Integrating intercultural competence in course curricula in a tailored way

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This concept paper outlines the steps in a process to integrate intercultural competence (IC) into course curricula in a way that is tailored to the program and course outcomes. The paper also provides guidelines and examples for how this could be implemented on the level of teaching, task and text design, and sequencing. Internationalised education has prompted an increased focus on developing global citizenship, a main tenet of which is a move from a one-sided integrative model of education to an inclusive one that values students as participants. One component of this is enhancing IC. With the help of Deardorff's (2006) model of IC conceptualised as a process, this paper identifies the aspects of IC (e.g., awareness, behaviour) relevant to a course to audit its existing curriculum, and it provides examples for task development to address various levels of cognitive engagement. Through a focus on a university pathway context, the paper presents the steps used to identify the salient aspects of IC relevant to the given curriculum, provides guiding questions to audit an existing curriculum, gives examples for staged task design and considers potential assessment areas. The process outlined is applicable for English as a Second Language (ESL), English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and discipline-specific curricula for student cohorts with or without Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) students.

Introduction

Global mobility and the internationalisation of education has resulted in an increased focus on developing global citizenship. International student numbers are on the increase in Australia (Department of Education and Training, 2019a), and with a great proportion of them attending English language courses or study through English as a medium of education (18% in English Language Intensive Courses for Overseas Students and 49% in higher education [Department of Education and Training, 2019b]), developing global citizenship has appeared in course learning outcomes. One element of global citizenship is intercultural competence (IC). Various definitions

and models of IC exist but what they have in common is the understanding that IC has both a cognitive element of understanding cultural differences and a behavioural element of interacting effectively (see Spitzberg & Changon, 2009 for a discussion of various models).

In this paper, I outline the steps to integrate intercultural competence into course curricula specific to the course's learning outcomes. The context through which I will demonstrate this is a university pathway English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course in Australia. However, I also indicate the way this can be relevant for courses with content and language integrated learning (CLIL) or discipline-focused courses, such as diploma courses[1] that include culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) student cohorts. In fact, as the concept of IC used in this paper is an inclusive one that stresses individual differences rather than identifying individuals based on the group they belong to, IC is important to any student cohort, whether they are first language speakers of a language (L1) or second (L2), or whether they are from the dominant culture or a different one.

The EAP course through which I demonstrate the integration of IC is the University English Entry Course (UEEC), a Direct Entry program at the University of New South Wales (UNSW). The course is 10, 15 or 20 weeks long (20 hours a week) depending on the students' English language proficiency at entry. On successful completion, students typically enter postgraduate courses in a range of disciplines, although a smaller number of them may intend to complete undergraduate studies. It is a large program with approximate student numbers between 1100 and 1500 in peak periods in the past 3 years.

In the following, I begin with a brief explanation for the need to include IC in course curricula. The process consists of three main steps: firstly, I consider the institutional, program and course learning outcomes and identify the aspects of IC relevant for the context; then, I examine these aspects in more detail and outline a series of guiding questions to audit the existing curriculum. Finally, I discuss how these aspects can be sequenced to create a scaffolded approach to integrate IC on a task level and provide some examples. Ways to assess IC in this context are also considered.

Towards a more inclusive learning environment

The aim of the integration of IC in course curricula is to improve the student experience through an inclusive curriculum, and through this, empower international students. As international students have been found to experience segregation and exclusion in their educational contexts (Chang, 2015; Yan & Pei, 2018) and in broader societal discourses (Bodis, in press; Devos, 2003; Paltridge et al., 2014), student experience has come to the forefront in international education in Australia. The

2019 QS International Student Survey has revealed that for international students, the main driver for choosing an Australian institution is how welcoming it is towards them (Crace, 2019). Their university experience is greatly influenced by the quality of their social relationships and intercultural interactions; however, there is a drop in the quality of their experience once pathway students enter mainstream university education (Teo & Arkoudis, 2019). Moreover, in the EAP context, higher academic achievement was found among students with higher intercultural communicative competence (Martin, 2016).

The way student empowerment can be realised is not by conceptualising IC as a one-sided model where information is provided to students about the local culture (in this case, Australian) and students' practices are contrasted with the ones of the 'target culture'. Instead, an inclusive understanding of IC is needed, which considers each participant taking part in the communicative event as an individual with their own values, views, skills and practices and with their own educational, social and cultural experiences. This also assumes that culture and identity are not fixed but are interpreted by the individual in the given context (Jund, 2010). This shift to viewing the students as individuals and culture as a fluid system is significant for two purposes. The first is to regard students as individuals with agency and not as members of a stereotyped group. This can empower them when they need to communicate in English with more proficient speakers and through this they can feel more included.

The second reason why this shift to the individual is useful is that it makes educators more sensitive to intra-cultural differences. Especially in university pathway contexts, the student population may be dominated by students from a handful of source countries and assumptions of skills and qualities are made about them based on their nationality (Ellwood & Nakane, 2009; Nakane, 2007). Diploma courses often have student cohorts with a wide range of English language proficiency levels. With a curriculum that acknowledges diversity and with educators being more sensitive to differences, a more equitable and inclusive teaching and learning environment can be created. Thus, there is a need to investigate the integration of IC into course curricula (Douglas & Rosvold, 2018).

Identifying the main aspects of IC

To be able to gauge what areas of IC are relevant to include in a course and which of these to focus on, the institutional, program and course learning outcomes need to be examined. I demonstrate this in Table 1 through the UEEC course as part of UNSW Global's Academic English Language Programs, and in turn, UNSW Global as part of UNSW. As a first step in the process, I identified the various graduate capabilities or program outcomes (UNSW Global, 2019; UNSW Teaching, 2018) that mention any

aspect of intercultural competence and analysed the themes that emerged from these (Krippendorff, 2013). Three main themes were identified: one related to 'attitude' (respect, empathy, etc.), one related to 'awareness' (knowledge about diversity) and one that is related to behaviour (these were represented by verbs, e.g., 'acting in a just and responsible way', 'expresses', 'demonstrates', etc.). These aspects of intercultural competence that emerged can be found in Table 1. Awareness, attitude, and communication/behaviour are coded in the right column as bold italicised. bold underlined (blue) and plain bold (burgundy) respectively.

Table 1

Thematic Analysis of Institutional Graduate Capabilities and Program Outcomes in the Context of UNSW Global's University English Entry Course

	Levels	Relevant institutional capability or outcome	Details
	University level: UNSW	UNSW Graduate Capability (d) (UNSW Teaching, 2018)	Global citizens who are ***culturally adept*** and capable of **respecting diversity** and **acting in a socially just and responsible way**
	Institutional level: UNSW Global	UNSW Global Graduate Capabilities (GC4) (UNSW Global, 2019)	Participating in an English Language environment, **respect for diversity** and **empathy for others, *cross-cultural awareness*** *and* **communication**
	Academic division: Academic English Language Programs	UNSWG Academic English Program Learning Outcome (PLO6) (UNSW Global, 2019)	**Respects diversity, expresses *curiosity,*** and **demonstrates *openness*** to a range of perspectives
	Course level: Direct Entry Course	University English Entry Course Learning Outcome (CLO5) (competency 5) (UNSW Global, 2019)	**Interact and contribute as an active participant** in the university discourse community **demonstrating *awareness of appropriacy*** and intercultural competence

The next step was to decide how to approach these main concepts. The various models of IC can be grouped into five main types: compositional, co-orientational, developmental, adaptational and causal processes (Spitzberg & Changon, 2009). To see how the aspects identified in Table 1 work together, Deardorff's (2006) developmental model of IC as a causal process is useful. This model is an outcome of a consensus among 23 scholars of intercultural topics from various disciplines (Deardorff, 2006). In this model, IC is conceptualised as a process which moves from a personal to an interpersonal level. Looking at IC as a developmental process, in turn, can help build tasks and perhaps even point towards assessment in the

curriculum. Deardorff (2006) conceptualised IC as a process that begins with an open attitude, respect and curiosity, which, through skills of listening, observation and evaluation and analysis, lead to outcomes. As Figure 1 shows, the internal outcomes include becoming more adaptable and flexible and through interaction with others, the external outcomes are effective behaviour and communication in intercultural situations.

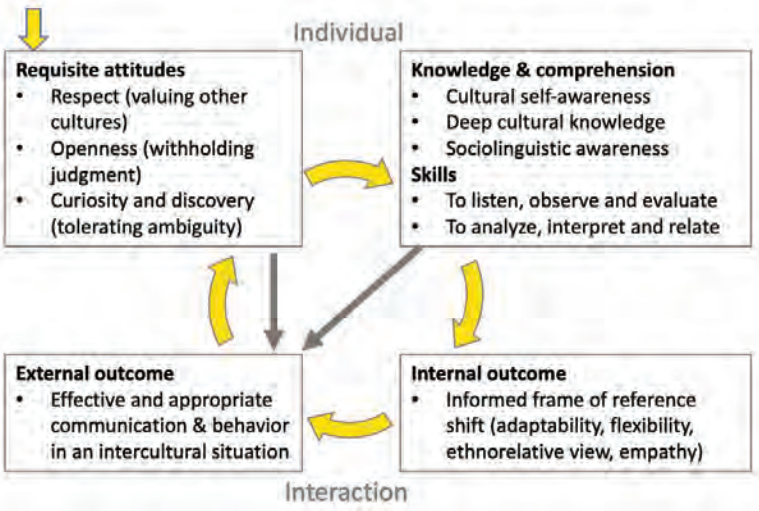

Figure 1. IC Model from Deardorff, 2006, p.256

This model is useful to understand how to integrate the aspects of IC identified in Table 1 in a student-centred and pedagogically sound way: tasks and resources in the curriculum should scaffold each other to guide the learners through the process of acquiring the main components of IC and the tasks should facilitate learning through interaction (Vygotsky, 1930-34/1978). Having identified the main aspects from the learning outcomes, they need to be sequenced in a way that the tasks built around them can scaffold each other. In a scaffolded process, knowledge building ('awareness') needs to come first, followed by 'attitude', which is facilitated by tasks aimed at analysis and interpretation, and finally, 'communication'. It can also be seen from the thematic analysis in Table 1 that the course learning outcome (CLO) (in the last row) places more emphasis on the 'communication' aspect of IC. This is clear from phrase structure: 'interact and contribute as an active participant' is the main part of the phrase and even the participle clause 'demonstrating awareness of appropriacy and intercultural competence' has the head verb focused on behaviour ('demonstrating'). For this reason, in 2019, a series of tasks focusing on cross-cultural pragmatics were integrated into the UEEC curriculum. More details about this will be provided in the next section.

Moreover, Deardorff's (2006) model also helps identify what actual knowledge (self-awareness, deep cultural knowledge, sociolinguistic awareness) and skills (listening, observing, evaluating, analysing, interpreting, relating) contribute to changed internal and external outcomes. Consequently, methodology and tasks facilitating the development of these skills and competencies need to be integrated. According to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) framework of Global Competence (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2018), such task types or 'pedagogies' are group-based co-operative project work, organised discussions, structured debates, and service learning (linking knowledge learned in the classroom with participation in the community, followed by reflection). Due to the short-term intensive nature of the EAP teaching context (10 weeks of full-time study), the first three activity types are more feasible (see Chappell, 2014; Norton, 2008; and Wilson & Maldoni, 2008 on the benefits of group work and debate in ESL and EAP). Additionally, given that the dominant teaching approach in English language teaching is Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the range of activity types that can enhance IC can be broader than the ones suggested in the PISA framework (2018).

In sum, the process begins with the identification of the relevant course and program learning outcomes and the graduate capabilities of the institution. The main aspects of IC that emerge can form a sequence with careful attention to the aspects the actual course learning outcome emphasises. For instance, a course that has a mix of L1 and L2 speakers of English with varying English language proficiency levels may need to focus more on the 'communication' aspect to facilitate not only awareness and attitude but also successful communication which is immediately applicable in the class. On the other hand, in a course with more culturally and linguistically homogenous student cohorts, the aspect of 'awareness of internal diversity' might be more important to emphasise. In the next phase, the existing curriculum needs to be examined through the lens of the aspects of IC, keeping in mind the emphasis the learning outcomes place on each aspect.

Integrating the relevant aspects of IC into the curriculum: Audit and task design

To successfully identify to what extent the curriculum incorporates the aspects of IC, they need to be turned into more specific knowledge, skills and behaviour. Based on the three aspects identified in the institutional, program and course outcomes in Table 1, and the conceptual model above, I have developed the following guiding questions against which the curriculum content can be evaluated (Table 2). These questions are generic enough that they can be used in ESL curricula but can also be specified for the target language use domain, and narrowed down depending on the scope of the curriculum and the needs of the students, too. In the case of the UEEC course, an EAP university pathway context for non-discipline specific studies

would have 'language use in social situations on campus' and 'communication in university tutorials and online discussions' added to the questions in the last aspect, 'Communication'.

Table 2
Guiding Questions to Identify Elements of IC in the Curriculum

Concept	Guiding questions
Awareness (knowledge, building awareness)	• Do the input texts have an element of cultural diversity/facilitate thinking about various points of view? • Do the texts in language-focused tasks (e.g., grammar activities, sample paragraphs) reflect social/cultural diversity? E.g., non-Anglo names, locations, cultural practices, holidays, etc. • Are there tasks that require students to interpret the communicative purpose or behaviour and relate to these?
Attitude (analysis, evaluation, demonstrating awareness)	• Do the reflection-type tasks facilitate accepting cultural, linguistic, social diversity through analysis and evaluation? • Do reflection and discussion questions homogenise groups rather than acknowledge intra-cultural diversity? E.g., Instead of 'in your country', use 'in your region/in your community', or instead of 'in your language', use 'in your language use', etc. • the development of 'tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty'? E.g., issues that are not 'black and white', have many stakeholders, etc.
Communication	• Is language for cross-cultural communication addressed? • Is the input on communication non-culture specific? E.g., ways and functions of indirectness in various languages/speaker groups, etc. • Are there practice activities? Are there tasks that require students to demonstrate IC? • Is non-verbal communication addressed from a cross-cultural perspective? • Do assessment tasks enable the demonstration of IC? Do aspects of IC appear in the assessment criteria?

Regarding CLIL and discipline-specific curricula aimed at students from CALD backgrounds, where language input and practice may be of lower importance or non-existent, the focus may not be on 'communication' but on other elements of IC. It is worth keeping in mind that even though the key aspects of IC emerging from the learning outcomes of these courses might not seem to focus on 'communication', the 'behaviour' element of IC as a process (if present in the learning outcomes) requires students to demonstrate their skills and knowledge, which is achieved through some form of communication (e.g., peer evaluation of collaboration in a group project). Thus, it is important to facilitate communication in some way.

As the next step, tasks can be developed to address various aspects of IC and various stages of it to scaffold IC through the curriculum. The progression between them can then scaffold the successful development of IC in the curriculum. Table 3 shows examples for the way tasks can build on each other. Moreover, there is potential to break these aspects down for further scaffolding, especially in the aspects of 'Attitude' and 'Communication', thus forming a continuum on which tasks can be placed and if needed, further scaffolded.

Table 3
Examples for the Application of the Three Elements of IC in Task Design and Sequencing

Concept	Awareness	Attitude	Communication
Function	Students learn about culture (content knowledge, building awareness); task facilitates respect.	Students analyse and evaluate positions, demonstrate awareness, reflect on practice.	Students demonstrate effective communication (pragmatic competence).
Example tasks	*For a listening lesson that includes an interview:* Flipped research task on how body language varies from culture to culture. Students fill in a table on country/group; practice; meaning.	*For the same listening lesson that includes an interview:* Post-task of reflecting on body language employed in the video and attempt to interpret it.	Later in the course students may be asked to take part in a roleplay which involves challenging situations regarding body language and its (mis) interpretation. [After this, body language could be included in some assessment criteria (typically in discussion tasks, presentations).]
Example tasks		*After a discussion skills task:* students reflect on how they expressed politeness linguistically, then get some language input on indirect requests, hints, etc.	Practice tasks addressing cross-cultural pragmatics, e.g., requests, agreeing/ disagreeing. [Politeness could be assessed in discussion tasks.]
Example tasks		Students are asked to consider stakeholder attitudes and possible responses to a problem that involves different world views (perhaps following jigsaw input).	Students write an argument paragraph with a counter-argument and rebuttal demonstrating respect in word choice.

In the case of the UEEC curriculum, the CLOs suggested a higher emphasis on 'Communication'. Moreover, in their course feedback, students expressed the need to develop oral everyday communication skills. Research also shows that international students find everyday oral communication more difficult than academic

communication (Humphreys, 2015) and they are judged negatively by peers and other interlocutors based on their everyday communication skills (Bodis, in press). Therefore, with the aim to provide transferable skills in everyday communication, which is less standardised than academic language, I identified a range of speech acts that could be useful for students in their communication as students. Such speech acts are 'asking for and giving clarification', 'making arrangements' or 'making direct and indirect requests' as well as the broader concept of pragmatics like 'politeness'. A series of tasks were then written around these speech acts and concepts, which provide some English language input and facilitate a cross-cultural perspective. The aim of these tasks is to empower students through developing their communication skills in English while making them reflect on their own communication practices and diverse practices in general. These tasks were then integrated into the Discussion Skills lessons under the theme 'Communicating on campus'.

Considerations for assessment

The identification of the salient aspects of IC enables the development of performance indicators for each level of IC, but these depend on the actual assessment tasks. If IC is to be assessed summatively in the course, the nature and extent of the assessment needs to be developed first, followed by the task design. This corresponds to the 'design-down' or 'backward' approach to curriculum design (McTighe & Thomas, 2003): identification of the required results, determining the evidence, and as a final step, creating learning materials – to achieve constructive alignment in curriculum planning (Houghton, 2004). Moreover, because IC is a process, exposure to the salient aspects identified from the learning outcomes may need to be repeated in 'cycles of learning' (Gregersen-Hermans & Pusch, 2012; Hsieh, 2019) before they can be assessed.

Deardorff (2006) identified student interviews and narrative diaries as the most effective assessment methods in a higher educational context. Deardorff (2018) also highlights the importance of peer assessment and teacher observation in assessing IC. However, these are not specifically made for an ESL teaching context. For university pathway courses, assessment of one or more elements of IC could potentially appear in the following assessment task types:

- introductory or follow-up tasks to skills lessons (formative)
- reflective discussion board tasks in LMS (formative/summative)
- seminar presentations (formative/summative)
- argumentative essays (formative/summative)

- groups discussions (formative/summative)
- reflective blogs or videos (formative/summative)

Assessment of IC needs to consider the nature and the limitations of the task, and determine which elements of IC can be measured and how. Deardorff (2018) provides a list of questions to consider when developing ways assessment of IC can be integrated into the curriculum. They are especially useful for assessment design and evaluation in CLIL or discipline-specific curricula. Moreover, Deardorff (2015) suggests both direct and indirect evidence (observation of students' performance and students' perceptions of their performance, respectively) for the assessment of IC but warns that some aspects of IC, like appropriateness of behaviour, can be assessed only through direct evidence. Finally, the fact that IC is a process, and a lifelong one, needs to be considered when designing assessment (Deardorff, 2015).

Conclusion

This paper has outlined the process to integrate IC into ESL curricula and demonstrated it through a university pathway EAP curriculum. It has also provided examples for potential task design following pedagogical principles such as scaffolding of skills and concepts. These steps can be used to identify the salient aspects other institutions, programs and courses have and, based on those, develop criteria and sequence tasks to include into the curricula. It needs to be noted that developing IC is a lifelong process itself (Deardorff, 2015, 2018) and therefore the outcomes, skills and performance students are expected to learn need to be realistic. With increased calls to enhance international education (see for example University of New South Wales, 2018), the focus on student experience and the need to address IC in an accountable way will stay. It is important to note that IC is important for all student cohorts whether ESL, CALD or L1 speakers of English; however, what aspect(s) of IC the curriculum and task design focus on depends on the learning outcomes of the course and the students' needs. Hopefully, with the procedure outlined here, institutions can adopt a systematic approach to develop intercultural competence in their course curricula.

Notes

[1] At Australian universities, diploma courses are first year undergraduate courses which typically include an academic literacy component besides the first-year discipline-specific courses. On completion, students are admitted into the second year of the undergraduate course.

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