Contextualising the international student experience: Psychosocial adjustment and the role of institutional intervention

Lee Hawkes
April 2013
Introduction: “Psycho-social”?

Psycho

Feelings
Emotions
Identity

Social

Friends
Activities
Languages
"The view of writing as a situated social practice also represents a shift away from a characterization of genre as consisting primarily of conventionalized textual formalisms to one in which textual patterns and regularities are considered to be aspects of broader social and rhetorical practices..." (Casanave, 2002)
“Student perceptions of their experiences have taught us that their interactions with native speakers may be far less intense and frequent than was once assumed…” (Freed, 1998)
Japanese students in US: happier when NSs are accommodating

(Imamura, Zhang, & Harwood, 2011)
Existing Research

Singaporeans in Australia: Extroverts good (Ward, Leong, & Low, 2004)

Chinese students in London: disappointed with accent/dialect

(Tuneja, 2008)
Background: Existing Research

Group-Level Variables

- Society of Origin
  - Political Context
  - Economic Situation
  - Demographic Factors

- Group Acculturation
  - Physical
  - Economic
  - Social
  - Cultural

- Society of Settlement
  - Attitudes
    - Ethnic Attitudes
  - Social Support
    - Larger Society
    - Ethnic Society

Individual-Level Variables

Factors Prior to Acculturation
- Age, Gender, Education
- Motivation and Expectation for Overseas Sojourn
- Language Proficiency and Other Skills
- Personality

Factors During Acculturation
- Length of Time
- Coping: Strategies & Resources
- Social Support
- Societal Attitudes: Prejudice & Discrimination

Acculturation Experience
- Life Events

Appraisal of Experience
- Stressors

Strategies Used
- Coping

Immediate Effects
- Stress

Long-Term Outcome
- Adaptation
Background: Marginalisation

Marginalisation

‘Acculturative stressors’ (Smith & Khawaja, 2011)

‘Maladaptive strategies’
Background: Marginalisation

Integration

(Berry, 1997)
# UK students’ perceptions of the French

(Coleman, 2001)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>French</th>
<th>Year 1 students (n &gt; 4,618)</th>
<th>Year 4 students (n &gt; 2,184)</th>
<th>Difference between Year 1 and Year 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arrogant</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
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# UK students’ perceptions of the French

(Coleman, 2001)

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<td>Arrogant</td>
<td>61.9%</td>
<td>77.3%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impatient</td>
<td>58.4%</td>
<td>70.2%</td>
<td>11.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Efficient</td>
<td>83.2%</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
<td>14.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>80.5%</td>
<td>65.8%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerant</td>
<td>55.7%</td>
<td>43.3%</td>
<td>12.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patient</td>
<td>44.6%</td>
<td>34.6%</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>88.1%</td>
<td>78.2%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical</td>
<td>72.8%</td>
<td>63.3%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good humoured</td>
<td>79.3%</td>
<td>71.3%</td>
<td>8.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Perceptions of the French, ctd. (Riley, 2008)

“lack of a greeting or eye contact, explicit remarks about their accent or linguistic incompetence, being kept waiting and lack of interest” (p.223)

“little objective difference in respect of these factors between the treatment meted out to native and non-native clients” (p.223)

“the French don’t find one another rude, in fact they think of themselves as being politer than many other nationalities” (p.220)
Research Questionnaire: Lee Hawkes, IPP 2011-2012

Research Questionnaire: Attitudes and Motivations towards Studying in the UK

1. Please circle the number which indicates to what extent you agree with the following statements:

1 = Completely Disagree  5 = Completely Agree

* I am studying in the UK (both the IPP and my future degree) because...
  - I would like to improve my informal, spoken English
  - I would like to improve my formal, written academic English
  - to study and learn new things at university
  - to get a certificate from a British university
  - to learn about, and interact with, British society and British culture
  - to meet people from other countries and learn about the world
  - my parents told me to...
  - to improve myself

2. Please choose the answer which best describes how you feel:

**Intro**
**Background**
**1: QUAL**
**2: QUAN**

- Why did you choose to study here?
  - Because, I think, England is or... pure language country and er I want to learn the natural... and my parents tell me that there are much more professional teaching systems in your country
  - Okay, so learning English is a big reason?
  - Yeah, learning English is the first goal, and the second is the academic knowledge.
  - Okay, so if you say learning English – do you mean everything, reading, writing, listening, speaking?
  - Umm... speaking is the most important
  - How will you improve your speaking?
  - Communicating with English native people, that's the way to improve my English
  - Are you communicating with many English people?
  - Yeah, I try to communicate with them, and uh I try to, uh...
  - In what situations?
  - (...) there are so many Chinese, so I have to try my best to...
  - Try your best to avoid Chinese people?
  - Yeah (laughs), so now I try to avoid to sit with Kate
  - Okay and outside of university?
  - Yeah see in church, because there are not lot of Chinese and foreigners in the church, I can talk with them in English
  - So would you like to speak English with more British people?
  - Yeah of course
  - But it's difficult?
  - Yeah, it's difficult because I want to know more about British... British culture
  - And that's not happening at the moment?
  - I have some problems! Because really I have less chance to communicate, because they are also very busy.
  - I do think that in the future this will get better?
  - I hope so! I hope so, I will try my best – I will make more efforts to improve my English

Please return to:
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Phone 020 7882 2826, Fax 020 7882 7923, email l.hawkes@qmul.ac.uk

Don't talk me with Flatnicks
Feels never, talking to them / Flatnicks happy
Research 1: Qualitative Case Study – September 2011 to March 2012

What are the sociocultural experiences of a small group students undertaking an International Foundation Programme?
1. ‘Sat at the baby table’

“I thought that I will get a lot of English friends, English students, but now I think that it is hard, maybe, like I am doing foundation, that is why...” (Tom)
2. ‘Not good enough’

“I met some people from UK, and I went on party with them, it was a little difficult to understand because they speak too fast” (Xoe)
3. ‘Later, but not now’

“...I will have English friends, sometimes I will go to the pub Saturdays, but it will happen in time, not now”

(John)
## What do you feel stressed about?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lucy</th>
<th>Tom</th>
<th>Kate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Ability to communicate</td>
<td>1. Loneliness</td>
<td>1. Ability to communicate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Grades</td>
<td>2. Location</td>
<td>2. Academic work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who have you spoken to this week? (Tom)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Campus</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Campus</td>
<td>Russian</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flatmate</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classmate</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Campus</td>
<td>Saudi</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Kazakh</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>Restaurant</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
<td>Turkish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>180</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Azeri</td>
<td>Azeri</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friend</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Skype</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What are the sociocultural experiences of a small group students undertaking an International Foundation Programme?

- Socioculturally marginalised
- Very little contact with native speakers
- Report feeling isolated, lonely and disappointed
- Not necessarily ‘lack of access’ to NSs
Research 2: Quantitative/Longitudinal – September 2012 to March 2013

How do students’ reported contact, confidence and competence with English, in both academic and non-academic contexts, change over the period of an IFP?
QMUL IFP 2012-2013
8 groups: From IELTS 5.5 to 8.5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group number</th>
<th>IELTS scores</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>8</td>
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</table>
Use of English Questionnaire (3/3)

Please answer the questions below by circling the relevant number.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
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<th>7</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How many days per week do you have conversations in English when you are not in class?</td>
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<td>2. How confident do you feel speaking English outside of class? (0=not at all, 7=extremely)</td>
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<td>3. How many days per week do you listen to/hear English being spoken outside of class?</td>
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<td>4. How much do you understand when you hear English being spoken outside of class? (0=nothing, 7=everything)</td>
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<td>5. How many days per week do you read in English for fun or out of general interest (like websites or newspapers)?</td>
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<td>6. How much do you understand when you read English for fun or out of general interest? (0=nothing, 7=everything)</td>
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<td>7. How many days per week do you write/type in English in non-academic contexts (such as on Facebook or Twitter)?</td>
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<tr>
<td>8. How confident do you feel writing/typing in English in non-academic contexts? (0=not at all, 7=extremely)</td>
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<td>9. How confident do you feel speaking English in class and with teachers? (0=not at all, 7=extremely)</td>
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<td>10. How much do you understand when your teacher/lecturer speaks (in English)? (0=nothing, 7=everything)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. How much do you understand when you read academic texts? (0=nothing, 7=everything)</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. How confident do you feel writing academic English? (0=not at all, 7=extremely)</td>
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I consent for this information to be used for research purposes by Queen Mary, University of London. I understand that participation is optional, that my anonymity will be preserved, and that I am free to opt-out of this research at any time. Signed:

_____________________________
IELTS scores and contact, confidence and competence #1
IELTS scores and contact, confidence, and competence #2
IELTS scores and contact, confidence and competence #3
Overall increase in English contact over 5 months:
Overall increase in English **confidence** over 5 months:
Overall increase in English competence over 5 months:
Overall increase in Academic/non-academic CCCs over 5 months
Research: EAP2

How do students’ reported contact, confidence and competence with English, in both academic and non-academic contexts, change over the period of an IFP programme?

All levels increased contact, competence and confidence over 5 months, in both academic and non-academic contexts.

(but not much...)

IELTS 6 did much better with both
Institutional Intervention?

- Accommodation
- Mentoring schemes
- Orientation Programmes
- Volunteering
- Student Unions
End

References


