mind because you have to worry about other people's thinking.

Herb: Yeah...others talk about Ibrahim, his wife...you know Ibrahim his wife wear jeans and see eyes...oh Ibrahim I see eye his wife...you can see about hair...but in Canada...sometimes when my wife and I go the shopping sometimes find some people from Libya...no problem you can see because you can see same problem as me.

Cross-cultural learning environments give students like Herb the freedom to experiment with the ways in which different behavior can change how students see ourselves and the others around us. By not being fully aware of the cultural norms immediately around them (i.e. in a foreign culture), and by being immersed in a space where cultural norms are fluid / dynamic (i.e. a cross-cultural learning environment), international students are free to explore a wider scope of identity.

For Sue, having the opportunity to step outside the pressures of being a woman in her home-culture has fostered a freedom to explore new attitudes and lifestyles. Sue says that:

Here in Canada there is freedom...I will talk with my daughter about the hijab and everything I was learned from my parents but I cannot force you have to wear hijab...I only talk with her....because she will go to school and see her friends and she will see different from here...

Moreover, sometimes the cultural landscapes people live in allow or require us to behave differently. And as such behavior becomes habitual, the changes that emerge in one's personal identity may become increasingly permanent. As Sue explains in the following exchange:

Interviewer: Do you think that you're changing?

Sue: Yeah...in lifestyle...maybe until now [not much]...maybe if I more than two years it will be different...because I saw my friend she has seven years in Canada and she said I cannot go back to Saudi Arabia...because she does everything here...she works and she

drives...and she cannot do everything to deal with people when she went to Saudi Arabia...every time she was angry and she cannot deal with people in Saudi Arabia...she said people not like Canada...even in the store....people different to deal with.

Sue's anecdote about her friend shows that not only does she value having freedoms that are restricted to women inside her home-culture, she is also well aware that living with these freedoms for an extended period of time will permanently change her identity as a woman, as a Saudi Arabian, and, possibly, as a Muslim.

Other students, such as with AI in the following exchange, are not only aware of their emerging hybrid identity, but are actively participating in manifesting a sense of 'self' they can express in both attitude and behavior.

Interviewer: Is your understanding of the world better because of your experiences in Canada?

AI: Yes...like when people drive their car...when they pass by the cross [intersection] they will stop...at that time I think that all the car is driving by people...but I think the car looks like a human...so I think if I driving the car in China I will do that although I'm in China because I hope the car I drive is more like human...so people will think more harmony with traffic or something....

Interviewer: So when you go home to China...?

AI: I will do in China...yeah...keep doing.

Interviewer: And also in reverse...Are there things/ideas you bring from China that will influence Canada?

AI: Yeah...yeah...I will also keep my Chinese good things in Canada....like if at the bus I see an old man and there's nobody to let their seats to him I will let him in my seat...this morning I saw that ...it happens.

Al is clearly developing an identity that bridges his experiences and learning from both China and Canada. He is beginning to see himself as someone influenced by his home-culture but not completely defined or limited by that home-culture. By being able to compare real life experiences with different types of behavior, Al has begun reflecting on behavior that he likes/dislikes regardless of its cultural origin.

Professional

Within the 'professional' theme of identity formation I have identified two trends including: western education; and, cross-cultural experience. The first trend, western education, focuses on students' perceptions of how a university education from a western country (i.e. Canada) places them in an advantageous position to both succeed in professional careers and assume a privileged socio-economic status. The second trend, cross-cultural experience, centers on how students value building a personal repertoire of interaction with other cultures as a means to position themselves as 'in the know' in a globally competitive job market.

Western education

Most students see themselves as positioned differently once they return home with a western education. As Liz explains:

Liz: If I don't know some culture of the western country or some other country I will be afraid about that ...afraid...if I understand just a little bit it make me feel more confident...you will find they're all almost alike...they are considerate...and culture is similar...and I will be more confident that I can live in here and I can get along well with them...and that will help me...

Interviewer: How will it help you?

Liz: I think that different after I learning here and to go back China...because I think in China I'm not usually talk with foreigner and because I am not that confident about language ...but now I will be more confident I think because it's normally conversation between foreigner and Chinese that will make you feel it's not something difficult. I think culture will be one more important thing for confident...like in Saudi Arabia if you don't know their custom or religion...if I don't come here...if I don't talk to my roommate [Libyan] or classmates [Saudi, Libyan, and Chinese] I think I would never talk with Arab people...I you learn the way to communicate with foreigner and know how to respect them...respect their culture or something like religion...and I won't do something make them angry.

Liz is well aware of the increasingly international nature of living and working in China. She knows that interacting with other cultures is becoming a common occurrence and having the experience/skills to negotiate cross-cultural encounters successfully will benefit her professionally. Liz further explains that:

After coming here I want to know more...know more...know more...learn more...and I don't want to stay at one place...I think some people stay in one place...but for me I think that's so important because if make you think more and you know how to critical thinking about things...you don't always have one opinion...you can get more ideas...and I can have different view of one problem...it will help make successful...but some people want to see only one place.

Broadening her point of view will benefit Liz's career. Liz has not only become more aware of how other cultures perceive the world, she has also come to value the ability to see multiple points of view at the same time. Moreover, Liz knows that developing her intercultural awareness will facilitate a successful career.

Post-secondary institutions in general provide credentials to initiate or augment a professional career, and university degrees from the west in particular have become the most

highly sought after education credentials in the world. As Sue puts it, “Canada is the first one in education I think...the best university are in Canada.” Before coming to Canada Herb acquired a bachelor’s degree and more than 10 years of work experience in his field, and he is now preparing for graduate studies. Herb understands that attaining a graduate degree from a western university is an advantageous opportunity. When asked why he came to Canada Herb explains that, “The first reason is Canada is best place for education in the world about my specialty...and I want to learn good English ...very hard in Canada...but Canada good place for education.” For Herb both a western education and the English language skills it requires are valuable commodities he can highlight to perspective employers.

Some students place a higher value on western post-secondary education because they see universities in their home-country as deficient in some way. Joe tells us that:

I wanna get a better education ...you know....now the system of university in China is not a very good system...except for some really good university in China... like Peking University, Chin Hua University...I think except for some of them the others are not so strict like not focus on the academic works...seriously the university are so freedom they do not focus on their study and they can graduate very easy...universities in Canada are better qualities.

Joe is aware that China has some very good universities, but he also knows that when it comes to professional education credentials a school’s reputation means a great deal. Other students, like Al, are looking for both a better education opportunity and an education better suited to their personal faculties. Al explains that:

Al: My parents hope I can get a better education...and in the past years my grades in China compared to other students is not very good...so they think maybe the Chinese educational system is not very suitable for me...and they believe in Canada I can have the higher stage to learn a language and learn the knowledge and show my ability...and I

think my parents think Canadian university is better than China university...my grades can't enter the top university in China...

Interviewer: well you could probably get into 'a' university in China...but maybe not the top university.

Al: Yeah...but [my parents] think that it's useless and I will waste my time at that place.

Both Al and Joe are banking on the general perception that western universities have a better reputation in order to better position themselves in the job market as candidates with not just an education but a quality education.

Cross-cultural experience

For most students the opportunity to build cross-cultural relationships is part of their imaginary of success. When asked how his language study facilitates his cross-cultural encounters, Andy says in the following exchange:

Andy: [my goal]...I don't mix a lot of [same-culture] people ...I chat up/work with others...see other cultures...so I try and learn more and more.

Interviewer: How does your language study help you with this goal?

Andy: well succeed...learning about other cultures other than mine... some of the things sounds weird...but it helps me understand my own culture...when I was in the U.S. I stayed with my own culture...I said hey that's my culture...I didn't want to change my identity...but then I figured out this is the wrong way...so I've changed it...but like you have to find the right people...I've met lots of people and I look at their pros and cons...what's good and bad about them...and I choose to go with the best so I can improve myself also...they say...if you want to be successful surround yourself with success...people who think the same way.

The 'success' that Andy is alluding to is both personal and professional. He has developed a personal interest in building friendships with like-minded people (i.e. motivated to broaden their

minds) regardless of culture. At the same time, Andy knows that those friendships represent future (possibly) professional networks and being culturally aware of how others see/understand the world is vital to maintaining successful long-lasting relationships.

Finally, a few students have already begun to build a working professional identity for themselves through an international network of business relationships. In the following anecdote Roz explains how a friendship with a classmate from China has manifested into a much larger business relationship between their families.

Roz: I have one of my Chinese girl...she is very my best friend...I talk with her I'm going to make some small business for my life and something like that to know about my life...developing my future...and she told me okay...just we make a small conversation...after that she talked with me...I was in Saudi Arabia, I took a break for one month and she talk with me...my father wanna make a business with you...I talked with my friend ...I said what? I'm still young...I don't know anything about business...so how can I make?...so as you know everyone know about the Chinese have very big knowledge about business...but for me I'm still young I don't know anything...I talk with here actually I'm going to make my own business but actually I don't have enough information about business...and she told me okay but if you want anything you can make that with my father and she gave me her father email and everything is okay...and just when I was with my father I talk him...one of my friend in China...I met her in Canada...she is now in China and her father wanna make a business with me...and just from me and my friend make a small conversation and now it becomes a big business with my father and her father...so they make a business together and me and my friend is very close to each other...and father now in China to make the business...import export kind of thing....

Interviewer: In the future can you imagine taking over your father's business that he's made with this Chinese girl's father...and the Chinese girl takes over her father's side of the business...and now it's you and her doing business internationally?

Roz: Yeah...why not?

Regardless of whether or not Roz's import/export enterprise with her Chinese friend materializes, building this particular cross-cultural relationship has allowed them to imagine a future international business career and vice versa. It is giving them an opportunity to engage difference in a real-life professional experience. It is showing them the value and potential in searching out further cross-cultural encounters.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter provides both an explanation of the EAP context, and a report of this study's findings. The findings are organized in respect to the objectives laid out in chapter 1, as well as in accordance to the themes and trends that emerged from my analysis of the student interview transcripts. The next task, taken up in chapter 5, is to summarize the findings and discuss them in relation to the conceptual framework of this study.

Chapter 5

Traditionally, international students have borne a personal responsibility for both navigating their foreign learning environments and handling criticism for any failures they may incur. However, as western universities intensify the internationalization of their campuses, a re-examination of the traditional precept that intercultural learning manifests in an individual's psychological response to an outside given world (i.e. the dominant paradigm in intercultural research) is imperative. Understanding how competence for successful adaptation into a foreign culture (i.e. intercultural skills, Deardorf, 2008, p. 34) affects students' foreign learning experience can provide practical insights and advice for their sojourn; however, a significant epistemological and philosophical gap remains. More precisely, further study is needed regarding how the societies / cultures that international students co-inhabit dynamically position their practices of self-formation.

Addressing this gap, my research employs a cosmopolitan lens that considers individuals as they are positioned in their particular local, national, and international spaces-times (Marginson and Sawir, 2011, p. 55). Cosmopolitanism acknowledges the complexities of our unique spaces-times (especially prevalent in the modern era of hyper interconnectivity) while enabling us to imagine culture and cultural exchange relationally, historically, critically, and reflexively (Rizvi, 2009, p. 264). In a time when global pressures are transforming our identities and communities (Rizvi, 2008, p. 21), our sense of self is becoming a complex matrix of transnational (Britzman and Pitt, 1996, p. 117), plural, and hybridized (Sen, 1999, p. 117) characteristics. We are immersed in relationships that are dynamic, unpredictable, and open-ended (Rizvi, 2005, p. 337). In turn, this relational and cosmopolitan environment shapes how our local positions and affiliations are both given and chosen (Marginson and Sawir, 2011, p.

60). Moreover, we are significantly affected by the people, places, and spaces-times (rather than cultures) (Dervin, 2011, p. 38) we inhabit. Thus, who we are becoming is much more than, as psychology suggests, our individual aptitudes to cope in a bounded other-culture domain.

A relational cosmopolitan lens in education focuses on learning about and ethically engaging with new cultures, while building an understanding of one's 'situatedness'⁸ in the world. My study uses classroom observation and administrator, teacher, and student interviews to illuminate how a cross-cultural learning environment in a western post-secondary institution, such as an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classroom, supports students from diverse backgrounds to be globally aware individuals with intercultural sensibilities that engage new ways of understanding the world in relationship with others.

To more fully apprehend how a cross-cultural learning environment initiates or galvanizes intercultural learning, and how participants' intercultural learning is manifested in my research case I pose the following questions:

1. Given that intercultural learning (i.e. the sharing of cultural knowledge and perceptions) and the development of intercultural sensibilities result from encounters with different cultures, in what ways does intercultural learning manifest in a cross-cultural classroom?
2. Understanding that international students are globally mobile individuals undergoing transformational experiences involving foreign and cross-cultural learning environments, in what ways is their intercultural learning fostered by such a learning environment?

⁸ Situatedness: a critical global imaginary positioned in relation to the social networks, political institutions, and social relations not confined to particular communities and nations but connected up with the rest of the world) (Rizvi, 2009, p. 264).

Thus, the research objectives are to: first, identify how spaces of cross-cultural encounter facilitate intercultural learning; second, to clarify how spaces of cross-cultural encounter nurture and develop the intercultural sensibilities necessary to understand foreign learning expectations; and, third, to shed light on how spaces of cross-cultural encounter prepare students to take advantage of the growth opportunities for personal and professional identity formation made available through cross-cultural learning experiences.

The classroom observations were semi-structured⁹ and involved embedding a researcher in an EAP classroom for two hours/day, four days/week, for four weeks. The class consisted of fifteen international students from diverse national, cultural, and religious backgrounds (for further descriptors see chapter 3), and four teachers facilitated the weekly schedule divided between distinct (yet somewhat overlapping) reading, writing / grammar, listening/speaking, and IELTS¹⁰ classes. The audio recorded interviews consisted of 12 students, as well as 4 teachers and 1 senior school administrator. Interview questions (see appendixes B, C, and D) were open-ended in order to leave space to spur participants into reflective narratives of their experiences with cultural difference. Further interview questions emerged from classroom observations and the interview context that allowed for a richer investigation of research objectives.

There is no denying that the administrators and teachers of the language school in this study play an important role in guiding intercultural learning for students. However, I am looking for evidence of intercultural learning from the perspectives of students. Even staff member David agrees that the student experience should be a central concern when he says, “The best student

⁹ Observations were ‘semi-structured’ which meant that the researcher was not a member of the group, but participated a little on the periphery in the group’s activities in order to more richly understand situations as they developed (Cohen *et al*, 2011, p. 457).

¹⁰ IELTS – International English Language Testing System (a standardized test for English language proficiency developed by Cambridge English Language Assessment).

experience has been the mantra...it comes up a lot...you have to remind yourself what's important...best student experience...that's an over-arching theme that's guided us and contributed to [our] overall success...over the years." I must also mention that despite the important contributions from administrators and teachers, a significant portion of student responses to questions and discussions around intercultural learning referred to encounters that took place either in-class with classmates, or with acquaintances outside of school entirely.

Thus, in reporting and analyzing this study's findings, I have focused primarily on the interview responses from student participants. Moreover, data from classroom observations were used to identify critical incidents (Tripp, 1993, p. 24) of intercultural teaching and learning in attempts to draw out deeper reflections during student interviews. Data from the teacher and administrator¹¹ interviews, as well as classroom observations, are used to augment the discussion around intercultural teaching and learning in this chapter – primarily regarding objectives one and two since they speak more directly to staff member perceptions of students' experiences.

As evidence of intercultural teaching and learning was identified in student interview transcripts, it was coded to one of the study's three objectives. In turn, as evidence for each objective accumulated, more specific themes emerged. Of the themes that emerged I have chosen two for each objective based on the higher frequency of their occurrence (See Table 2). For each theme I have identified a number of significant trends that more precisely exemplify the themes' contribution to the objective. The remainder of chapter five connects the study's findings to teacher/administrator interviews, classroom observations, and the conceptual framework discussed in chapter two.

¹¹ When not referred to by their coded nickname, the teachers and administrators will be referred to as 'staff member' in the findings discussion in order to maintain non-identifiability.

Discussion

Objective 1: Facilitating Intercultural Learning

In identifying how spaces of cross-cultural encounter facilitate intercultural learning, I have limited the findings for this objective to two key themes as they emerged from the student interview data. The first theme, *classmate interaction*, occurs both inside and outside of the classroom (i.e. both academic and social interaction) and involves two or more students originating from two or more cultures, nations, and/or language groups. The second theme, *outside influences*, involves cross-cultural encounters that take place external to school.

Within these themes I have identified three trends, including: cross-cultural comparisons, which refers to general student reflections on the similarities and differences between their own culture and the new or ‘other’ culture(s) they engage; challenges with cross-cultural encounters, which involves students’ reflections on some of the difficulties they face when working with individuals from a different culture; and, the benefits of cross-cultural interaction, which shows what the students view as the positive aspects of their cross-cultural experiences (i.e. what they learn from those experiences).

Classmate Interaction

Comparisons

Predominant throughout the student interviews (and as evidenced by classroom observations) was the notion that the variety of cross-cultural encounters in their EAP classes provides students with opportunities to discover what they have in common with classmates from other cultures. Such opportunities allow them to compare attitudes and behavior, while also sharing ideas and perceptions about the world and their place in it (i.e. relational

cosmopolitanism's role in education) (Rizvi, 2008, p. 21). The student interviews revealed that despite typically feeling uncomfortable in first time meetings with people from cultures different from their own, many students felt more at ease after just a little interaction with the other-cultures in their class. In fact, as students got to know each other better over the one month period of classroom observations, it became increasingly common to see students from different cultures choosing to work together on tasks. Once the 'ice was broken' and students had the chance to put faces to names in real-world relationships, they were able to see beyond cultural (and even religious) differences to find common interests and hobbies.

For many of the students these common interests and hobbies became the catalyst for further exploration of cross-cultural class-mate friendships both inside and outside the classroom. In some interviews, particularly with the more mature students, discussions around the exploration of cross-cultural relationships yielded even deeper reflections on the universal similarity of the human condition (i.e. we are all human) similar to Kantian liberal-humanist universalism that upholds a universal moral outlook for managing human behavior (Marginson and Sawir, 2011, p. 55). Regardless of the extent of their exploration, students' intercultural learning was fostered by their cross-cultural relationships. As staff member David explains, "...you're learning more than just [language] skills...you're learning how to interact among a diversity of people because that's university." Observations indicated that the more time students spent collaborating with other-culture classmates the more at ease they seemed to feel and the more confident and curious they were about investigating each other's culture.

By learning about other cultures from the perspectives of people in those cultures individuals are better able to de-construct their preconceived notions of other cultures, as well as understand the differences and similarities perceived when interacting with others. Such

questioning helps shape a tendency towards a more critical investigation of the world that is central to learning about and ethically engaging with new cultural formations (Rizvi, 2009, p. 64). Thus, what manifests from students' encounters with other-culture classmates is a deeper sense of how they are situated in the world in relation to each other, each other's culture, and (maybe) the larger forces and trends emerging from globalization. In facilitating such encounters, classroom observations show that cross-cultural pairing, open discussions, and a pleasant classroom atmosphere lead to a significant amount of cross-cultural sharing.

Staff member Peter explains that when engaging cultural differences in his class he tries, "...to focus on the positive aspects of difference...like food and celebrations...through discussion...[bringing] to light differences in society in a positive manner." Feeling comfortable helps break down barriers of insecurity and this allows people to get to know each other. This comfort, in turn erodes distrust and initiates understanding and possibly long term relationships. Despite the evidence that students are forming a wider awareness of the world, it is important to remember that opportunities to develop a *critical global imagination* involve circumstances and relationships that are dynamic, unpredictable, open-ended, and otherwise out of students' control (Rizvi, 2005, p.337). Thus, the degree to which students build a 'critical global imagination' (or the direction it is being guided) is difficult to define and may not exist at all. Opportunities and motivation for students to become more critically aware of the world depend on the particular topic being addressed, the day-to-day stresses on students, or a variety of other variables around each student's unique circumstances and relationships inside and outside of class.

Despite not overtly interfering with classroom tasks, in both my observations and interviews a sense of religious divide¹² was always present in some subtle way. In fact, student comments and discussions often compared different religious inclinations and motivations. Notwithstanding some precarious moments of confusion and misunderstanding, listening to these investigations of religious differences gave the impression that some students were beginning to perceive how their other-culture classmates' experiences (past and present) may be better, worse, or simply different than their own. Such insights into their classmates' circumstances embrace a relational description of the spaces people inhabit according to where they are, where they are from, who they currently identify themselves as, and what larger social, economic, and political forces are at work (Marginson and Sawir, 2011, p.55). Listening exercises and discussions around food, for example, provided innocuous opportunities for students to share their culture's tendencies and taboos on a topic where differences of opinion resulted in furthering students' interest in their other-culture classmates. Staff member Laura explains that, "...the work has to be brought into the context of where they're living...and drawing from their backgrounds...critically thinking about what they're doing...reflecting on how this is different from before...and why this difference is important." It became clear that cross-cultural spaces that encourage honest and respectful getting/giving first-hand explanations provide opportunities for everyone involved to examine the validity of their own culturally endowed values by listening to and observing how others' rationalized the validity of their cultural values.

Comparing home-culture to host-culture and other-cultures also allows an opportunity to explore differences in attitude, behavior, and perception. It must be said however, that although

¹² Religious affiliations in this class included: Muslim, Christian, Atheist, Agnostic, as well as those curious to investigate any religion.

most of the students find it easy to identify cultural differences, few regularly engage in open discussions, comparisons, and questioning that lead to deeper understandings for why cultural differences exist. This hurdle speaks to the relational cosmopolitan approach to education which acknowledges knowing as not only partial and tentative but also in need of an ongoing critical exploration and imagination of other-cultures' positioning in the world. Staff member Jessica suggests that teachers should model effective ways to involve critical thinking skills when reflecting on and questioning cultural differences. She goes on to explain that, "...when you start making assumptions [about others] you're not being very reflective about what's happening around you." During much of the classroom observation period many students spent the majority of their days with same-culture classmates unless directed otherwise by their teachers. Staff member Laura laments that, "...there's very few students who say...wow, I get the chance to talk to that [other-culture] kid across the way...you'd like for it to happen naturally but it often doesn't." This reluctance to engage other-culture classmates undoubtedly limits students' opportunity to investigate cultural differences, and surely dulls their curiosity in other cultures as well.

Challenges

While difficulties with cross-cultural encounters rarely stopped students from exploring relationships with their classmates, challenges often limited the extent of their exploration. Religious conviction, for example, often provides a substantial barrier that, at its worst, positions others (i.e. non- or other-religious) as deficient in some way, and, at its best, pushes others to question which view is right/wrong and how so. Since half of the students' cultural backgrounds are largely defined by religion, various aspects, rituals, and viewpoints of religion surfaced regularly in discussions during classroom observations. These discussions sometimes stimulated

questions from others, but non-religious students often remained silent. Staff member Jessica explained that she often has to focus on, "...why are [students] disengaging? What is happening? We have lots of situations where it doesn't work out...it's tricky and you kind of luck out when it's a really cohesive group." Interviews with the non-religious students, for example, confirm that they feel uncomfortable or disinterested in discussing religion mostly because they suspect their questions or responses might cause offense and conflict.

One productive response to the challenge of inspiring students to explore relationships with other-culture classmates hinges on the capacity of the teacher as a relational cosmopolitan. This approach requires teachers who have re-invented themselves as capable to shift between local, national, and international realms (all of which encompass religious undercurrents) in order to identify and interact with the people, practices, and knowledge of the present historical moment (Luke, 2004, p. 1429). Encouraging staff members to think critically about their students' encounters with other cultures, as Jessica does, helps identify appropriate responses to cross-cultural classroom conflicts as they emerge.

On the other end of the same challenge, students who hold on to particularly strong cultural norms (i.e. religious convictions) often find it difficult to be open and accepting of others who are questioning (or whose presence throws into question) those strong moral standards of right and wrong. Despite accepting that others define good and bad behavior differently, strongly religious students, for example, frequently choose to limit their contact with those who are perceived as behaving inappropriately. The result is that these students tend to isolate themselves from cross-cultural encounters both in and out of the classroom while, intentionally or not, sometimes alienating classmates with different attitudes and behavior.

This scenario illuminates how globally pervasive notions of cultural essentialism (i.e. culture is a static and fixed entity), inherent to Ward's (1997) *cultural fit theory* and Hofstede's (1998) binaries of cultural traits, result in a perpetual likelihood of conflict between entrenched and diametrically opposed sides. A relational cosmopolitan approach to intercultural learning can be particularly helpful in this scenario because it allows students to explore as many cultures as they like without choosing/adopting all the values and practices of one culture in particular (Rizvi, 2005, p. 332). While in some ways this leeway conflicts with the modern cosmopolitan tendency to promote cultural plurality (i.e. norms, perspectives, and behaviors from other cultures can be rejected outright), it is both descriptively appropriate of our contemporary reality and normatively appealing to an egalitarian sensibility.

It is important to remember that the teacher's role in intercultural learning involves facilitating students' curiosity toward different cultures. Moreover, since immersion in a cross-cultural environment inevitably leads to personal identity transformations, and since we wish the nature of these transformations to be progressive and not regressive, breaking down walls that stifle or limit cross-cultural encounters is vital. Rizvi (2009) would suggest a curriculum that enables students to enter into direct relations with different perspectives and contexts in an attempt to help them undertake their own formation (p. 263). Implementing such a curriculum approach is less threatening for students, and the effects are more enduring, when expectations for change are not imposed on students, but nurtured to evolve organically as defined by each student for him or herself.

Acknowledging the challenge that arises from holding on to strong cultural convictions should not diminish the challenge posed by classmates who are knowingly being culturally inappropriate. Whether students are acting intentionally or not, language or behavior that

denigrate a classmate's cultural norms (e.g. one Muslim student's anecdote involved having bacon waved in her face) risk offending to the extent that the classroom becomes an awkward (maybe even intimidating) space where cross-cultural interaction is strained or, worse, non-existent. Moreover, it is difficult to know if such experiences have a long lasting negative effect on future cross-cultural encounters.

Finally, students are often asked to choose a partner(s) for various learning activities or assignments. Some of the students immediately choose a partner from another culture / language group, while others choose a partner from their same-culture / language group whenever possible, and some fluctuate between other-culture and same-culture partners. Regardless of choice, partnered tasks in a cross-cultural classroom invoke Rizvi's (2008) notion that our cultural identities are *spaces of ceaseless becoming* (p. 23) in that who we imagine ourselves to be is significantly influenced by our relations with those around us. In order to fully understand how these spaces of ceaseless becoming, our positions in them, and their effect on us, function in our lives, we must acknowledge that, as Bhabha (1994) reminds us, for most, movement within such spaces involves struggling with contexts of uneven power. Further, movement between these spaces entails changes of identity highlighted by perpetual instability, complexity, and tension (p. 171). Interestingly, when asked to explain their choices of partners, the latter group of students said that when focused on getting as much as possible from their classroom experience they choose an other-culture partner, but if feeling tired, bored, or apathetic about their studies they select a same-culture partner.

Working effectively in cross-cultural groups takes significant time, energy, and effort. Moreover, the students are engaging a foreign learning environment and studying in and about a second language. And, finally, since students are instructed, evaluated, and graded on their

English language progress (not intercultural learning), it is no surprise that students' prioritize their English language learning over their cross-cultural relationships.

Benefits

The most significant benefit to cross-cultural encounters, as yielded by student interviews, is learning to value cultural difference in some practical real-world application. Students often described their new and different experiences as making them 'feel fresh' and inspiring them to explore how and why others think and act the way they do. This contradicts the theory of *cultural distance* put forward by Church (1982) and Pedersen (1991), as well as the *cultural fit* theory advocated by Ward (1997), who see international students' successful adjustment as less challenging when the cultural differences between home and host-cultures are small; and increasingly challenging when the differences are large. This approach to cultural diversity not only positions difference as a deficiency, but it also suggests that cultural differences can discourage international students from engaging other-cultures altogether.

Contrary to such theoretical assumptions dominant in cross-cultural research, my results show that the new knowledge and perspectives students gain when encountering cultural differences appears to pique their interest and encourage further investigation of different cultures. Further, in the modern era of intensifying cultural diversity on a global level it is important to both celebrate difference and manage our relationships with it. Hall (2002) puts forward that we are in a new globally open space requiring a cosmopolitan approach that not only celebrates difference but also acknowledges and understands the limitations of any one culture/identity by helping people become radically self-aware of their culture's insufficiency in governing a wider/global society (p. 30). Cultural difference is not a hurdle to overcome but an ongoing reality that people must learn to live with in order to work peacefully and productively

with each other. Tarc (2013) goes further to suggest that the intensity and difficulty of challenges faced in cross-cultural experiences are the catalytic material through which over time people might come to know and understand spaces-times beyond their own idealizations (p. 54). Such learning is unpredictable, complex, and time consuming as it does not follow a constant linear pattern of development [e.g. from ethnocentric to ethno-relative (Bennett, 1993, p. 25)] but a personal, irregular, and indeterminate path of engaging difference.

A few students show signs of having progressed beyond a mere curiosity in other cultures. They have begun to perceive, engage, and thus value cultural difference on a more profound level. As staff member Laura explains, “A few students are the real risk takers...the ones that really put themselves out there...that talk to anyone...ask all kinds of questions...make all kinds of mistakes...and just go on.” These students have built a rationale for valuing difference, by imagining future education and work scenarios that will require them to relate closely with/within different cultures. The cross-cultural relationships these students are building have begun to shape their identities in ways that Sen (1999) explained as plural and potentially hybridized (p.117). Moreover, these few students recognize and value the transformative power inherent to cross-cultural experiences (i.e. a catalyst for personal change) to the extent that they get upset when other students isolate themselves in their same-culture group. The notion that one’s identity is not plural or hybrid seems strange to them.

A second benefit that cross-cultural classmate interaction has for facilitating intercultural learning is that it becomes necessary for students to manage how they process, understand, and work-around the differences they encounter so they can interact with fewer problems. Held (2002) suggests relational cosmopolitanism has the capacity to mediate such challenges by helping people see above their national cultures without abandoning their chosen/given values

and lifestyles (p. 58). To this point, staff member Peter approaches cultural differences in the classroom in such a way that he thinks it is important, "...to help students understand differences in culture and different expectations...not that what they think may be wrong...but simply that it is different." Rizvi (2009) would again add that there should be a curriculum that enables students to enter into direct relations with different perspectives and contexts in an attempt to help students undertake their own formation (p. 263). An informal type of intercultural learning is already happening in a more subtle, largely unsupervised, and sometimes misguided manner. In their interviews, for example, most students relayed anecdotes of experiences with other-culture classmates that introduced new notions of appropriate speech and behavior for particular situations. Through language based tasks not necessarily intended to illuminate cultural differences, students had frequent opportunities to investigate how their other-culture classmates perceive and communicate their view of the world. Such exchanges were observed in less structured classroom discussions for which students were required to both explain their ideas, opinions, and reflections, as well as listen to others'. Perhaps Rizvi is suggesting that a curriculum that enables students to engage and learn from other-culture classmates should be more intentional in its attempts to guide students' efforts in self-formation.

Whether conscious of their transformation or not, students show signs of a deeper awareness of the world around them. Along with learning to clarify what is and is not appropriate in other cultures, student interviews show growing responsiveness to the notion that when conflicts arise with other-culture partners it is best that the cultural norms of everyone involved be respected. Marginson and Sawir (2011) would suggest that respecting different cultural norms is a practice of cosmopolitan education because it fosters students' ability to engage and maintain multiple, intersecting, diverse, and constantly changing relationships across

the three dimensions of global connectivity, national culture, and local day-to-day life (p. 72). Neither the students nor Marginson and Sawir define what ‘respect’ is exactly. The general expectation, however, is that once a person learns (at least) the basic cultural norms of another culture (i.e. that which most offends people in that culture), that person has a responsibility to conduct themselves appropriately when engaging people from that other culture. Students acknowledge, and classroom observation supports, that cross-cultural experiences in which mutual respect is maintained, motivate students to accept difference and cope with change. The most successful cross-cultural encounters in this class usually involved students who had invested the time and energy into becoming friends with classmates from other cultures.

A third benefit to cross-cultural encounters is that they provide an opportunity to explore and experiment with different cultural perspectives. Having to change how one speaks or behaves with classmates from different cultures can free them from home-culture norms that may limit potential personal transformation. In fact, cross-cultural spaces offer students a freedom to begin questioning and even transcending some social rules of their home-culture. While discussing an online course on current events staff member David points out that, “... [the students] said it really broadened their perspective and they could hear other perspectives and they could better understand their own.” Students reported feeling uncomfortable expressing what they really think about a topic to people from their home-culture because they fear offending them more than people from other-cultures. Thus, there is a kind of self-censoring with same-culture groups to stick to the accepted norms even where students may desire to investigate different cultural perspectives.

From the students’ perspective, probably the most important benefit that classmate interaction has for facilitating intercultural learning has more to do with the people they meet.

One pair of students in particular, despite having different first languages and coming from different cultures and religious perspectives, developed a strong friendship that involved spending much of their time together both inside and outside the classroom. Speaking of these students, Peter says that, “They make friends and mix with other cultures...because of this, [other] students are more interactive...they share opinions and ideas very easily and work with each other a lot easier...learning about different cultures and learning from them as well.” Through their willingness to confront the ‘strangeness’ of each other’s differences, and by focusing on what they have in common (i.e. studying English and sharing a hobby), these two students (and possibly some of the others they have inspired) have begun to transcend the cultural boundaries that once divided them. Many of the students made it clear that the personal trust between friends from different cultures comes from seeing the other(s) show their respect. Thus, experiencing others’ respect for you and your culture (i.e. who you identify as) potentially builds trust which can lead to various kinds of relationships and eventually to deeper, more solid, and enduring levels of mutual understanding and respect.

Outside Influences

Comparisons

When sojourning to a new country/culture one often feels distant, even isolated, from the host culture. Developing a deep understanding for why or how things are done takes time and patience. When reflecting on cross-cultural experiences they had outside the classroom student participants often compared what they saw and heard to a similar experience from home. For the students, finding a common humanity in others seems necessary in order to bridge cultural gaps. Many of the students reported being somewhat overwhelmed by the cultural differences they

saw. They often seem preoccupied with finding commonalities between their home and host cultures more than understanding how or why the differences they see and hear are unique.

Observations show frequent superficial discussions around locality and nationality that, like Hofstede (2007), essentialise the identities of students by categorizing them into neat and narrow culture-based roles and personality traits (p. 16). Moreover, despite an awareness and concern for further critical thinking, I observed very few investigations of the deeper and more subtle issues of students' changing cultural identity and the effects of global systems. This does not confirm Hofstede's analysis but instead speaks to the hegemonic influence of psychology's assumptions in cross-cultural research. In defence of the students, it appears as though finding shared commonalities between cultures represents an initial stage of cross-cultural engagement that allows sojourners to feel more comfortable in foreign spaces. This increased comfort level in turn leads to a more positive attitude towards other-culture classmates, friends, and acquaintances – especially with those who reciprocate the students' outgoing outlook. As they become more established in their new surroundings students can better deal with differences that may appear puzzling, risky, or scary.

Becoming more familiar with other-culture acquaintances outside the classroom allows students to step beyond timid or distant observations of others, and form cross-cultural relationships that reveal more nuanced cultural differences. For example, having a roommate from a different culture introduces students to some unfamiliar daily rituals (e.g. daily prayer or meal preparation) that, when regularly exposed to, increasingly puts them at ease with things that originally feel foreign. And then, as staff member Peter observes in his classroom, "...students will interact with each other and ask each other questions, and I think once you start that dialogue then students are able to learn from each other and then think about things...it's not a

mystery anymore.” Further, over time, understanding why cultural differences exist, as well as how they feel about them, helps students better manage their relationships with others from those same cultures. However, deeper anxieties or difficulties may emerge as students delve into more profound reasons for cultural difference. In fact, students may continue to focus on superficial commonalities between their home-culture and other cultures as a kind of antidote to the risks that alterity affords.

Challenges

Cross-cultural experiences are challenging and misunderstandings can lead to aggressive posturing and confrontations. In particular, if such confrontations happen with students’ initial experiences in a new culture there is often a residual feeling of distrust. For example, some Muslim students reported new-comer experiences (e.g. on the street and with immigration) where, from their point of view, they were treated unfairly because of their religious affiliation. Such experiences discourage sojourners from further exploring cross-cultural relationships beyond what they need to cope in their foreign environment. Countering the challenge posed by such troublesome cross-cultural experiences, in this case Islamophobia, becomes all the more significant for facilitating intercultural learning when we recognize the near impossibility of detaching ourselves from our experiences – all of which shape who we are, what we do, and how we do it.

Sometimes shaping our behaviour and perceptions in the present has less to do with our current situation or circumstances and more to do with our reflections on others’ experiences. A few students explained that hearing about a friend’s challenges with cross-cultural encounters helps them reflect on their own intercultural learning and model their foreign experience differently from their friend’s. By shaping their self-conduct in this manner, students are creating

a defensive coping mechanism to better protect themselves from being made vulnerable by their foreign living and learning environment.

As a response, Marginson and Sawir (2011) point to three cosmopolitan understandings that, if mutually accepted, could help us avoid cross-cultural conflicts. First, from each positioning the world is seen differently (i.e. knowledge from one point of view is incomplete) and no one positioning is given privilege. Second, notions of difference encompass rather than replace notions of equality (i.e. respect for other positionings). Third, it is important to distinguish between social position, group identity, and values (one cannot be read from another) (p. 74). The goal is to facilitate the negotiation of new identities and relationships in active cooperation with others based on a mutual willingness to listen and perhaps change.

Benefits

It is often not the current or very recent experiences that influence students' perceptions of living and working in different cultural spaces-times. In their interviews students reflected on how their past cross-cultural experiences have a significant positive effect on how they engage others today. Staff member Laura reminds us that in a culturally diverse classroom, "...it's important to draw on [students'] experience...to get them talking about what they know." Memories of having at least some success merging their knowledge of a different culture with interaction involving locals from that culture, bolsters students' confidence to engage with people from a variety of backgrounds. This speaks to Rizvi's (2009) notion that the cosmopolitan approach towards intercultural learning acknowledges that knowing is not only partial and tentative but also requires continued critical exploration and imagination (p. 264). Thus, through their experiences with other cultures, and in reflecting on those experiences, students are better

able to identify and appreciate how the differences that divide cultures, and the commonalities that bridge them, can often complement each other.

Another benefit that outside experiences have on intercultural learning in cross-cultural spaces relates to the choices people make in arranging and managing their daily lives. While living in Canada some students have made lifestyle choices (e.g. their housing location, children's education) that compel them to engage people outside their home-culture. Staff member Susan argues that, "...there's students who have almost zero intention of doing anything beyond classwork...and you see the gap widens between them and the ones who...like...live in a homestay. How [students] participate in a culture is really important." Thus, by making choices that engage other cultures students better position themselves (and their families) for the transformative intercultural learning opportunities afforded by their international sojourn. To facilitate and inform students on their journey through diverse and dynamic cultural landscapes, Marginson and Sawir (2011) suggest that the relational cosmopolitan approach to learning is a pathway towards a deeper understanding of how global transformations (i.e. changes brought on by globalization and global mobility) effect people's lives. The approach opens the question of how best to work with these transformations (i.e. with creativity, progressiveness, and equality) (p.60). As we will see later in this chapter, encounters with different cultures are wrought with challenges that frustrate, discourage, and even risk conflict. Learning to grapple with how global transformations shape our relationships with people from other spaces-times allows us to cultivate a sense of self-efficacy in how and why we change.

Another advantage of engaging people from different cultures outside the classroom is the opportunity for students to broaden and deepen their understanding of other cultural viewpoints by building and maintaining relationships with friends, roommates, or acquaintances

from other cultures. These relationships and experiences help students: gain a firsthand awareness of how other people perceive the world; challenge some of their preconceived notions; and possibly, transcend the apprehension they felt towards different cultures when they first came to Canada.

Relationships and experiences with different cultural viewpoints outside the classroom also provide students an opportunity to develop an ability to negotiate complex, culturally diverse spaces. This harkens back to Marginson and Sawir's (2011) notion that educators should be equipping students to make their lives in a relational environment marked by both local grounding and interconnectedness (p. 60). In order to better facilitate students' journey through these local and interconnected spaces, the school in this study attempts to bridge the gap between the practical academic goals of EAP and the social reality experienced by students outside of school. The school does this with a course called *Canadian Cultural Studies* which as staff member David explains, "...gets into the extra-linguistic cultural aspects of being [in Canada] and solving problems and working with people...if problems arise we try to facilitate solutions...[the class] brings in the notions of difference and working through and inter-relating." Moreover, reflecting on how they and their classmates/friends/roommates engage culturally diverse spaces can shape how students interact with difference in those spaces. Whether first or second-hand, having the opportunity to confront cultural differences allows exploration of how best to manage the cross-cultural relationships students engage.

For a few students the cross-cultural relationships they have built and nurtured outside the classroom involve a circle of friends that share the same religion (as well as some cultural norms and language), but were born and raised in Canada. Thus, while these students feel comfortable with their host-culture friends, they also encounter and learn about cultural

differences. Discovering such a circle of friends helps these students cope with the intersections of cultural and language differences. Admittedly, these relationships may seem less diverse compared to the cross-cultural relationships with their classmates. However, given the difficulties some of the students have encountered in Canada (i.e. being a young Muslim woman), it should come as no surprise that they feel compelled to be cautious with the cross-cultural relationships they engage.

It should also be pointed out that students experience a wide variety of serendipitous encounters with other cultures that often inspire transformation of personal perceptions. It is these types of encounters that Susan encourages her students to seek out. As staff member Susan explains, “I try to show them ways to live outside of their bubble...don’t just go to school and go home...you’re in Canada...you have to live within the culture...use English outside of class...that makes your experience better.” A variety of student anecdotes refer to friendly and helpful cross-cultural encounters outside the classroom in which both the students and their other-culture acquaintances, by looking beyond language challenges and cultural differences, build pre-emptive trust, as well as empathy and understanding that serve to bridge their cultures.

Objective 2: Success in Cross-Cultural Learning Environments

This objective seeks to clarify how spaces of cross-cultural encounter facilitate the growth of intercultural sensibilities necessary to succeed in cross-cultural classrooms. Two notable themes emerged from the student interview data. The first theme, *nurturing and developing students’ intercultural sensibilities*, focuses on ways that classrooms are organized and managed in attempts to maximize students’ cross-cultural encounters, guide students’ complex cultural differences or conflicts, and assist students to compare/contrast and reflect on the cultural differences they encounter. The second theme, *challenges in intercultural learning*,

outlines some of the difficulties the students experience in regards to cross-cultural encounters and intercultural learning. Since somewhat different trends emerged for each of these themes, I have given a description of each trend below their theme headings.

Nurture and Develop

Within the second objective's first theme, nurturing and developing students' intercultural sensibilities, I have identified three trends. The first trend, cross-cultural partnerships, describes how partnering students with other-culture classmate(s) nurtures the valuing of difference from a personal perspective. The second trend, classroom atmosphere, refers to how a general feeling of openness and honesty in the classroom augments appreciation for cross-cultural encounters and intercultural learning. The third trend, new pedagogical approaches to learning, relates to how students' experiences with new pedagogies facilitate a better understanding of the foreign learning expectations of western academia.

Cross-cultural partnerships

Helping students nurture and develop the intercultural sensibilities necessary to succeed in a cross-cultural classroom sometimes requires teachers to compel students to interact with different cultures. As staff member Jessica tells us, "I don't always allow them to choose their own partner since I know they are likely going to gravitate towards what's comfortable." Relational cosmopolitanism suggests an egalitarian approach to international education and attempts to increase opportunity for, and enhance the quality of, intercultural experiences. Although most students said they value interacting with other-culture classmates, classroom observations show that many chose to sit beside and work with same-culture classmates unless prompted by their teacher to do otherwise.

The significance of cross-cultural pairings in EAP classrooms extends well beyond the necessary language exchange. While in cross-cultural pairs, students report hearing different opinions on various topics, as well as seeing new approaches to problem solving and task completion – opinions and approaches they surmise would never be brought up in same-culture pairings. Staff member David adds that, “...the teachers purposely match up students with different first languages...to get interaction going...it encourages the use of English...but it’s also opening up and stretching them because many of them tend to stay in their safe zone...people from their own country.” Moreover, it is important to consider that on several occasions I observed the more mature students (i.e. Libyan students) guiding their other-culture (younger) classmates in negotiating open and respectful discussions and group tasks. Taking on these informal advisor/advisee roles suggests age is a factor influencing cross-cultural encounters between these classmates. We can see that while English language learning might be the student’s primary purpose for study, a deeper awareness of others is also being nurtured.

Nurturing the intercultural sensibilities necessary for engaging cultural similarities and differences in the classroom involves giving purpose to cross-cultural interactions. Further, in order for such interaction to be peaceful and productive, students, teachers, and curriculum must allow for, and foster, the potential for mutual transformation (Marginson and Sawir, 2011, p. 72). By structuring cross-cultural encounters (i.e. partnering students with other-culture classmates) teachers remove many social pressures on students to be with their home-culture classmates. Moreover, students admitted that when teachers compel them to work with their other-culture classmates they feel somewhat liberated from the social expectations and roles imposed on them by their home-culture. As classroom observations show, when students were paired with other-culture classmates their attitude (i.e. tone of voice), body language (i.e. facial expressions), and

general manner of behavior seemed friendlier and more energetic than when partnered with same-culture classmates. Similarly, student interviews show that classroom tasks are often seen as helping cross-cultural partners look past the cultural differences they might otherwise use to diminish or ostracize their other-culture classmates in less structured social environments. These students tend to compartmentalize work and social interaction as a means to cope with difference. Changing this tendency by making work and social life mutually exclusive might represent the greatest gains for possibilities of learning for international students.

In the end, when cross-cultural classrooms are positioned as spaces where engaging people from different cultures is required, success depends on how well the students relate and cooperate with each other. As staff member Jessica tell us, "...you really luck out when it's a cohesive group...and [we] remember those classes when everyone worked well together." Interview transcripts show that the students' relatively deep reflections on their cross-cultural classroom experiences are a sign that they are becoming increasingly aware of how people from different cultures approach work, study, and problem solving in general. These reflections support Dervin's (2011) suggestion that success in the modern world necessitates an intercultural sensibility with mutual understanding of positioning and negotiation between individuals from different spaces-times (rather than cultures) (p. 38). Observation evidence confirms that when the students are compelled to take on tasks that involve listening to and respecting the contributions and perceptions of an individual other-culture classmate, they are more likely to experiment with how best to dialogue across cultural differences. Thus, even though they may continue to identify other-culture classmates by their nationality or religion, through daily interactions many students have become more consciously aware (or are trying to become more aware) of their other-culture classmates as unique individuals shaped by a different time and space.

Classroom atmosphere

When focused on nurturing and developing intercultural sensibilities in a cross-cultural classroom, perhaps the most significant factor in an educator's teaching repertoire is knowing what are, and are not, considered appropriate behavior and language exchanges by the cultures represented in each particular class. Interview data suggests that the younger students generally suspect their EAP teachers already have such a solid grasp of all the culture norms. The more mature students understand that teachers are often unaware of cultural nuances but they exhibit an appreciation for new cultural knowledge. This reminds us of staff member Laura's comment that, "I like to know where people are from...a bit of background...so that I can draw on those experiences." Classroom observations show that teachers often place a high value on cultural difference by expressing a strong interest in other-cultures, and by giving their students the time and space to share and compare the different cultural viewpoints they encounter. If teachers can, as Luke (2004) says, re-invent their approach to intercultural education in a relational cosmopolitan manner (p. 1429), then the education they provide can foster their students' ability to engage and maintain multiple, intersecting, diverse, and constantly changing relationships across the three dimensions of global connectivity, national culture, and local day-to-day life (Marginson and Sawir, 2011, p. 72). At the same time, pressures from the language curriculum and the EAP program's intensive schedule severely limit the amount of time available for deeper critical exploration of cultural differences (i.e. intercultural learning). Interview data shows that staff members recognize the need for more awareness and training around deliberate and measured integration of intercultural learning curriculum.

The relationship between teachers and students plays a particularly important role in building a classroom environment that nurtures intercultural sensibilities. Teachers having an

open, honest, and friendly rapport with students helps lower the anxiety and social barriers that sometimes stop students from engaging others. Intercultural learning is often unscripted (i.e. not a part of a formal lesson plan/curriculum) and unpredictable, but by establishing a more relaxed relationship teachers allow a space and time for students to go beyond academic goals. At the language school, attempts to build such a rapport with students often involves class trips where teachers and students share a social experience in the local community.

Staff member Jessica commented, “In *Canadian Cultural Studies* activities [students] don’t just see you as a teacher with a certain amount of power...you’re now one of them...you’re in a different context with them which also shows culture and how we interact in our culture.” It should be said, however, that even though student interviews suggest they feel more ‘connected’ to their teachers after class trips, students do not necessarily feel they enjoy more relaxed relationships with their teachers. Bhabha (1994) reminds us that, for most, movement between such spaces (i.e. spaces that shape who we are becoming) often involves struggling with contexts of uneven power as well as relationships of perpetual instability, complexity, and tension (p.171). In fact, for some students a relaxed relationship with a teacher might have an adverse effect. Moreover, one classroom discussion about an upcoming field trip (i.e. the maple sugar bush) revealed a student apathy towards such events unless it became mandatory to attend. This suggests some disconnect between the school’s good intentions and the students’ awareness of how such events benefit their learning experience.

Having a teacher willing to open up about herself enables students to engage differences between their preconceived notions of another culture and a new understanding of their teacher’s reality. A friendly and personal demeanor from teachers builds a classroom atmosphere of sharing and regardless of how deep or shallow cross-cultural inquiries might be, this sharing is a

gateway to further understanding. Nurturing and developing intercultural sensibilities in cross-cultural learning environments also requires teachers to diffuse students' anxiety and fears. Observations show that teachers usually portray such a friendly and relaxed approach, but the pressures of the language curriculum, the program's schedule, and each teacher's course load (not to mention the normal stresses of leading the class) can sometimes strain teachers' patience and temperament. One heavy-handed response from a teacher can reverse many of their advances towards an open and friendly student-to-teacher rapport.

Interestingly, students suggest that one way to put them at ease is by imagining the classroom as a space in which, despite their cultural differences, students and teachers have a recognizable relationship with one another (i.e. they share similar expectations as to teacher and student behavior). Providing a familiar point of reference for new relationships can help students engage difference on a more stable playing field. This returns us to Luke (2004) who highlights the need for teachers to shift between local, national, and international realms in order to identify and interact with people, practices, and knowledge of the present historical moment (p. 1429). Thus, blending effective classroom management with an open and friendly rapport in a cross-cultural classroom requires teachers who are particularly adept at moving between social and academic roles.

Classroom atmosphere is also augmented by exploring a range of topics wide enough to allow students the opportunity to not only discover a larger scope of knowledge and explore a wider variety of opinions from different cultural perspectives, but also shape and express an evolving understanding of new ideas. In Jessica's class, for example, students are assigned, "...topics that reflect some current event happening in Canada...and so they can learn about and try to argue against if it's something they don't necessarily believe." Both student interviews and

classroom observation show that discussions on government or parent imposed curfews, for example, led to a critical exploration as to how and why curfews are (or are not) employed as a means of social control. While some students conveyed anecdotes about living and coping with curfews as part of their everyday reality, others listened to and questioned their classmates on this 'foreign' socio-cultural phenomena. Rizvi (2008) equates such interaction to relational cosmopolitanism since it helps students recognize the multiplicity and subjectivity of their unique spaces-times while enabling them to imagine culture and cultural exchange relationally (p. 264). When broaching such topics it is crucial to the nurturing and development of intercultural sensibilities that teachers strive to maintain a classroom environment where students are less fettered to express and explore different ideas. It is in this communicative searching that intercultural sensibilities are formed.

New pedagogical approaches to learning

When EAP students experience an approach to learning that is different from their previous study experiences they further develop the intercultural sensibilities they need to be successful in western academia. Some students, for example, explain that post-secondary study in their home-country usually involves strict adherence to a text book, but studying in Canada often involves expressing personal opinions on knowledge gained from various research sources. According to Laura, it is necessary to, "...wean students off rote teaching/learning...focused on tests and high scores...to think about how well they've done...why they did well...how could they do better...to take ownership of their own learning...the reflective process, critical thinking...those higher level skills that they need." One of the writing classes I observed, for example, involved sending the students to the library computer lab to research an assigned essay topic. The teacher facilitated students' choice of search-language and difficulties with vocabulary

comprehension, but finding sources, deciding whether or not the sources are suitable, and extracting subject-appropriate data (things taught and practiced in class) were left to the students.

The act of doing one's own research and becoming a more independent learner are important steps in developing the self-efficacy and 'higher skills' each will need in university. Such learning relates to Tarc's (2013) argument that in order for intercultural learning to be transformative it requires, among other things, moving beyond simply adapting to new cultural environments toward deeper critical understanding of differences (p. 51). Experiencing an independent approach to learning for the first time (i.e. figuring out how to do it on your own) compels students to consciously and deliberately delve deeper into why and how the task needs to be done. Such critical reflection on the nature of what they are asked to do in an EAP class, and the manner in which they are expected to accomplish their learning tasks, nurtures students' learning beyond the intended language targets.

Another pedagogical approach to learning that is new for most EAP students is their immersion in a cross-cultural classroom. Intent on confronting the limitations of a monoculture frame of mind, some students expressed their frustration with a myopic approach (i.e. limited by cultural norms, and local or individual expectations) to learning. However, most students are surprised, for example, by the inconsistencies they discover between the language, information, and insights of western culture learned at home and corresponding notions learned from teachers and other students in Canada. Staff member David explains that the language school has become, "...more focused on getting students to compare and contrast cultures...teaching the critical or ethnographic perspective on learning how to learn about new cultures...how to ask questions and inquire...comparing it to your own...maybe looking at your own in a different way than before." Observing how students relate to new vocabulary (and by extension, new

topics or information in general), for example, helps us understand that they not only position new vocabulary in relation to words or concepts in their first language and home-culture, but also that they regularly share these cultural insights with their classmates.

This emerging understanding aligns with the relational cosmopolitan view of international education that, as Marginson and Sawir (2011) explain, promotes a global perspective involving notions of plural identity that are inherently individual but *positioned in the larger relational space* in which individual personality and behavior (i.e. the core preoccupations of psychology) are played out (p. 72). In other words, it is through a wider more diverse exposure to different cultures and languages that students begin to perceive and understand the limitations and misconceptions that myopic approaches to study can have.

Cross-cultural classrooms encourage students to explore ways to combine different approaches to learning in order to come to terms with their foreign learning environment. A few students have begun to make connections between the different strengths of learning approaches at home and here in Canada. Observations show that in their English language study Chinese students, for example, are often required to blend the memorization of large amounts of vocabulary and grammar rules (a skill they became very familiar with during high school in China) and the utilization of a more critical and independent approach to learning (typical of western academia). These ‘connections’ that students make are a sign that intercultural sensibilities are emerging through students’ practice of merging what they already know with the demands of new/different classroom expectations.

Challenges

Within the second objective's second theme, challenges in intercultural learning, three trends emerged. The first trend, new pedagogical approaches to learning, describes how classroom learning experiences can often hinder the better understanding of the foreign learning expectations they are meant to facilitate. The second trend, cross-cultural conflicts, explains how cultural differences in the classroom can sometimes cause misunderstandings that lead students to feel more isolated and ostracized than included and accepted. The third trend, language learning, refers to how second language learning can inhibit cross-cultural relationships and discourage engaging difference.

New pedagogical approaches to learning

The most significant challenge that new approaches to learning make for nurturing and developing intercultural sensibilities in an EAP classroom is that most students are not only acquiring new knowledge and information about language and culture, they are also experiencing new pedagogical approaches. Students new to western classroom culture are often learning to relate to their teachers, the curriculum, and each other in new ways. Their writing teacher, for example, has introduced student centered tasks, such as peer editing a classmate's essay, that require the students to independently engage and apply their English language knowledge in a meaningful and real scenario. Such tasks tend to make students feel insecure about both having others depend on them, and having to depend on classmates they do not know or trust. Each student's identity involves unresolved past conflicts with others (and within themselves) that get projected onto the meanings of new interactions (i.e. transference) (Britzman and Pitt, 1996, p. 117). In a high-stakes learning scenario (i.e. pass EAP and go to university / fail EAP and go home) where students already feel that so much is unknown to them

(i.e. the English language, as well as host-culture and other-culture norms), adapting to new ways of learning can be particularly disturbing toward efforts to facilitate intercultural learning.

While the students in this study feel they usually adapt quite well to the demands of a more independent student-centered approach to language learning (new to most of the students), student interviews reveal attitudes critical of teachers who do not take a more active and controlling role in bringing the classrooms' cultures together. Observations show that when a student sits beside (or is partnered with) a same-culture classmate he or she seems less engaged with the tasks or other-culture classmates – they also tend to use much of their first language. When sitting beside (or partnered with) an other-culture classmate students' behavior and classroom interaction seem much improved. Teachers also recognize the value of having classmates from other-cultures collaborate. As staff member David explains, "...students have a lot of challenges and if they develop intercultural skills it will help them...everyone... admin / faculty / students...society in general...unless you want to stay in your little corner and not leave...nowadays intercultural skills will help you...people need to learn that...globally." However, since students tend to sit with same-culture classmates when given the choice, and because students can choose where to sit when class begins and when cross-culture pair work is complete, the lengthy time and substantial effort needed to foster intercultural learning are often interrupted.

The paradox is that some students choose (on their own – without a teacher's coercion) to engage people from different cultures, and these students have become much more independent in both their language and intercultural learning. If focusing solely on personal adjustment and agency (i.e. two of the core preoccupations of psychology) it is easy to see Matsumoto's (2004) point that, "...adjustment involves an active involvement of the self with others..." (p. 299).

However, cross-cultural research in psychology tends to ignore the dramatic effects that a new learning and social environment can have on individuals (young people in particular) navigating a contemporary reality defined by increasingly complex interconnections, interdependencies, and cultural diversity on a global scale.

New approaches to learning may also involve being exposed to classroom codes of behavior that challenge not only previous learning experiences but deeper held cultural norms. For some students this means watching classmates behave in ways that, although condoned by their teachers, they simply cannot bring themselves to accept. On the surface, behavior such as eating in class, going to the washroom without the teacher's permission, or asking a question without raising a hand may not seem significant. However, for students foreign to the idea of a more relaxed classroom environment, such behavior is a sign that deeper cultural expectations are at work that make them feel uncomfortable. These students may thus avoid interacting with classmates thought of as acting inappropriately – or at least be put-off by such behavior when partnered with classmates 'acting inappropriately.' Although students rarely spoke of purposely avoiding any of their classmates, a few students were critical of classmates' "bad" behavior.

Encountering behavior fundamentally different from what students assumed were well established standards for effective learning and classroom decorum can be a turning point where students' awareness of intercultural sensibilities expands, stagnates, or regresses. Which path is taken often depends on what behavior changes students must consider, and the manner in which students' behavior expectations are challenged. One student anecdote about a Muslim woman expected to remove her veil while in class resulted in the woman choosing to disengage and return to the Middle East. Although this scenario did not take place at the language school involved in my research, it is a significant reflection of some students' perceptions of how

different expectations in classroom behavior are sometimes approached in Canada. Taking student perceptions of such scenarios into account, educators would be well advised to heed Rizvi's (2009) advice that as our lives are increasingly shaped and reshaped at the local level by global processes (albeit saturated with deep inequalities), and as people and cultures around the world become more integrated and interdependent, both problems and solutions become interconnected (p. 254). Thus, understanding, accepting, and adapting to local culturally-appropriate classroom behavior or manner can be disconcerting for students expected to change a deeply held belief. The 'veil' scenario exemplifies how expectations and demands of host-culture classroom behavior can have a dramatic effect on the nurturing of intercultural sensibilities in cross-cultural classrooms.

Another challenge that new approaches to learning bring to intercultural learning is relating to topics that are not only unfamiliar but counter intuitive to the beliefs deeply rooted in one's home-culture. Even with topics considered fun and innocuous in a host-culture (e.g. making a bucket list), teachers' expectations might conflict with their students' perception of the topic (i.e. living in the moment versus planning for the future). Marginson and Sawir (2011) suggest that the role of educators is to help form in students the capacity for imaginative mediation amongst difference (p. 61). To this point, observations show that whether misunderstandings are caused by fundamental culture differences or something more universal such as the student's age and maturity, having an open and honest conversation around any conflicting perspectives of the topic provides an opportune intercultural teaching moment. As staff member Laura says about engaging different cultural perspectives through the curriculum, "I think there are opportunities...sometimes you have to tease them out of the material...that's a

big part of critical thinking.” Moreover, ignoring or being unaware of such opportunities can have the opposite effect of building or reinforcing barriers of cultural misunderstanding.

A final challenge that new approaches to learning have on the nurturing and development of intercultural sensibilities in the classroom is the fact that students are often overwhelmed with the amount and variety of difference they engage in cross-cultural language classrooms. The students frequently express anxiety over the notion that although English language learning is their primary task, the challenge of academic success is compounded when engaging cultural difference. Thus, sometimes students choose to step back from their investigations of cultural differences in order to focus their energies on their primary goal. In order to understand this common student viewpoint we turn once again to Bhabha (1994) who reminds us of the perpetually unstable, complex, and tense nature of encountering and responding to cultural difference. Staff members, such as Susan, agree that the students are very busy with a heavy schedule and a significant amount of homework and assignments (individual and group / same-culture and other-culture partners). Students feel that it is sometimes too much to ask them to learn a language, and adapt to a foreign learning environment / foreign curriculum content, while simultaneously and proactively engaging the variety of cultures in the classroom.

Cross-cultural conflicts

One of the challenges to intercultural learning that emerged from student interviews relates to the notion, often preconceived, that success in a foreign learning environment is improbable because studying with people from other cultures is too difficult. Moreover, insecurity regarding inadequacies (imagined or real) students may have when engaging difference, as well as anxiety over making mistakes in cross-cultural encounters and fears of how others may respond to their behavior, can paralyze a student’s ability or willingness to engage

others. Students speak, for example, of being afraid that something they say or do will be disrespectful to their other-culture teachers and classmates. In fact, the interviews show that even as a student's approach to cross-cultural encounters matures, engaging cultural differences is still perceived as a risk.

This perception often stems from students feeling that they do not know enough about the other cultures they encounter to make good judgements as to what is appropriate and what is not. We are reminded by Tarc (2013) that the transformative power of cross-cultural encounters (i.e. the intensity and difficulty of challenges faced) is a catalyst for deepening our understanding of spaces-times beyond our own (p. 54). Thus, educators should keep in mind that students are traversing complex and dynamic learning processes that involve both subject study (i.e. English language) and profound personal change. Laura's overseas teaching experience provides some insight, "I think it's important to get them talking about what they know...just get them talking...it's beneficial...[when I was overseas] I didn't know [the local culture]...but if I didn't think about it, ask somebody, and reflect on it...I never would've understood the culture." Thus, the initial challenge for teachers seems to be nurturing a broader form of cross-cultural respect until students learn enough about the other cultures they are engaging to know what is, and is not, appropriate ways of relating.

This time in between knowing and not knowing what is, and is not, culturally appropriate in other-cultures is a particularly precarious time in cross-cultural encounters. Students are often unaware that their behavior can have a much larger effect on others than they expect. Student interviews show, for example, that being opinionated and argumentative, admired in some cultures, is a signal of disrespect and arrogance in other cultures. Often the result of such misunderstandings is that students isolate themselves in their home-culture groups where they

feel more comfortable (even when those home-culture classmates are strangers). In turn, this home-culture isolation sends a message, intentional or not, that these students are less open to cross-cultural encounters. Other-culture classmates, feeling ostracized and disrespected, reciprocate what they interpret as indifference or hostility in a cycle of misunderstanding.

Within such a scenario it is easy to see some merit in Barry's (1997) argument that each individual negotiates and shapes their relationships to both their original and new culture-group (p. 9). However, in focusing on individual responses Barry ignores surrounding environmental factors that stimulated the response. Similarly Matsumoto (2004) encourages sojourners to be tolerant, empathetic, and adjustable when in foreign cultures (p. 299). Such research ignores the challenge that international students should build tolerance in a host-culture intolerant to them; that they should develop empathy for others despite being segregated by their hosts for being different; and, that they are encouraged to be cross-culturally adaptable in a host-country that need not adapt.

One group of three (sometimes four) students in particular spent most of the classroom observation period ensconced in a same-culture group of friends. Since they performed well in most of the graded assessments of their language and academic skills, teachers tended to overlook (despite being disappointed with) the students' lack of cross-cultural interaction. The general feeling was that these students, at that time, showed few signs of being ready to engage or manage the full range of demands brought up in cross-cultural classrooms. Whether or not the teachers made the right decision is difficult to say. However, it is clear that continued isolation in a same-culture 'safe zone', will limit these students preparation for the demands of a rapidly internationalizing academic reality.

Another challenge students have in cross-cultural encounters in the classroom are the mixed feelings that emerge over their other-culture classmates' perceptions of topics via particularly strong cultural viewpoints. One particularly disruptive example that comes up repeatedly in the student interview transcripts is the effect religion has on student perceptions. Students without a religion report feeling uncomfortable, embarrassed, or even intimidated because they think their religious classmates see them as deficient in some profound way. Student anxiety over what classmates from other cultures may think of them is exacerbated by fears to confront the differences they discover between themselves and their classmates, and often leads students toward both misunderstanding others and disengaging from cross-cultural encounters. As a way of informing students' attitude towards encounters with other-culture classmates, relational cosmopolitanism acknowledges the equal right of each culture to exist and evolve on its own terms (Rizvi, 2008, p. 23). Moreover, each individual is in a constant state of becoming – an ongoing effort to define and re-define themselves in the space-time they inhabit. The task for teachers is to build learning environments where there is a strong mutual agreement that, as much as possible and within limits, everyone is free to express themselves and formulate their own vision of the world and their position in it.

While I do not dispute that the non-religious students' perceptions are valid and certainly real to them, it should be said that neither interviews nor observations yielded any evidence of religious students' involvement in any purposeful attempt to make non-religious classmates feel inadequate or discriminated against.

Language learning

Although my research involves EAP students, the purpose of this thesis is not to analyse or prescribe solutions for learning the English language, in part because this aim dominates in the

research literature. However, the challenges posed by English language learning significantly affect students' ability to develop the intercultural sensibilities necessary to succeed in cross-cultural learning environments. As staff member Peter explains, reforming other-culture misconceptions and shaping intercultural learning, "...can be very difficult when teaching students in the very low levels because you're trying to teach them in a language completely foreign to them." In fact, students often blame their lack of English skills for most of the difficulties they have interacting with people from other cultures. In their interviews students reported feeling inadequate about their English and, by extension, insecure about engaging others (in and out of the classroom) with first languages different from their own. Moreover, as Peter says, EAP can be particularly taxing for some students, "I find that if the students are really struggling...if they're slow learners...it can be difficult for them because of the speed of the program." As if in response to these pressures, classroom observations provide significant evidence that many students usually sit with same-culture partners, often speak their first language, and sometimes avoid cross-cultural interaction. All three of these tendencies inhibit the frequency and quality of the students' cross-cultural interactions – and by extension, growth of their intercultural sensibilities.

Cross-cultural encounters in English can be especially intimidating to a student uninitiated to both the language and cultural aspects of these encounters. Classroom observations show that students in their first semester of study in a foreign country tended to spend more class time with same-culture classmates. Moreover, student interviews report being pressured to (and anxious about) interacting with others in English despite not feeling ready to do so – particularly with other-culture classmates. In the following excerpts from an anecdote about one of her favorite students, Laura provides some common descriptors (many I have used myself) of a

successful EAP student, “He was a sponge...came to class every day with a new question...never let anything rest...learned a lot of English because he uses everything...and never misses an opportunity...a lot of fun in class.” The lesson from this exceptional student is that it is important for teachers to remember that overcoming their insecurities and feelings of inadequacy towards their English abilities can be debilitating for students when initiating, or participating in, cross-cultural experiences. The deeper goal of embracing cultural difference can seem quite distant.

Objective 3: Opportunities for Identity Formation

The goal of the third research objective is to shed light on how spaces of cross-cultural encounter prepare students to take full advantage of the growth opportunities for *personal* and *professional* identity formation (i.e. who the students are becoming) encountered in cross-cultural learning experiences. As emerged from the student participants’ interviews, personal identity formation is defined as how the students perceive, position, and portray themselves as participants in local, national, and global society. Alternatively, students’ professional identity formation is defined by how their cross-cultural learning experiences are expected to result in professional careers that will enable the students to assume socially, economically, and politically advantageous and desirable positions in the global economy. Discussions around personal identity formation in student interviews were the more common of the two themes (see Table 2) primarily because most of the students had little or no work experience and thus opportunities for professional identity formation were more the formation of personal aspirations than the definition of who they are as professionals.

Personal

Within the ‘personal’ theme of identity formation I have identified two trends from the interview data. The first trend, frame of mind, discusses how students’ cross-cultural encounters (and reflections on those encounters) are shaping their attitude towards the ways others’ perceive the world around them and how these new perceptions effect who the students are becoming. The second trend, behavior, examines how cross-cultural encounters (and reflections on those encounters) are encouraging students to change (or think about changing) their behavior – especially when encountering difference – and thus how they imagine themselves functioning in cross-cultural spaces.

Frame of mind

Most students expect their foreign sojourn will change them in some fundamental way. For many students this involves opportunities to explore beyond the limited world view of their home-culture with the intent on becoming a more globally minded person. Rizvi (2015) explains that with the intensifying mobility of capital, people, ideas, information, and ideologies brought on by globalization, social identities and cultural formation may potentially be profoundly affected. Thus, for those students interested in broadening their understanding of the world, globalization’s promise of profound personal transformation galvanizes their attitude toward the cross-cultural aspects available in modern post-secondary education.

Cross-cultural classrooms are often rich with opportunities to explore one’s identity as positioned by the modern reality of globalization. Interviews revealed a tendency for students to imagine a future in which they are able to respond to various situations regardless of what culture(s) they engage. Having acquired a knowledge of living and working with others, students

imagine themselves as being more comfortable dealing with difference. Moreover, observations show that some students have become interested in exploring the differences they perceive between themselves and their other-culture classmates. These particularly inquisitive students seek out and even create encounters with classmates from other cultures. For many students, understanding the differences between their home-culture and western culture has become an important life purpose. By knowing how/why others make sense of the world differently, students develop a more international identity for themselves.

Often, students' desire to understand different cultures is mitigated by previously held beliefs on how best to engage people from different cultures. As staff member Peter explains, while in their home-culture, "...students tend to learn something that is expected in this new culture [Canada] that's not correct...misconceptions are taught and students consider themselves prepared." However, student interviews conveyed how their cross-cultural experiences have reformed their expectations of both themselves and others. More specifically, some students reflected on how experiences with other cultures help them foster peaceful, tolerant, and respectful attitudes and behavior when engaging other-culture classmates. The teachers, as Marginson and Sawir (2011) have suggested, understand their role in helping students engage other-culture classmates. Despite other pressures, such as time limits and curriculum expectations, the teachers make a concerted effort to form in students the capacity for imaginative mediation amongst difference. Observations confirm that students who appeared to remain consciously aware of what best to do or say when working with other-culture classmates (e.g. men refraining from intentionally touching a Muslim woman in any way) usually had a friendlier and more constructive encounter. A healthy cross-cultural classroom gives students the time-space to explore cultural differences within such culturally respectful and sensitive

circumstances. Moreover, teachers in cross-cultural classrooms should promote such altruistic notions as productive ways for students to transform who they understand themselves to be in relation to the modern world they inhabit.

Sometimes being able to explore differences in their own culture helps students scrutinize the cultural norms they take for granted. For the Libyan and Saudi Arabian students in this study, having Muslim classmates from a different country allowed them to compare what many of them thought were rather uniform cultural and religious norms. In-class discussions around appropriate social customs, for example, often involved contrasting viewpoints from the Libyan and Saudi Arabian students in which, to almost everyone's surprise, Libyan customs appeared significantly more restrictive than those in Saudi Arabia (often criticized for its socially conservative laws). While some of the Chinese students are curious as to the purpose of religion, question the value of believing in God, and perhaps still see Muslims as a homogenous religious group, the Muslim students are exploring the geographic distinctions of what it means to be Muslim. This reflects Marginson and Sawir's (2011) notion that individual identities (i.e. their personality, behavior, attitudes, circumstances, etc.) are positioned in local, national and international spaces (p. 55). Thus, where these particular Muslim students are from, where they are now, and what larger forces influence them, play a role in negotiating how Islam is defined and practiced by them.

Some students have come to identify strongly with the increased autonomy to make personal choices outside of the cultural norms they were raised in. For example, having built a strong friendship despite barriers of cultural difference, two students in particular have begun to transcend the identity imposed on them by the cultural norms of their home countries. One of these students has even begun to position himself without a national identity (an imagined

identity not yet possible in any pragmatic sense). He imagines a space and time when everyone can ‘fit together’ in a more universal human identity. This student’s perspective aligns with Rizvi’s (2008) notion that in the accelerated globalizing reality of the modern world our cultural identities are increasingly breaking free of territorial limitations as defined by a single nationality (p. 23). Through their cross-cultural friendship these two students have begun to see that difference, whether defined by nationality or some other marker, is simply a matter of perception. They have taken some of their first steps into a more cosmopolitan identity.

Behavior

Encountering different notions of appropriate behavior compels students to change how they interact with others. Some of the behavior that has caught students’ attention in Canada is shaping how they imagine their present and future ‘self’ behaving both in Canada and at home. As Rizvi (2008) tells us, cultural norms are not only difficult to define but also constantly evolving in contrast with others that are different (p. 30). The students’ behavior changes may become a permanent part of their identity, but these same students are often not very aware of the cultural-hybrid identity they are shaping and being shaped into.

Some students seek to compartmentalize different behaviors based on the culture they encounter, but they are not seeking to drastically change what they see as the fundamental core of their identity. One Muslim woman, for example, explains that most Muslim women adapt their behavior according to their perceptions of western expectations (e.g. vocally oppose men they do not know, or change how – or whether – they wear their head-scarf). When they leave class, however, these women make a conscious effort to change to a more traditional sense of themselves. It can be argued that, while maintaining a strong Muslim identity is important for the Libyan and Saudi Arabian students, being in a cross-cultural learning environment gives them

the time-space to explore a sense of self-efficacy when it comes to choosing who they identify themselves beyond their national or localized norms.

Some students have used their encounters with different notions of behavior and identity to strengthen previously established identity markers. They accept that working with people from different cultures is part of the modern reality. However, instead of desiring personal transformations that align with the different cultural perspectives they have encountered, these students seek merely to build mutually-respectful culturally-platonic relationships. The Muslim students, for example, have an opportunity to at least examine why they identify with Islam and then explore how best to ‘manage’ both their relationship to their religious faith and their encounters in a culturally dynamic and complex world. Rizvi (2005) explains that relational cosmopolitanism allows for as many or as few hybrid identities as each individual chooses. Despite the prerequisite to celebrate cultural plurality, relational cosmopolitanism does not expect people to adopt all the values and practices of one culture in particular (p. 332). Although these students do not tend to sympathize with their other-cultural classmates who openly question the value of religion, they do seek to reconcile the conflicts that arise in their relationships with others from different, even conflicting, cultural viewpoints.

Experiences with cross-cultural encounters foster growth in students’ personal identity by allowing them to step into different cultural spaces where they are less bound by many of the social / cultural norms of their home-cultures that limited how they could behave and who they could become. Cross-cultural learning environments give students the freedom to experiment with the ways in which different behavior can change how they see themselves and the others around us. Moreover, Tarc (2013) reminds us that identities and experiences are neither generic, uniform, nor static, but personal diverse, and dynamic (p. 51). Thus, by not being fully aware of

the cultural norms immediately around them (i.e. in a foreign culture), and by being immersed in a space where cultural norms are fluid / dynamic (i.e. a cross-cultural learning environment), international students are able to explore a wider scope of identity. For many of the female students, for example, having the opportunity to step outside the pressures of being a woman in their home-culture has fostered a freedom to explore new attitudes and lifestyles. Moreover, sometimes the cultural landscapes we live in allow or require us to behave differently. New behavior thus becomes habitual, and the changes that emerge in one's personal identity may become increasingly permanent. The Muslim women in particular are well aware that living in Canada (with freedoms that are restricted to them inside their home-culture) for an extended period of time may permanently change their identities as a women, as Libyan or Saudi Arabian, and, possibly, as Muslims.

Other students are not only aware of their emerging hybrid identity, but are actively participating in manifesting a sense of 'self' expressed in both attitude and behavior. These students are developing an identity that bridges their home-culture, host-culture, and other-culture experiences. Classroom observations show that these students are regularly negotiating an alternative notion of themselves as influenced by their home-culture but not completely defined or limited by that home-culture. By being able to compare real life experiences with different types of behavior, these students have begun reflecting on behavior and attitudes that they like/dislike regardless of cultural origin.

Professional

Within the 'professional' theme of identity formation I have identified two trends. The first trend, western education, focuses on students' perception of how a university education from a western country (i.e. Canada) places them in an advantageous position to both succeed in

professional careers and assume a privileged socio-economic status. The second trend, cross-cultural experience, centers on how students value building a personal repertoire of interaction with other cultures as a means to position themselves as ‘in the know’ in a globally competitive job market.

Western education

Many students see themselves as positioned differently once they return home with a western education. Interviews illustrate that they are aware of the increasingly international nature of living and working in their home countries and that interacting with other cultures is becoming a common occurrence. Moreover, observational data suggests that students’ experience and skills negotiating cross-cultural encounters successfully, their broadening awareness of how other cultures perceive the world, and their ability to hold and manage multiple cultural viewpoints simultaneously, is helping these students develop an intercultural awareness that will facilitate a successful career in the modern world.

Post-secondary institutions in general provide credentials to initiate or augment a professional career, and university degrees from the west in particular have become the most highly sought after education credentials in the world. Warranted or not, most of the students in this study admit seeing Canada as providing some of ‘the best’ post-secondary education in the world, and the prestige of obtaining a degree from a Canadian university (especially an English speaking university) is advantageous for international students’ social, economic, and professional prospects. For graduates, both a degree from a western post-secondary institution and the English language skills that degree requires have become valuable commodities they can highlight to prospective employers.

Some students place a higher value on western post-secondary education because they see universities in their home-country as quality deficient (i.e. having a bad reputation for being overcrowded, too easy to pass, professors with weak credentials) and thus lacking the prestige that will help set the students apart from others in a competitive job market. Moreover, universities in China, for example, may provide high quality instruction, but the credentials that a degree from these universities lends their graduates' professional careers lacks the lustre of a western degree.

Cross-cultural experience

For most students the opportunity to build cross-cultural relationships is part of their notion of success. These students are simply 'trying to learn more' about their home-culture and other-cultures because they feel it will make them a more well-rounded person. Such an attitude towards 'success' benefits students both personally and professionally. Most of the students have developed a personal interest in building friendships with like-minded people (i.e. motivated to broaden their minds) regardless of culture. At the same time, they know that those friendships represent future (possibly) professional networks, and that through these relationships the cultural awareness (i.e. seeing and understanding how others perceive the world) they develop is vital to maintaining successful career in the modern world.

Finally, a few students have already begun to build a working professional identity for themselves through an international network of business relationships. One student in particular has nurtured a friendship with an other-culture classmate that has leveraged a larger business relationship between their families. Regardless of whether or not their cross-cultural enterprise continues to grow, building this sort of cross-cultural relationship has allowed the students involved to imagine a future international business career. These students have an opportunity to

engage difference in a real-life professional experience, and they are learning the value and potential in searching out further cross-cultural encounters.

Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter provides both a summary of this study, as well as a summary and discussion (augmented by teacher/administrator interview data) around this study's findings in relation to the conceptual framework. The discussion is organized in respect to the objectives laid out in chapter 1, as well as in accordance to the themes and trends that emerged from my analysis of the student interview transcripts. The final task, taken up in chapter Six, is to return to the study's primary research questions and discuss the ways in which the completed research illuminates answers to the primary research questions. Moreover, chapter 6 outlines the significant implications and limitations of this study; recommends how educators might make cross-cultural encounters more productive; and, presents concluding remarks.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

A relational cosmopolitan lens was used in this study to further understand how international students engage and potentially learn from cross-cultural encounters in an EAP classroom. By stepping away from generalized cultural distinctions that essentialize cultural groups as rigid and tangible entities, relational cosmopolitanism has transformed my perception of intercultural learning beyond simple adaptations to new cultural environments (i.e. the main preoccupation of psychology-based cross-cultural research). My research extends towards a deeper critical understanding of students' cultural identities as spaces of ceaseless becoming. In cross-cultural environments in particular these are complex relational spaces defined by the locality, nationality, changing cultural identity, global systems, and imaginings of those involved. Students in such cross-cultural environments (i.e. international students in Canadian EAP classrooms) regularly negotiate and share new experiences and identity formations that are neither generic, uniform, nor static, but personal, diverse, and dynamic. Thus, relational cosmopolitanism has helped me form a more realistic view of intercultural learning as an unpredictable, complex, and slow process. The challenge is that such learning (and research that accompanies it) follows a singular, irregular, and indeterminate path to understanding and engaging difference.

Based on my analysis of the observation and interview data, this final chapter returns to the study's primary research questions as a major part of my concluding discussion. More specifically, the components of this chapter include: ways in which the completed research illuminates answers to the primary research questions; limitations of this study and suggestions for future study; my recommendations for making cross-cultural encounters and intercultural

learning more positive and productive; this study's implications for future policy and practice regarding intercultural learning; and, the concluding remarks of this thesis.

Revisiting the Research Questions

In revisiting this study's predominant research questions I utilize the factors outlined in Appendix A to examine how intercultural learning manifests in the classroom. Moreover, although much of the completed analysis engages more than one research question at a time, the following discussion approaches each question separately. The first half of the discussion relates to the intercultural skills and sensibilities of students (i.e. question 1), while the second half of the discussion responds to question two's concern for intercultural learning in foreign and cross-cultural learning environments. Below I restate the two primary questions.

1. Given that intercultural learning (i.e. the sharing of cultural knowledge and perceptions) and the development of intercultural sensibilities result from encounters with different cultures, in what ways does intercultural learning manifest in a cross-cultural classroom?
2. Understanding that international students are globally mobile individuals undergoing transformational experiences involving foreign and cross-cultural learning environments, in what ways is their intercultural learning fostered by such a learning environment?

Intercultural skills / sensibilities of students

Throughout the course of this study most students exhibited a (sometimes strong) curiosity in the other-cultures of their classmates or teachers, and their cross-cultural encounters usually involved a respectful sharing of cultural knowledge and perceptions. Disagreements and conflicts were, more often than not, caused by misunderstandings or unintentional missteps

related to different culturally-defined expectations. Such incidents were usually mediated via a classroom atmosphere promoting open discussion and question making around cultural differences. In turn, these questions and discussions facilitated students learning how a (somewhat limited) range of ‘others’ define themselves (i.e. nationality, and religion) and behave according to their home-cultures and past experiences. Moreover, in discussing the how’s and why’s of their home-culture as well as the how’s and why’s of their other-culture classmates, students have had to reflect on (i.e. compare / contrast) the unique nature of their cultural perceptions. It should be noted however, that although these students have initiated a critical exploration of other cultures and their own, their awareness of a larger critical global imagination (i.e. how they identify their own and others’ multi-faceted positioning in the world) seems limited.

Foreign and cross-cultural learning environments

The research shows that the facilitation and support of intercultural learning in cross-cultural classrooms (e.g. EAP classrooms) is fostered largely by the experience, motivation, and/or ability¹³ of teachers to navigate (sometimes complex) cross-cultural interactions. Particular to EAP classrooms is the necessity for teachers to minimize language barriers in order to enhance understanding between students with different first languages. However, while the teachers in this study frequently attempt to cultivate communication amongst students from different cultures (i.e. get students talking with each other), most cross-culture communication skills are developed by proxy via cross-cultural pair/group work. In other words, unless a student

¹³ Read – ability according to demands of curriculum, subject (i.e. English language) assessments, and time restraints (i.e. completion of English language acquisition in 8 months or less).

is being particularly disrespectful or unethical, there are few overt attempts to teach how best to conduct a cross-cultural encounter.

Still, various pedagogic strategies were employed to affect the classroom dynamic and participants' classroom performances so as to promote intercultural learning. Such strategies included: long term problem-based projects (i.e. academic presentation or essay writing); team-based learning (i.e. group work); cross-cultural pair work on in-class tasks; and, building a warm and safe interactive atmosphere. Evident in the utilization of these cross-cultural pedagogic strategies was a concerted effort to encourage students to listen to, question, and understand the viewpoints of their other-culture classmates in a non-judgemental manner. Despite the value placed on learning about / from encounters with other-culture classmates, cross-cultural pairs/groups were not the primary median for learning (i.e. students often chose same-culture partners). Moreover, little partnered/group-based *assessment* involved cultural content in which cross-cultural learning presses the students to exchange cultural knowledge or perceptions. That being said, teachers regularly modify their curriculum-based lesson plans (or amend them with alternative teaching materials) to enhance the cross-cultural aspects of classroom interaction. This means, for example, choosing textbook chapters, or questions or exercises within those chapters, which are not only culturally appropriate, inclusive, and diverse, but which also engage critical thinking.

Limitations

This study's most significant limitation is its attempt to articulate the complex, dynamic, and 'ever becoming' nature of intercultural relations (not to mention personal identity) in a time when cross-cultural encounters are intensifying on a global scale. Given that our understanding of globalization and its effects are still developing, using standard forms of investigation (i.e.

observation and interviews) might not provide sufficient insight into the nuances of this novel and all-pervasive socio-cultural phenomena. Further, trying to understand students' *emergent* intercultural learning and becoming is itself an ambitious task, not easy to capture. My findings, for example, emerge from rather short one-off interview-conversations with globally mobile students who are working to understand their shifting locations and identities. Such interviews offer a limited glimpse of a personal and ever changing international experience of which the students are little aware and only beginning to understand. One alternative is a less formal investigation (i.e. with friends or well-known acquaintances) involving multiple impromptu in-person or online conversations with two or three students in cross-cultural classrooms over a much longer period of time (i.e. one or two academic years). An investigation of this design would provide a deeper understanding of intercultural learning in the modern era.

A second limitation is that the study focuses solely on one EAP program. Moreover, EAP is a college preparatory program where cross-cultural encounters and intercultural learning hold an intrinsic value (though they are not formally assessed). Further research might broaden this study's investigation of intercultural learning by involving EAP programs in language schools outside of southern Ontario. Additionally, researchers might conduct follow up research on how, and how well, the intercultural learning of the students in this study develops as they move into and through their post-secondary courses and programs. Another research suggestion is to look into the nature of intercultural learning in a post-secondary course or program.

Finally, this study is limited by its focus on (international / EAP) student perceptions regarding cross-cultural encounters and intercultural learning. Such a focus largely ignores the research possibilities opened up by the contributions that curriculum, teacher training, administrative processes, and classroom management make towards intercultural learning.

Moreover, despite taking particular care in choosing a class with cultural diversity, advanced English language abilities, and a reputation for frequent and productive cross-cultural interactions, cultural differences and/or language difficulties between myself and the students may have caused some discord between my analysis and the students' perceptions. Researchers might conduct follow up research on how, and how well, the intercultural learning of the students in this study develops as they move into and through their post-secondary courses and programs. Additionally, a deeper investigation of the same EAP program could involve a larger number classes and language levels to see if similar results can be confirmed.

Recommendations

My recommendations for creating peaceful and productive interactions in cross-cultural classrooms are based largely on what my research evidence did not reveal in relation to factors affecting intercultural learning (as outlined in Appendix A). It must also be said that the two main obstacles to my recommendations are that most EAP programs: 1) lack a dedicated intercultural learning component in their curriculum; and, 2) implement intense time constraints on language learning (i.e. one academic year to progress from beginner English to an advanced university-ready level). Without considering (and possibly reducing) these obstacles, administrators, teachers, and students will likely perceive my recommendations as more burdensome than advantageous. My suggestions are meant to serve as general counsel for best-practice in administrative processes, conflict resolution, classroom management, curriculum development, teacher training, and student advising.

Building an intercultural learning component into a curriculum must involve a couple of guiding principles. First, it is important to acknowledge that learning is always partial and tentative. Such an insight identifies the fundamental need for an 'ever-becoming' and flexible

curriculum. Moreover, such a curriculum facilitates a genuine respect for others who are different. Second, educators must work towards modifying their view of the world by incorporating the cultural content (e.g. history) of other cultures into our own. These modifications facilitate the imagining of alternatives as one reconciles differences between their home-culture and other-cultures – doing so shapes new identities for themselves and others based on a new ‘local’ in a more global context.

Thus, my first recommendation is that a concerted and ongoing effort be made to confront and investigate cultural differences. Struggling with tendencies to shy away from other-culture classmates seems a natural response for many in foreign places. However, it is important to recognize that cultural differences are, in a sense, *effects* of readings and misreadings produced in unique spaces-times. In fact, our goals (i.e. getting an education, building a career, and being generally happy) are basically the same. Moreover, critically analyzing and deconstructing how and why which differences come about (and with which valences) might help us transcend culturally defined barriers and build a more multiple relational identity encompassing more of our particular space/time (i.e. as we become more aware of others we incorporate their perceptions with our own).

Lastly, intercultural learning components in curriculum should engage students in the recurrent problems common to the human condition that no culture has managed to solve completely (i.e. global problems that require global solutions). Investigating such areas of concern involves students in both a critical analysis of cultural differences and a search for new and less ethnocentric views about issues relevant to everyone today. The result should be increasing opportunities for more open discussion, sharing, and learning.

Implications

There are three main implications for educational policy that emerge from this study. The most significant policy implication addresses the loss of intercultural learning opportunities in cross-cultural classrooms. For example, many international students choose to isolate themselves in same-culture groups and engage other cultures only when directed to do so by their teacher. Despite acknowledging the intrinsic value of their encounters with other culture classmates, teachers, and acquaintances, it is difficult for many students to ignore the significance of English language based tasks (i.e. tasks that are graded or assessed in some manner) as students must ‘pass’ these tasks in order to attend a post-secondary institution.

One option for EAP programs is to place a tangible value (e.g. 10% of final grade) on, and providing effective assessment and feedback for, the quality of each student’s cross-cultural interactions. Such an amendment would further motivate students to engage other-culture classmates. However, it is impossible to guarantee cross-cultural interaction in every EAP classroom – especially in EAP programs comprised solely of local students (e.g. EAP programs in China) and even in EAP programs that recruit students internationally. Thus, assessing the extent to which any student has achieved intercultural learning would be problematic (at best) in many classroom scenarios. Moreover, imposing a grading scheme on intercultural learning risks reducing what a relational cosmopolitan understanding of intercultural learning would be – that is, as deeply personal transformative experiences in which students are free to explore, engage, and maintain multiple, intersecting, diverse, and constantly changing relationships and self-identities on a global stage. Certainly educators should be better prepared to help students engage with other cultures. Thus, perhaps the best option is to help (or search for ways to help) educators become more aware of creating opportunities for students to engage different cultural

knowledge and perceptions – leaving intercultural learning an unassessed but intrinsically valued curriculum goal shaped in unique and organic ways particular to different spaces-times.

The second policy implication involves writing and implementing curriculum that more thoroughly allows for the critical analysis of cultural differences and how they get constructed. The reading and listening textbooks used by the class in this study, for example, tend to include a few topic-focused ‘critical thinking’ questions as an appendage to introduce and/or conclude each unit. Discussions around these questions focus mainly on each unit’s topic. In order to further students’ intercultural learning, more effort should be made to introduce topics into the curriculum that involve the students in regular critical analysis of their particular cultural differences and cross-cultural experiences. An added benefit, in the case of EAP, is that students could develop the language and academic skills necessary for success in their post-secondary studies while simultaneously critically exploring their relationship to other cultures.

The EAP program in this study is already progressing towards curriculum that involves critical analysis of cultural differences. However, as staff member David tells us, “...there’s been strides made to be more intentional to working [intercultural learning] into the curriculum... some [teachers/administration] value it more than others...and there’s different levels of understanding what we’re talking about too...they might not understand what it actually is.” This illuminates the third policy implication of this thesis – the training of faculty and staff. Throughout my observations and interviews each teacher’s considerable ability to teach English (and basic academic skills) was clearly apparent. There appeared to be variations, however, in each teacher’s awareness of how international students identify and position themselves (and how others identify and position them) in their day to day reality. Moreover, some ‘teachable-moments’ involving critical analysis of cultural difference were overlooked or lost. This may

have been the teacher's prerogative for prioritizing language learning targets. However, further training on how best to implement intercultural learning into their lessons could help teachers deepen students' understanding of cultural differences.

In addition to implications for educational policy, there are also three main implications for teaching practice that emerge from this study. The first implication for teaching practice is that, when possible (i.e. when a class's cultural diversity allows), teachers should make cross-cultural partnering mandatory. As observational evidence in chapter 4 shows, students usually sit with a same-culture partner(s) if given the choice. Partnering with other-culture classmates will facilitate intercultural learning in the simplest and most direct manner – by compelling students to learn about and work through their cultural differences in order to complete a task. Moreover, the pedagogical implication for English language teaching in particular is that by having other-culture task partners (i.e. a classmate with a different first language) students are compelled by circumstances to practice their English. Teachers might be more lenient about allowing students to work with same-culture/language classmates earlier in the program (i.e. in beginner levels of learning, or the first week of each semester), but as students advance teachers should expect students to work with someone from a different first language group. Such an expectation ensures that cross-cultural encounters occur and that tasks are largely completed using English.

The second implication for teaching practice, strongly related to the first, is to provoke students who regularly hide in same-culture 'safe-zone' groups by purposely involving them in discussions about cultural differences. These may be topics that self-isolating students are uncomfortable investigating. However, having them explore, identify, and (hopefully) confront that which discourages them from cross-cultural encounters may help these students transcend

personal barriers that only hinder their progress through an increasingly internationalized post-secondary education.

The third implication for teaching practice speaks directly to each teacher's ability to critically analyze both their understanding of intercultural learning and how well they exploit intercultural 'teaching-moments' in their own practice. Teachers must also work to recognize which students are struggling with cross-cultural encounters and develop strategies for helping them. Such complex insights into personal teaching practice will not emerge without participation in teacher training, curriculum development, and ongoing mentorship guided by intentions to facilitate students' intercultural learning.

Concluding Thoughts

As researchers of education the time has come for some of us to shift our focus from identifying and measuring each individual's intercultural competencies (although these remain important in gaining a full understanding of a particular individual's circumstances), towards an awareness of how the broader effects of local, national, and global forces influence individuals in the unique spaces-times they live. The challenge for educators (constrained to value the measurable) is that intercultural competencies or sensibilities are somewhat difficult to assess numerically. So how do they know if their students are becoming more interculturally sensitive/aware?

Those of us who are not 'world travelers' (i.e. deficient of strong intercultural competencies) may always struggle with living, studying, and working with other cultures. In the past this might have been enough to discourage us from leaving home altogether. However, as the social and economic pressures of globalization intensify few people in the world will be able

to avoid cross-cultural encounters throughout their life. Thus, especially for educators, questions arise around how best to facilitate globally comprehensive progress towards societies shaped by intercultural sensibilities that encourage both ethical and fair interactions with people from cultures different than our own. An integral part of this progress involves thinking reflectively and critically about how one perceives and responds to other cultures, as positioned in their particular space and time in history, and correcting our mistakes. A relational cosmopolitan approach improves how we grasp and engage cultural differences and thereby helps us work towards intercultural understanding on both pedagogic and societal levels.

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Appendix A

When examining intercultural learning in a cross-cultural classroom, it is helpful to focus on a number of factors that may or may not become manifest, including (but not limited to):

- Facilitation/support of intercultural learning in the classroom
- Cultivation of intercultural communication and awareness amongst different cultures
- Development of cross-cultural communication skills
- Ethical / respectful encouragement of engaging different cultures
- Inspiration to critically explore other cultures
- Encouragement to understand one's own socio-cultural locations
- Modifying understanding of the world by merging different cultural content (e.g. history) and developing a more diversified viewpoint of the world
- Evidence of listening / understanding the other
- Expression of values such as openness, tolerance and culturally inclusive behavior
- Teaching materials that are diverse, culturally appropriate, and/or modified to be culturally inclusive
- Pedagogical response to minimizing language barriers to enhance understanding
- Awareness of the politics of classroom participation
- Intercultural learning strategies (examples listed below) that affect the classroom dynamic and participants' classroom performance so as to promote intercultural learning
 - Problem based learning projects (long-term / mixed groups)
 - Team based learning (e.g. group projects)
 - Frequent cross-cultural pairing for interactive learning
 - Group work that involves examples from home countries
 - Frequent group-based assessment with cultural contents in which cross-cultural learning inspires students to work in groups and not alone
 - Mixed groups are the primary medium for learning
 - Time spent on developing skills in focused listening, turn-taking, questioning, negotiating, and giving/receiving feedback
 - Generating peer to peer conversations in a warm and safe interactive atmosphere

- Work around recurrent problems common to the human condition and that no culture has managed to solve completely – thus initiating opportunities for more open discussion/sharing
- Students' expression of new non-ethnocentric views about social issues in their own lives
- Placing value on cultural differences and learning from difference

When examining how intercultural learning manifests with participants (i.e. teachers and students) it is helpful to focus on a number of factors, including (but not limited to):

- Interest in learning about new cultures
- Interest in learning about cultures beyond the immediate dominant culture
- Respectful /ethical engagement with other cultures
- Expressed appreciation / awareness for the global connectivity available
- Acknowledgement that learning is always partial/tentative, as well as initiation / continuation of a critical exploration of other cultures
- Attempts to develop a critical global imagination that tries to identify/understand one's true positioning in relation to the world
- Learning the cultural knowledge of others
- Attempts to modify one's view of the world by incorporating the cultural content (e.g. history) of others into their own
- Mediation of the differences of understanding encountered (e.g. different views of historical events)
- Learning how others define themselves (i.e. nationality, religion, other)
- Learning whether or not/how others identify with something larger
- Exploration of the ways others identify with (i.e. see themselves a part of / separate from) their new/host-culture, country, community, and/or university
- Exploration of the ways others identify with something larger that encompasses everything (i.e. global)

- Imagining alternatives as one reconciles differences between home and host-cultures while establishing a new identity based on a new local understood in a global context
- Attempts to understand the range of cultures one encounters as well as attempts to situate one's home culture within that range

Appendix B

QUESTIONS FOR STUDENT INTERVIEWS

1. Tell me about yourself. What do you think others should know about you?
2. What motivated you to study in a foreign country?
3. What can you tell me about your experiences studying in a new culture?
 - What successes / difficulties have you experienced?
 - What have you done to adjust?
4. What can you tell me about the teachers/students from other cultures you've met here?
 - What other cultures have you encountered?
 - What do you have in common with them?
5. Do you enjoy studying with students / teachers from other cultures? Why? Why not?
 - Have they ever done anything that you thought was unusual?
6. How do students/teachers in your culture behave differently from the students/teachers you have met from other cultures?
7. What are the benefits of studying with students/teachers from other cultures?
8. What are the challenges of studying with students/teachers from other cultures?
9. What has surprised you when studying with people from other countries/cultures?
10. Have your experiences with people from other countries/cultures helped you better understand the world? In what way?

Appendix C

TEACHER INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do you love about teaching English for Academic Purposes?
2. What are the most significant challenges in teaching and learning in an EAP program?
3. Describe a successful experience you have had working with international students.
4. Do you feel it is important to teach international students how to study/work/live in a culturally diverse society? How would you accomplish this task?
5. How does the EAP program you teach in help its students relate to different cultural perspectives?

Appendix D

ADMINISTRATOR INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Tell me about CultureWorks. What should others know about this school and its programs?
2. The CultureWorks website says, “CultureWorks care about students and international education above all else.” Can you extrapolate on this?
3. The CultureWorks website says, “Our care is shown in every action and decision from strategic growth and strong partner relationships to program development and services.” Can you give some specific examples of what CultureWorks has done to accomplish these goals?
4. The CultureWorks website says, “Our English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program teaches the fundamentals of English as well as North American culture and academic traditions.” Can you explain what is meant by ‘teaching...North American culture’?

Appendix E

Project Title: Intercultural Learning in a Cross-Cultural Environment

Principal Investigator:

Paul Tarc, PhD, Education, University of Western Ontario

Student Letter of Information

1. Invitation to Participate

You are being invited to participate in this research study about intercultural learning in a cross-cultural environment because you are studying in a cross-cultural environment and you experience cross-cultural exchange on a regular basis.

2. Purpose of the Letter

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

3. Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is to establish a deep understanding of how intercultural learning is both conceptualized and actually supported in a cross-cultural learning environment from a relational cosmopolitan viewpoint.

The objectives are to:

1. Identify how spaces of cross-cultural encounter (e.g. EAP programs) facilitate intercultural learning.
2. Observe how student and teachers in cross-cultural environments (e.g. EAP programs) apply existing/developing intercultural skills
3. Clarify how spaces of cross-cultural encounter (e.g. EAP programs) nurture and develop the intercultural sensibilities necessary to understand foreign learning expectations.
4. Shed light on how spaces of cross-cultural encounter (e.g. EAP programs) prepare us to take full advantage of the growth opportunities for personal and professional identity formation encountered in cross-cultural learning experiences.

4. Inclusion Criteria

Participants must be a student in an English for Academic Purposes / English Language Training program at a post-secondary institution in Canada, or at an English language school/institute, that specializes in preparing international students for the English language rigors of attending a post-secondary institution in Canada with English is the dominant language.

Participants must be studying full time at an intermediate to advanced level as designated by the school/institute in which they are enrolled.

5. Exclusion Criteria

Any student without an overall passing grade in the intermediate / advanced level of their English language program will not be considered for this study.

Any student body (at the classroom level) below the school/institute's designated intermediate level of English will not be included in the project.

Any student body (at the classroom level) consisting of a single language-group/culture-group/nationality will not be considered for this study.

6. Study Procedures

You are being invited to participate in a study that we, James Budrow and Paul Tarc, are conducting. Briefly, the study involves two parts.

The first part involves a research team member observing your class two hours a day for, five days a week for four weeks. In this part students/teachers are not expected to do anything other than what they usually do in class.

The second part involves a research team member conducting one-to-one interviews with up to three students per week (different students each week) for four weeks.

The interviews will take place in a location (and at a time) negotiated by the research team member and the students being interviewed. They will take 30 – 45 minutes to complete. The interviews will be audio recorded and transcribed.

7. Possible Risks and Harms

Student interview transcripts will be kept confidential by coding participants' names and other identifying markers. You will be anonymous.

Sharing with an administrator / teacher any observations and interview results regarding students' (individually or as a whole) attitudes, reflections, and/or criticisms of their experiences in class could have an unfair influence on the teacher's evaluation of a students' language ability or overall performance.

Analysis and/or criticism of students' performance in class or comments made towards students in interviews could have a negative on students' motivation to continue learning, self-esteem in relation to language ability, self-identity, or social positioning/activity.

Documenting, recording, and giving voice to international students is particularly sensitive since they are often marginalized in western post-secondary communities. Inaccurately or insensitively communicating international students' unique interests, concerns, and reflections can potentially leave them (individually or as a group) not only feeling more vulnerable but also more intensely positioned as outsiders by mainstream society.

8. Possible Benefits

There is opportunity in interviews for one-on-one practice of English with an experienced English language teacher - thus furthering their interest, ability, and comfort with English as a second language.

There is opportunity to broaden/deepen your understanding/perception of the cross-cultural environment they are (will be) studying in.

You may or may not directly benefit from participating in this study but information gathered will provide benefits to society as a whole. These include:

- As cross-cultural encounters intensify on a global scale, there is a growing need to deepen our understanding of the intercultural dynamics at play in learning so we may tune into the diverse relationships that emerge. The intention of my research is to build awareness of who we are becoming as the societies / cultures we inhabit position and identify us.
- Moreover, given that the upward trend of international student enrolment in Canadian universities, it is vital that all stakeholders in post-secondary education participate in the ongoing conversation on how best to accommodate the needs of international students.

9. Compensation

Each student participant will be provided with an hour one-to-one English language tutoring session (not on material/assignments they will be evaluated on for class) during (or shortly after depending on schedules) the research study.

10. Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your future (career/academic status/employment).

11. Confidentiality

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. If the results are published, your name will not be used. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed and destroyed from our database. While we will do our best to protect your information there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so. The inclusion of your initials and your date of birth may allow someone to link the data and identify you. Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may contact you or require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

12. Contacts for Further Information

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact:

Paul Tarc, Principal Investigator.

James Budrow, Research Team Member.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics.

13. Publication

The study's results may be published in an academic journal. If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please contact Paul Tarc or James Budrow.

14. Consent

Included with this Letter of Information is a Consent Form that you must sign in order to participate. This letter will be kept for future reference.

Appendix F

Project Title: Intercultural Learning in a Cross-Cultural Environment

Principal Investigator: Paul Tarc, PhD, Education, University of Western Ontario

Administrator / Teacher Letter of Information

1. Invitation to Participate

You are being invited to participate in this research study about intercultural learning in a cross-cultural environment because you are working in a cross-cultural environment and you experience cross-cultural exchange on a regular basis.

2. Purpose of the Letter

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with information required for you to make an informed decision regarding participation in this research.

3. Purpose of this Study

The purpose of this study is to establish a deep understanding of how intercultural learning is both conceptualized and actually supported in a cross-cultural learning environment.

The objectives are to:

- identify how spaces of cross-cultural encounter (e.g. EAP programs) facilitate intercultural learning.
- Observe how student and teachers in cross-cultural environments (e.g. EAP programs) apply existing/developing intercultural skills
- clarify how spaces of cross-cultural encounter (e.g. EAP programs) nurture and develop the intercultural sensibilities necessary to understand foreign learning expectations.
- shed light on how spaces of cross-cultural encounter (e.g. EAP programs) prepare us to take full advantage of the growth opportunities for personal and professional identity formation encountered in cross-cultural learning experiences.

4. Inclusion Criteria

Participants must be an administrator / teacher in an English for Academic Purposes / English Language Training program at a post-secondary institution in Canada, or at an English language school/institute, that specializes in preparing international students for the English language rigors of attending a post-secondary institution in Canada with English as the dominant language.

5. Exclusion Criteria

Any administrator / teacher who is not a full time employee of the participating language school will not be included in the project.

6. Study Procedures

You are being invited to participate in a study that we, James Budrow and Paul Tarc, are conducting. Briefly, the study involves two parts.

The first part involves a research team member observing your class two hours a day for, five days a week for four weeks. In this part students/teachers are not expected to do anything other than what they usually do in class.

The second part involves a research team member conducting one-to-one interviews with up to three students per week (different students each week) for four weeks. The school's principal will be interviewed once and participating teachers will be interviewed twice (one interview near the beginning of the study and another interview once the classroom observation period is complete).

The interviews will take place in a location (and at a time) negotiated by the research team member and the students being interviewed. The interviews will take 30 – 45 minutes to complete and will be audio recorded and transcribed.

7. Possible Risks and Harms

Administration:

Within schools (public or private) administrative positions are usually highly politicized and administrators' job security / advancement is often at risk when they are openly critical of what the direction / condition of their school (i.e. the company) and their students' experience. Release of the contents of conversations asking administrators to honestly/critically reflect on the condition of their school (in any capacity) could potentially endanger either their relationships or position within the school.

Teachers:

Teaching contracts in English language schools in Canada are often short-term (8 - 16 weeks) and whether or not a teacher is invited back for further contracts depends on a number of both candid (e.g. student enrolment) and discrete (whether a teacher is perceived as a good instructor / employee) factors. Exposing the content of conversations where teachers honestly/critically reflect on their classroom, their teaching, and, more generally, the school's program can potentially make their position at the school untenable.

Analysis and/or criticism of teachers' performance in class or comments made in interviews can have an inverse effect on their motivation in teaching, self-esteem in relation to teaching ability, self-identity, or social positioning/activity.

8. Possible Benefits

Administration: there is opportunity to discuss and reflect openly on the cross-cultural aspects of learning as made evident in their school's mission statement, policies, and curriculum in order to develop a broader/deeper awareness of the school and its program.

Teachers: there is opportunity to discuss and reflect on the cross-cultural aspects of learning (stepping beyond concerns around language teaching) and developing a broader/deeper perspective on their own professional teaching development.

You may or may not directly benefit from participating in this study but information gathered will provide benefits to society as a whole. These include:

- As cross-cultural encounters intensify on a global scale, there is a growing need to deepen our understanding of the intercultural dynamics at play in learning so we may tune into the diverse relationships that emerge. The intention of my research is to build awareness of who we are becoming as the societies / cultures we inhabit position and identify us.
- Moreover, given that the upward trend of international student enrolment in Canadian universities, it is vital that all stakeholders in post-secondary education participate in the ongoing conversation on how best to accommodate the needs of international students.

9. Compensation

Administration: each administrator participant will be provided with assistance with basic administrative tasks (e.g. photocopying) during the observation period.

Teachers: each teacher participant will be provided with assistance with preparing for class (photocopying, organizing desks, cleaning white-boards, setting-up AV equipment) during the observation period.

10. Voluntary Participation

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time with no effect on your future (career/employment).

11. Confidentiality

All data collected will remain confidential and accessible only to the investigators of this study. If the results are published, your name will not be used. If you choose to withdraw from this study, your data will be removed and destroyed from our database. While we will do our best to protect your information there is no guarantee that we will be able to do so. The inclusion of your initials and your date of birth may allow someone to link the data and identify you.

Representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board may contact you or require access to your study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research.

12. Contacts for Further Information

If you require any further information regarding this research project or your participation in the study you may contact:

Paul Tarc, Principal Investigator.

James Budrow, Research Team Member.

If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant or the conduct of this study, you may contact The Office of Research Ethics.

13. Publication

The study's results may be published in an academic journal. If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to receive a copy of any potential study results, please contact Paul Tarc or James Budrow.

14. Consent

Included with this Letter of Information is a Consent Form that you must sign in order to participate. This letter will be kept for future reference.

Appendix G

Consent Form

Project Title: Intercultural Learning in a Cross-Cultural Environment

Principal Investigator: Paul Tarc, PhD, Education, University of Western Ontario

Research Team Member: James Budrow, MA candidate, Education, University of Western Ontario

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Participant's Name (please print): _____

Participant's Signature: _____

Date: _____

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print): _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Appendix H



Western
Research

Research Ethics

Western University Health Science Research Ethics Board NMREB Delegated Initial Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Paul Tarc

Department & Institution: Education\Faculty of Education, Western University

NMREB File Number: 105991

Study Title: Intercultural Learning in a Cross-Cultural Classroom

Sponsor: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

NMREB Initial Approval Date: December 29, 2014

NMREB Expiry Date: December 29, 2015

Documents Approved and/or Received for Information:

| Document Name | Comments | Version Date |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------|
| Instruments | Administrator Interview Questions | 2014/10/29 |
| Instruments | Student Interview Questions | 2014/10/29 |
| Instruments | Teacher Interview Questions | 2014/10/29 |
| Western University Protocol | | 2014/12/03 |
| Other | Observation Guide | 2014/12/03 |
| Letter of Information & Consent | Administrator and Teacher | 2014/12/18 |
| Letter of Information & Consent | Student | 2014/12/18 |

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board (NMREB) has reviewed and approved the above named study, as of the NMREB Initial Approval Date noted above.

NMREB approval for this study remains valid until the NMREB Expiry Date noted above, conditional to timely submission and acceptance of NMREB Continuing Ethics Review.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario.

Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB.

The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Appendix I

Curriculum Vitae

JAMES BUDROW

EDUCATION

Master of Arts (Education): University of Western Ontario, 2015.

Bachelor of Arts: University of Maine, 1994.

CELTA Certificate: International Language Institute, Halifax, Nova Scotia, 2011.

TEFL Certificate: Winfield College, Vancouver, Canada, 2005.

Diploma of University Teaching: University of New Brunswick, 2004.

WORK EXPERIENCE

ESL / EAP (supply) Instructor: Western English Language Center (currently).

ESL / EAP (supply) Instructor: Culture Works (currently).

ESL / EAP Instructor: Saint Mary's University; Sept. 2010 – Aug. 2012. EAP: listening / speaking & reading / writing (beginner to advanced levels). ESL: pronunciation, grammar, IELTS / CAEL test skills, conversation, creative writing, and beginner writing. UBP: writing (university bridge program).

ESL / EAP Instructor: Univ. of New Brunswick Saint John; Sept. 2003 – Aug. 2010. Prepared curriculum for and taught in: English for Academic Purposes, ESL Support (bridge), Pre-MBA, English Immersion, and a foreign based TESOL course for public school teachers in South Korea.

ESL Instructor: Wallstreet English International (Shanghai, China); Jan. 2007 – June 2007 (Business and Conversation English).

English Language Instructor: (South Korea) Feb. 1998 – Dec. 2002. ELS Daegu; ELS Seoul; ELS Kangnam; Yeung Jin Junior College Daegu: Taught English Conversation, TOEFL, Listening, Reading, and Writing Comprehension to beginner, intermediate, and advanced level students of all ages from kindergarten to adult; focused on mature students, university students, and business people.

AWARDS

Canadian Graduate Scholarship: Social Science and Humanities Research Council: 2014

Western Graduate Research Scholarship: Western University: 2014

Western Graduate Research Scholarship: Western University: 2013