

## **Inclusive Approaches to Intercultural Dialogue**



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### **This session offers:**

1. What the students had to say about their intercultural interactions
  - The difficulties
  - What worked
2. What is inclusive intercultural dialogue ?
3. A strategy for enhancing intercultural dialogue in the classroom

## Power rank and intercultural communication

- The study
- Email to students
- Who responded
- Analysis undertaken
- Practical outcomes

### Good and Bad



## 'The Australian Student'

Both local and international students referred to local Australian students as a group

The inference was that a large proportion of them related to people from other cultures in the same manner

## The Australian Cultural Chasm

*"...something that I have not enjoyed so much about Australia is the fact that... the groups are separated. People coming from Asia just hang around with other people from Asia, .... and people from Australia stick with people from Australia..."*

Juan (International Master's student)

## What creates the chasm ?

Taboo topics

*“...some people seem to have certain taboos that you would never find in a country like the United States. If you talked about anything, or ask about anything quite straightforward - in Australia you may just say a joke that is not so clean or is a little bit racist and they give you this look ! What’s everyone about?...”*

*Juan*

## What creates the chasm?

- Taboo topics
- Prescribing behaviours

*“You could break into Singaporean English or just stay with your own British English which you’d been taught - that was all acceptable, whereas you came to Australia and it wasn’t literally acceptable around friends to speak with a British English accent or an American influenced accent .... You just sort of had to adapt to the Australian way of speaking”*

Steve

## What creates the chasm ?

- Taboo topics
- Prescribing behaviours
- A feeling of being judged

“..they (Australians) try to judge you if you are good..., it's difficult to get into the Australian work culture as Australians are properly culture community..it's a bit difficult to penetrate..Yes, first they judge, and then they probably might invite you to make friendship with you”

Bakhir

## Effects on Communication



## An international student perspective

*“well it certainly affects [working relationships] because it puts a barrier between the interchange of ideas. Each of these groups is going to have a different perspective, and each of these groups has the really strong friends...”*

Juan....

*....I realise that each one of these groups have a part in Australia. They have something that makes them strong, like some of them are really skilled technically, and some of them are really skilled in politics, and some of them are really skilled in simply creating the right atmosphere to be successful and it just seems like a waste that you cannot have all skills together..."*

Juan

## Local student observation

*.....[This] seems to be enough, at an Australian level, to communicate with someone else. 'They're the ones [international students] who sort of need to adapt to you', I think is the feeling, the sentiment."*

Steve



## Hitting the Sweet Spot



*“...with time you learn to hit the sweet spot of know[ing how] to be in harmony with the local culture, ... It takes some skill and it’s not instant,... I’d say I’ve been successful. ... the basis we are all the same and the basis in our communication is still the same. ”*

Juan

## Positives for local students



### Sean

*“...People here [Australians] generally look at what you look like, how you act, that sort of thing. .. It doesn't matter what you wear...because he has different expectations...I don't feel as much pressure to impress myself and impress everyone else..... I just get the feeling that it doesn't matter what I wear, it won't make a difference.”*

*“I feel more comfortable with [international students] sometimes than I would with people I’ve grown up with in Australia, just because we’ve shared so many experiences..... you all become very advanced in expressing yourselves, even if the other person can’t understand anything but a few words ... and can’t speak the same native language as you.....*

Steve....

## **5 Factors for Success**

- are motivated to interact meaningfully
- are willing to reflect personally
- feel comfortable to experiment with creative solutions to the problem of not understanding one another
- employed a non-judgemental approach
- found opportunities to practice

## Intercultural Dialogue



## Intercultural Dialogue

Definition:

‘ open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups with different ethnic, cultural, religious and linguistic background and heritage, on the basis of mutual understanding and respect.’

Bergan & Restoueix, 2009

## Intercultural Dialogue

- Bridges the cultural chasm by using inclusive practices to create effective connections
- Focuses on how to connect in order to find out what others think, and mean by their comments

## Students' Strategies for Inclusive Communication



## Large Group Discussion



## Addressing intercultural differences

1. Acknowledge that we all make different assumptions about people from another culture and this affects our communication.
2. Interacting effectively requires certain techniques to work.
3. Other students are already doing this !  
( so get with the program )

## Feedback

“The emphasis on the sub-cultural groups within Australia broadened my understanding of the ‘grey areas’ in life where there is more than one ‘right’ way of life.”

## Feedback

“While we were brainstorming about interacting with people from other cultures, we got to hear peoples point of view and some of the people in the workshop had disagreements with each other which was an eye opener towards how people may have different opinions about culture”

## **Benefits of large group format**

- Normalises the practice of talking about our communication skills
- Normalises the practice of talking with people from other cultures
- Safe discussion - participants can engage with the topic on their own terms
- Respects personal styles and preferences- there are no right ways- non-judgemental
- Encourages experimentation to find own right way

## **Benefits for Students**

Inclusive communication skills and attitudes that will assist them to become competent and confident communicators as global citizens and professionals of the future.



Want to stay in touch?

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