A case study investigating international and local students' perceptions and experiences of teaching in an intercultural tertiary context

Susan C. Hellmundt

University of Wollongong

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A Case Study Investigating
International and Local Students’
Perceptions and Experiences of
Teaching and Learning in an
Intercultural Tertiary Context

A dissertation presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the
degree of Doctor of Education in the Faculty of Education at the
University of Wollongong, 2000.
Abstract

How do international and local students and their lecturers perceive and experience teaching and learning in an intercultural context and what kind of impact does an intercultural context have on both teaching and learning and attitudes to cultural diversity? This research investigates, from a critical theorist perspective, the relationship between the use of a dialogic method of teaching, student-centred learning and the participation of international students in the tertiary classroom. Underpinning the study is the belief that international students bring a wealth of cultural capital to tertiary classrooms that can be used as a valuable resource to broaden the critical thinking skills and intercultural understanding of all students, both local and international, and their lecturers.

International students studying at Australian universities provide rich diversity, income for institutions, and potential international connections for local students. Yet, international students often face marginalisation and alienation and are sometimes seen as non-participating and underperforming. In some earlier studies, the focus has tended to be on international students’ perceived difficulties and “deficiencies” that need to be remediated as quickly as possible for them to “adapt” to our academic traditions. However, more recent studies focus increasingly on lecturers and their teaching practice, as opposed to a focus on students and their cultural backgrounds. It is argued in this literature and in this study that lecturers should revise their teaching practice and employ teaching strategies that create a learning context that is student-centred and in which students feel it is appropriate to speak up and learn from each other. The study theorises that it is the culture of the context that needs to be examined when discussing student learning, not the cultural backgrounds of students. It posits that a person’s cultural background is not static nor are there universals that describe it. Rather, it is flexible and ever changing in response to different contexts, including the culture of the university and the university classroom.

The study is a multiple case study in a single context, a tertiary setting, using both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The study focused on a number of different sets of students and their varied classes at a single site by collecting data using a variety of instruments, including semi-structured, in-depth interviews; focus groups; observations; and a survey. The students at the focus of the study came from a wide range of countries, including Vietnam, Pakistan, Sweden, the US, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Japan, Tonga, Nepal and Australia.

The research sheds new light on international and local students’ perceptions and experiences of teaching and learning as well as the pedagogical, personal and social impacts of an intercultural context. Documenting evidence from students and lecturers provides an opportunity for both their voices to be heard in the research literature. Among the findings is that both international and local students strongly indicate that they want to have a voice in the classroom with the lecturer acting as a facilitator rather than an all-knowing imparter of knowledge. Rather than international students being seen as a “problem”, students and lecturers in this study see cultural diversity as a means to broaden their thinking, appreciate difference, and improve cultural understanding.
For Christian, Christopher and Charlotte

I would like to express my sincere thanks to my supervisors Dr. W. Rifkin, Dr. W. Vialle and especially, Dr. C. Fox who has been a wonderful source of inspiration as mentor, colleague and friend.
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Chapter One

1 Introduction

1.1 The background of the study

How do international and local students and their lecturers perceive and experience teaching and learning in a tertiary intercultural context? International students are choosing to study at Australian universities in increasing numbers, but what do they think of the kinds of teaching and learning experiences they have and how does an intercultural context impact on their experiences and those of local students? This study investigated, from a critical theorist perspective, the experiences of students (both international and local) and their lecturers with a view to understanding the impact of these on their intercultural interactions. In particular, the study examined the impact of international and local students’ intercultural interactions on the development of their critical thinking skills and intercultural understanding. A driving force to the study was to examine how the application of a critical pedagogy could enhance and foster student voice in the tertiary classroom to broaden the critical thinking and intercultural skills of both international and local students and their lecturers, to the mutual benefit of all.

The study is unique in that it examined the interrelationship between the use of a dialogic method of teaching, student-centred learning and the interaction of international and local students in the tertiary classroom. A dialogic method of teaching and learning encourages students and lecturers to engage in dialogue to view the familiar from multiple perspectives with the aim of self and social empowerment. In particular, a dialogic method of teaching that encourages and fosters intercultural skills of students can promote acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity. This heightened understanding will hopefully be taken outside the tertiary classroom and help foster and promote intercultural understanding and awareness in the wider community.
The study sought to add to the growing body of knowledge about international and local students’ experiences of teaching and learning as well as those of their lecturers by documenting evidence from both of their perspectives. Crucial to the study, however, was to give international and local students a voice about their experiences. The thesis is grounded in the words of the students, which give life and significance to the issues at hand (Walsh, 1991).

The following provides some background information on the numbers of international students studying in Australia, and in particular at the University of Wollongong, the site of the study. A more comprehensive historical account can be found in Chapter Two. Knowledge of increasing international enrolments is important for the reader to be able to situate the study and understand its rationale.

**1.2 The context of the study**

Over the last decade, the number of international students studying at Australian universities has grown exponentially. In the late 1980s, there were approximately 8,000 international students enrolled in Australian universities, private colleges and schools. A decade later, there were more than 142,600 (News Report, 1998). The number of international students doubled every year between 1987 and 1990, and has doubled again since, growing at 40 per cent a year on average between 1990 and 1996 (News Report, 1996). International students comprise some ten per cent of the student population with 85 per cent coming from Asia, particularly Malaysia (18 per cent), Singapore (15 per cent), Hong Kong (14 per cent) and Indonesia (seven per cent). They account for six per cent of university revenue, contributing some $3.3 billion annually to the economy (News Report, 1998). Reasons cited most often on student surveys for choosing to study in Australia are the reputation of our universities, our proximity to Asia and the price - about 25 per cent cheaper than a comparable degree from the United Kingdom or the United States (Jones, 1989; Martens, 1994; Williams, 1989).
The 1990s have seen some Australian universities, particularly the University of Wollongong, adopt much more aggressive marketing campaigns overseas to attract international students to their universities than previously (Alcock & Alcock, 1997; Chalmers & Volet, 1997; Mills, 1997). As a result, while subsidised places under the Federal Government’s former international student program no longer exist, the number of international full-fee paying students has increased dramatically. At the University of Wollongong, for example, the number has grown from just 7 international full-fee paying students in 1987 to 2,193 in 1997 (Selected Higher Education Statistics: Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 1997). Students come from 72 countries and comprise 17 per cent of the total enrolment. This percentage of international students puts the University of Wollongong among the seven universities (out of 38) in Australia with a high intake of international students (News Report, 1998), the highest of an Australian regional university.

The full impact of the 1998 Asian financial crisis and the political turmoil in Indonesia and their effects around the region are yet to be gauged in terms of student enrolments at Australian universities. Nevertheless, the overall number of international students has remained steady and was expected to grow by three per cent in 1999 (News Report, 1998). With the overall decline in government funding to Australian universities, it seems that universities will continue to develop a more entrepreneurial culture seeking out and competing for overseas markets to generate revenue. Monash University, for example, plans to double international student numbers by 2002 (News Report, 1997).

Debate about the internationalisation of university education has tended to focus on the corporatisation of tertiary institutions with the role of full-fee paying international students seen in terms of their economic contributions. There is scant data on the impact of internationalisation on the curriculum or how international students’ cultural identities and academic interests may be included in the teaching practice of lecturers. Rather than celebrating cultural diversity in the tertiary classroom, the focus has been on how well and how fast international students adapt to the “host”
environment (Kim & Gudykunst, 1988; Ward & Kennedy, 1993). There is little research into the impact on students’ and lecturers’ intercultural interactions or links with a critical pedagogy and the issues of equity and social justice to the internationalisation of tertiary institutions and intercultural theory (Fox, 2000).

However, universities across Australia have recognised the need to internationalise the curriculum with a view to promoting the values of globalisation and intercultural understanding. A study conducted in 1995 reports 37 out of 38 universities include in their corporate plans a policy of internationalisation (DEETYA report, 1995). A key focus of the understanding of internationalisation in higher education is a curriculum that prepares students as global learners and citizens, tolerant and accepting of cultural diversity (Rizvi & Walsh, 1998). In mid-2000, the University of Wollongong established a Working Party to investigate the internationalisation of the curriculum, with a particular focus on pedagogy. It will consider how to position internationalisation into the mainstream with regard to quality teaching and learning.

1.3 The issue of international students in the tertiary classroom: A problem or a resource?

International students studying at Australian universities provide rich diversity, income for institutions, and potential international connections for local students. Yet, international students often face marginalisation and alienation and are sometimes seen as non-participating and under-performing. The issue of international students studying at Australian universities is of broad significance across disciplines in tertiary settings, as evidenced, for example, in the work of Pearson and Beasley (1996) in Management, and Ballard (1987), Ballard and Clanchy (1991) and Samuelowicz (1987), in Student Support. In these studies, the focus tends to be on international students’ perceived difficulties and “deficiencies” that need to be remediated as quickly as possible for them to “adapt” to our academic traditions. There is also the perception that international students, in particular, South-East Asian students, face considerable difficulties in using critical thinking and independent problem-solving skills (Ballard, 1987; Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Beasley & Pearson,
These perceived difficulties are often seen to be related to language ability and previous learning experience.

In some more recent studies, the emphasis is increasingly on the lecturers and their teaching practice, as opposed to a focus on students and their cultural background. Others argue that lecturers should revise their teaching practice and employ strategies that create a learning context that is student-centred and in which students feel it is appropriate to speak up and participate, both in and out of class individually and in group assignments (Biggs, 1991; 1992; 1997; Chalmers & Volet, 1997; Prosser & Trigwell, 1997; Watkins & Biggs, 1996). Rather than the students being seen as the "problem", lecturers need to re-examine their own teaching practice to be more inclusive of all students in the tertiary classroom (Hellmundt et al., 1998; Jackson, 1997; McKay & Kember, 1997).

Furthermore, it is also argued, lecturers need to re-evaluate the compatibility of their curriculum and assessment practices with their espoused objectives of developing students’ independent learning, critical thinking and intercultural skills (Argyris & Schon, 1974; Biggs, 1997; Chalmers & Fuller, 1996; Gow, Kember & Sivan, 1992; Schon, 1987). However, the relationship between using a critical pedagogy and including both international and local students’ perspectives as a teaching resource to broaden the critical thinking skills of all, seems to be largely overlooked in the literature.

There is also much debate in the literature about how students from different cultural backgrounds learn and whether they use a surface, strategic or deep approach as assessed by questionnaires, such as Biggs’ Study Process Questionnaire (Biggs, 1987; Marton & Saljo, 1976; Mugler & Landbeck, 1997). This study, however, concerns itself with students’ experiences and perceptions about their learning and teaching contexts from the students’ own perspective.
1.4 The significance of the study

Over the last decade, the internationalisation of higher education has been increasingly on the agenda of university policy makers, largely for financial reasons. However, universities, including the University of Wollongong, also recognise the need to focus on promoting cultural and intellectual diversity in the curriculum for students to be able to contribute to the challenges of globalisation (Rizvi & Walsh, 1998). Despite this growing recognition, there is very little theoretically based research that investigates students' learning approaches and lecturers' teaching approaches with regard to intercultural tertiary contexts (Volet & Ang, 1998). There is also scant research that examines the impact of students' intercultural interactions on their critical thinking and intercultural skills and understanding (Pederson, 1994). This study supports the views of Knight and de Wit (1995) in their comprehensive overview of the issue where they assert that "internationalisation" is a meaningless term without a conscious effort to integrate an intercultural dimension into the curriculum and teaching practice of lecturers. Furthermore, the study recognises what Volet and Ang (1998) so succinctly point out:

*International and multicultural student campuses represent ideal social forums for promoting cultural understanding; fostering tolerance of diversity; discovering alternative ways of thinking; and developing intercultural skills (p.6).*

This study is unique, however, in that it makes connections between (1) the application of a critical pedagogy and (2) student and lecturer perceptions and experiences of teaching and learning in a tertiary intercultural context. It focused on the possibilities of an interrelationship between student-centred learning, the use of a critical approach to teaching and learning, and the inclusion of international and local students' voice in the curriculum and teaching practice. A critical approach to teaching and learning involves viewing the lived experiences, histories and identities of students from multiple perspectives where students and lecturers engage in dialogue and learn from each other for both self and social empowerment, including increased acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity. This connection between
using a dialogic method of teaching and encouraging the voice of both international and local students to understand their diverse and original perspectives in order to broaden the critical thinking and intercultural skills that is the focus of this study.

The study sheds new light on international and local students’ perceptions and experiences of learning and teaching as well as their interactions with each other in the tertiary classroom. It examined the links between students’ self-professed and preferred learning styles, higher education teaching strategies, and intercultural interaction in a tertiary context.

Documenting the statements of students and lecturers provides an opportunity for their voices to be heard in the research literature. A driving force to the study was to give both international and local students a voice, to bring them to the forefront on the discussion about teaching and learning in culturally diverse tertiary classrooms. In an increasingly intercultural environment, it is important to include local students’ experiences and perceptions of teaching and learning at the tertiary level as well as those of international students. While some studies have an ethnocentric focus on international students’ perceived deficits, this study acknowledges the role of both international and local students, as well as their lecturers, in fostering and promoting intercultural skills and acceptance of cultural diversity in the tertiary classroom (Volet & Ang, 1998).

Another dimension to the study was to compare the students’ perspectives of teaching and learning with both the espoused teaching objectives of lecturers and their in-use teaching strategies (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993; Schon, 1987). The comparisons help to provide a more in-depth analysis of these issues from different perspectives.

The study provides insight into the viability of some of the existing theories of intercultural communication and their perceived relationship to learning and teaching in intercultural tertiary contexts. The findings sought to add to a growing body of knowledge about international and local students, and their experiences and
perceptions of higher education teaching contexts as well as the impact of their interactions with each other.

1.5 Introduction to the participants and method

Fifteen undergraduate students were each interviewed twice in-depth for one to three hours over a sixteen-month period. Fourteen of them also participated twice in focus groups of three or four students (one international student had returned home to Sweden). They had all taken a Business Communication subject, and been taught by the researcher. They were selected, in part, according to their availability. Ten of their lecturers were interviewed once for two hours. Observation of nine lecturers' classes by the researcher was also undertaken. In addition, 114 other undergraduate students completed a survey, based on the same issues that were discussed at length with the fifteen key participants. The Pro Vice-Chancellor and Vice-Principal of the University were each interviewed once for two hours.

The study is a multiple case study in a single context, a tertiary setting, using both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The study focussed on a number of different cases at a single site by collecting data using a variety of instruments including semi-structured, in-depth interviews, focus groups, observations and field notes, and a survey.

1.6 Research focus

The study was guided by one key, overarching question:

How does an intercultural context impact on the teaching and learning experiences of international and local students and their lecturers?

A search for responses to the following questions directed the study:
What are students' experiences and perceptions of university teaching at the University of Wollongong? How do these perceptions compare among international and local students?

How do lecturers describe their aims, their beliefs and their assumptions about student learning (international and local) and their role in that process?

How do students interpret and experience these same teaching strategies? Are there similarities/differences in their perceptions and experiences according to their cultural backgrounds?

What kinds of teaching strategies do students and lecturers believe will improve intercultural interaction in a tertiary setting?

1.7 Definitions of terms

For the purpose of this study, the terms below have been defined as follows:

**International students** are considered to be students who come from another country for the specific purpose of studying at the tertiary level.

**Intercultural communication**

The definitions given by Fox (1997) guide the study. She asserts that

> Successful communication of an intercultural kind requires some untangling of the web of power and dominance. It can only occur when a model of communication is employed in which communication is linked to the positioning of the participants in the wider social and political context, and one where the speakers are orientated to reaching an understanding rather than strategically dominating the situation (p. 93).

**The SAR of China, Hong Kong**, has been referred to, in this thesis, as Hong Kong.
Learning Development Unit is where students, international and local, can ask for professional help with their academic English.

Lecturer-directed contexts refer to a teaching approach, 'which emphasises the acquisition of knowledge, in which the curriculum is rigid and prescribed, in which the teacher is an instructor and imparter of knowledge rather than a co-learner, and in which the emphasis is on hearing the teacher rather than engaging in discussion' (Ninnes et al., 1999, p.330).

Resource Room is a place set aside in each department where lecturers can leave notes, including lecture notes for students to photocopy.

Teachers, lecturers, and instructors are used interchangeably throughout the study.

A private school in Australia means a fee-paying school, usually a high fee-paying school with a reputation of academic success from their students.

The Higher School Certificate is an exam for the final year, Year 12, of high school in the state of New South Wales, Australia, and is referred to as the HSC. The most usual age for students to sit for this exam is between seventeen and eighteen years old.

1.8 Assumptions underpinning the study

In accordance with proponents of the qualitative approach to research, the following makes explicit my political and ideological assumptions about education in general and about international students in particular (Erikson, 1995; Lather, 1991; Peshkin, 1988). The pivotal assumption of this study is that international students bring a wealth of cultural capital to tertiary classrooms. This cultural capital should be viewed as a valuable resource to broaden the critical perspectives of all, the students, both international and local, and lecturers. Enhancing students’ understanding and ability to view issues from multiple perspectives necessarily involves the use and
development of critical and analytical thinking skills, skills that are often stated as key aims of a university education.

Students, lecturers and policy makers interviewed at the University maintain that a university education should enable students to make learning a process of inquiry and of critique. These aims are encapsulated in the University’s Strategic Plan where the first key attribute that a Wollongong graduate is deemed necessary to have is:

A commitment to continued and independent learning, intellectual development, critical analysis and creativity (Strategic Plan, 1997-2005, p. 5)

Other attributes seen as vital for a Wollongong graduate to learn include high level oral and written communication skills; a capacity for teamwork; an ability to logically analyse issues and consider different opinions and viewpoints; an appreciation and valuing of cultural and intellectual diversity to function in a multi-cultural or global environment as well as ethical considerations (Strategic Plan, 1997-2005, p.5). These attributes sit well with the use of a critical pedagogy in the tertiary classroom. The use of a critical pedagogy encourages students and lecturers to value cultural and intellectual diversity by promoting student voice and validating student experience as a legitimate site for intellectual inquiry. The internationalisation of tertiary education is seen in terms of preparing students as global learners and citizens and necessitates the use of a pedagogy that promotes intercultural awareness and skills as well as a curriculum that reflects international perspectives.

Underpinning this study is a strong belief in the transformative powers of a critical pedagogy. A critical pedagogy encourages students and lecturers to recognise how the dominant culture can act to constrain, silence and disempower or alternatively empower students and those who teach them. Suggested is that in using a dialogic form of teaching, where international and local students engage with each other and the lecturer to view their own lived experiences from multiple perspectives, each student’s voice will be heard, recognised and valued to their mutual benefit. Furthermore, by engaging in dialogue, students will come to recognise and reject
inequality, injustice, and oppressive authoritarian structures and move to empower themselves and others (Beyer & Apple, 1988; Freire, 1970a, 1996; Giroux, 1988, 1997; McLaren, 1994a; Shor & Freire, 1987; Smyth, 1989).

The need to pose questions such as the following underpins the study:

*How can problems related to class, race, gender, and power be translated into questions of educational equality and excellence? In what way can we reposition ourselves as educators against the dominant culture in order to reconstitute our own identities and experiences and those of our students? How can educators construct a pedagogical practice that legitimates a critical form of intellectual practice?* (McLaren, 1988, p.87)

Chapter Three provides a more thorough exposition of a critical pedagogy as it relates to the study at hand.

Another assumption underpinning this study is the need to recognise the student participants as complex individuals who are influenced by both their culture of origin and the culture of context. Rather than representing the students as stereotypes and their experiences and perceptions of tertiary education according to their cultural background, they are presented as individual personalities.

### 1.9 Limitations of the study

#### 1.9.1 The researcher's perspective

This study emerged from my involvement with international students as their instructor of a Business Communication undergraduate subject. All interviewees were thus familiar with my teaching style and my interest in intercultural contexts. This familiarisation might have influenced some of the participants to agree to be in the study and it may have swayed responses. My background in languages and my work in other countries also influenced the topic of the thesis. I know first hand what it is like to be living on your own in another country and to be in situations where you have to speak and give your opinion in another language. I feel a good deal of empathy with students learning to function in another language and in another culture
with all its inherent joys and difficulties. It was my interest in and experience with other cultures as well as what I took to be a challenge to devise teaching strategies to provide a more inclusive classroom that led to the choice of thesis topic.

My teaching experience, both in the Business Communication subject and in a range of subjects in Education, has provided me with opportunities to examine the influence of choice of curriculum, teaching strategies and the roles of teacher and student on student learning. I sought students' and lecturers' perspectives as well as insights from the literature to describe the learners' experience, both pluses and minuses, and characterise pivotal factors that contribute to enhanced learning and intercultural understanding.

1.9.2 The case study approach

The case study approach employed here limits the conclusions that can be made due to the selection of students from just one university and due to the small number of participants interviewed in-depth. The site of the inquiry, however, has a high (17 per cent) percentage of international students and so some of the conclusions may be seen as relevant to other universities that also have a high proportion of international students. The intention of the study is not to be generalisable in its entirety to a wider population, however, but rather to be illuminating for others in similar positions and to offer other perspectives about the same issues.

1.10 The structure of the thesis

This first chapter has presented the context of the study in broad terms. It gives an overview of the research focus, the problem and significance of the study as well as the limitations of the study. Chapter Two discusses the historical background to the issue of international students studying in Australia, in particular at the University of Wollongong. Chapter Three discusses the literature on critical theory and intercultural communication theory in relation to teaching and learning with international students.
in a tertiary context. These bodies of literature are discussed only in terms of their relevance to the study at hand. Their relationship to each other is also explored.

Chapter Four presents the research design, the approach to collecting the data, the data collection instruments and procedures, and how the data have been analysed. Chapter Five presents the personal profiles of both the students and the lecturers. These are intended to give a picture of the participants so that the following presentation of the data comes alive. Chapter Six documents the findings of the responses of students and lecturers in interviews, focus groups and a student survey in regard to the purpose of tertiary study. Chapter Seven reports on the view of students and lecturers on didactic, lecturer-directed contexts, and Chapter Eight documents students’ and lecturers’ responses to interactive, student-centred teaching and learning contexts. Chapter Nine discusses the analysis of the findings and makes conclusions about the findings in the light of the literature reviewed in Chapter Three with suggestions for future research, teaching approaches and policy initiatives.
Chapter Two

2 The historical background to international students studying in Australia

The following provides an historical account of international students studying at Australian universities as well as some background to international students studying at the University of Wollongong, the site of the study. This overview indicates that international student enrolments will continue to increase and recognises the need to internationalise the curriculum to meet the needs of all students.

Students from overseas have been attending Australian universities since 1904. Their numbers began to rise with initiatives such as the 1950 Colombo Plan, through which the Australian Federal government provided funds to encourage students to study in Australia. The underlying philosophy then was to provide education as a form of aid, to equip students to be able to contribute to their country’s economic development on their return home. In 1973, the Whitlam government abolished all fees for both domestic and international students but imposed a limit of 10,000 students from overseas. By 1979, a review of educational policy was under way. The Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs advocated the imposition of full fees for international students, while the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of Education argued that the benefits, including cultural exchange and valuable aid, were justification for the subsidisation of international students (Williams, 1989). The Fraser government chose a middle path and decided to introduce an Overseas Student Charge (OSC) in 1980.

These fundamental differences in approach to international students, seen in terms of providing education as aid or as trade, were the focus of two committees that reported to the government in 1984. They were the Goldring Committee, which provided the first comprehensive picture of the background, the circumstances and attitudes of
international students, and the Jackson Committee appointed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs. The Goldring Committee recommended that the OSC be set at 30-40 per cent of the full cost and advocated the continuation of the policy of education of international students in terms of aid. The Jackson Committee, on the other hand, advocated the introduction of full fee-paying students and the introduction of scholarships based on merit and equity, now known as Australian Development Scholarships (ADS) (Phillips in Martens, 1994). These scholarships, administered by AusAid (Australian Agency for International Development) in high level consultation with the recipient countries, reached a peak of approximately 6,000 in 1992 but decreased to just under 4,000 in 1998 (Snapshot of training, 1998). The reduction in numbers was due in part to the use of a different counting and computer procedure rather than a deliberate policy (personal communication with an employee of AusAid). South-East Asian and Pacific Island countries receive the highest proportion of this aid because of their proximity to Australia. Approximately 260 scholarship holders are at the University of Wollongong (International Office Database, April, 1997).

By the mid-1980s, the government had decided to introduce full fee-paying international students as well as fees for domestic students (Higher Education Contribution Scheme - HECS). In 1987, a Code of Ethical Practice for international students was agreed to by the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee and the Australian Committee of Directors and Principals. Guidelines were established that require all institutions with international full-fee paying students to provide “all necessary support systems” (Williams, 1989, p.19). Just what the “necessary support systems” may include or involve is the subject of some debate among academic circles as well as in the literature (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991).

2.1 The University of Wollongong context

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) and the Vice-Principal (International) at the University were interviewed in June 1997 about the internationalisation policies of the University of Wollongong. An academic member of the Internationalisation
Committee also provided a discussion paper about possible dimensions of an internationalised curriculum and strategies for implementation. The following is a summary of the information they volunteered.

Changes to the Commonwealth Higher Education Act, reported in the Dawkins’ Green and White papers of the mid-1980s, resulted in an increased fiscal reliance on attracting fee-paying international students to Australian universities. Government subsidised scholarships for international students were phased out over a three-year period. The University of Wollongong had a high percentage (then ten per cent of total enrolment) of international scholarship students as did its parent university, the University of New South Wales. Since the government was no longer providing sponsorship, the University had to seek alternative arrangements to replace this particular population of students with fee-paying students.

The University’s first recruitment mission was in 1986 to Singapore, Malaysia and Hong Kong. There was a tendency to try to recruit students in our region in Asia, particularly with the then Federal Labor government’s push toward Asia. However, a deliberate strategy to diversify into other markets than the Asian market was put into place, and the University of Wollongong was one of the first to go on recruitment missions to the Middle East and the Indian Subcontinent. This potentially huge English-speaking market had only heard of Australia in terms of wheat and live sheep. They had never heard of the unusual name of “Wollongong” and so were particularly hard markets to win over (personal communication with the Vice-Principal of the University of Wollongong, 1998). A serious lack of supportive infrastructure and government assistance made the task even harder; for instance, in the United Arab Emirates, there was, at that time, no Australian embassy for students to apply for a visa in order to study in Australia. Universities also have to rely on their own budgets to fund these operations as the government provides relatively little financial assistance in relation to the scale of operations ($AUD 4 million a year). This allocation is spent generically by The Department of Education, Training and Youth affairs across all 38 Australian universities.
However, after the first Austrade mission had been to the US and the UK in 1988 and later established reciprocity of exchange with respected universities in the US, the University of Wollongong’s international recognition increased markedly. Other marketing strategies built on the fact that Australia is a politically neutral and stable country and is based on the British political system, a system widely understood.

In the late 1980s and in 1990, exchange agreements were put in place at universities in the US, the UK, Italy, France, Japan and Sweden, not only to encourage their students to come to Wollongong but also to encourage our students to go abroad to study. Exchange agreements are on a reciprocity basis where there is no payment of fees, just an exchange of students from one university to another. Since the European community of students is free to study at any university within the European Union under the Erasmus system, and thus students have many possibilities to choose from, a different marketing strategy had to be employed. The opportunity to do a three-month intensive English language course over the summer, prior to doing a semester of study, was the approach adopted.

Strategies to encourage recruitment with colleges in Malaysia, Hong Kong, Singapore and Indonesia, for example, include giving students one or two years’ credit toward a degree here as well as twinning arrangements where students undertake one or two years of a degree in their institution and come here to complete their degree. Other students, such as those from the Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, may be funded by government contracts with the World Bank or the Asian Development Bank to upgrade qualifications in either education or health. The University has to bid for these contracts against international competition. The University also offers some of its courses off shore and has entered into partnerships with universities in Thailand, Taiwan, Singapore and Hong Kong.

The University has paid agents in 27 countries to promote the University. The establishment of international alumni groups also helps in promotion. Advertising in newspapers and the like, and exhibitions - held in hotels, embassies, and so on - about the University, both in Australia and overseas, are other avenues used to promote the
University. Employing a range of strategies suited to the diverse needs of the international educational market underpins the recruitment drive of the University.

2.1.1 The internationalisation of the University of Wollongong

In the University’s mission statement, the word “international” features prominently, no less than forty times across four pages. The objectives of the University presented in its Strategic Plan 1997 - 2005 also reflect an international focus. They include positioning the University as an internationally recognised centre of excellence in research and teaching; developing a culture that values diversity and is receptive to new ideas and critical inquiry; and creating an environment that fosters cooperation and teamwork and that has an international orientation (Strategic Plan, 1997-2005). Although the initial impetus to sustain and enhance a high international profile was largely a financial one, internationalisation is ‘a central plank’ of where the University wants to be for ‘a host of reasons’ (personal communication with the Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University of Wollongong, 1998). There is recognition that having a large international student population brings not only financial benefits that result in, for example, a larger selection of subjects being offered due to increased budgets, but that it affords a much richer teaching and learning environment for all students and lecturers. Internationalising the curriculum will help, in the words of one key policy maker, ‘to produce graduates who can work in a whole range of international spheres’, both local and international students (personal communication with the Pro Vice-Chancellor, 1998).

To oversee this side of the internationalisation of the University, a Working Party was set up by the Academic Senate in the early 1990s, which led to the establishment of the Internationalisation Committee as one of the three major academic committees in the University – the others being Education and Research. The Internationalisation Committee has three dimensions: to encourage international research, forging major links with international teams; to internationalise the curriculum; and to encourage University of Wollongong students to study abroad as well as to encourage international students to study at the University of Wollongong. Representatives from each faculty attend the committee’s meetings, and there is a standing item on the
University Internationalisation Committee faculty reports about their international activities, especially about innovations to do with the internationalisation of the curriculum and teaching and learning methods.

From 1997 through 1998, significant progress was made in addressing teaching and learning methods and, in some cases, curriculum to meet the needs and interests of the international student population (personal communication with the Pro Vice-Chancellor, 1998). The Faculty of Creative Arts, for example, introduced a subject on international art that has proven very popular with both international and local students. Under discussion during the year of 1998 was the idea that students enrolled in any degree will have to take 12 credit points in some kind of international studies in order to graduate. In 2000, a Working Party was established to oversee the internationalisation of the curriculum with a particular focus on how this will impact on the quality of teaching and learning experiences of students and lecturers.

According to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (personal communication, 1998), central to the internationalisation of the curriculum is the transformation away from lecturer-centred learning toward much more student-centred learning where students and lecturers can capitalise on the culturally diverse backgrounds in their classrooms to gain different insights. He regards student-centred learning as a ‘good vehicle’ for students from a whole range of backgrounds, not just international students, to manage their learning. However, the committee is well aware that for some lecturers, teaching culturally diverse classes is more than just a challenge and that there needs to be much more staff development so that attention to internationalisation becomes ‘a systematic part of the way people think’ (personal communication, 1998).

Formalising an international component in current tertiary teaching courses was on the agenda in 1998 as well as the introduction of courses on internationalisation and how to work effectively with students from diverse backgrounds. Constraints mentioned in this regard are those of resources, staff time and their willingness to participate (Burroughs-Lange, 1996; Pe-Pua, 1994). Staff participants in professional development workshops are often the ones with the most interest in this issue who
have already explored different teaching strategies and who are willing to examine their own teaching practice. Resistance to change is often discussed in terms of not having enough time to “cover content” or fear that “standards” may lower should they be more inclusive in the classroom (Brunet, 1993; Phillips, 1994). Comments made by academics at a University workshop on teaching in culturally diverse classrooms, given by Hellmundt, Rifkin and Fox (1997), revealed a sense of frustration at the size of classes, and the expectation, in some subjects, to cover more and more content at the expense of being able to engage students in interactive activities.

Christine Fox (1995), an academic member of the Internationalisation Committee and educational consultant and lecturer with extensive experience in teaching contexts in countries in the Asia-Pacific, South America and Africa, articulates the dimensions and possible strategies to internationalise the curriculum. Importantly, she stresses the OECD definition of the curriculum as ‘curriculum with an international orientation in content, aimed at preparing students for performing (professionally, socially) in an international and multicultural context, and designed for domestic students as well as foreign students’ (OECD, 1994). Fox (1995) emphasises that teaching strategies and processes, the learning activities, assessment and evaluation, and student interaction should all be seen to be part of the curriculum as well as curriculum content and learning outcomes. Curricula and teaching strategies need to be analysed to ensure that they contain examples of best practice internationally. Furthermore, the skills and knowledge necessary to become an “international” graduate, as well as those skills/understandings/teaching strategies that are important for an internationally oriented lecturer also need to be analysed.

While travel and scholarly exchange internationally has been the practice of scholars from elite universities in Europe for centuries, it is now part of the globalisation thrust of governments and educational institutions in Asia and the Americas as well (Fox, 1995). This globalisation has significant implications for the University of Wollongong in terms of student and staff exchanges. The introduction of specific subjects that have an international focus, such as the one in the Faculty of Creative Arts mentioned previously, help to position the University internationally.
But internationally recognised course offerings of high quality are necessarily
dependent on the expertise of those who teach them. Fox (1995) suggests that a new
recruitment policy be devised whereby international expertise in new staff is seen as a
priority. She recommends that all curricula address international comparative issues.
Also suggested is that there should be a variety of curricula that lead to more
specialised international qualifications as well as more general intercultural skills. In
1999 another initiative was launched, that of a degree with an International Studies
focus, where students can select a suite of subjects with international content or
emphasis from a variety of Faculties.

2.1.2 Support for students

In accordance with the 1987 Code of Ethical Practice agreed to by the Australian
Vice-Chancellors Committee and the Australian Committee of Directors and
Principals, an array of student support services has been established in all universities
(Williams, 1989).

At the University of Wollongong, one issue of concern for lecturers highlighted in a
survey of lecturers and students across campus is that of English language difficulty
of international students (Supervision Working Party Report, 1997). The University
introduced in 1995 an English-as-a-second language subject that can be included as
part of any degree. This support, as well as that offered by The Student Learning Unit
and English language workshops, has proven very popular. For many international
students, learning English is one of the reasons they come here to study so that,
among other things, they will be better able to operate in the global marketplace in
their future employment on their return home (News Report, 1998). Support from the
Student Learning Unit is not restricted to international students. Local students also
seek and receive help in improving essay writing and the like.

Other services include a counselling service with international counsellors, a Prayer
Centre for Islamic students, and consideration by catering staff in the preparation and
selection of food, all of which are of benefit to local students as well as to
international students.
The two policy makers interviewed, who were responsible for key elements of the internationalisation of the University, emphasise many advantages of having international students studying at our university, beyond financial benefits. A richer learning and teaching environment, a wider selection of subjects, more student-centred learning, more professional development for staff, among other things are seen as positive developments to the mutual benefit of both international and local students and lecturers.

This chapter has documented the historical background to the issue of international students studying at Australian universities as well as some contextual information about international students at the University of Wollongong. It has reported on the growing numbers of international students at Australian tertiary institutions and the growing attention to ways to internationalise the curriculum and teaching practice of lecturers. The next chapter discusses the literature on critical pedagogy and intercultural communication theory and its relationship to international students studying at the tertiary level.
Chapter Three

3 Literature review

The literature on critical pedagogy, the possible relationships among teaching and learning contexts, the experiences of international students, and the development of students' critical thinking skills in the tertiary classroom is explored here. This literature review has deliberately focussed on where these literatures bear on teaching and learning with international students in the tertiary classroom, as this is the crux of the study. This chapter explores the contributions of some key educational theorists to this present study's exploration of links between intercultural interactions among students and lecturers and development of students' critical thinking skills.

3.1 A critical pedagogy

As noted in Chapter One, the study is informed by a critical theoretical perspective to education. The following presents some of the key aspects of a critical pedagogy and the views of some of the key players, namely Paulo Freire, Ivor Shor, Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren.

Thomas McCarthy (1991) provides an insightful synopsis of the key aspects of critical theory, as follows:

*Critical theory challenges the notion of pure reason, showing its changeability depending on the culture, history, and the power in which it is embedded.*

*Critical theory rejects the Cartesian picture of an autonomous rational subject who is capable of controlling the world.*

*Critical theory emphasises the practical over the theoretical, but the two are inseparable.*

*Knowledge is not disembodied from the rest of existence, though a distanced or objectivating understanding of knowledge is needed.*
Established human sciences, scientifically trained experts, and rationalisation are all closely analysed by critical theorists.

Critical theory's major purpose is to make problematic what is taken for granted in culture, so that a degree of social justice can be had by those who are oppressed (cited by Nichols & Allen-Brown, 1996, p.43)

Early prominent critical theorists include Theodor Adorno, Erich Fromm, Jurgen Habermas, and Herbert Marcuse, who were, at various times, members of the Institute for Social Research (the Frankfurt School) founded in 1923 in Frankfurt, Germany. They saw themselves as responding to historical events of the time, such as the evolution of Soviet communism and Western capitalism and the carnage of WWI. They were also concerned about what they saw as the indiscriminate application of science to justify courses of action without concern for the benefits or otherwise for humankind. Carr and Kemmis (1986) give an overview of how early critical theorists viewed science:

Science had become an ideology, a culturally produced and socially supported, unexamined way of seeing the world which shapes and guides social action. As such, science's role had become one of legitimating social action by providing 'objective fact' to justify courses of action. Questions of values underlying these courses of action were believed to be beyond the scope of science and were thus left unexamined. Scientific results merely distinguished more effective courses of action from less effective ones and explained how outcomes occurred—not whether they should be allowed to occur. Far from being a relentless inquiry into the nature and conduct of social life, science was in danger of taking forms of social life for granted and reflecting only on 'technical' issues (p.132).

In the field of education, the focus of critical theorists is for pedagogy to be viewed as 'a decidedly historical, political, theoretical, and moral' process (Smyth, 1989, p. 3) rather than as a set of neutral, unquestionable, value-free technical acts. Critical theorists are concerned with making explicit the relations among knowledge, power, ideology, and education. They make problematic the idea that educational institutions are sites of objective instruction that encourage democracy and social mobility. Rather, they view them as 'agencies of social, economic, and cultural reproduction' (Giroux, 1988, p. xxx) that may serve to confirm and privilege the position of some while at the same time disconfirm or silence others. The central aim of critical
Critical theorists share similar perspectives with feminist theorists in that they are concerned with student experience, voice, and empowerment from oppressive dominant cultures (Gore, 1993). They also 'speak about the teachers' authority and struggle with the contradictions inherent in the notion of authority and emancipation' and they assert the objectives of erasing multiple forms of oppression through particular classroom practices (Gore, 1993, p.7). Nichols and Allen-Brown (1996) illuminate the shared perspectives thus:

*The intent of feminist pedagogy, like critical pedagogy, is to liberate. Through curriculum, discussions, and as agents of social change, feminist educators focus on the liberation of women from oppressive structures within society. Both feminists and critical pedagogists seek to empower students by affirming their race, class, and gender positions. They encourage students to reject any and all forms of oppression, injustice, and inequality. Students are taught to use their voices to prevent silencing by authoritarian social structures (p. 233).*

In spite of the wide divergence of thinking, and the extreme critiques of critical theory by the post-structuralist turn in the theoretical debate, critical theorists also share similar perspectives with postmodernist theorists in their recognition of multiple perspectives and encouragement of minority voices (Lather, 1991; Nichols & Allen-Brown, 1996). Critical theorists work across a number of intellectual spectrums. Some of the more widely published in education are: Paulo Freire, Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren, and Ivor Shor, and in Australia, Shirley Grundy, John Smyth and Robert Young.

Underpinning this study is the practical work of the influential thinker in critical pedagogy, the late Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire and his writings and his academic supporters.
3.1.1 Learning and the role of student and instructor

The role of student and instructor will depend on how knowledge is viewed and the extent to which it is created or imparted. For Freire, knowledge is not static or neutral and is continually 'being created and re-created as people reflect and act on the world' (Frankenstein in Shor, 1987, pp.181-182). A dialogic method of teaching allows for both students and teachers to be critical agents in the act of knowing. This act is seen as a cycle of two dialectically related moments: one is the production of new knowledge; the other is the one in which the knowledge is known or perceived (Freire & Shor, 1987, pp. 7-8). According to Giroux, it is crucial for knowledge to be understood as part of the power relations that produce it as well as in terms of who will benefit from it and who will not benefit (Giroux, 1988).

Freire speaks of ‘a creative pedagogy which seeks to reinvent knowledge situated in the themes, needs and language of the students, as an act of illuminating power in society’ (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.81). In this way, students’ experiences and feelings are validated as a legitimate basis for intellectual inquiry. Students and lecturers work together to expose the power relations inherent in issues relevant to their lives. This kind of pedagogical practice, it is argued, will help give students a voice and will enable them to see the hidden assumptions and challenge the givens of daily life within broader social contexts. As Freire so succinctly describes:

*These “generative themes” should be organised and “represented” dialectically so that the links between them, their relationship to the totality of ideas, hopes, values, and challenges of the epoch, their historical context, their relationship to the community, and their raison d’etre, are all clarified. Only as people come to know these themes critically, as they realise how these themes support or contradict the dominant ideologies, do they see that dehumanisation, although a concrete historical fact, is not a given destiny but the result of an unjust order* (Freire, 1970a, p. 28).

Critical educational theory is in direct contrast to the practice of the didactic transmission of knowledge to passive, silenced students. According to Shor and Freire (1987), the transfer-of-knowledge based lecture is the most likely method to re-
produce the status quo and silence students’ voices. This silencing separates the process of producing knowledge from knowing existing knowledge produced by others, far away from student experience and students lose the opportunity to develop their critical thinking skills. More particularly, students and lecturers lose qualities such as critical reflection, curiosity, demanding inquiry and action that are required for the production of knowledge and instead, the lecturer becomes just the specialist in transferring knowledge, the student the receiver. Shor and Freire (1987) see the “standard curriculum” as something organised away from the teacher with set formulae, such as a set amount of pages to be read, short answer type tests and so on, ‘which mechanically structures education and discourages us from the responsibility of recreating ourselves in society’ (p.77). A dialogic pedagogy, on the other hand, can be seen in terms of a ‘method for freedom and against domination, as cultural action inside or outside a classroom where the status quo is challenged, where the myths of the official curriculum and mass culture are illuminated’ (Shor & Freire, 1987, p. 97).

Shor and Freire (1987) do acknowledge, however, that lecturers can act to codify a problem providing the challenge for students to decodify it. They distinguish between lecturers who are channels for the transfer of knowledge and those who present a challenge.

Giroux (1988) argues for the need to develop students’ skills and knowledge so that they can ‘read the world critically and change it when necessary’ (p.xxxiv). Shor and Freire (1987) are, however, aware of the limits of this kind of pedagogical practice as well as the practical reality of some classrooms. They contend that education is not the primary lever of transformation for a more just society, but a necessary step. By helping students to see the contradictions in society and developing their intellectual habits, teachers enable students to ‘undermine the myths supporting racism, sexism, and the elite control of the economy’ (p.167).

3.1.2 Authority and the teacher

Critical theorists theorise about how to change the power relations within the classroom so that lecturers and students work together and create a context where
student voice is encouraged. Nevertheless, the teacher needs to be recognised as competent, trustworthy, flexible, and with authority; otherwise students will not have the confidence to participate in this kind of learning process. The teacher is seen to be the primary agent, directing the class and playing a leadership role. Freire (1987) contends that teachers can never leave their position of authority because ‘without authority, it is very difficult for the liberties of the students to be shaped’ (p.91). Instead, he talks about the absence of “authoritarianism” within the classroom. Both Shor and Freire discuss many instances of student resistance seen in their long and varied teaching experience, Shor in his work as a Professor of English in the US and Freire in his educative work, originally in Brazil and later internationally. They understand student resistance to be a response to their previous conformity to a transfer-of-knowledge approach to teaching and their fears of having to be responsible for their own learning. They strongly maintain that teachers need to recognise that, in some cases and at some points in time, it will not be possible to teach a dialogic pedagogy and that teachers should not feel they have failed (Shor & Freire, 1987).

Some students and lecturers, at the focus of this study, discussed the difficulties and constraints with using a dialogic pedagogy in a lecture theatre with a large number of students, over 50.

3.1.3 The transformative powers of a critical pedagogy

Underpinning this approach to teaching and learning is the belief that a dialogic pedagogy can help students to become critical readers of texts and hence remake knowledge in the classroom. Discarded is the “banking” concept of education with lecturers filling empty heads with information they have chosen to impart (Freire, 1970). Instead is Giroux’s idea of teachers as “transformative intellectuals” (Armaline & Hoover, 1989; Aronowitz & Giroux, 1991; Giroux, 1988; Mezirow, 1990). The role of teachers is to deliberately develop pedagogical practices that foster the democratic principles of equality and social justice. Giroux (1988) contends that teachers need to recognise that pedagogy is ‘fundamentally a political and ethical practice as well as a socially and historically situated construction’ (McLaren in Giroux 1988, p.xix). Teachers, who develop a critical understanding of the relationships between education and the wider social, historical and political forces that inform it, recognise
how different pedagogical practices can either act to silence and disempower both educators and educated alike or ‘legitimate (their) voices in an effort to empower them as critical and active citizens’ (Giroux cited by Gore, 1993, p. 95).

The following makes the link between the use of a critical pedagogy, its transformative power as described above, and the inclusion of the perspectives of international students in the tertiary classroom.

3.1.4 The relationship of a critical pedagogy to the issue of international students in the tertiary classroom

A critical pedagogy challenges traditional educational authoritarianism where only certain voices are heard and others silenced, where some have the power to decide what exists in the curriculum and what is rendered invisible, and where pedagogical practice benefits some but not all (Freire, 1996). Instead, lecturers make explicit the assumptions underlying their teaching practice and identify their expectations of students and themselves. They need to articulate their goals and purpose clearly in order to be able to deliberately undertake socially transformative practice that fosters equality and social justice. This shared understanding is essential to realise an inclusive classroom.

According to theory of critical pedagogy, lecturers need to employ different strategies to create an inclusive classroom, which includes beginning with what is familiar to students to encourage student voice. Equality, social justice and inclusivity are of course highly contested concepts, and it can be argued that much of the education system and curriculum is based on a paradigm of hegemonic “exclusion” of the voice of the participants in this study. The socially transformative practices discussed here are contextualised within a particular site, and the concepts of “equality” and “social justice” are used within this framework.

This study makes the connection between the use of a critical pedagogy and recognising and valuing the different cultural backgrounds and learning styles that students bring to the tertiary classroom. By embracing the cultural diversity of all
participants and by validating each student's experience as the focus for legitimate intellectual inquiry, this study suggests that students' voice will be encouraged. Encouraging students to recognise and reveal oppressive social structures and inequalities in their every day life, including feelings of alienation in their academic life may help them to reject these constraints and hence empower them.

Underpinning this study is the belief that in encouraging both local and international students to critique issues from their different perspectives, (each others’ for example) the critical thinking skills of all will be enhanced (Alcock & Alcock, 1997). Broadening students’ perspectives on a range of issues may help them to gain a deeper understanding of injustices and inequalities within different systems, be they educational or political, and become increasingly more tolerant of each other to their mutual benefit. This improved understanding will hopefully be taken outside the tertiary classroom and help foster and promote understanding in the wider community.

3.1.5 Constraints to a critical pedagogy

A critical and reflective approach to teaching and learning can be problematic for both lecturer and student. The idea of relearning, re-inventing knowledge can be intimidating for lecturers (Shor & Freire, 1987). The use of a dialogic method of teaching may seem chaotic and less rigorous than the transferring of knowledge from expert to novice (Shor & Freire, 1987). The technical, isolated physical structure in which teaching is often organised – lecture theatres, for example – may provide a very real impediment to the process, too (Giroux, 1988). Weiler (1991) suggests that instructors operate within hierarchical structures that may act to constrain the educator and the educated alike.

Freire and Shor (1987) acknowledge that instructors can be under pressure to “cover” certain mandated topics and to use certain textbooks, which are then tested in exams. Grades, exams, and teaching evaluations are often subjected to criteria that may not reward a dialogic/critical pedagogy, a point often referred to by instructors in this study. The challenge for lecturers is to teach the skills required and valued by society
and at the same time expose the values and skills to critical inquiry (Giroux, 1997). Freire (1996) encapsulates this view thus:

...it is impermissible to train engineers or stonemasons, physicians or nurses, dentists or machinists, educators or mechanics, farmers or philosophers, cattle farmers or biologists, without an understanding of our own selves as historical, political, social, and cultural beings - without a comprehension of how society works (p.133).

Some lecturers and students may have had a long acculturation process in schooling and teacher practice, based on the transfer-of-knowledge, technical view of teaching so that they have not actually experienced what Freire and Shor (1987) call a 'liberating pedagogy'. Teachers' own appreciative systems and epistemologies (i.e. repertoire of values, knowledge, theories, and practices) are not always clear or articulated and yet, their appreciative systems will necessarily influence how they teach, what they teach, who they reward, and who they silence (Burroughs-Lange, 1996; Gow et al., 1992; Ross, 1989). They need to be aware of their own readings of the issue/topic/text and avoid imposing these on their students as the only way to see an issue (Giroux, 1997).

John Smyth (1989), a strong opponent of the technocratic view of teaching, suggests that teachers need to question taken-for-granted assumptions about teaching practices and understand that they 'may be socially constructed responses to wider societal agenda' (Smyth, 1989, p.4). He suggests that teachers view teaching from multiple perspectives within wider historical, political, theoretical and moral contexts.

Acknowledged by Shor and Freire (1987), too, is that teacher educator models do not always encourage this kind of expansion of pedagogical practice. Others argue that student teachers should demand courses that make critical inquiry the focus (Giroux, 1988).

Reflecting on teaching practice, however, is a complex task and involves time, strength of purpose and conviction, an awareness of one’s own assumptions, beliefs and values, and possibly a collegial, collaborative atmosphere with other lecturers – something not necessarily easy to establish (Kent, 1993; Osterman & Kottkamp,
Some lecturers at the focus of this study lamented the lack of professional development and the expectation by students, subject co-ordinators and heads of departments that they will know automatically how to teach. Others commented on the lack of time and resources to reflect on teaching practice. The literature suggests that lecturers take the time to reflect on their teaching practice, their aims and underlying rationale, which the data from this study confirms, while adding the practical constraints that lecturers face in an increasing amount.

3.1.6 Critics of a critical pedagogy: Pedagogical theory and classroom practice

Jennifer Gore (1993) provides a comprehensive critique of a critical pedagogy. She separates the writings of Paulo Friere and Ivor Shor, whom she sees as offering specific pedagogical examples of critical theory in practice, from those of Henry Giroux and Peter McLaren, whom she views as articulating theory without (enough) reference to the realities of pedagogical practice. She takes particular issue with their use of language in describing what lecturers need/should/have to do. She maintains it is easy to theorise at a distance what teachers should be doing and when conditions are such that teachers fail in their use of a dialogic pedagogy, they can be left with feelings of guilt and blame.

Importantly, Gore (1993) points out that there is an assumption by critical theorists that teachers will know what emancipatory pedagogical practice is. Like Elizabeth Ellsworth, another critic of critical pedagogy, Gore argues that it is also assumed by proponents of a critical pedagogy that teachers will have the skills to manage this kind of pedagogical practice as well as strategies to affirm the voice of students (Ellsworth, 1992). Gore (1993) maintains that underpinning this pedagogy is the assumption that teachers themselves are beyond racism, sexism and other oppressions. Furthermore, it is assumed that students are willing and capable of change, and, indeed, that they need to change. Just what the notion of self and social empowerment is or might look like is not clearly articulated, according to Gore (1993).
A comprehensive reading of Giroux, McLaren and Shor and Freire suggests that these points of contention are valid but are not sufficient for discarding a critical pedagogy. The literature and anecdotal evidence suggest that the issues raised by Gore are indeed not easily addressed in practice.

Elizabeth Ellsworth (1992) contends that critical theorists do not acknowledge the lack of problematising of the issues the instructor brings (or does not bring) to the classroom. There is an assumption, she maintains, that instructors want to engage students and make problematic their teaching (Elbaz, 1988). Resistance may also come from students who are used to the transfer-of-knowledge kind of teaching or who want to get through the course from a purely technical point of view, a point acknowledged by Shor and Freire (1987). These perspectives are discussed by both students and their lecturers at the focus of this study.

Ellsworth (1992) also has difficulty with the concept of “student voice” within a critical pedagogy. She argues, as does Gore (1993), that the notion of creating a dialogue between instructor and student and encouraging student voice assumes that students (and lecturers) will have the skills to participate ie to speak up, to view issues from different perspectives and be able to construct an argument with supporting evidence. Furthermore, she contends, there is assumed a relationship of equal power to direct the class among students and between students and instructor. She also argues that critical theorists neglect ‘to come to terms with the essentially paternalistic project of traditional education’ (p.99) that does not provide a context for students to ‘conceptualise self-definitions’. This study argues that the issue of student voice is about students expressing what they experience, and they need to expose that experience to critical inquiry, particularly when that experience may represent a male-dominated, hegemonic world of ideas.

The issue of power relations within the classroom is discussed comprehensively by Freire (1996) and Shor and Freire (1987). They articulate quite clearly that students and teachers are not equal but different (Freire, 1996). They also emphasise the need for teachers to be competent enough to maintain discipline so that each person’s voice
is heard and know the direction they want the class to be going in if transformation is to occur. Shor (Shor & Freire, 1987) elaborates:

I use authority and need authority to begin and direct my classrooms. I am open to sharing it and to having the students emerge as co-directors of the curriculum. The more the students have confidence in me as an authority who directs a productive course, who can maintain discipline, who has a good command of knowledge and how to gain knowledge, the more the students trust my interventions. I agree that liberating educators have to use authority within the limits of democracy. How to do this in practice is harder to demonstrate. Each classroom, each group of students, each situation will require individual teachers to adjust the equation of authority and freedom (p. 91).

They distinguish between teachers whose authority is fixed and unchanging and the teacher who establishes her authority at the start and gradually withdraws at the appropriate juncture to encourage students to self-organise and to participate in the setting of the agenda. They acknowledge that knowing when to withdraw is a delicate decision and takes practice in being able to “read” the class (Shore & Freire, 1987). In a way, this is a similar point of view to Vygotsky’s (1978) zone of proximal development – the need for the “Other” to assist the student to reach their next “stage” of understanding.

Students, both international and local, at the focus of this study discuss the classroom power relationships candidly as well as their difficulties in expressing themselves, in and out of class. Underpinning a critical pedagogy, however, is the instructor’s role of creating a context where students, (international and local), are encouraged to develop and foster their critical analysis skills in order to be able to participate, to share their opinions and negotiate and refine their arguments (Biggs, 1997; Chalmers & Volet, 1997). In this study, specific teaching and learning strategies are discussed to foster and develop students’ ability to speak up and discuss different perspectives.

The issue of teachers being able to teach using a critical pedagogy is an important one. Armaline and Hoover (1989), Ross and Hannay (1986), Roth (1989), and Shor and Freire (1987) suggest a review of teacher education courses may well impact positively to create more reflective teachers within a critical discourse of pedagogy.
Suggested is the development of a critical discourse, based on Freire’s concept of critical pedagogy, to enable instructors ‘to examine their own personal theories of action, expose their thinking to others, make their own teaching problematic and focus on the social construction of knowledge and the nature of social life’ (Ross & Hannay, 1986, p.13). One can conclude that the process of making explicit one’s assumptions about teaching and learning and the rationale for the teaching method taken may itself create a greater awareness about teaching practice and the different interests being legitimised or silenced (Giroux, 1997).

Despite the pragmatic reservations raised about a critical pedagogy as discussed, a general framework based on a critical pedagogy has informed this study. It is regarded as crucial that lecturers encourage students to view and question the familiar from multiple perspectives and to learn and share ideas with each other. Underpinning this study is the belief that international students bring a wealth of cultural capital to the tertiary classroom that can be used as a resource to the mutual benefit of international and local students, particularly in terms of developing critical thinking and intercultural skills. While a few studies mention the perspective of international students as a resource in the tertiary classroom (Alcock & Alcock 1997; Goodman, 1994), there is little evidence of studies specifically linking the use of a critical pedagogy with interaction among local and international students in the tertiary classroom.

Some studies do, however, suggest a more student-centred approach to teaching and learning. They argue that when lecturers focus on what they are encouraging students to do, rather than on what they themselves are doing, they will broaden the critical thinking skills of students (Biggs, 1991, 1992, 1997; Burroughs-Lange, 1996; Chalmers & Volet, 1997; Jackson 1997; McKay & Kember 1997; Prosser & Trigwell, 1997).

Not readily apparent in the literature is the idea that encouraging international and local students to share their ideas from their different cultural perspectives empowers them to challenge the status quo and expose the assumptions and power relations in
order to create a more just society. Furthermore, the idea of creating an inclusive classroom where the different cultural perspectives of students are encouraged and explored and embedded within the curriculum, classroom strategies and assessment practices is also something not easily found in the literature. Indeed, even some of the most recent literature fails to include international students’ perspectives in any meaningful way (Biggs, 1999). Instead, they are either completely absent with no reference made to them at all (Brown & Atkins, 1988), or they are treated in terms of how well/fast they can adapt to our academic traditions (Ninnes et al., 1999).

3.2 Intercultural communication

In order to locate and position trends found within the literature, in particular, about the dominant cultural and educational beliefs about other cultures and ways of knowing and learning, it is useful to turn to Christine Fox’s (1996) taxonomy of intercultural interaction, the five ‘Ds’ as she has classified them. Fox (1996) writes, ‘...the four Ds ... concern who has been seen to be culturally deficient, disadvantaged, different or dominated. The fifth D, that of dialogue, creates the conditions for developing authentic communicative action interculturally’ (Fox, 1996, p. 295). ‘Authentic communication’ is defined as ‘communication that claims to be free of coercion and open to all ways of seeing’ (Fox, 1996, p. 292).

Fox developed her theory on intercultural communication within the historical context of educational consultancies engaged in development projects across cultures, more recently in the Pacific. The first four classifications represent trends in approaches to intercultural education and are easily discernible within the literature concerning international students studying at Australian universities. Within some of the literature, the idea that international students have come from deficient educational systems or are at extreme disadvantage, either because of their poor English skills or because of the type of educational system and cultural background they have come from, is often stated. This intellectual, educational and even cultural poverty is perceived to be because they are inferior in some way, and different from the dominant culture, within which they now seek to learn. These three constructs are
almost impossible to separate from the ideological concept of domination where the institutionalisation of power favours the dominant group, local students, and labels international students as the “Other”.

Their Otherness, John Thompson (cited in Fox, 1996, p. 293) contends, ‘operates to legitimise the current relations of domination, the dissimulation or concealment of this domination’ within the tertiary setting. On the one hand, it is often argued international students need to adapt fast to the dominant group’s academic traditions. However, when it seems evident that current teaching practice is not beneficial to the dominant group either, the question of the “Other” disappears from the discussion; international students are then concealed by being completely absent. There seems to be strong evidence for adding another ‘D’ - that of denial - to the five ‘Ds’ of Fox.

In some studies, for example, Bradley and Bradley (1984) and Felix and Lawson (1994), international students at Australian universities are referred to as students from South-East Asia. The literature surveyed reveals very little about international students from other places, such as Scandinavia, Europe or the United States. Furthermore, students from “Asian” countries are treated as one homogenous mass, without reference to their individually different cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic or intellectual backgrounds (Burns, 1991). The literature does not refer to the enormous differences in terms of opportunity and access, rural and urban, in SEA countries. Differences are not considered from the point of view of systematic inequalities or the socio-economic background of students.

Some literature tends to concern itself with the notion of cross-cultural adaptation (Brislin & Yoshida, 1994; Gudykunst & Yoshida, 1994; Kim, 1988; Kim & Gudykunst, 1988). Kim’s (1988) integrative theory of cross-cultural adaptation focuses on the need of the “sojourner” – (the international student) – to participate in individual change to fit with the dominant culture rather than seeing the communicative interaction as a two-way dialogue. In the tertiary context, this tends to emphasise the need for international students to adapt as fast as possible to our academic traditions and discourse. Little reference is made to the value of the cultural
capital they bring to Australian universities nor the role local students and lecturers play in their “adaptation”. International students are, then, viewed as the “Other” with their cultural background seen as fixed and static and their previous experiences incompatible with those of the dominant group – the local students (Fox, 1997). As noted by Said (1978) and Spivak (1990), this view is based on the dominant group stereotyping international students’ cultural background with attitudes of superiority. Fox (1996) points out, ‘theorists have been more concerned with individual adaptation and individual communicative competence rather than with interrelationships in an intercultural encounter’ (p. 302). It is this idea, that of interrelationships in intercultural encounters, not just between lecturer and students, but also among the students themselves that is of interest for this study.

Indeed, Fox’s fifth ‘D’, dialogue, seems to be largely absent. This ‘critical process of making meaning, of sharing meanings, and of building bridges across those multiple realities and multiple truths’ (Fox, 1996, p. 298) is inevitably tied up with the willingness of participants to ‘accept and engage in different expressive discourse practices’ (Fox, 1996, p. 293) for authentic intercultural communication to exist. She refers to Habermas’ theory of social action to explain the conditions necessary for authentic intercultural communication to take place as being those involved to be open, true and sincere in their intent to reach an understanding, not agreement (Fox, 1997). She explains:

Authentic communication implies, as Hans-Georg Gadamer states, the opening of oneself to the full power of what the “other” is saying. He shows that such an opening does not entail agreement but rather the to-and-fro play of dialogue (p.88).

In the tertiary context, for successful intercultural interaction among students and lecturers to occur necessarily involves negotiating the space for all voices to be heard and listened to. The different ways of thinking and knowing are included rather than the voice of the dominant group favoured to the marginalisation of the “Other”. Fox (2000) argues for an agenda that does not accept the dichotomy of us and the “Other”. Such an agenda would create spaces ‘for personal and professional transformation through new educational and methodological strategies’ (p.14) where there is a shift
from student as subject to co-researcher with an awareness of who is speaking and who is listening. Knowing that someone is listening seriously is just as important as telling the story, notes Spivak (1990).

For me, the question ‘Who should speak’ is less crucial than ‘Who will listen?’ ‘I will speak for myself as a Third World person’ is an important position for political mobilisation today. But the real demand is that, when I speak from that position, I should be listened to seriously, not with that kind of benevolent imperialism... (Spivak, 1990, pp.59-60).

Mariam Meynert (1998) also asserts that there is an urgent need to evolve curricula where all students can locate themselves and their ways of knowing ‘in order to reconcile the notion of difference and equality with imperatives of freedom and justice’ (cited in Fox, 2000, p.16).

However, while much of the literature on international students resides in Fox’s first three classifications, some literature on interactive, student-centred teaching strategies does not refer to or include international students (Biggs, 1999; Brown & Atkins, 1988; Chalmers & Fuller, 1996). Since the use of interactive teaching methods necessarily involves giving students a voice, thus encouraging them to learn from multiple perspectives, it would seem that the inclusion of international students’ perspectives would be an obvious teaching strategy. It is this connection between enabling/empowering students to see and learn from multiple perspectives by engaging in intercultural encounters and the use of interactive teaching strategies, that is the focus of this thesis. Fox’s five “Ds” help to integrate these concerns.

The following overview of some of the key trends found in the literature classifies studies according to Fox’s taxonomy of intercultural interaction.

3.3 Constructs of deficiency, disadvantage, difference

The often cited Ballard (1987) and Ballard and Clanchy (1991) demonstrate the overlap of these three concepts, deficiency, disadvantage and difference. They suggest
that lecturers should not treat their classes as culturally neutral, that they should be more aware of appropriate teaching strategies and be better trained to make explicit their expectations. However, they also tend to make sweeping generalisations about “Asian” educational systems as if they are all deficient, overcrowded and under resourced with authoritarian teachers (Ballard, 1987). They seem to perceive the “problems” of international students to be to do with their attitudes toward the relationship between student and teacher, and their attitudes toward knowledge, authority and learning. They recommend that students be given specialised English assistance within the discipline (Ballard, 1987).

The language used is very negative as evidenced in the constant use of words, such as ‘problem’, ‘adjustment’, ‘long suffering academics’, ‘anxiety’ and ‘failure’. Emphasis is on the differences between “them” and “us”, and their “deficient” educational systems, which act to disadvantage them in our system. Little recognition is given to any resourcefulness on their part or any value in the cultural capital they bring to Australian universities.

Beasley and Pearson (1996) also argue that Asian students’ backgrounds, value systems and scholarly traditions may ‘impede academic adjustment’ (p. 2) in Australian universities as, they assert, international students have difficulty engaging in analytical thinking. The authors discuss the success of a support program they conducted alongside the formal program to encourage the development of critical thinking skills. They do mention that local students also benefited from the program, although 70 per cent of participants were international students. Beasley and Pearson (1996) acknowledge the work of Volet and Kee (1993), and Volet, Renshaw and Kee (1994) who contend that South-East Asian (SEA) students become just as well adjusted to academic requirements as their local counterparts, yet they continue to claim that Asian students find it difficult to become critical thinkers. They also fail to include reflection on varied cultural perspectives in their course, other than providing learning and language support to meet (the perceived) Australian academic criteria.
Samuelowicz (1987) earlier described the problematic nature of international students’ adjustment to academic tradition in Australia. She uses particularly strong language to describe the ‘excessive’ regard of Asians for authority and use of a surface approach to learning (p.124). The academics surveyed in her study state that they view Asian students as compliant, reproductive learners and advise more training in critical thinking approaches and help with academic English. Students from countries as diverse as Pakistan, Mexico, Fiji, Iraq, and Kenya are all quoted as saying that they are used to learning as passive recipients of knowledge from the expert teacher and are unaccustomed to interactive teaching styles.

Ninnes, Aitchison and Kalos (1999) contend that students studying at Indian universities have to memorise large quantities of information to be reproduced in heavily weighted exams although the students also pointed to the teachers’ role as helping them to gain a deep understanding rather than memorising with a surface approach. Robust argument and critique were, however, reported as being largely outside the teaching and learning experiences of the students in their study. The authors also found many poorly resourced institutions in India.

These assertions, then, support the views of Ballard (1987) and Ballard and Clanchy (1991) about international students’ previous teaching and learning experiences, but they do not yield insights into how these students meet the perceived unaccustomed demands for critical thinking skills and classroom interaction. Nor is there any recognition of the cultural capital they bring to the tertiary classroom, nor the diversity of experiences of all students, including international students (Jones, 1989). Implied in these studies is that a student’s cultural background puts them at a disadvantage because they have had different educational experiences to the dominant educational culture in which they now seek to learn. One might ask whether an Australian student studying in an “Asian” university is also seen as deficient? The current study investigated these assertions and questions whether the two groups - international and local students - come from so qualitatively different educational backgrounds. It also investigated both international and local students’ responses to critical thinking assignments and interactive activities as well as to lecturer-directed
contexts. The following gives a pictorial presentation of the interconnection of Fox’s five “Ds” taxonomy and its relationship to a critical pedagogy as previously discussed.

**Figure 3.1: The 5 “Ds” model**
Initial interviews for this study suggest local students have had similar experiences where they were expected to memorise and reproduce information that the teacher had given them and where they were not encouraged to use their critical and analytical skills. Suggested here is that international and local students may both be starting university life with undeveloped “tertiary literacy” skills. Furthermore, some students at the focus of this study reported that they were still experiencing, in some subjects, a didactic, lecturer-directed method of teaching at the University. They noted that they are expected to copy down information with little understanding that has to be reproduced in assignments and a general assessment system heavily weighted towards exams. The teaching and learning experiences of international students and local students, it is suggested, may not be so very different.

Other studies, such as those by Alcock and Alcock (1997) and Goodman (1994) also have a deficit approach, but explain international students’ difficulties with Australian academic contexts by referring to Hofstede’s (1984; 1991) five cultural dimensions to explain why international students may learn in the way they do. It must be noted that missing in his theory is any critique of a sociological nature, as well as any critique on the individual, psychological experiences of men and women. Hofstede studied organisational behaviour in IBM subsidiaries in 53 countries around the world with two different data collections, the first from 1967 to 1973 and the second phase from 1985 to 1987. He found five areas of “problems”, which he then investigated as to how the various cultural values influenced corporate behaviour in different countries. Goodman extrapolates from the five dimensions and relates them to what he sees as issues that may arise in intercultural educational contexts. He states that:

- **Power distance** amounts to how far societies accept that power in organisations and institutions is distributed unequally. Educationally this translates as high power distance societies as having teacher-centred education with the teacher as the transmitter of knowledge to passive recipients. Age and status are respected.

- **Individualism/collectivism**: the orientation toward the individual or groups. In societies that rate highly on collectivism, there is a strong sense of tradition and
respect for the group with an emphasis on saving face. In individualistic societies, people are more likely to pursue their own personal goals. In collective societies, people are more likely to integrate their own goals with those of group members.

- In societies that are high on uncertainty avoidance, both student and teacher like a lot of structure, precise objectives, detailed assignments; lecturing is common and the teacher is not interrupted; learning the content is more important than learning how to learn.

- Masculinity/femininity: masculinity is equated with the value a society places on material things while femininity emphasises relationships and concern for others. Goodman (1994) elaborates on this more by saying: ‘The degree to which a society focuses on assertiveness, task achievement, and the acquisition of things as opposed to quality of life issues such as caring for others, group solidarity, and helping the less fortunate. The more assertiveness, competitiveness, and ambition are accepted, the higher a country’s rank on this measure’ (p.137). Others, such as Martin and Nakayama (1997) interpret this value as being the implications of being born female or male.

Alcock and Alcock (1997) argue that what they consider to be Australian cultural characteristics may restrict learning and inhibit integration of international students in tertiary classes. Implied in both Alcock & Alcock’s (1997) and Goodman’s (1994) studies is the idea that international students have to change and adapt and they do so with difficulty. However, among their recommendations is the need to recognise international students as a resource and to encourage students to access sources from other countries. They recommend teaching programs to have intercultural perspectives. Goodman also attempts to make some contributions as to ways to overcome perceived intercultural difficulties. He suggests, for example, inviting students who have studied in other countries to discuss their experiences. Another strategy, he suggests, is for international and local students to discuss different educational contexts they have experienced.
The point to be made here is that while an awareness of differences in cultural expectations is certainly something to be aware of, generalisations about traits of whole countries can be extremely dangerous. This kind of research ignores the fact that theoretical debate – sociological, psychological, philosophical, historical – concerns intra societal divisions as, of course, does all feminist theory. All theoretical debate about society, about epistemology, about ontological understandings that seek to make sense of the world is excluded.

Furthermore, the idea that societies can be labelled as “masculine”, valuing assertiveness and competition or “feminine”, valuing caring and nurturing, seems to me an unfortunate use of gender to describe characteristics of people in a society, particularly when the notion of assertiveness is ranked higher than that of so-called feminine characteristics! It seems also to confirm the stereotypical concepts of what constitutes masculinity and femininity to their mutual exclusion. The theory is flawed further because it does not recognise that people, including the students at the focus of this thesis, operate differently in different contexts.

In extrapolating these dimensions to educational contexts, there is once again an assumption, a generalisation that one can make about the cultural background of student and teacher and the way people learn and teach. Hofstede refers to Australia as being a highly individualistic country with low power distance. These characteristics then, according to Goodman (1994), should translate to educational contexts that value individual achievement as opposed to group work, teacher/student interchange in intellectual debate as opposed to lectures with the lecturer as all-knowing. It begs the question, then, how does one account for the countless lecture halls filled with rows of passive students taking down notes that need to be memorised for exams at the end of the session?

The problem with accepting theories such as this one is that they become self-fulfilling prophecies (see Biggs, 1997). If a lecturer assumes that the way a student looks will mean that they can only learn in a particular way, it may lead the lecturer not to elicit their viewpoint or give them the opportunity to speak up. In other words,
the danger is that assumptions will be made about individuals because of someone else's idea of what their cultural background represents that exclude them from adopting strategies to be successful in another educational context. The current study sought to determine how lecturers see the cultural backgrounds of students impacting on their learning and how the cultural diversity of their classes impacts on their teaching and learning approaches.

Another assumption associated with the deficit approach to students' learning is the claim that international students, and particularly South-East Asian students, are rote learners who depend on memorisation with little understanding. The two approaches to student learning—surface and deep—originated from the research of Marton and Saljo (1976) in Sweden. Students were given a text to read and responded to questions given to them in two different ways. One group focussed on the facts they may be asked without understanding the intent of the author—a surface approach. The other group focussed on the meaning of what the author was trying to say and looked below the surface for interpretation—a deep approach.

Chalmers and Volet (1997) and others, point out a difference that the casual observer may miss between surface or rote learning and methodical and meaningful rehearsal learning strategies (see Biggs, 1997; Chalmers & Fuller, 1996; Ninnes et al., 1999). They assert that it is important to understand students' intentions when using memorisation as a learning strategy. They cite studies by Hess and Azuma (1991), Hollaway (1988) and Kember and Gow (1989), among others, who report that students and their teachers view memorisation as a strategy to gain deep understanding rather than memorising unprocessed information in a surface and superficial manner (Chalmers & Volet, 1997). They point out that when studying in a foreign language, it may well be very productive to use memorisation strategies that lead to accurate recall of content, particularly when accurate recall of content is required.

Biggs, in some of his studies (1992; 1993; 1997) argues similarly. He points to the high success rate of many international students (Salili, 1996) and makes the
comparison with a musician repeating over and over bars of music to gain deep understanding. He argues that it is misleading to equate memorisation with surface learning and it is unhelpful to label international students as rote learners as this often leads to self-fulfilling prophecies where lecturers teach according to what they think students want and can manage.

3.4 A context of inclusion

Instead, Biggs (1997; 1999) describes three different levels of conceptualisation about teaching. He recommends a contextual approach where lecturers do not focus on student differences (level 1) or teach according to what they believe a student’s cultural background expects (level 2), but create a context, what constructivists call “the scaffolding”, to enable students to meet the required objectives (level 3). He describes this third position as lecturers understanding that there are ‘universals about learning and teaching which apply across systems relating different educational systems to each other’ (p. 4). He argues that the focus should be on engaging appropriate cognitive processes, such as allowing for individual difference in choice of learning and setting personal objectives. He emphasises that it is the lecturers’ responsibility to create a context where students see that it is appropriate to engage in class discussion and activities (Scollen & Scollen, 1995). “‘Culture’ does not determine how to do this, but a well-founded theory of teaching does’, states Biggs (1997, p.13; Mugler & Landbeck, 1997).

Biggs (1997) describes a unit of study he developed for a B.Ed. programme for in-service teachers in Hong Kong where the objectives of the course ‘sought evidence for reflection, application and practice enlightened by the course content’ (p. 11). The teaching and learning activities encouraged self-observation and group discussion. The initial criticisms of the course structure and teaching methods centred on not being told the “correct” answer and the lecturer not imparting knowledge but instead promoting student-centred learning. However, by the end of the course, ‘over three-quarters of the 82 students were able to apply constructivist theory to practice in their own classrooms’ (p.12) and demonstrated a perceptive understanding of the kinds of
learning this kind of approach encourages. Biggs' point is that it is the context that is central to the kind of learning students engage in, not the cultural background of the students.

McKay and Kember (1997) report similar findings in their case study of two intakes of 69 and 72 students at a Hong Kong university where they challenged a commonly held belief that the SEA students wanted to be spoon-fed (Renshaw & Volet, 1997). Their study showed that the students preferred a student-centred teaching and learning context where they were expected to work independently and participate in class discussion and relate the theory to practice. They measured the learning approaches of the two intakes of students using the Study Process Questionnaire (Biggs, 1987) as well as conducting random interviews. The curriculum was redesigned to have more tutorials, the use of case studies, role playing and student led seminars. The students reported that they learnt more, understood the theory more and developed understanding in context. They liked the increased interaction with the tutor and described the cooperation with their classmates as helping their learning. The students adopted learning strategies in response to the context and were enthusiastically supportive of student-centred contexts rather than teacher-directed contexts.

In McKay and Kember's study (1997), there is no mention of language problems or the students' cultural background inhibiting participation. They point out, as do others (see Biggs, 1997; Chalmers & Volet, 1997), making assumptions about students' learning styles according to their cultural backgrounds can lead to self-fulfilling prophecies. Furthermore, by blaming the student or seeing the student as "the problem", lecturers can avoid examining their own attitudes and practices (Chalmers & Volet, 1997).

In the current study, I sought to investigate what kinds of teaching and learning approaches students at the site of inquiry had experienced and what kinds of learning these encouraged. Interviews indicated that students at the focus of the study preferred similar teaching and learning contexts where they were expected to participate and learn in groups and independently.
Studies by Brunet (1993) and Phillips (1994) at Australian universities found that some lecturers have the opinion that if they changed/modified their lecture format to be more inclusive of students from different backgrounds, "standards" would lower. Phillips (1994) found an unwillingness of academic staff to adjust areas of program design, yet he found ‘many examples of poor course design, inappropriate course content, examination papers, inadequate teaching approaches and so on. All of which had nothing to do with maintaining standards’ (p.195). Lecturers need to recognise the hidden, unexamined conventions in different academic and social cultures and openly discuss their ways of thinking and expectations with the use of various strategies. This recognition and open discussion of teacher and student expectations brought from past experience is an essential element of student-centred learning.

Other studies, such as that by Burroughs-Lange (1996), have found that some lecturers have a poor conception of the objectives of their teaching practice and often struggle to articulate the skills they are trying to develop in their students. Students’ needs were assumed to be about mastering subject matter rather than needs that had been articulated by the students themselves. The lecturers’ concept of their role was as gatekeepers of knowledge in the didactic role of ownership and transferral of knowledge (and see Clifford, 1999).

Others like Gow, Kember and Sivan (1992) have found a mismatch between what lecturers say they are trying to achieve in students’ learning and how they actually teach. In their study, lecturers at a Hong Kong polytechnic adopted one of three positions: blame the student, blame the lecturer or blame the system. They claimed that students were unmotivated with a heavy reliance on lecturers, there was a lack of teacher training, their classes were large and the curriculum was under-resourced and relied heavily on memorisation and exams. The lecturers in the study readily identified the barriers to the way they say they would like to teach but offered few solutions.

Lafferty (1996) also acknowledges the constraints lecturers can face in designing their courses and teaching practices. He refers to the current political-economic climate in
Australia with increasing class sizes, the introduction of fee paying courses and the shift from collegial to corporate managerial forms of university organisation, so that, he asserts, the rhetoric is about producing critical thinkers, but the reality is not conducive (Lafferty, 1996). The current study has sought to determine whether lecturers at the site of inquiry experience and perceive similar constraints to their teaching practice.

The literature increasingly calls for lecturers to re-examine their teaching objectives and practice and to focus, not on what they do, but what they ask students to do (Burroughs-Lange, 1996; Chalmers & Fuller, 1996; Jackson, 1997; Prosser & Trigwell, 1997; Shuell, 1986). Numerous studies demonstrate that students adopt learning strategies in accordance with the kinds of teaching and assessment practices they are given, not according to their cultural background (Biggs, 1997; Dahlgren, 1984; Entwhistle & Ramsden, 1983; Gow & Kember, 1993; Lafferty, 1996; Taylor, 1996).

Students respond to the kind of teaching and learning context they find themselves in with the most appropriate strategy. If it is a constructivist context as in Biggs’ (1997) and McKay and Kember’s (1997) studies, for example, their responses suggest initial confusion but later acknowledgment of the deep understanding and learning that has taken place. Other studies, such as those by Burroughs-Lange (1996) and Gow et al. (1996), report teacher-directed contexts where students are unmotivated and rely on lecturers for information to be memorised and reproduced in exams. Another study by Volet, Renshaw and Tietzel (1994) support these views. They compared a group of local Australian (whose cultural backgrounds are not discussed) with a group of South-East Asian students. They report that ‘study approaches are influenced by students’ perceptions of course requirements rather than determined by stable personal characteristics of individuals or cultural differences’ (Volet et al., 1994, p.301).

In line with these studies, the current study investigated international and local students’ and their lecturers’ perceptions and experiences of teaching and learning.
and whether they support the claims stated above. It tried to gain insights into both international and students' experiences and the impact of different contexts on the kinds of approaches they take to their learning. It also explored the impact of these experiences on their intercultural interactions as well as the impact of their intercultural interactions on their learning, their appreciation of cultural diversity and their general outlook on life.

Research conducted at the University of the South Pacific by Mugler and Landbeck (1997) contends that the students at the focus of their study responded to what they describe as a Western style educational system by using a surface approach. They describe the system as being teacher-directed and exam-driven and decontextualised in a language other than their mother tongue. This is a different view of a Western educational system from that described by Ballard (1991), who suggests this kind of teaching and learning context is the domain of “Asian” educational systems.

One major outcome of a program designed by Prosser and Trigwell (1997) for teachers in higher education was their increased awareness of the relationship between the context in which student learning occurs, the approaches students take to their learning, and the quality of the outcome. They come from a phenomenographic perspective and contend that one way to improve student learning is for lecturers to experience variation in perspectives of teaching and learning and to see how this can change their views about teaching and learning. Their perspective shares the most basic commonality with the constructivist view of teaching and learning that learning comes about through interacting with phenomena and is about conceptual change, not the acquisition of knowledge directly transmitted from expert to novice.

Prosser and Trigwell (1997) discuss the range of different conceptions of teaching and learning that have been reported in many research studies, from learning as an increase of knowledge through memorising, as the lowest conception, to learning as changing as a person and an interpretative process of understanding reality (Marton, Dall’Alba & Beaty, 1993). They suggest that these can be linked to different conceptions and approaches to teaching, ranging from a teacher-focused strategy of
transmitting knowledge for students to acquire to a student-focused strategy where teachers help students to develop and further change their conceptions.

In the Prosser and Trigwell study, different materials were used to help teachers experience variation in conceptions of teaching. They were given extracts from interviews and asked to note the range of conceptions and approaches, which were then discussed in small groups. They were also shown videos with teachers commenting on their intentions with the use of different strategies. A second workshop was designed to encourage lecturers to reflect on their own experiences of lecturing and that of students with the aim of helping them to see the variation in students’ approaches and perceptions of their studies. As well, they reflected on the different perceptions that lecturers have about their roles and approach. The fundamental aim was to encourage lecturers to reflect on their intentions and change from a focus on transmitting knowledge to helping students’ understanding.

Prosser and Trigwell (1997) report that among the key outcomes of this work was an increased awareness of the qualitative variation in conceptions and approaches to teaching within and between disciplines. In conclusion, this awareness of the variation of experience indicated to some of the lecturers involved the importance of the relationship between their own approaches and intentions in their teaching with the way students perceive and approach their learning.

This study has been described in some detail because it resonates with the current study, particularly the authors’ observation that some lecturers were adamant that a different approach to transmitting knowledge was not possible in their subjects. In a workshop given by Hellmundt, Rifkin and Fox (1997), similar comments were made by academics across a range of disciplines and experience. The current study sought to examine whether the findings cited in the above studies have been the experience of lecturers at the site of the inquiry. It was also of some interest to see whether lecturers had experienced variation of conceptions and approaches to teaching and the impact of these on students’ learning and intercultural interactions.
Other studies, such as that by Mannison and Patton (1994), discuss the urgent need for lecturers to move away from the talk-and-chalk lecture format and question the effectiveness of some university teaching practice in producing critical thinkers. Their study investigates students’ experiences and perceptions of the use of interactive teaching methods on their learning processes in an elective subject, Human Sexuality and Learning. The lecturers used a variety of presentation styles. Students’ responses were enthusiastically in favour of small group work with the authors reporting an increased awareness ‘in associating learning with interaction with others’ (Mannison & Patton, 1994, p.39). When asked to think of a subject that had no real interest for them, students recalled a lecturer-directed, didactic format with the material to be memorised for exam purposes.

Oliver and Morrison (1991) also report students’ enthusiastic endorsement of interactive teaching strategies. Their responses revealed an appreciation of having the opportunity for open discussion, listening and sharing opinions, and developing their skills in critical awareness and problem solving. Authors of the course note that the underlying rationale of the course was a deliberate attempt to ‘carefully socialise (students) from the beginning of their tertiary studies into active, involved modes of learning which will maximise both understanding of material and an acceptance of personal responsibility for one’s own learning’ (Oliver & Morrison, 1991, p. 152). One third-year student’s comment was that this was the first time he had been taught in this manner. Student comments reveal little difference between what is reported about international students’ experiences in their home countries and their experiences at university in Australia. Their comments suggest that some university teaching practice does not encourage critical thinking or improved problem solving skills.

Ramsden (1992), Brown and Atkins (1988) and Chalmers and Fuller (1996) describe a range of effective teaching strategies to involve students in their own learning and to develop their critical thinking and analytical thinking skills. However, in none of these accounts, as in the above articles, is there mention of the cultural backgrounds of the students. Is this because the cultural background is deemed irrelevant to good
teaching practice or were students from cultural backgrounds other than the dominant group silenced? It would seem that the rationale behind each of these programs was that this approach just made good teaching practice. As Biggs (1997) says so succinctly,

*Good teaching is inclusive. It is certainly possible to teach locals in a way that excludes the participation by international students, but it is also possible to teach even better, so that all students participate adequately (p.18).*

### 3.5 Challenges to the deficit approach

Of significance to the study are the challenges made by Chalmers and Volet (1997), among others, to some of the commonly held beliefs about students from South-East Asia (SEA). The teaching experience of the researcher resonates with their findings and suggests that they may be the same misconceptions that students at the focus of the current study also experience. A key misconception Chalmers and Volet (1997) report is that SEA students do not want to speak up or participate in class discussions and activities. It is often suggested that they avoid discussion and debate because of their passive learning styles (Barker et al., 1989; Bradley & Bradley, 1984). As Chalmers and Volet (1997) point out, being quiet does not necessarily mean being mentally passive. Anecdotal evidence from lecturers suggests that some lecturers see quiet students in the same light and do not assume that they are mentally passive because they are quiet.

Other studies report that SEA students often find lecturers and students speak fast, use a lot of slang and refer to unfamiliar examples that alienate them and make joining in the discussion hard (see Mills, 1997; Mullins et al, 1995; Volet & Kee, 1993). Chalmers and Volet (1997) suggest that lecturers actively engage SEA students in class discussion by allocating questions to all students and giving them time to discuss. Specifically asking students by name to comment, and organising small group activities are other strategies that they encourage. The teaching experience of the
researcher suggests that these kinds of activities may result in increased interaction and engagement with each other to their mutual benefit.

Renshaw and Volet (1995) argue cogently that data from their study are inconsistent with the generally held view of SEA students being unusually quiet. They surveyed 40 local and 33 international students from Singapore using the Study Process Questionnaire (Biggs, 1987). The findings indicate that both local and SEA students engaged in discussions of their own accord and at the instigation of the tutor. They point out that, in their study, the most reticent and at risk students were local students who did not participate at all. They also report that when the SEA students were in a small minority, they perceived themselves to be more reserved but when there was an almost equivalent proportion in the class, they felt more at ease. Chalmers and Volet (1997) report other studies undertaken by Volet and Kee (1993) in Singapore that also revealed that students were expected to give their opinions on issues and problems and thus do not support the conception that SEA students are not used to giving their opinions.

Another assumption sometimes made by lecturers is that international students do not want to speak up and contribute to class discussion because of their language skills. This belief may result in lecturers not asking those students questions or to undertake various tasks. One lecturer in McGinty’s (1996) study was ‘amazed’ at the end of a class when two SEA students thanked her for giving them the opportunity to read. Previous to her experience at an intercultural workshop, she had always assumed that they would not want to participate. McGinty (1996) concludes that a successful (success in terms of involving all students) teacher is one who is aware of her assumptions and expectations that may act to silence students from different cultural backgrounds.

Volet and Kee (1993) make similar assertions and also suggest that lecturers knowing students’ names as well as giving enough time to respond were other important considerations for students to engage in intercultural interactions. The current study
investigated whether these approaches and assumptions about international students have been the experience of the students at the focus of the study.

Another misconception identified by Chalmers and Volet (1997) is that SEA students do not want to mix with local students. They cite several possible reasons for SEA students to group together, including accommodation, which they share with other international students and lack of group assignments or discussions in class where, for some, this is one key opportunity to make friendships with local students. Volet and Ang (1998) also point to the repeated evidence of research of international students’ high level of homesickness, loneliness and stress which make forming friendships with local students difficult (Barker et al., 1989; Burns, 1991; Cross, 1995). They also report that the high level of commitments, other than study, of local students impeded the amount of time available to meet to complete group assignments and to interact with each other.

Mills (1997), in her study of four different cultural groups of students at a New Zealand university, reports that few local students sought opportunities to mix outside of class with international students. There was a mixed response to the impact of international students on the learning experiences of students. Some reported that the range of cultures in their classes had enriched their learning experiences while for others, working in mixed groups was not valued. None of the local students considered intercultural interaction to be a central aspect to their experience of university study. Some local students reported working more with international students when their number in the class was small. Local students and their lecturers described international students in terms of being a “misfit”. They ‘saw the differences that defined the misfit, particularly the communication related ones, as justification for not pursuing contact with the international students’ (Mills, 1997, p.111). As in the studies by Ballard and Clanchy (1991) and Beasley and Pearson (1996), ‘the misfit belongs to the international student and is problematic when it cannot be remediated’ (Mills, 1997, p.111)
For the lecturers in Mills’ (1997) study, teaching in a culturally diverse classroom was seen through the filters of language problems and the demands made on them by international students. English was the central dimension of most of their experience of internationalisation, so that English speaking international students were not included in their perspective. For the lecturers, internationalisation was seen to be problematic and created by the perceived differences in the groups due to language difficulties as well as the international students not having the skills to fit in. What stands out in this study is the strong negative feelings of the lecturers toward the cultural diversity in their classrooms which may have impacted on the local students’ willingness to interact with the international students. There was also an absence of discussion about strategies to promote an inclusive classroom. Sharda (1995 cited in Volet & Ang, 1998) emphasises the importance of the lecturers’ attitude to intercultural study groups and the impact it may have.

Volet and Ang (1998) point to the paucity of research on the impact of local students’ attitudes toward international students in regard to the formation of intercultural study and social groups (Pederson, 1994). They assert that the responsibility of academics should not be minimised with regard to the lack of intercultural mixing of students. They suggest that lecturers need to actively encourage culturally mixed groups of students so that they do not miss out on gaining intercultural insights and critical learning opportunities (Mills, 1997; Volet & Ang, 1998).

Volet and Ang (1998) note that one of the key objectives of the internationalisation of university education - ‘an appreciation and valuing of cultural and intellectual diversity to function in a multi-cultural or global environment’ (Strategic Plan, 1997-2005, p.5) - are unlikely to be met, if lecturers do not promote intercultural activities and interaction. They report that students are unlikely to initiate intercultural study or social groups, and hence miss out on critical learning opportunities (Nesdale & Todd, 1993). Both local and international students need to be fully committed to learning from intercultural interactions. They confirm what the literature search for this study found: that there is a dearth of research on this issue.
This study is of key importance to the current study as Volet and Ang (1998) make the connection between the internationalisation of tertiary education, teaching and learning approaches and the fostering of students’ critical and intercultural skills. They point to the role of both lecturers and local and international students in promoting intercultural learning and skills and appreciation of different ways of thinking. Unlike other studies, which emphasise the difficulties and the necessity for international students to adapt to Australian academic contexts (Alcock & Alcock, 1997; Goodman, 1984), they recognise the role local students and lecturers also play.

To overcome this lack of intercultural mixing, Quintrell and Westwood (1994) recommend a “buddy system” where international and local students are matched together and offer each other support over a year. International participants reported that they had gained more knowledge about intercultural communication, understood Australian customs better, had made friends with their host peer, felt more relaxed in the environment and had improved their English skills as a result of being in the program. Local participants were enthusiastic about gaining more knowledge of other countries, understanding more about their own country and customs, and gaining in intercultural communication (p.56). Ladyshewsky (1996) makes similar recommendations and also urges lecturers not to make assumptions about international students that they will all experience the same kinds of difficulties.

Another oft cited claim about SEA students is that they have not experienced using their critical and analytical thinking skills (Ballard, 1991; Ninnes et al. 1999; Samuleowicz, 1987). The current study investigated this claim as well as examined and compared the prior learning experiences of local students with those of international students. The implication underpinning this conception in the literature cited previously is that local students start university with well-developed critical and analytical skills. The study also investigated how students develop these much-valued skills at the University and what kinds of approaches lecturers employ to encourage the development of these skills.
Other studies indicate that both local and international students face similar challenges in starting university life. Burns (1991) suggests that the perceived problems of international students may very likely be experienced by local students as well. He found many similar difficulties experienced by the two groups, including financing their studies and ‘academic demands’. Mullins et al. (1995) contend that while other literature has focused on the issue of international students’ adjustment to another culture or new ways of learning, their study found many issues of concern were shared by both local and international students. They recommend that lecturers need to communicate their expectations clearly, by providing performance criteria, course outlines, examples of model answers and detailed feedback on performance (p.230). In another study by Chalmers & Volet (1992), the international students reported being very much aware of what is required of them here in Australia and, furthermore, they were enjoying the experience of independent study.

Renshaw and Volet (1995) urge academics not to assume that all students from South-East Asia fit the same mould and to treat them as resourceful and resilient individuals, who expect to adapt to a new environment just as local students do. They also point out that many of the adjustments faced by students are similar for local students too, for example, moving away from the more structured setting of school to university where greater self-reliance and self-management are required. They see some of the adjustments in terms of ‘reconciling the competing demands of university study, securing financial resources, maintaining personal relationships, and setting aside time for recreation’ (p.104). In conclusion, the authors suggest:

_We need to recognise the resourcefulness of students in this process rather than presume that their differences are a deficiency (p.104)._ 

Chalmers and Volet (1997) and Biggs (1997) conclude that good teaching is inclusive and argue that international and local students have much to learn from each other. They state:

_The principles of good teaching apply just as much to students from South-East Asia as they do for local students. South-East Asian students_
have been shown to be motivated, effective and strategic learners. They present us with the opportunity to learn from them. It is an opportunity that we should take advantage of for the benefit of all students and teachers (Chalmers & Volet, 1997, p.96).

3.6 Conclusion

The two bodies of literature on international students studying in Australia seem to fall into two kinds of categories or contexts. A context of exclusion sees international students in terms as having a deficit and being different, and a context of inclusion has experiences of all students included and different ways of thinking are recognised and valued. A context of exclusion implies that international students are different or at a disadvantage and their cultural background acts as a deficit. Studies from this perspective contend that international students have difficulty with the development of their critical and independent thinking skills, largely because of their previous teaching and learning experiences that rely on memorisation and a surface approach to learning (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Beasley & Pearson, 1996; Bradley & Bradley, 1984). Assumptions associated with this approach are that international students do not like to participate in student-centred activities or contribute to class discussion. Preferred is a lecturer-directed teaching and learning approach. It is also argued they prefer the company of students from their own cultural background and do not want to mix with local students in either group assignments or socially (Mills, 1997).

International students tend to be portrayed as one homogenous mass (Burns, 1991). They are often referred to as being from South-East Asia with all sorts of problems and difficulties that the lecturer tends to phrase in terms of the student adapting as quickly as possible to our academic tradition (Ballard & Clanchy 1991; Barker et al 1989). The emphasis is ethnocentric with the focus on their need to adapt to Australian academic traditions. There is little recognition of the cultural capital they bring to Australian tertiary contexts that can be harnessed to the mutual benefit of both lecturers and local and international students. Neither is there recognition of the role local students and lecturers play in fostering dialogue among international and local students and the critical learning opportunities such interaction can provide.
Other studies argue that it is up to lecturers to create a context of inclusion where interaction among international and local students is encouraged and seen in terms of promoting critical and intercultural learning opportunities (Mills, 1997; Volet & Ang, 1998). They contend a learning context is needed where student-centred activities and discussion are considered to be appropriate and assignments are structured for students to develop critical and analytical skills using a deep approach (Biggs, 1997; Chalmers & Volet, 1997). These studies contend that conceptualising teaching as being about what the lecturers do, where their role is to transmit knowledge that has to be memorised and reproduced in exams, will encourage students to take a surface approach to their learning (Jackson, 1997; McKay & Kember, 1997). A context of inclusion, on the other hand, conceptualises teaching and learning as being about interaction and changing one’s conceptions (Biggs, 1999; Prosser & Trigwell, 1997). Important is for lecturers not to make assumptions about the way students learn because of how they see their cultural background but instead to focus on their own conceptions and approaches to teaching that encourage a deep approach to learning in student-centred activities and assignments (Biggs, 1997; Prosser & Trigwell, 1997; Volet et al., 1994).

A student-centred approach is one that may reflect a critical pedagogy where students are invited ‘to think critically about some issue, to co-develop the session with the “expert” or teacher, and to construct peer relations instead of authority-dependent relations’ (Shor & Freire, 1987, p.41). A critical theorist perspective invites the lecturer to be seen as a facilitator guiding students to become responsible for their own learning rather than as a transmitter of knowledge to passive recipients, reliant on the lecturer for knowledge of content. Interacting with the content and with each other, it is argued, will encourage students to see the issues involved from multiple perspectives and foster cultural understanding and acceptance (Volet & Ang, 1998).

A critical theorist perspective encourages students and lecturers to work together to expose the power relations inherent in issues relevant to their lives (Giroux, 1997; Smyth, 1989). This kind of teaching practice, it is argued, will help give students a voice and will enable them to see the hidden assumptions and challenge the givens of
daily life within broader social contexts. Teachers, who develop a critical understanding of the relationships between education and the wider social, historical and political forces that inform it, recognise how different pedagogical practices can act to silence and disempower both educators and educated alike (Giroux cited by Gore, 1993, p. 95).

This study is unique in that it makes the connection between using a critical approach to teaching and learning and the inclusion of international students’ perspectives with the aim of self and social empowerment in terms of increased tolerance, cultural understanding and appreciation.

In the literature reviewed, connections encompassing all three areas - the internationalisation of higher education, university teaching practice, particularly the use of a critical pedagogy, and the promotion of critical and intercultural skills in students - seem to be largely absent. There is also a dearth of literature relating to the formation of intercultural study and social groups and the impact on students’ learning (Pederson, 1994; Volet & Ang, 1998).

The current study investigated international and local students’ perceptions and experiences of teaching and learning as well as their lecturers’ conceptions and approaches to teaching. The conceptions of international students as passive, quiet learners who like a lecturer-directed context where they rely on memorisation with little understanding are also examined. Other assumptions made in the literature about international students, such as students’ cultural backgrounds will determine the kind of approach they take to their learning, are also investigated. Implications, such as local students being experienced critical thinkers who find adapting to university life much easier than their international counterparts, are investigated. The kind of intercultural interactions students engage in and the impact on their learning and their personal lives are key issues explored in the study.

Chapters Six, Seven and Eight report on the kinds of strategies and approaches lecturers take in their classes, including lecturer-directed and student-centred
contexts. They are compared with the kinds of contexts international and local students report liking that help with their learning, in particular the development of their critical, analytical and intercultural skills. The impact of an intercultural context on students' learning and lecturers' teaching approaches is also examined.
Chapter Four

4 Method

4.1 Purpose and rationale of the study

In this chapter, the purpose of the study is restated and the approach to the study is detailed. The research design and participants are presented. The data collection procedures are outlined and the methods used to analyse the data are explained.

A major focus of the study was to examine the impact of an intercultural context on students’ and lecturers’ approaches to teaching and learning. The research sought to provide a detailed description and analysis of students’ and lecturers’ perceptions and experiences of teaching and learning in an intercultural tertiary context. The rationale was to examine, from a critical theory perspective, the types of teaching practised in a tertiary setting, the perceived impact on students’ learning experience, and the kinds of interactions international and local students engaged in. Of importance to the study was to examine the impact of students’ intercultural interactions on the development of their critical and intercultural skills. Other dimensions to the study were to provide an opportunity in the research literature for both local and international students to have a voice about their experiences. The study also sought to provide further insights into the viability of existing theories of intercultural communication and their relationship (or otherwise) to learning and teaching in intercultural contexts.

The key overarching research question was – how an intercultural context impacts on the teaching and learning experiences of international and local students and their lecturers – guided the selection of research methods that would unveil the day-to-day experiences and individual preferences of a small group of students and lecturers.
4.2 Research design

4.2.1 A case study

The study is a multiple case study in a single context, a tertiary setting, using both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The study focussed on a number of different cases at a single site by collecting data using a variety of instruments including semi-structured, in-depth interviews; focus groups; observations and field notes; and a survey. The initial phase of the study called for the collection of data from the key participants, fifteen undergraduate students who were interviewed, twice in-depth, one month apart with interviews beginning in March 1997 and ending in July 1998. Each interview was audio-taped and transcribed. The transcript was analysed several times. Drawing on Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) grounded theory, patterns and categories were drawn out and coded into broad themes. These themes informed the directions for the next stage in the data collection process, which involved another set of interviews, and were thus grounded in the participants’ responses.

Several data collection procedures were occurring at the same time; for example, the student survey was administered at the same time that some of the student interviews were being conducted. Some student and lecturer interviews were undertaken in the same timeframe. Observing classes took place when it was convenient for the lecturers but always after they had been interviewed. The student focus groups were the last in the data collection process and acted to confirm data gathered by other means. Each transcript was revisited every three months during the fieldwork and often, new themes were identified in the light of the latest stage of data collection. Data continued to be collected until no new themes relevant to the analysis were generated. Data collection occurred over a 16-month period from March 1997 to July 1998.
Data Collection Procedures Model

Figure 4.1: Data collection model
Fundamental to each stage of the data collection process was to return to the key participants to "member check". Member checks (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973) allow the participants to respond to and share their observations and conclusions with the researcher, thereby triangulating the data as well as ensuring that their perspective had been properly understood.

4.2.2 The site of the inquiry

The research was undertaken at a single site, the University of Wollongong, on the South Coast of New South Wales, Australia. It is a regional university, 90 kilometres from the state capital, Sydney. The University is one of seven universities in Australia with a relatively high proportion of international students – 17 per cent of the total student enrolment – coming from over 72 countries. Domestic students are also attracted to the University from different places in Australia, including major cities such as Sydney and Canberra, the capital of Australia, as well as from rural, resource, and holiday areas, such as Albury and Jindabyne. Originally a technical college, it later became a feeder college to the University of New South Wales. In 1975, it was established as the University of Wollongong (Castle, 1991). Despite its relative youth, the University is consistently rated as one of the top ten universities in Australia and was selected as joint University of the Year 1999 - 2000. It also has a growing international reputation; for example, in areas such as engineering, health research, and multimedia educational material winning international awards in the latter area.

4.2.3 Ethics

Permission to undertake the study was granted by the University’s Human Research Ethics Committee in 1996. Each participant was given a letter outlining the nature of the research with a consent slip attached. These slips were returned signed to the researcher. All participants were given a pseudonym to assure confidentiality and anonymity. Some, where possible, were asked to choose a pseudonym themselves. Some of the pseudonyms chosen reflect their cultural identity. It was considered
important to maintain their cultural identity within their name rather than ignoring their cultural background and Westernising all their names.

Permission for the survey was indicated by student completion and return of the survey to the researcher. Tapes of interviews and focus groups were kept in a safe place with no directly identifiable information attached. Lecturer confidentiality was further ensured by not including the subjects or the Faculty/Department in which they teach in their personal profiles. Participants could withdraw at any time. Both student and lecturer participation in the research was conducted at a time and place convenient to them, usually in my office for the students and the lecturers’ office for the lecturers.

4.3 The qualitative paradigm

The case study approach is well documented as being a most appropriate research tool when dealing with the sensitive issues of people’s perceptions and experiences (Lincoln, 1985; Stake, 1978). It allows for on-site observation and exploration of social complexities and realities, and enables participants to present their views through negotiation and dialogue (Cannings, 1983; Guba & Lincoln, 1981; Maloney, 1993; Prideaux, 1985). In accordance with case study protocol, multiple sources of evidence from a variety of data collecting techniques have been used (Patton, 1980; Yin, 1994). The findings have been written in a narrative style of reporting with direct quotations from participants allowing the reader to be transported to the site of inquiry (Wolcott, 1990).

The assumptions and theoretical underpinnings of the case study method of inquiry are that the world is to be viewed as one of complex, multiple realities, where reality is socially constructed, and cause and effect variables are interwoven and difficult to measure (Glesne & Peshkin, 1992). Qualitative research is context-specific:

*It posits that ideas, people, and events cannot be understood if isolated from their contexts (Vulliamy, 1990, p.12).*
The participants are therefore studied in context with an emphasis on gaining an holistic understanding of their experience. The data collected involves spending extended periods of time with the participants of the research in order to capture their perspectives. The approach is inductive, with theory developing from the emerging categories from the collected data: that is, via Glaser and Strauss’ grounded theory (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). This approach generates theory grounded in data.

Issues of concern, such as the methodological rigour, reproducibility, generalisability (internal and external validity), and subjectivity, are sometimes mentioned in regard to this approach. However, as Guba and Lincoln (1981) point out, as long as ‘the data are fitted into the derived categories under some rule of procedure that is applied systematically and objectively’ (p.102), there is no reason to assume the approach is any less rigorous than the quantitative paradigm. Of importance is that the researcher makes explicit the appropriateness of the procedures used (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Qualitative research has the advantage of actually being ‘based on and verified by real-world data’ and the grounded hypotheses ‘represent directions indicated by actual information’ (Guba & Lincoln, 1981, p.102). Furthermore, the combination of multiple methods to triangulate the data allows the researcher greater flexibility to view the data from numerous vantage points (Walker, 1990).

The canon of reproducibility is critically analysed by Strauss and Corbin (1990), who argue that

> probably no theory that deals with a social/psychological phenomenon is actually reproducible, insofar as finding new situations or other situations whose conditions exactly match those of the original study, though many conditions may be similar (p. 251).

They suggest that if another researcher were to set up a similar set of conditions and followed the same general rules, (s)he should be able to come up with the same theoretical explanation, albeit with discrepancies that can be identifiable due to the difference in certain conditions.
Another concern for some is how well the specific findings can be generalisable to a wider population. The underlying rationale of the qualitative approach is, however, to provide an in-depth description and analysis of the actions and interactions of the phenomenon under investigation and the resulting consequences to provide a deeper understanding rather than to be generalisable. Researchers using the qualitative mode of inquiry search for knowledge, not just for knowledge’s sake, but ‘for the significance of that knowledge’ (Edson in Sherman & Webb, 1988, p. 46). The conclusion reached in much of the literature is that the researcher needs to be explicit about the conditions and the procedures taken, and only then can the research be generalisable to those specific conditions (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Proponents of qualitative research suggest also that the findings from the use of this approach may be illuminating to those in similar situations rather than to be generalisable (Peshkin, 1993; Vuillamy et al., 1990). The outcomes of qualitative research can be categorised into what Peshkin (1993, p.23) calls ‘a feast of possibilities’ of description, interpretation, verification, and evaluation.

The issue of subjectivity is an important one; however, it may be argued as Giarelli (in Sherman & Webb, 1988) points out, all domains of inquiry require interpretation. Researchers do not just collect facts for the sake of collecting facts or numbers; they are necessarily analysed, interpreted and presented within a conceptual framework with theoretical and philosophical underpinnings, to paraphrase Abbot-Chapman (1993).

Peshkin (1988) argues for the need of researchers to be aware of their subjectivity throughout the research process, revealing the influence of feelings and personal reactions (Wolcott in Eisner and Peshkin 1990) so that one can at least keep the reader aware ‘where self and subject become joined’ (Peshkin, 1988). Erikson (1996), in his engaging discussion on power and knowledge relations between the researcher and the researched, points out that feminist researchers have long claimed that all social research is inherently political and that it is also personally political. Hence,
As a researcher, I am part of the story I tell. And so who I am needs to be in the research report. My intellectual autobiography and my first person need to appear on the page (p. 9).

So, at various junctures throughout the thesis, the personal pronoun “I” has been used to make explicit the assumptions and concepts by which I undertook the research. The assumptions underpinning this study have been documented in Chapter One (see page 16).

4.4 The participants

4.4.1 The students

The fifteen students, of whom nine were international and six were local, were enrolled in an undergraduate Business Communication subject between 1996 and 1997 in the Department of Management at the University of Wollongong. They volunteered to be part of the study and were also selected according to their availability. The students came from many countries, including Taiwan, Malta, Sweden, India, Russia, Pakistan, Hong Kong, Malaysia, South Africa, Tonga, Singapore and Australia. They were enrolled in various degrees across campus, including Commerce, Public Health, Arts/Law, Accountancy, Physiology, Marketing, Industrial Relations, Human Resource Management, and Italian.

All except one ranged in age from being in their second year out of high school – nineteen years old – to being twenty-five years old. One was a mature age student in his thirties who was here with his wife and young children. There were nine females and six males. While I knew that some of them were international students in the sense that they had left their home country to attend university here, the local students also had direct family experience of different cultural backgrounds, which was unknown to me at the time of selection. One student’s mother had been born in Sweden, another had been born in Italy and one other’s parents had been born in India. Three of the local students had been born overseas: one in Malaysia, one in South Africa, and one in Malta.
One potential bias to the findings of the study is the students' own direct experience of different cultures in their family background. It is recognised that the students who agreed to be a part of the study may have self-selected due to a heightened concern about intercultural issues as well as due to the rapport already established with me as their tutor.

Two other cohorts of students also enrolled in the Business Communication subject were surveyed. They, too, were enrolled in a variety of degrees studying subjects including Accountancy, Psychology, Human Movement, Quantitative Methods, Law, Japanese, Marketing, Economics, Sociology, Physiology, Adult Education, Industrial Relations, Chemistry, Business Computing, and Biology. Of the 114 students who completed a survey, 72 were local students and 42 were international students. The latter came from countries, including China, Hong Kong, Norway, The Maldives, Japan, Macedonia, Britain, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia, the US, Singapore, Jordan, Nepal, Taiwan, Japan, Turkey, Vietnam, and Singapore.

Another potential bias besides that mentioned above is that the students had all undertaken the subject, Business Communication. In this respect, they had all been exposed to the same pre-treatment, i.e. the same teaching style. It must be acknowledged that the subject and the teaching style of both lecturer and tutor involve, by design, a high degree of intercultural discussion and interaction; hence, the students may have been more sensitive and ready to discuss intercultural issues than another cohort of students may have been. Countering this potential bias, however, are the survey results where a high rate of responses (70%) reinforced what was garnered in the interviews and focus groups. It must also be noted that some 60% of students, who take the subject, are required to as part of their degree in Management and Nutrition.

The argument of bias can also be rebutted on the grounds that the student interviewees and survey respondents addressed a range of subjects and teaching styles beyond Business Communication. Only ten – 4 international and 6 local survey respondents – selected Business Communication as the subject they liked to answer.
the 16 rated questions on the survey. Their comments suggest that they were sensitive to certain styles of teaching and learning and were not swayed by their experiences in one subject.

4.4.2 The lecturers

Ten lecturers were selected due to availability and at the suggestion of the 15 student participants. I also sought diversity in subject matter, age, and gender. The students’ recommendations may account for the numerous examples of best teaching practice they volunteered. Their reported beliefs and practices reflect, for the most part, quite different experiences from the negative teaching practices reported by some of the students. It may therefore be inferred that these lecturers were not the same as those being criticised.

The lecturers varied in age from their mid-twenties to their mid-fifties. There were eight males and two females. Their country of birth was varied and included the US, England, Bangladesh, Italy, Kenya, and India as well as Australia. Six of them had been born overseas, four in Australia. They have studied and worked in different countries, such as the US, Italy, France, India, England, New Zealand, Bangladesh, and the Philippines. Their areas of work outside of academia have included employment as a marketing manager, a corporate personnel manager, a manager of information and technology in administration, a business consultant with the Federal bank, a secretary, an undertaker, a counsellor for the AIDS council, a language teacher, and a casual employee in department stores.

Their interests of study include anthropology, health promotion ethics, community care, sociology, business administration, philosophy, the Italian Renaissance, the impact of capitalism on third world countries and their environment, cross-cultural consumer research, and industrial relations. They teach a range of subjects including International Marketing, Marketing Strategies, Consumer Behaviour, Italian, Health and Disease, Public Health, Introduction to Management, Human Resource Management, Philosophy, Competitive Analysis, International and Comparative Employment Relations, Management and Occupational Safety, Government Policy
and Administration, Quantitative Methods in Marketing, and Hollywood and American Culture. Three were in untenured positions and were employed at the lowest end of the academic scale as casual tutors and sometimes guest lecturers. The others were either in tenured lecturer or senior lecturer positions, and one was a visiting Associate Professor from the US for one semester. They were all very welcoming and interested in the study and gave me a very straightforward picture of themselves as individuals as well as their teaching successes and difficulties.

### 4.4.3 Key policy makers

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) and Vice-Principal of International Programs of the University were also invited to participate and were interviewed separately, once, each for two hours. They gave some background historical information about international students studying at the University as well as information about marketing strategies to attract international students to the University.

### 4.4.4 The researcher

The researcher acted as an observer of nine classes during the research process. Nine of the ten lecturers interviewed agreed for me to observe one of their classes and take notes.

### 4.5 Research instruments

To summarise, data collection comprised:

- Two, one-to-three hour in-depth interviews with fifteen undergraduate students to capture their experiences and perspectives about university teaching and their impact on intercultural interaction;

- Two, one-to-two hour focus groups of three or four of the fourteen participant students (one had returned home before they were conducted) where they
described and interpreted their experiences of teaching and learning in a tertiary setting with each other. The data were compared with the researcher’s and lecturers’ observations;

- A survey administered to two cohorts of students in a Business Communication subject by means of both closed (sixteen) questions and open-ended (seven) questions to establish a baseline of demographic data as well as their likes and dislikes in regard to teaching and learning in a tertiary environment. Their responses helped inform the questions for the on-going in-depth interviews of students and lecturers and to put the interview responses in a wider context;

- One, two-hour interview with ten lecturers to capture their perspectives about teaching and learning and their impact on student intercultural interactions. These perspectives were compared with the data from the student participants;

- Field notes that detailed observations of and reflections about nine student participants’ classes to triangulate both students’ and lecturers’ perceptions of their teaching and learning experience with my own.

- One, two-hour individual interview with the Pro Vice-Chancellor and Vice-Principal of the University to determine the historical background of international students at the University as well as to gain a first hand account of marketing strategies to encourage international students to attend the University.

The following table provides an overview of the research questions and the data sources employed.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| What are students’ experiences and perceptions of teaching and learning at the University of Wollongong? How do these compare among international and local students? | Student interview  
Student focus groups  
Student survey |
| How do lecturers describe their aims, their beliefs and their assumptions about teaching and student learning (international and local) and their role in that process? | Lecturer interviews  
compared with student interviewees’ responses  
Field notes |
| How do students interpret and experience these same teaching strategies? Are there similarities/differences according to their cultural backgrounds? | Student interview  
Student focus groups |
| How do students and lecturers each perceive and experience intercultural interaction among students, and among students and lecturers? | Student Interview  
Lecturer Interview  
Student focus groups  
Field notes |
| What kinds of teaching strategies do students and lecturers believe will improve intercultural interactions in a tertiary context? | Student interview  
Student focus groups  
Lecturer interview |
4.6 Generating the data

4.6.1 The student interviews

The aim of the initial student interviews was to ascertain baseline information about each participant. The first set of interviews consisted of broad open-ended questions in order to build personal profiles of each student participant. Building personal profiles of each student help bring the data alive. They helped me to appreciate the participants as individual and complex personalities, influenced both by their cultural background and the culture of the context. Although the interviews were informal and open-ended, broad guidelines had been written prior to the initial interviews as suggested by Bell (1987) to ensure that topics considered essential were covered. First, general questions were asked about their family, cultural and religious background, their reasons for coming to Australia and to the University of Wollongong, the degree for which they were studying, and their academic achievements. This information is presented in the form of personal profiles about each student, including some insights into each of their individual personalities. These are presented in Chapter Five.

The student participants were also asked, in the initial interview, about their experiences of university work, both in lecture and tutorial, and how those compared with their past experiences, and about their contact with students of different cultural backgrounds from themselves. The interviews were transcribed and analysed. Key ideas were underlined and then grouped together under themes.

Initially two broad themes – “didactic lecturer-directed” and “interactive student-centred learning” – were selected and then the data were grouped under smaller sub-themes, such as “note-taking in lectures” and “students’ opinions about group work”. Some of these sub-themes were again divided further. For example, the theme “assessment” was divided into “presentations”, “lecturers’ views on student presentations”, “written assignments” and “lecturers’ views on written assignments”. A third broad theme was then selected – “students’ purpose and experiences of tertiary study” - and sub-themes, such as “applied knowledge” and “life experience”
were included as these did not fit under the two initial broad themes. There were three key themes and thirty-three sub-themes in all. These can be found in Appendix A with an example from the data for further explanation. The themes were grounded in what the students themselves had said. If, for example, they talked about being involved in group work with other students, those comments were typed up under a heading "group work". The themes informed the questions for the second set of student interviews.

Broad guidelines informed the second set of interviews, although they were more focussed on details about student participants’ experiences in the tertiary classroom. Students were asked to talk about what happened in lectures and tutorials, writing essays and assignments, giving presentations, and assessment and feedback. They were also asked to discuss their interactions with students from different cultural backgrounds. Care had to be taken that the views of each student participant were given a similar amount of time and space for each of them to have their voice heard. Some of the questions were similar to the ones asked in the first interviews but elicited more detailed responses.

The order of themes was also an issue. I had to make sure that the themes flowed on from each other to tell the story from the students’ perspective. In some sections, their responses overlapped, for instance in their responses about interaction in tutorials, group work and speaking up. I had to then decide where was the most appropriate section to present them. The decision was made according to where, in my opinion, their response fitted best.

A description of the joys and difficulties of the interview process with the student participants follows.

4.6.2 The interview process with the students

The interviews usually started with some descriptive questions about their personal background to help build up a rapport and to give each student time to organise their thoughts. The interviews were conducted in what I hoped was a non-threatening,
friendly atmosphere by me asking them how they were and whether they wanted a cup of coffee. An advantage to in-depth interviewing is that it allows the researcher to investigate the topic in all its complexity. Asking open-ended questions allows the researcher to find out how and why the respondents think the way they do as they are able to answer from their own frame of reference (Minichiello et al., 1995).

The participants were aware of my teaching philosophy, which reflects a critical theorist perspective, as well as my interest in international contexts as I had taught them all in the undergraduate Business Communication subject. Thus, care was taken to allow the direction of the interviews to be guided by their responses (Schwartz & Jacobs, 1979) and to find out their opinion by gentle probing or by encouraging them to proceed with a nodding of the head, a smile, or repeating what they had said and then waiting. They seemed comfortable in giving their opinions openly about a range of issues including problems with lecturers and assessment, writing assignments, giving presentations and speaking up in class. Their high level of comfort in sharing their opinions was indicated in the kinds of comments they made. Some were very personal remarks or stories of things that had happened to them or were happening to them, such as (perceived) harassment by lecturers, the poor teaching style of some lecturers, and the romantic entanglement with someone of whom their parents would certainly not approve, among other things. What was pleasing also was that as the interviews and focus groups progressed, some international students who at the beginning had been very quiet, began to speak at their own volition, claiming the space and making the more vocal students be quiet.

I was sensitive to those who had difficulties with language and encouraged them to persevere with what it was they wanted to say. At times, it was important to establish a waiting pattern so that students could collect their thoughts, as sometimes they seemed to be struggling to translate what it was they wanted to say. Other times, they indicated with a shake of the head that they were not ready to respond and I returned to them at a later stage, always inquiring whether they wanted to say something or not.
I listened attentively, sometimes using a reflective probe strategy to cross check what they had said. Other times, the students were given a summary of what I had understood them to say and were asked to confirm or to clarify that interpretation. The intent underlying these strategies was to fully understand the participants’ perspective as well as providing them with the opportunity to have a voice about their experiences. Their responses indicated in some places that my summaries had caused them to reflect on situations and what these had meant to them. In other cases, these strategies served as forms of validity checking.

From one perspective, we were all students, and I could relate to their concerns on a personal level. Giving me their time and the data were, however, clearly in my interests. Nevertheless, the students seemed to enjoy talking about their experiences, sometimes airing grievances, other times laughing about a situation or describing a learning situation that they had particularly enjoyed. Some of them made new friends from the focus groups, and all of them seemed to willingly give me their time.

Students were later contacted and invited to member check the transcript to ensure that the transcript properly reflected the intended response. Sometimes, they helped clarify a point that I had been unable to properly understand. With some students, their accents made transcribing extremely difficult. In subsequent interviews, I tried to repeat back what I thought they had said to help with the transcribing. They either confirmed what had been transcribed or changed and added points as well as correcting spelling mistakes, which were mainly misspelled place names.

4.6.3 Student focus groups

By the time I was ready to conduct the focus groups, one student, Per, had left the University and returned to his home country, Sweden. However, he did participate in an interview with another student participant from Pakistan who was studying the same subject. Fourteen of the fifteen students participated in focus groups. The focus groups were made up of three or four students and were conducted to triangulate the data. In particular, the focus groups helped to further elicit their opinions about their experiences and perceptions of teaching and learning in a tertiary setting and to
determine how these experiences may have impacted on any intercultural interactions they engaged in. The focus groups lasted between one and two hours. Students participated twice, not always with the same students from the first focus group. Selection of who was grouped together depended on student availability.

The following table presents the participants’ grouping, their cultural background and their international or local student status. An asterisk * indicates that the participant took part in two different focus groups as opposed to staying in the same group. This was because of their availability at the different times when the focus groups took place.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Nationality/Background</th>
<th>Student Status</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tonja</td>
<td>Maltese Australian</td>
<td>Local student</td>
<td>Lives in Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nikolai</td>
<td>Russian; international student</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Now living in Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harish</td>
<td>Indian; international student; studying</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Now living in Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Li-Chin</td>
<td>Singaporean; international student;</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Returns home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elaine</td>
<td>Hong Kong; international student</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Lives in Hong Kong</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eli</td>
<td>Malaysian Australian; local student</td>
<td>Local student</td>
<td>Has lived in Australia since 1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michelle</td>
<td>Australian with Italian born mother; local</td>
<td>Local student</td>
<td>Lives in Australia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Soane</td>
<td>Tongan; international student</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Returns home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Candy</td>
<td>South African Australian; local student</td>
<td>Local student</td>
<td>Has lived in Australia since 1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Li-Chin</td>
<td>Singaporean; international student;</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Returns home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sofia</td>
<td>Australian born of Indian born parents</td>
<td>Local student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Millie</td>
<td>Hong Kong; international student</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Returns home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Ali</td>
<td>Pakistani; international student</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Returns home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Soane</td>
<td>Tongan; international student</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Returns home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>Australian born of Swedish born mother</td>
<td>Local student</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*Ali</td>
<td>Pakistani; international student</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Returns home</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lorna</td>
<td>Taiwanese; international student</td>
<td>International</td>
<td>Returns home</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The focus groups were organised at a time convenient to the students. Their responses were audio-taped and transcribed.
Broad open-ended questions were devised prior to the focus groups meeting. However, the focus group discussions were allowed to develop according to student interest and response. This approach helped to capture the students’ perspectives about a range of issues and allowed them to voice their opinions and perceptions about the kind of teaching and learning they had experienced in a tertiary setting. The broad areas of interest that I pursued were as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What do you think about your lectures and tutorials?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kind of group work have you experienced?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kind of teaching and learning strategies have you seen being used in class? What do you think about these? How have these impacted on your learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kind of interaction have you had with the lecturer/tutor and with other students? How has this interaction affected how you learn?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel confident speaking up in class? What could the lecturer/tutor do to help you?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After transcribing and initial coding and classifying, it was decided to refine the questions in order to elicit some definitions of what certain terms meant to students as well as find out more about the influences on how they learn; for example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is a tutorial to you? What is a lecture? What do you see happening? How does this impact on your learning?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What kinds of learning do you think there are? When does learning take place?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is an essay to you? What kinds of assignments do you do? What skills do you...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some focus groups became very animated and stimulated by these questions. Their answers were sometimes very personal and reflected a high degree of comfort in giving their views. They also seemed to be comfortable talking with each other and often responded to each other’s point of view, either agreeing or contradicting each other. One group, however, had considerable difficulty with the complexity of some questions, such as, ‘What is culture to you?’ They looked down and told me how they ‘really hated questions like these’. ‘Ask us something else!’ they demanded with a giggle.

The following overview of one focus group gives some insight into how four participants responded to each other in a focus group. They were Tonja (Maltese Australian, local student), Nikolai (Russian, international student), Harish (Indian, international student) and Li-Chin (Chinese Singaporean, international student). Tonja is a twenty-one year old from a Maltese Australian background who, at the time of the study, was studying Italian and teaching. She changed from studying for a degree in Management, she said, when she failed a compulsory subject by one percentage point after a year of study. Her disappointment in not being able to continue in a Management degree because of her inability to pass the first year subject seems to colour her opinions about teaching and learning, as she often commented on this subject.
Nikolai is a twenty-five year old from Russia’s Pacific coast. On arrival in Tasmania, he took an English course, his first experience of learning English. He was studying for a degree in Marketing and Management. Harish is from India and was also studying for a degree in Marketing and Management. Li-Chin is of Chinese descent from Singapore and was enrolled in a Marketing degree.

Note: *R. = *Researcher.

Tonja, Harish and Nikolai had very strong opinions about learning and teaching and their lecturers and seemed unafraid to give their opinion. Although for Nikolai English was his second language, he spoke fluently and with no apparent difficulty. There was a sense of collaboration. They often agreed with each other, although adding their own perspective. Other times, they contradicted each other giving contrasting perspectives on an issue. I noted the need to restrict the questions to exploring the students’ own opinions and the reasons for them rather than engaging in a sharing of opinion between myself and them. Sometimes, they asked me for my opinion about an issue such as assessment practices. I tried to phrase questions in such a way that avoided leading students; however, on some occasions where a leading question was asked, they contradicted me, as evidenced in comments, such as:

\[ R: \textit{Did the small classes help with interaction or not?} \]
\[ \textit{Tonja: Well this year it didn’t actually. It contributed negatively because there were only two people.} \]

Other times, one of the participants suggested something, and her cue was acted upon either by myself asking a question or one of the other participants responding, for example:

\[ \textit{Tonja: I think if I was in that situation I would like to see the marking criteria and that way you could say, ‘Well, I think I fulfilled the criteria’}. \]
\[ R.: \textit{Did he give you criteria of how he marked?} \]
\[ Nikolai: No, he didn’t. \]
Care also needed to be taken not to switch from a topic and to let them finish with what they wanted to say or take the direction they wanted. The decision to let participants talk and interact with each other freely until the topic came to a natural close was not an easy task, especially when they had said something earlier on that needed to be followed up. Sometimes the point was forgotten or at other times asking questions seemed to interrupt the flow of the conversation. This was particularly so with the lecturer interviews as most of them talked at length on an issue. However, with this particular focus group, they had a strong sense of what they wanted to say and went on to say what they had begun on, even when a different question had been asked.

Non-verbal cues - eye contact, nodding of the head - particularly to the fluent English speakers to indicate that I wanted them to give a non-fluent student time to respond - was intended to create an environment where students knew that they had as much time as they wanted to express themselves (apart from time constraints). Other times, they indicated that they did not wish to pursue the point with a shake of the head, or they returned to the point at a later time or date. Sometimes, students became quite animated with two either agreeing or disagreeing, so that I had to decide at what point to invite the others to give their opinions. Some questions at first elicited only laughter or quizzical facial expressions, followed by the question, ‘What do you mean?’ and I would try and paraphrase the question or return to it later on after they had warmed up.

Both the interviews and the focus groups concluded with me either asking them if they had anything further that they wished to add or when they had to leave to go to class.

Some students chose to stay on at the end of the interview or focus group when the tape recorder had been switched off to talk to me about personal things that were happening in their lives. They talked about things such as the amount of assignments they had to hand in that week; the breaking up of a romantic relationship; moving house; the political situation in their home country; and their future study plans. This
suggests they felt a high degree of personal comfort in talking with me. Several international and local students remained in contact with me two years after the data collecting had ended.

4.6.4 Data analysis of the interviews and focus groups

The emergent themes from the focus groups were coded and classified and added to the existing themes. In order to ensure each individual’s perspective was included, some of the broad themes were narrowed down into sub-themes. For example, on the subject of what happens in a lecture, students revealed different perspectives. For some, lectures were where they sat silently and took notes. For others, it was important that the lecturer presented the theory and related it to practice with examples. Both perspectives have been included under sub headings within the broad theme of “didactic, lecturer-directed contexts”.

The overviews and summaries discuss the findings in terms of trends and similarities and differences in responses of international and local students. The number of responses, international or local students, has not been documented in this section of the research findings because not all students discussed an issue from the same perspective, given the open-ended nature of the interviews and focus groups. Instead of stating how many students responded in a particular way, each individual perspective has been documented under the appropriate theme or sub-theme and whether the student was local or international is indicated clearly. Numbers of responses to questions have, however, been documented in the quantitative reporting of the survey.

In some cases where students have spoken in very long sentences or used the same word repetitively, for instance, many ‘ands’ together, their responses have been edited to make reading them easier.

The student participants’ international or local status was added in brackets after each person’s pseudonym. The issue of referring to the student’s international or local status brought to the surface some important concerns. One of the underlying
assumptions of the study is that, although these students come from vastly different backgrounds, as students they share common experiences, perceptions and opinions about a range of issues raised in the study. While they see their cultural background as impacting in a myriad of ways, the culture of the context is also influential in how they perceive a range of issues. I wanted to present the student participants as complex individuals, not as stereotypes representing different cultural backgrounds. It was tempting to leave out their international or local student status to allow the reader to view them as individuals rather than to focus on their international or local student status. However, since their international or local status is crucial to the study’s findings and conclusions, in the interests of the reader, their status has been alluded to with an “I” for international, and an “L” for local in brackets.

4.6.5 The survey

A survey (see Appendix B) was designed to determine whether the findings from the qualitative data collection were unique to this group of student participants or whether they were representative of a wider student population. As Vulliamy (1990) suggests, the initial responses to the qualitative research played an important role in indicating the kind of questions a larger scale quantitative survey should address. Seven open-ended questions helped to triangulate the 16 rated responses as well as to overcome potential criticism often levelled against quantitative analysis that the responses fail to capture ‘the fluidity, spontaneity and creativity of classroom life’ (Hitchcock & Hughes, 1989, p.27). The survey responses later informed the next stages of the research, namely the student and lecturer interviews.

The data collected from the initial student interviews helped to structure the questions of the survey administered to two cohorts of students - 114 in all - who were enrolled in the Business Communication subject in the Department of Management in 1996 and 1997. The open-ended questions were designed to establish some base line data about students’ cultural background, their experiences in and perceptions of lecture and tutorial, their likes and dislikes in regard to teaching and learning in a tertiary intercultural context. Further, it sought to determine what kind of impact their interactions with students from different cultural backgrounds has had on their
teaching and learning experiences. Their international (I) or local (L) status and their
gender M – male and F – female is indicated in brackets following each quote. The
number is the number given to each completed survey to allow the researcher to keep
track of each individual survey.

The 16 rated questions sought to determine the frequency of use of different teaching
and learning strategies in a subject they liked and in a subject they disliked. The
students rated on a scale of 1 to 5 teaching strategies, such as copying notes,
practising the application of theory to practice, and participating in group discussions
and experiential activities. A rating of a 1 indicated that the strategy was hardly used
to a 5 that indicated a high use of particular strategies. Each graph is referred to with
the same alpha identifier ie “a” as on the survey with an additional “1” for the subject
they liked and a “2” for the subject they disliked, followed by an “L” indicating a
lecture and a “T” for a tutorial. For example, a lecture they liked for question a is
referred to as “a1L”; a tutorial they liked is referred to as “a1T”. The data show
correlations between particular strategies and students liking and disliking of subjects,
although they do not show causation.

A pilot survey was trialed over several weeks with students from both English and
non-English speaking backgrounds to ensure that the questions conveyed the meaning
intended and that the language used reflected the kind of descriptions students
themselves were familiar with.

Ninety students in the first cohort were given the survey at the end of the final lecture
of the subject. Students were given about ten minutes before the lecture was due to
finish. Most students attending agreed to participate, and some had questions that the
researcher answered. Out of the 90 surveys distributed, there were 78 responses,
which is an 87 per cent return, by most experts on survey return a good result (Cohen
& Manion, 1980). The survey was also given to a further cohort over the summer
session where the researcher was the lecturer and coordinator of the Business
Communication subject. Forty-one students were asked to complete the survey.
Thirty-seven returned it. The two cohorts together accounted for 114 responses. In
this last cohort, students were given up to 30 - 40 minutes in class time to complete the survey. In these two cohorts together, there were 72 local students and 42 international students who completed and returned the survey.

Limitations of the survey were that however precisely the questions had been designed, there were still some students who interpreted or understood some of the questions differently from what was intended. Despite distributing a pilot survey, there were some questions that were interpreted differently by individual students to what had been intended. Another limitation, typical of any survey, was that a few students did not complete all of the questions. Nevertheless, the survey did provide a broad picture of students' likes and dislikes in terms of teaching and learning, their contact with students from different cultural backgrounds, and the impact of that contact in their daily life as well as their academic work.

4.6.6 Data analysis of the survey

The quantitative data were coded and entered into an Excel spreadsheet for easy sorting and initial comparisons, and scattergrams were prepared. The data were then transferred to an SPSS statistical program for analysis. Bar graphs and cross tabulations revealed similarities and differences in the sixteen rated responses of the international and local students. Data from questions 7, 8 and 9 have not been included, as there were over 60% invalid responses. The seven qualitative open-ended responses were typed up in a Word document and organised into themes and sub-themes. All of these data were then compared with the interview and focus group data of the students and the lecturer interviews. However, due to the space constraints of the thesis, not all data have been included. Data that illustrated the key themes, such as the frequency of experiential activities, the application of theory to practice, and the use of international examples were selected. All of the bar charts can, however, be found in Appendix C. The data that are presented were subjected to a chi square test of significance, of which only three were found to be statistically significant. These are reported on pages 161, 174 and 196.
4.6.7 Lecturer/tutor interviews

The (15 student) participants were asked to nominate a lecturer whom they considered to be of interest to the study. The lecturers they nominated gave many examples of what is considered in the literature as best teaching practice (Biggs, 1997), which may indicate that the students chose these particular lecturers because of their exemplary teaching practice. The lecturer or tutor was then contacted by letter with a follow-up telephone call or e-mail asking for their permission to be interviewed. Permission was given by ten lecturers, who were interviewed once, with the interview lasting two hours. The findings from both the student in-depth interviews and the survey were analysed to provide cues for the interviews with the lecturers, such as foci on teaching styles, assessment practices and international examples.

The lecturers were interviewed about their cultural background, their teaching experiences and teaching styles, their assessment practices, their rationale for the way in which they teach, and their assumptions and beliefs about teaching and learning. An important aspect to the study was to investigate lecturers' use of teaching strategies that encourage participation in the classroom and interaction among students of different backgrounds. I also focussed on what a university education should be fostering in students. This question was followed by further probing about whether they viewed the strategies that they use as helping students to become critical thinkers, and helping them to see issues from multiple perspectives. Constraints to their teaching practice, such as the size of classes, were also discussed at length.

4.6.8 The interview process with the lecturers

Fourteen lecturers who taught a range of subjects such as Philosophy, Marketing, Cultural Studies, Physiology, Italian and Management were invited to be part of the study. Four declined to be interviewed, either on the grounds of being too busy or for other personal reasons. Those who did participate gave me an extensive amount of their time. With one, the tape stopped half way through the interview without my knowledge, and the lecturer was kind enough to give me more of his time to recap the
interview while also giving me more information than in the original interview. Three of them told me about their own doctoral studies, making suggestions about various issues and remembering some of the difficulties that they had experienced. One commented, ‘I enjoyed that. It’s not often you get a chance to reflect on one’s teaching practice’. In this way, there was a sense of rapport between myself and the lecturers.

With a few of the lecturers, however, it was clear from observation of their classes that there was a difference between their espoused theory and their in-use theory of teaching (Schon, 1987). Three of them seemed to use teaching strategies that they were (and seemingly the class too) unfamiliar with, as they were not confidently executed, an observation that was confirmed by several student participants. In another instance, one commented on the constructive use of a feedback sheet he said he used for student presentations, but when students in his class were shown the sheet, they said that they had not seen it before. Some of them tried to elicit my opinion about certain teaching activities or assessment tasks that they were thinking of trialing, and I had to politely turn the interview back to eliciting their opinions.

At times, a few of them seemed to change their perspective as the interview progressed, so there was the suspicion that they were telling me what they deemed appropriate. Some of the lecturers interviewed were aware of the teaching approaches of one of my supervisors as well as my own interest in international students and intercultural contexts, which may have led them to make certain supportive or contrasting remarks. However, they were all very straightforward about their personal backgrounds and values; their assumptions about teaching and learning for both international and local students; the politics of learning and teaching in tertiary settings; the constraints to what they deemed “good” practice; and what they considered to be their successes and non-successes. Their responses shed considerable light on the concerns of lecturers on a variety of issues, particularly where they pointed to the contradictions in policy directions and their practical application in the tertiary classroom.
4.6.9 Data analysis of the lecturers' responses

The interviews were audio-taped, transcribed and emergent themes and sub-themes coded and classified. The themes were then compared with those from the student interviews and survey.

4.6.10 Field notes

Permission was requested from the ten lecturers interviewed for me to sit in one of their classes as an observer where I took detailed field notes of nine classes. I described what I had observed in each class: the atmosphere; the teaching strategies employed and the activities undertaken; the interaction amongst students and between student and lecturer/tutor; the kinds of learning that seemed to be going on; and the language used by the lecturer/tutor. I also wrote a critical reflective report comparing the kinds of learning they said they were trying to encourage with my observations and interpretation. I observed nine classes of between one and two hours over a six-month period from March to September in 1998.

Each student participant was later invited to read notes from my observations in their class and asked for comment, which was audio-taped and transcribed.

These observations have been documented in critical incident reports where they illustrate a key theme, for example of a lecturer-directed class.

4.7 Validity and reliability issues

In the interest of allowing examination of validity and reliability, each stage of the research process has been detailed and the procedures used have been made explicit. The researcher’s own background (see 1.8 and 1.9) has also been described so that the reader is aware of the underlying assumptions and the rationale for the directions taken. Potential bias in selecting students from a subject with a high degree of intercultural interaction and cultural focus has been recognised and addressed. Also
recognised is that this group of students self-selected to be part of the study and so may have heightened sensitivity and interest in intercultural issues. However, the use of multiple methods to triangulate the data outlined above allows both the researcher and the reader to view the data from a number of vantage points and to come to their own conclusions. There is no intention that the findings from this study should be directly generalisable to a wider population. Rather, the findings may be illuminating for others in similar positions and may serve to help others look at the issues from other perspectives.
Chapter Five

5 Personal profiles

Personal profiles of the students and lecturers are intended to set the scene, detailing who they are and what their interests are, so that the following presentation and analysis of the data comes to life. Instead of the participants being viewed as stereotypes of people from various countries, they are presented as complex individuals, influenced by both their culture of origin and the culture of the context. The student profiles present a picture of each student’s background, their reasons for choosing the University of Wollongong as a place to study and some insight into their learning styles and personalities. Because the interviews were open-ended, the precise nature of the data is different for each person and so I have reported the data in a way that was most appropriate for each individual rather than for uniformity.

The lecturer profiles give some insight into their background, both personal and career-wise. In order to protect confidentiality, personal details about the lecturers have not been presented. However, more general information about the lecturers can be found in section 4.4.2.

5.1 The students

Li-Chin is a 25-year old Singaporean of Chinese descent. From 1995 to 1998, he studied for a degree in Commerce taking subjects in marketing and management. The year before, in 1994, he spent completing a year of Foundation Studies. His ‘A’ level grades were not high enough for him to study at university in Singapore, and he did not want to spend time repeating them. So, after completing compulsory military service, he decided to come to the University of Wollongong to do Foundation Studies and then study for a degree of his choice. One of the reasons he gave for choosing to study at the University of Wollongong, was the timing of Foundation Studies, which start in early March. Another reason was his parents commented the
University looked ‘nice and green’ in the brochures, and they also felt it would be safer for him to study in Australia than in the US. He was here for four years before returning to Singapore early 1999. He was the first in his family to study overseas, although many of his friends had studied in the US. At the time of the study, his younger brother was studying for a computer programming diploma at a college in Singapore, and his sister had just finished an Economics/Japanese degree at university in Singapore.

Compulsory subjects with a high proportion of marks attached to a final exam, particularly those to do with statistics and quantitative research methods, were the ones Li-Chin found the hardest to pass. Although he worried about failing subjects, mainly because he did not want to let his family down, he told me that he usually passed with marks between a credit and a high distinction.

Li-Chin always appeared outgoing and gregarious with a sense of humour. He described himself as being basically non-competitive. He was also very creative in his approach to his work and, at one point, had wanted to change degrees to do a Creative Arts degree instead. Family pressure prevented him from taking this avenue. In the Business Communication subject, he instigated an international network of students, some of whom were still meeting socially two years later. He demonstrated a high level of self-awareness and sometimes a rather pensive, philosophical outlook on life. He was well travelled, having spent time in Mexico, New York, Taiwan and Japan. During his time at the University of Wollongong, he ran a local radio program and was an active member of several University societies.

**Twenty-three year old Ali came from Lahore** in Pakistan in 1995 to study for a Bachelor of Commerce degree with a management specialisation. He first did seven months of Foundation Studies, which he enjoyed and which, he said, gave him a good introduction to Australia, the University system and how to interact with lecturers and with people from different cultures as well as practice in English. Being with other international students had encouraged him with his English and with getting used to a different educational system. He had cousins working and studying in different
countries around the world, one working for the United Nations in Paris, another studying for a PhD at Harvard University in the US, and three studying at the University of Wollongong. Some of his uncles had studied in the US and UK, but he was the first in his immediate family to study overseas. His father had been in the army so the family had travelled a lot around Pakistan. His father owns and runs a construction company in Pakistan.

Out of the three possibilities of countries in which to study, Ali chose Australia because, he said, it was hard to obtain a visa for the US and England was expensive. An agency in Pakistan had recommended the University of Wollongong to him, and he had followed their advice. After school, he attended a college in Pakistan where he studied for a Bachelors degree in Statistics, Economics and Persian. He had failed Economics and Statistics at the end of the term because, he said, of the company he was keeping and lack of study. He also had not enjoyed the subjects or the way they were taught and the heavy emphasis on exams at the end of the two-year degree.

Ali is a loquacious, astute student interested in politics and he commented with passion on the ways the Western media represent his country. He had many friends from different regions including Turkey, Europe and Asia with whom he enjoyed going out and having fun. He saw his religion, Islam, as impacting on some of his experiences here, especially recreational times. He found he treated his teachers in Pakistan differently and with more respect than the way he saw teachers being treated here. Nevertheless, Ali expressed enthusiasm for the way he had been taught and the opportunities he had had in Australia. His marks were generally between a credit and a distinction. On the completion of his degree and his return home, he hoped to work as a manager for a multinational company in Pakistan for two or three years and then return to study for a Master of Business Administration.

Eli arrived with her family from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia in 1987 to live in Australia permanently. Although they had lived a comfortable lifestyle as she described, the main reason for leaving Malaysia was because of what she considered to be institutionalised racism toward people of Chinese descent, such as her family,
Chinese Malays. She talked about racism toward people of other religious convictions than Islam, for example, in being prevented from attending university. She stated that only the top one per cent of Chinese Malays was permitted to attend university in Malaysia which is why, she said, so many international students choose to study in Australia. Her experience of racism was not, however, limited to Malaysia. She described how on moving into a community in Sydney, they had been the only Chinese family attending the local primary school, and she and her two younger sisters had been subjected to racist taunts and the like. She had managed to cope with it but her youngest sister was deeply affected. Eli noted that family plays a big role for people of Chinese descent, and she saw herself as having certain obligations toward her family, such as setting a good example to her sisters, looking after them and studying hard to be successful.

Eli has a very out-going personality and was keen to give her opinion on a variety of issues, including the political situation vis-à-vis the position of different cultural groups in Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia. She was a member of several groups of students from different countries, including Thailand, Egypt, Pakistan, India, the US, Russia and Hong Kong. She said she enjoyed meeting people from other cultures and often instigated a friendship by approaching people and introducing herself. Being of Asian descent, she took on the role of helping students from countries in Asia by giving them friendly support, both in and out of class which, she said, they appreciated because she had some understanding of their situation.

On completion of the Higher School Certificate, Eli attended another university in Australia for one year before transferring to the University of Wollongong to study for a Bachelor of Commerce in Management and Marketing. She had missed her family too much, and her marks had not been very good. Since attending the University of Wollongong, however, her marks improved enough for her to achieve a credit average because of what she saw as competitiveness among students and the higher expectations of lecturers that she said pushed her to work harder. She sees herself as being very outgoing and interested in people from other cultures. At her previous University, she had been a leading member of the International Students’ Association.
with over two hundred members. She speaks Cantonese and English. With her Chinese friends, she has come to an agreement that she speaks Cantonese to them and they speak English to her so that they can both improve. At the end of the study, Eli had finished her degree and was looking for employment where she could use her marketing knowledge and skills.

Nikolai came from Russia with the intention of studying Nautical Science at the Maritime College of Australia in Tasmania. He had completed two and a half years of study at the prestigious Military Academy in Vladivostock, where his father had also studied for a Masters Honours degree by research. He broke with family tradition and left Russia and his studies to come to Australia, a decision that he does not regret.

The two Academies had an exchange program with each other and so that is how he knew of the College in Tasmania. However, his first year in Australia was spent at the University of Tasmania at the English Learning Centre learning English since he had had no education in English in Russia. On his arrival in Australia, he did not speak or understand any English at all. His introduction to the idea of studying in Australia came from a representative in Valdivostock who had application papers that he had filled out and sent back to Moscow. He said he had not considered other countries, but he did not elaborate why this was so. He says he went to Tasmania largely by default. He had trouble getting his visa processed, which had delayed his application. He was told that all universities had closed their admissions except for the University of Tasmania, which was still accepting admissions. After a year of learning English, he changed his mind about studying at the Maritime College because he perceived the College and indeed the nautical profession had low status. In Russia, according to Nikolai, the profession is highly regarded, and the college he had attended is an elite institution. Instead, he began a Bachelor of Commerce degree at the University of Tasmania and after a year transferred to the University of Wollongong, where he continued studying Marketing and Management. He says, he found the pace of life in Tasmania too slow.
Nikolai grew up in an industrial city of one and a half million inhabitants in the Ural mountains. His father had retired from the army at the age of fifty to start a business exporting fish to Asian countries, such as Japan and Korea. His mother worked for an engineering company as a librarian. He described his country as being very conservative. During his time at the University, he built up quite a large network of friends in Sydney. Two other young men from the same city had followed his example and were studying in Sydney. He and his friend Harish from India, another participant in the study, had been sightseeing around Australia, including Melbourne, the Gold Coast and the Hunter Valley. During his three-year degree, he had not been back to Russia. At the end of his degree, he accepted a managerial position with an international export company in Sydney that has dealings with Russia.

Nikolai is a high achiever whose work is both original and creative. Despite only having learnt English in the last four years, he speaks and writes it fluently and with flair. He is perceptive and has a strong sense of humour and sarcastic wit that he often uses to describe different situations, both here and in Russia. He seemed genuinely interested in the study and was very willing to give his time and insights for this study.

**Harish grew up in Bombay,** India and was studying Marketing and Management for a degree in Commerce. Harish described his cultural background as being rooted in a very orthodox, collectivist society. However, he does not see himself as being orthodox. He considers himself to be extravert and open. There was a sense in his comments that he did not want to be stereotyped as being like other Indian students on campus. He said it was important for people to adapt and gain a new experience rather than just focus on acquiring an education. His own background he described as ‘high income status.’

After school, he started studying for a Bachelor of Arts degree at what he saw as a prestigious college in Bombay. He did not have high enough grades (he had received a distinction average) to study for a Bachelor of Commerce at university in India, where he said a high distinction score was needed. However, he had not liked what he considered to be the narrow scope of the curriculum at his college so, after two
months of study, he started to look at other options. His uncle had studied at the London School of Economics in England, and many of his friends were studying in the US. However, his parents thought that attending an American university would be too expensive. Also, he would have had to sit for the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), which he claimed he would not have passed as he considers it to be culturally biased. A friend told him about a delegate from the University of Wollongong whom he visited in Bombay. He was so impressed with what he was told about the University that he applied the next day.

Harish is an out-going, talkative student and a high achiever who was very creative in his approach to his studies. His overall marks were between a distinction and a high distinction. He returns home to India twice a year. At the end of his degree at the University, he began to study for a Masters of Business Administration at the University of New South Wales in Sydney.

Elaine is of Chinese descent and from Hong Kong. She was studying for a degree in Finance and Accounting. She had chosen the University of Wollongong because of the twinning arrangements with the college at which she had studied for two years in Hong Kong. They have an arrangement whereby two years of study at the college in Hong Kong counts as one year of study at the University of Wollongong. She was the first in her family to study overseas, and her family had been originally against the idea. However, after a visit to the Buddhist temple by her grandma where a proverb about her future had signalled that it would be good for her to come to Australia, they had changed their minds. Her grades were not high enough to study at the University of Hong Kong where she said an ‘A’ average score was needed to be accepted. She had not wanted to study in the US. She noted Australia was more stable than the US and a quiet and safe place for her to study.

Both her mother and older brother are accountants. Her father owns a transport company and her eldest brother also has a company. Elaine was quite shy although she gave her opinion readily. She speaks English with difficulty and with a heavy accent. She returned home to Hong Kong at the end of 1998 to look for employment.
She had enjoyed her time in Australia, although she worried about how the political situation vis-à-vis the One Nation party would transpire. In one interview, she brought up of her own volition the issue of racism in Australia and wanted to know if the views of Pauline Hanson were really as widespread as they appeared to be in the 1998 election results.

**Millie is of Chinese descent** and is also from Hong Kong. She had studied at the same college in Hong Kong as Elaine. At the University of Wollongong, she was studying Marketing and Management for a degree in Commerce. She had not gained high enough marks to be able to study for a degree in Commerce at the University of Hong Kong and had chosen to study at the University of Wollongong because of the twinning arrangements. For her, the question of cost was important. She had compared the cost of studying in England with Australia and had found it to be cheaper here. Her mother was very supportive of her coming here to study. Millie is an only child of professional parents who were divorced. Many of her friends were studying in the US, so she did not consider it to be unusual for her to go overseas to study.

Millie found speaking and understanding English difficult. She had learnt English from Kindergarten upwards in Hong Kong, but she said that was quite different from studying in English in Australia. There was a sense that she listened intensely to the question, thought about her answer and then responded. She had no hesitation in giving her opinions. Although both Millie and Elaine talked about their studies seriously, commenting on how hard they work, they also commented about the night life in Wollongong as being ‘boring’ compared with that in Hong Kong. They did not just want to study. They were also perceptive about situations and shared a sense of humour.

Millie considered her cultural background to be a mix of Chinese tradition and Western influences. She has a friendly disposition and seemed to enjoy being interviewed. Both Elaine and Millie, however, compared favourably the pace of life in Australia as being less frenetic and competitive than in Hong Kong. She and Elaine
knew each other from their college days in Hong Kong and were good friends who shared a flat together in Wollongong.

**Sofia is a 20-year old Australian-born student of Indian heritage.** She was studying for a degree in Arts/Law but has an eclectic range of interests. She had included in her degree some Creative Arts subjects, such as Screen Production and Writing, Writing for the Media and Cinema Studies as well as subjects from Management, Business Communication, from Sociology, Communications and Cultural Studies, and Politics. There were so many subjects from a range of disciplines that she still wanted to do that she said she was already over her credit limit but she would fit some in over the summer sessions. In 1996, she was placed on the Dean’s Honours List, which is the top five per cent of students across the University. On completion of this degree, she was considering studying at the Sydney Law School as well as doing some Communication and Creative Arts subjects at Macquarie University in Sydney.

Sofia had originally planned to go into medical research and had taken a lot of science subjects in Year 12. She had been a boarder at an elite, private girls’ school (i.e. a fee-paying school) in Sydney for the last two years of her schooling. However, she changed her mind about doing medical research after looking at the Arts courses at the University of Wollongong. She had also considered studying at the University of Sydney, but she did not receive high enough marks in her HSC to be accepted into Arts/Law. However, she was pleased with her choice. She had friends who were studying at the University of Sydney who did not have the range of choices that she has had, for example in the Creative Arts subjects. She wants to write and produce films or perhaps go into International Relations or maybe work as a lawyer for intellectual property in film production.

Sofia has a 23-year old sister who had completed a Degree in Commerce, also at the University of Wollongong. At the time of the study, she was working in Human Resources for a large Australian bank in Sydney while studying for a Masters degree in Business and Public Relations. Sofia’s father is a psychiatrist, and her mother has a
degree in Law from a university in India but has not practised in Australia. Her parents originally came to Australia from India for her father to have some overseas training to be able to sit for the British Psychiatry exams. However, she said one job led to another and they ended up staying here permanently. Up until 1992 when her grandparents died, she had regularly visited her extended family in India, a country she says she loves.

Per is a 25-year old from Sweden who studied at the University of Wollongong for one year. In his first semester, he studied three postgraduate subjects in Mechanical Engineering and one Physics subject. He then enrolled for the next semester in the subjects Introduction to Management, Business Communication and Philosophy. He came from a city in the north of Sweden close to mountains. His father is a pilot with the Swedish air force, and his mother works as a secretary in an hotel. He had studied Engineering and Physics for three and a half years at a Swedish university established in 1477. On his return home, he was going to complete a thesis that will give him the equivalent to an Australian Masters degree. After finishing school, he worked for fifteen months as a radio operator in the submarine division of the navy as part of the compulsory military service. He then spent some time travelling around Europe before deciding to start studying Engineering and Physics at university.

Per described how he came to the University of Wollongong as ‘a bit of a coincidence’. One of his friends had studied at the University so he said he knew it was ‘a good spot’. From his comments, he seemed more interested in surfing and playing sport than to be concerned about study. His first choice had been to go to Auckland or Christchurch in New Zealand for something different from where his friends had been, but they did not have any places. However, when a representative from the International Office in Sweden asked him if he would like to go to the University of Wollongong, he replied in the affirmative.

Per appeared to be a very relaxed, easy-going person who did not allow himself to be too concerned about difficulties in life, but who took things as they came. He was very pragmatic about he had changed his mind about studying after having worked for
a couple of years. He had taken the opportunity to learn English very seriously, however, and was pleased when new friends thought he was an Australian. He had enjoyed visiting other parts of Eastern Australia, including the Great Barrier Reef, Queensland and Northern New South Wales. He returned home to Sweden at the end of 1997.

**Tonja has spent her life going between Malta and Australia.** Although her parents were born in Australia, they never quite settled and so returned several times to Malta, her grandparents’ country. After the last time of moving to Malta on completing Year 12, Tonja returned to Wollongong on her own to start university. She had found the pace of life too confining in Malta. She had worked as an Accounts Clerk, which she had hated. She had missed her friends and she was not prepared to marry and have children as most of the young women her age were doing in Malta. She had also found the environment confining. She missed the outdoors.

Tonja attended private Catholic schools in the Illawarra (the surrounding district of the University) for which she knew her parents had made sacrifices. They themselves had gained no formal school qualifications and had left school before Year 10. Her mother was a homemaker, and her father was, at the time of the study, an unemployed builder. She was the first in her immediate and extended family to attend university. She had begun her degree doing a double major in Italian and Management but, to her extreme disappointment, had been unable to pursue her studies in Management because of her poor marks in Accountancy. Passing first year Accountancy and second year Business Finance subjects was compulsory to graduate in Management. At the end of one year studying Accounting, she was told that she had failed the subject by one mark. Since the subject was worth twelve credit points, this was not only devastating to her for her choice of career, but it was very expensive as she had to make up for two subjects. She then changed to study Education and English-as-a-second Language (ESL). She was considering doing a Diploma of Education at the end of her degree in order to become a teacher of Italian and ESL.
Tonja enjoys meeting people from different cultures. She is outgoing and friendly and is interested in educational issues. At the end of the study, she won an Italian government award to study at the University of Florence for several months. She was looking forward to the experience.

**Candy spent her first thirteen years of life in Cape Town, South Africa** before moving to a southern district of Sydney. She comes from an Afrikaaner, ethnic background. She said she had gone to a multi-racial, British-type, private girls’ school that was very academic but also very money-orientated. She talked about girls from her class marrying into the British aristocracy. There were students from Zaire, Zambia and Zimbabwe as well as South Africans. She talked about bomb threats, strikes, sniffer dogs and tear gas as being part of her childhood experience but, she said, she had seen it as just a part of life. She said her education had not been interrupted as much as students in state run schools, which was one of the reasons her parents had sent her to the school. Her parents are both teachers; her mother teaches in Education at a university, and her father teaches Industrial Arts at a high school. She speaks both English and Afrikaans.

On starting school in Australia in Year 8, Candy was allocated to all the bottom classes until after the mid-year exams when she was put into all the top classes. She came first in the state of New South Wales for the 3-Unit English Higher School Certificate (HSC) exam (3 Unit is the highest level for HSC English). At the time of the study, she was studying for a Bachelor of Commerce, majoring in Finance and Management. As part of her degree, she had taken some compulsory Law subjects, such as Law in Society and Contract Law as well as Business Organisation. Her brother was also at the University studying Mechanical Engineering. All her immediate and extended family had been to university, and she saw them as being very successful people.

Candy is a practising Christian and is very involved with youth groups and a church organisation for whom she does the accounting. She described herself as being between cultures. She does not consider herself to be South African, but then she does
not consider herself to be an Australian either. She has friends and family scattered around the world whom she wants to visit on the completion of her degree. She has a very busy life fitting in her studies, work, church, reading and partying. She described herself as being mathematically inclined and a procrastinator. She was very forthright in her opinions and talked extensively on a range of issues. She mentioned racism in South Africa to be stemming directly from the amount of money one has and in which social circle one moved. She did not once talk about the politics of the country or what had happened there since she had left.

Lorna is from Taiwan and was 25 years old at the time of the study. She completed a Bachelor of Commerce degree after which she started a Masters degree in International Business at the University. Previous to coming to Australia, she had worked for one year in the Accounts section of a medium-sized export agency that has dealings with Europe, Australia and the US. She then studied English in Singapore for a year where she met an agent who suggested she study at the University of Wollongong. She chose Australia over the US because she saw it as safer. Also, a friend's cousin had studied in Australia, although not at the University of Wollongong. She chose the University of Wollongong because she had been told of its good academic record. She was the first in her family to study overseas.

At the time of the study, her younger brother was finishing a Bachelor of Commerce degree with a major in Finance, also at the University of Wollongong. Her younger sister had followed her example and gone to Singapore to study English, although only for four months before coming to the University of Wollongong. She was studying for a Bachelor of Commerce Honours degree.

Lorna’s parents run a steel furniture business in the third largest suburb of Taipei. She described the Taiwanese people as ‘very friendly’ with most belonging to the Buddhist faith. She enjoys a close family relationship. Lorna gave the impression of being a very determined, hard-working person intent on doing the best she could with her studies. Although speaking English is difficult for her, she gave her opinion of her own volition, often making the others in the focus groups give her some space and
time to say what it was she wanted to say. On finishing her Masters degree in July 1999, she was hoping to secure a managerial position with an international company in Taiwan.

**Soane is a mature age student from the island of Tonga in the South Pacific.** At the time of the study, he was studying for a double major in Human Resource Management and Industrial Relations. He works as an Industrial Promotions Officer for the government in his home country of Tonga, promoting small business and supplying on-the-job training. Having a degree in Industrial Relations and Human Resource Management will have an enormous impact for him on his return, he said, because he will be the only one in his department with these qualifications.

Soane is in Australia on a Tongan government scholarship. A Scholarship Board in Tonga make the decisions as to who is to study and where overseas on government scholarships but, in his case, he said it was natural to choose Australia because the work he does is based on the Australian system. The system he uses for Industrial Relations was set up by Australian AusAid consultants. He chose the University of Wollongong because a friend of his had completed a Masters degree at Wollongong and had recommended the University to him as it was far away from the city of Sydney and its distractions. Another had done his PhD at the University of Wollongong. Also, he had a sister who worked in Sydney as a secretary and who had helped him to settle in before his family arrived from Tonga.

Another reason for choosing the University of Wollongong was because the Scholarship Office had been late sending him the application forms so he could only go to the University of Wollongong. Furthermore, because his application was late, he had to enrol in a Bachelor of Arts degree. He was told to take one Arts subject and to enrol in Commerce subjects for the others and if he did well, he would then be able to take a Bachelor of Commerce degree. He had been approved to go to a university in Perth, but that was too far away and too expensive for him to pay for airline tickets for his family to come out. Previous to studying at the University of Wollongong, he had completed a one and a half-year Diploma in Marketing by correspondence at the
University of South Pacific in Suva, Fiji. Depending on his progress, his government has promised that he will be financed to do a Masters degree.

He described his cultural background as being very respectful and religious, so Sundays he spends time at a Methodist church, singing in the church choir. He was one of nine children, all of whom have diverse occupations such as a nurse, accountant, bank manager and a farmer. He took his studies seriously and his day was strictly regimented between studying and attending to family duties. He appeared to think about his answers intently before responding to a question in the interviews and focus groups. He has a friendly and open disposition. He seemed very interested in the study and wanted to read sections of the findings to see what I had discovered.

**Jane was studying for a Bachelor of Science degree with a major in Nutrition** at the time of the study. She is from Jindabyne, a farming community and ski resort some four hundred kilometres south of Wollongong. Her parents had worked in the tourist industry as ski instructors. Both had worked in Austria for many seasons. Her mother had been born in Britain but was of Swedish descent, and Jane had met all her extended family in Sweden with whom she felt a great deal of affinity. Her mother had worked in the Department of Foreign Affairs in Sweden before becoming a ski instructor in Australia and Austria. Her father is an electrical engineer. He has built up a business building ski lifts that he now subcontracts to an Austrian company with extensive contracts overseas in Korea, China, New Zealand, Canada and the US. Her parents are divorced and she has two stepbrothers. Her stepmother is an entomologist and has two insects named after her because she discovered them. Her brother is a professional skier and has an international reputation in the US and Finland.

At the start of her degree, Jane said that she had not been ready for study at University, and she had found it hard adjusting to the freedom of being a student, particularly living on campus. Her school years had been spent as a boarder at a private girls’ school in the capital city of Canberra. Her mother wanted her to study at university because she herself had never had the opportunity and had found her career choices restricted because of it. Her father had had to put himself through night
school to gain his qualifications, so she had the sense that gaining a degree was important to them. She decided to study Nutrition when one of the girls at her school developed anorexia and others also developed eating disorders. She said she feels very strongly that young people, both girls and boys need to be educated early about healthy eating. She chose the University of Wollongong because she wanted to experience being near the coast. Also, the University has a high status around Australia with regard to the degree she was doing.

Jane said she had enjoyed studying Business Communication because it had given her insight into business situations, and she had met a different group of people, particularly international students. In the first two semesters of her course, she had had a lot of difficulty with her work and had failed some subjects that she had had to repeat. However, she was now confident of graduating in the year 2000 and was considering studying for a Masters degree at a different university, either in Australia or overseas. On the completion of her Bachelors degree, she wanted to do some extensive travelling to Nepal, Alaska, Canada and Africa.

Jane was very open and frank in her opinions. By the end of the study, she had made friends with some of the other student participants in the focus groups. She enjoyed going out to parties and dances, but she also took her studies seriously, particularly to do with health issues with young people.

Michelle was studying subjects such as Physiology, Bio Mechanics and Sports Medicine in a Human Movement degree for two years in the hope that she would be one of the top twenty students selected to go on to do Exercise Science. She had also studied three Management subjects (Introduction to Management, Organisational Behaviour and Business Communication) because she had been advised that it was a good idea, especially since she wants to start up her own business at some time in her life. She noted there were very few international students in her field studying at the University.
Michelle lived with her family in a rural district some forty minutes away from the University. Her mother had been born in Italy but had spent most of her life in Australia. Although some of her mother’s family celebrated their Italian heritage, she found her immediate family was very Australianised. Her mother worked as a Teachers’ Aide at the local primary school, and her father was Head Trainer of a Sydney rugby league team. He had done this part time for the last twenty-five years while working as a civil engineer but, with the change to Super League, he was now working full-time as a Trainer. Michelle had been strongly influenced by what her father does and by a doctor for his team. She said she had only ever wanted to do Exercise Science which would give her the opportunity to diagnose and treat sports injuries. She had chosen this over doing physiotherapy because she liked being outdoors. She had been accepted into an Exercise Science degree at the University of Sydney and the University of New South Wales. However, the doctor of the rugby league team had advised her to study at the University of Wollongong because the course was much broader and would be of more use to her. She had also heard from friends that the University enjoyed a good reputation and was in natural surroundings. She was the first in her immediate family to study at university.

Michelle saw herself as a perfectionist. She would not hand in any work that was not to the best of her ability. She took her studies seriously and worried about getting high enough marks to get into the Exercise Science strand. At the time of the study, her marks were a distinction average. Michelle was keen to travel around the world to Sweden, the US and Fiji before venturing on her career. She and Jane were friends and had similar personalities, both outgoing and friendly with a sense of humour.

5.2 The lecturers

In the interest of confidentiality, details about the lecturer participants' personalities have not been included. Lecturers are much more easily identifiable than students because of their smaller numbers and because of the subjects they teach. However, some details can be found in Chapter Four under section 4.4.2. Another issue to do
with confidentiality is that when describing their explanation of the way they teach, care has been taken to use general terms about their subjects to avoid identification.

**Caroline describes herself as coming from a lower middle class, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon background.** At the time of the study, she was undertaking a Ph.D at the University and so has been studying consistently for over eight years. She tutors a first year subject and sometimes guest lectures in other subjects. She has worked as a research assistant on different projects and has helped co-ordinate several subjects.

She complained that she had been offered no support or teaching courses to equip her with teaching strategies and philosophies. She described her teaching style as sometimes ‘flying by the seat of my pants’.

**Katerina was born in Kenya but grew up in the South of England.** She moved to Australia in the early 1990s because of the then British conservative government policies. Previously, she had worked in London before studying in the US. She later worked in New Zealand. She won an Australian study travel postgraduate scholarship, which enabled her to study at a prestigious Australian institution in her field of study. She completed her Ph.D in 1998 at an English university by correspondence.

Katerina demonstrated an awareness of trying to achieve certain things from her teaching, particularly to empower students by encouraging them to be life long learners. She told me that she ‘loves’ her subject and feels ‘privileged’ to be doing what she does. She was the only lecturer to ask me for feedback about her lecture, which gives an indication of her critical approach to teaching. At the end of the one and a half-hour interview, she thanked me for giving her the time to reflect on her teaching practice.

**Mark is first generation English although his parents came from Russia** to live in England. He completed two degrees in a range of subjects at two English universities, one with an international reputation in his field of study. He moved to Australia in the 1980s because of the then British conservative government policies. He mentioned
several times how hard he finds it to teach critical thinking skills to classes of over 200 students. He also talked about how he enjoys mixing his research interests with his teaching. There was a clear indication that his research was of much more importance and interest to him than his teaching. He considers himself to be proficient in several languages, including Russian, German, Czech, Polish and French.

Martin describes himself as being a Catholic, Anglo Saxon male. He was born locally and has worked in different fields with people from many different cultural backgrounds. It was while doing a postgraduate degree at the University of Wollongong that he started tutoring on a casual basis. He told me that he does what he does because he ‘loves’ it and is considering doing a Ph.D. He was very focussed about his teaching strategies and talked about how he appreciated learning about different perspectives from his colleagues. He also talked about reflecting on his teaching and his rationale over the years. He thinks that there is some contradiction in the way the University talks about teaching, especially teaching in culturally diverse classrooms and the way such teaching is actually practised.

Jo is an Australian-born, Ph.D student. He took an Honours and then a Masters degree at other universities in Australia before starting a Ph.D at the University of Wollongong in 1996. He tutors in an introductory subject in his field and works in other capacities on a casual basis. He told me that he had had no preparation for teaching at university, other than reading a book about first time tutoring that his mother had bought him. He feels that he was poorly prepared for teaching at the tertiary level.

Arslan was born in Bangladesh in the Indian Subcontinent to a Muslim family. He has been at the University of Wollongong for several years and chose to work here because of the cultural diversity of both students and lecturers, its natural environment and proximity to Sydney as well as its academic reputation. Previously, he taught as a lecturer at a university in another part of New South Wales. Before coming to Australia to do his PhD, he taught at a university in his own country.
He seemed proud of his teaching awards and pointed out his certificates on the wall in his office. His comments suggest that he is genuinely interested in teaching and his impact on students, particularly international students.

**Peter is Australian-born and had first wanted to be a priest.** He did several years training for the priesthood in the seminary before changing his mind. He told me how much he loves abstract ideas and reading about metaphysics and philosophy. He seems to have a lot of empathy for students and takes his teaching seriously. He talked extensively about constraints to what he considers to be "good" teaching practice. He holds degrees from other universities in Australia where he also taught a range of subjects in his field. He has co-authored a textbook in his field of study.

**Frank described his background as Catholic American** with a long ancestry. He sees being American as having a strong, individual work ethic and taking responsibility for one's own actions. He speaks Tagalog as he worked in the Phillipines for several years. He has travelled through Asia, Canada and Mexico. He started teaching while doing his MA at a university in the US and then worked at another university while he was studying for his Ph.D. He chose to come to the University of Wollongong for a semester because he wanted a change, and he could teach the same courses that he teaches in the US.

**Paul was born in Europe but completed the final two years of his secondary education,** Year 11 and 12 in Australia at a technical college. He did a BA Honours and MA Honours at the University of Wollongong with some studies completed overseas. He has been teaching full time at the University of Wollongong for several years. Paul talked about the issue of identity and how as soon as you leave your native country, you lose part of your identity and you never really gain another one. He describes his cultural background as impacting on the way he looks at things, and the way he behaves and dresses.

**Salman was born in Calcutta, India and went to school and college in the South of India.** He did his Masters degree at an Indian University and worked for a French and
then an American multinational company for over five years. He went to study at a university in the US as a Ph.D student for six years where he also taught. At this university, Salman was able to pursue his interests in other courses outside his degree, including pathology, postcolonial literature, psychology, philosophy and anthropology as well as jazz music. He described himself as most interested in conducting his own research, publishing articles and teaching small groups of postgraduate students. He describes his upbringing as being very cosmopolitan and his cultural background as being non-Western. "An Indian", he says, is a construction of the West. He speaks four languages and his first language is English. He says he chose to work in academia because he is not motivated by money and he did not like working in the corporate world.

These personal profiles are intended to set the scene and give the reader an idea about the personalities and background of the participants of the study. Most of the student participants were friendly and keen to share their opinions, although some were much more shy than others. The next chapter reports on the data from the student interviews, focus groups and a survey as well as the data from the lecturers’ interviews.
Chapter Six

6 Students’ purpose and experiences of tertiary study

6.1 Introduction

*Australia stresses a lot critical thinking. We are taught to think for ourselves. In a way, use your brains. (Li-Chin, Chinese Singaporean interviewee)*

This chapter and Chapters Seven and Eight report on data gathered from interviews and focus groups of both students and lecturers as well as that from the student survey during the research process. Chapter Six gives an overview of the students’ and lecturers’ beliefs and perceptions of the purpose of tertiary study. Chapters Seven and Eight discuss the students’ and lecturers’ perceptions of two “macro-contexts” of tertiary study: the lecturer-directed contexts, including ‘the lecture’ in Chapter Seven; and the student-directed contexts, including ‘the tutorial’ in Chapter Eight.

Both international and local students reported that the purpose of tertiary study is to learn independent and critical thinking skills. Their views about teaching and learning contexts revealed a strong liking of a dialogic method of teaching where students and lecturers learn together, sharing ideas and looking at what is familiar to them from multiple perspectives. None of the student interviewees liked taking a lot of notes and regurgitating “facts” in heavily weighted exams. Instead, they stressed the importance of learning how to think for themselves, conduct hands-on research and apply theories in practice. These developing skills, they explained, will be of significant benefit to them in their future lives, having built up their confidence in many ways. They noted, for instance, how they have learnt to apply theories to work situations. Students interviewed and those surveyed, and the lecturers interviewed, concurred on the purpose of tertiary study as being primarily to develop students’ critical and independent thinking skills.
Note: For the reader’s convenience, the culture of origin of each student is included in brackets the first time they are referred to. (I = international, L = local).

6.2 Thinking skills

Responses from both international and local students demonstrated that they view the development of their research and analytical skills as an important part of their teaching and learning experiences. Lorna (I/Taiwanese) commented:

*You have to have done some research. Go and interview the company and get some information on that. Make up the questions before you interview the company and then we collate the data and then organise the structure, detail the investment and make up a report.* (Lorna I)

What can be inferred from her response is her need to take the initiative in contacting a company, arranging an interview and formulating the interview questions besides the more technical skill of writing a report for both her learning and to get high marks. Her response, as do those by both local and other international students, combines the development of independent thinking, research and analytical skills, as a goal in learning that they acknowledge is central. Local students like Jane concurred. She said:

*Jane (L): I think that some courses are trying to teach you how to think (my emphasis) rather actually learn [memorise] the things like this subject here. I don’t know if they expect you to know all these things but like teaching you how to read articles and be able to take out the information you need rather than... You can’t learn everything in this subject. How can you learn all of that but you can learn how to extract certain points for things.*

*R: And what do you do with those things?*

*Jane: Form an opinion.*

Her responses suggested that she sees learning as thinking about an issue and forming her own opinions rather than memorising “facts”. She also emphasised the importance of being able to apply theories to different situations rather than
memorising a lot of facts, without meaningful understanding. These views recur throughout her responses.

6.3 Independent learning

The strongly stated belief by both international and local students that they should be responsible for their own learning is another key finding of the study. Local students Sofia, Tonja and Jane were adamant that students should take responsibility for their learning. International students Per (I/Swedish), Harish (I/Indian), Nikolai (I/Russian) and Ali (I/Pakistani) also explained that they see students taking responsibility for their own learning as an integral part of the experience of going to university in Australia. Both Ali (I) and Jane (L) talked about how the lecturers guide them with what they should be doing, but they noted it was up to them to go to the library, do the research, read the textbooks and complete the work on time. Per (I) commented:

*I mean if you go to uni, you are expected to do something yourself. It's not just opening your skull and pouring it in and close it and hope. That would be too easy but there's got to be something better than someone talking about something and someone listening.* (Per I)

His response indicates that he sees a contradiction between the way he is taught in some classes and the purpose of a university education. His statement implies that passive learning in a lecturer-directed class is not what a university education should be about. International students, Soane, Elaine, Lorna and Millie, all discussed the importance of reading and preparing questions independently before class in order for them to be able to gain the most from class discussions and to gain a deep understanding of the subject under discussion.

These statements do not support what some in the literature refer to as the inability and unwillingness of international students to work independently and to use critical thinking skills (Ballard, 1987; Ballard & Clanchy 1991; Beasley & Pearson 1996). The similarity in views between international and local students about independent
learning and using their critical thinking skills is also significant and is a finding that some recent studies report, too (Biggs, 1997; Chalmers & Volet, 1997).

6.4 Applied knowledge

Students commented that they do not like having to memorise “facts”. International and local students agreed. They were adamant in their opinion that, at university, students should be learning how to apply theory or formulas rather than committing facts to memory. Jane (L) stated in a focus group:

... mainly with formulas learn how to apply them rather than actually memorising them (Ali in agreement – yes). Like back in high school, for some subjects, we were given a page of formulas, so only five might be relevant in that whole page. So knowing when is the right time to use the formula and knowing how to apply it. Getting information off the medium rather than you don’t have to actually memorise the formulas, you don’t see that in real life, but knowing how to apply it. (Jane L)

Underpinning their responses is the sense that learning how to apply theories or formula is a more worthwhile skill to have learnt and it requires using their thinking skills rather than memorisation skills. This belief about learning recurs throughout students’ statements, particularly on note taking. The following comment by Sofia (L) sums up the views of the others.

I think they’re all trying to basically get you to think for yourself. I mean my friends up in Sydney, I was saying to them that all my exams are open book and they were like, that’s really surprising. At the same time, it means that you don’t have to sit down and learn all this stupid stuff from memory. Just concentrate on the context instead of learning all the case names and things like that and I think that, in itself, shows a lot how to take initiative to grasp concepts rather than remember facts. (Sofia L)

Their responses correspond with how Biggs (1987, 1993a) describes the difference between a surface approach to learning where students memorise and reproduce information to meet external demands and a deep approach where they learn
information in a meaningful way, ie as they described above. In their comments, there was a strong sense that they want to learn for understanding – ie a deep approach.

### 6.5 Post-study employment/career

From a vocational perspective, there was keen recognition of the importance of gaining a degree for employment purposes. Both international and local students, such as Sofia (L), Candy (L), Michelle (L), Soane (I/Tongan) and Li-Chin (I/Chinese Sinagporean) stated that they believe that the skills they have learnt in getting a degree will be of use to them in the world of work. For example, Per (I), Ali (I) and Jane (L) noted that learning how to give effective presentations and write reports was good preparation for the world of work. Eli (L) also talked about having hands-on experience to prepare her for her future career in marketing. Soane (I) claimed he would be applying the management theories he had learnt in lectures in his managerial position back home. He also mentioned a Student Association that has mostly overseas members where, he said, they all get together and discuss how to build up the Association using the management theories from class.

Soane (I) and Michelle (L) added that by getting a degree and furthering their knowledge, they would have more bargaining power in the real world of work. Elaine (I) and Li-Chin (I) also talked about the competitive job market in their respective countries, Hong Kong and Singapore, and how having a degree will help them to secure employment.

### 6.6 Life experience

Other responses about the purpose of learning in a tertiary context indicated that the students recognise the broadening of their understanding of, and perspectives on, a wide range of issues. For example, Sofia (L) said that the experience of studying at university had improved her understanding of how different structures in society work. She stated:
It brings up things that I never really thought of like how the media can influence you. I think it's just the basic idea of how structures work and how institutions work and how it can affect how our society works. I think that's pretty important and that should be something that all people should have at least a taste of at uni. (Sofia L)

This comment reveals her growing understanding of and exposure to the power relations within societal institutions, a key underpinning of a critical pedagogy. Candy (L) suggested her experiences in gaining knowledge at university has given her power. She said:

It has taught me how to teach myself. Stimulating. The more knowledge, the more powerful you get. (Candy L)

Other local students, like Tonja (L), noted that she had first seen the purpose of a university education to be training for a specific set of job skills. As she neared the end of her degree, however, she saw herself as having become multiskilled and able to be effective in different situations, such as managing people and giving constructive feedback. Her responses, as with Candy's, revealed a sense of empowerment from her teaching and learning experiences at the University.

Summary

The responses of both international and local students interviewed about the purpose of tertiary study indicated the importance they attach to developing and using independent and critical thinking skills. Rather than focussing on memorising "facts", they argued it was important to have an understanding of the context, think about the concepts involved and be able to apply the theory in real life situations.

6.7 Teaching and learning contexts that meet students’ needs

Experiencing - at times reading and researching - definitely not being lectured at for hours and hours - too boring. (survey response of a local female LF 53)
The opinions of the student interviewees about the purpose of tertiary study concur with the survey respondents. Thirty-one (74 per cent) international and 50 (69 per cent) local students reported on the open-ended survey question 10 that they like teaching and learning contexts where they discuss and participate in interactive, experiential activities. Their responses suggest a strong preference for active thinking rather than passive absorption of information. The international and local students' comments on the survey were remarkably similar, and, in some cases, identical.

*Note: An I indicates an international student, an L for local students, an M for males, and an F for females. The number refers to the number given to each completed survey.

*I like to get a hands-on perspective. (IM 21)*

*Interactive, different ideas and opinions are encouraged. (IM 106)*

*Active thinking, examples, group interaction. (LF 39)*

*Need experience, interaction, thinking time, links between concepts, chance to talk about it because it makes what I learn concrete, more 'real'. (LF 63)*

*Observing, then practising often works best for me. (IM 88)*

*Where I participate in doing something rather than just answering a question. (LM 104)*

There were six international (14 per cent), twelve (16 per cent) local students, who indicated they like a more passive learning environment where the lecturer gives them the "facts" and they listen and absorb information.

*Listening, taking info in. (LF 16)*

*Lecturer providing the required information. (LF 76)*

The following graphs from the rated responses on the survey about the use of experiential activities in a class they like and in a class they dislike illustrate the same point. They rated a subject on a scale of 1 – never/hardly at all to 5 – a lot.
International and local students’ responses show similarities in their views about classes with frequent use of experiential activities. Some 60 per cent of both international and locals students like classes that have frequent use of experiential activities.
6.8 Teaching and learning experiences that do not meet students’ needs

Sixteen (38 per cent) of international and 42 (58 per cent) of local students added on the open-ended survey question 11 that a lecturer-directed context with no interaction does not meet their needs. Representative of their comments are the following:

*Formal, downward communication where the tutor only tells you the answer of the homework but you can’t give your idea. (IM 1)*

*I don’t like boring lectures where I have no opportunity to participate. (IF 68)*

*Straight out lectures – this is one person’s point of view. (LM 50)*

*Lecturers who only use overheads and do not interact with students. It makes the subject boring and students are less focussed. (LF 74)*

*Parrot fashion. Repetitive theoretical techniques. (LF 94)*

These open-ended statements included comments from five local students whose responses indicated that they do not like rote learning and another five local students and one international student who reported specifically not liking memorising for exam based assessment. These comments on the survey correspond with the interview responses about the kinds of teaching and learning contexts that do not meet their needs. Their responses indicate that they do not want to rote learn or listen to a lecturer’s point of view unless there is interaction or participation on their part.

These findings indicate the same kinds of experiential activities and learning contexts seem to play a role in meeting the needs of both international and local students. The findings are similar to some recent studies where student-centred contexts are established rather than lecturer-directed ones and are deemed “good” teaching practice to the benefit of all (Biggs, 1997; Chalmers & Volet 1997; Jackson, 1997; Prosser & Trigwell, 1997).
6.9 Students’ previous teaching and learning experiences: A comparison with those at the University

International and local student participants described very similar previous teaching and learning experiences. They talked about rote learning, memorising “facts” for heavily weighted exams, being penalised for giving their own opinion, and being told what to do, when and how. Underpinning some of the international students’ comments, however, was a certain ambivalence. On the one hand, they all commented positively on their teaching and learning experiences at the University where they recognised the emphasis on developing critical and independent thinking skills, which, they said, they liked. At the same time, however, they also commented on how hard they had to work in their respective countries. It was not at all clear whether they had found they did not work as hard here, although they did comment that they worked harder than local students, a frequently recurring statement.

The international students’ comments about their previous teaching and learning experiences correspond with some commonly held beliefs of lecturers noted in the literature and from anecdotal evidence (Ballard, 1987; Samuelowicz, 1987). However, what is crucial to the study is the international students’ insight into the requirements of the different systems in their home country versus Australia and their ability to meet the different demands. Meeting these demands in the Australian context has impacted on both international and local students in a myriad of ways, including broadening their understanding of issues and each other’s perspective (see Chapter Eight).

Importantly, these findings report that the previous teaching and learning experiences of the international students in the study are identical to those of the local students, and not so qualitatively different as some in the literature suggest (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Beasley & Pearson, 1996).

Li-Chin’s (I) comment sums up how the international students described their previous teaching and learning experiences. He explained:
We don’t challenge them (the teachers). We don’t talk to them to clear up misunderstandings and we accept the work and all classes are compulsory. It’s pretty much strict. It’s like if you fail a subject there you have to repeat a whole year. We are told you have to do this. You’ve got to hand in next week this time, this class. Not like here we say week 12 or five o’clock Monday or whatever. There is no room for discussion for extension for example so we are really restricted so we know we have to hand it in next week. So the whole week we’re doing it and also we’re not given topics. Like we’re free to express we can go to do research like here we are able to go and do more research. In Singapore, we don’t have to reference so when I first came here, I got a shock. Just for the problems of referencing a subject. (Li-Chin I)

His responses, including the one above, suggest mixed feelings about his educational experiences in Singapore. On the one hand, he talked about being ‘restricted’ with ‘no room for discussion’ but then there is the implication that life was easier because he knew what he had to do and when and he could write his papers without referencing.

Of importance, however, is that his response suggests a recognition of the requirements in the different educational systems and an appreciation of the ‘freedom’ to express himself, although he also commented on the need for self-discipline to attend lectures and hand in his work on time at the University. He said he had been shocked when first studying in Australia, but he also stated that he had become used to the system. Local students Jane, Tonja and Michelle also talked about how shocked they had been starting university study. It had taken them a year where they had failed several subjects before they had acclimatised to university study. After two years of study, they still experienced anxiety about completing assignments, organising their time effectively and writing critically.

The other international students also pinpointed the differences in the educational systems in Australia and in their different home countries. For Harish and Nikolai, there was some ambivalence in their comments, as with Li-Chin above. Harish pointed out that he considered the biggest difference to be that here, he was expected to apply the theory to practice and there was more creativity in teaching styles at the University than what he had experienced in India. He said:
I would say it was on the same level (the standard of education) but the teachers teach in a better way. I mean it's a more creative way to teach a person. (Harish I)

Nevertheless, he described the educational system in India as ‘rigorous’ and as ‘one of the best centres for education’ where you have to be ‘on the ball’ because it is ‘very competitive’. It was hard to decipher whether these comments were in contrast to what he found was required and expected of students at the University. The following comment may be seen as an observation or a criticism, although the use of words such as ‘forced down your throat’ and the repeated negative, ‘nothing, no practicality’ do suggest a degree of negativity about the kind of teaching practice he experienced in India.

What I mean by that (being rigorous) is the fact that education is literally forced down your throat, you know what I mean. There’s no creativity involved with the learning experience, nothing at all. The chapter is straight out of the textbook. The teacher will teach it, will extend some of the concepts, and leave you to finish the rest of the chapter on your own and answer the questions at the back of the chapter. There’s nothing, no practicality that links the chapter back to the real world. (Harish I)

Nikolai summed up the different educational systems in Australia and Russia thus:

Here they encourage you in different areas to speak up. They encourage different behaviour patterns. There, (in Russia), you are encouraged to memorise and regurgitate in the exam. Here, it is the other way around. You are encouraged to understand the concept. (Nikolai I)

Both Harish’s and Nikolai’s comments indicate that they see memorising and regurgitating information as a surface approach to learning compared to their experiences here where they have to understand and apply concepts – a deep approach to learning. However, Nikolai also talked about the high standards required of him in Russia as reflected in his other comments.

Yes, it is memorising, but the stuff we are memorising is more than they memorise at school here, like high school. I don’t know. Pretty tough, pretty high. When I was doing this statistics, how is it called the statistics quantitative methods, it was easy for me. (Nikolai I)
The implication seems to be that what he had to memorise in Russia included difficult concepts, which suggests he was memorising with understanding, a subtle difference that Biggs (1997) and Chalmers and Volet (1997) have reported on in the literature.

Nikolai also made the comparison between his lecturers in Russia, where he saw the textbooks as complementing the lecturers' knowledge with those here where, he said, 'the lecturers are just a complement to the books'. There is the implication that his lecturers in Russia have more expert knowledge than his lecturers at the University.

All of the other international students, except Per, made similar observations about their experiences at the University. For example, Lorna, Elaine and Millie saw their learning and teaching experiences here as being about active participation with the implication that at home, they do not volunteer their opinions. Millie described the systems thus:

*Quite different in Hong Kong style and the Australian style. Studying in the university, all the students do lots of paper work. In Australia, we discuss and need to open ourselves, volunteer and express our opinions. It's quite different.* (Millie I)

Per, on the other hand, did not see much difference between his experience of the Swedish university system and the Australian. He claimed they were both old-fashioned and conservative with 'not much happening'. He said students attend lectures and then go to tutorials where the lecturer solves problems. In some subjects, students prepare responses to problems beforehand and then compare their answers with those of the lecturer. His comment about having to work hard to pass end of year final exams worth 100 per cent in Sweden does suggest that, in some ways, he had to work harder to pass in Sweden. However, he also commented that he learnt more here, as he had to work continuously throughout the semester.

Of significance to the study is that both international and local students have had the same experiences of having to memorise a lot of information to be regurgitated in exams. Ali (I) and Harish (I) talked about a 'huge reliance' on memorising books for exams in their home countries, Pakistan and India. They said students reproduced
what was in the textbook without any real understanding, particularly how the theory applied in practice. Local students Tonja, Jane and Michelle described very similar experiences they have had in Australia.

For other local students, not only did they have to memorise information but they were spoon-fed the "correct" answers. Sofia and Candy described their school experiences where they had to give "set answers". They had not been encouraged to use their independent and critical thinking skills. In fact, they had been penalised for doing so. They talked about how they had written from a different point of view than the one presented by the teacher in class and had been given a very low score. Sofia’s use of the words ‘set answer’ and ‘produce’ suggests a degree of rigidity in the way they should answer exam questions.

Candy (L): Being spoon-fed? Oh definitely all the way through high school it was like spoon-fed.

Sofia (L): Yes, I think that especially I think it’s a problem with the HSC like in terms of the way they do the marking for it. It’s just the way the whole course is structured so you’re told from the beginning that you have to have a set answer. I don’t think it’s a problem with the teachers themselves. I think there’s too much importance placed on the final marks and I think that makes you have to produce, like especially with English, you have to have a certain answer.

**Summary**

The idea of having been spoon-fed and having to memorise a lot of information, where independent thinking skills are not encouraged, has been a shared experience for both international and local students. The students agreed with each other that memorising and regurgitating information does not encourage understanding or develop their independent and critical thinking skills. Some lecturers at the focus of this study made the same observation about both local and international students having difficulty in critical expression because of their past experiences.

Memorising a lot of information and regurgitating in exams without meaningful understanding has also been a part of their teaching and learning experiences at the
University (see section 7.3). The findings from this study indicate that the students' experiences at the tertiary level include didactic, lecturer-directed learning. There is, then, a mismatch between what the students see as the purpose of tertiary study, the skills they want to develop and the way they are (sometimes) taught. This mismatch is reported on in the literature (Burroughs-Lange, 1996; Chalmers & Fuller, 1996; Gow et al., 1992) but is not evident in most of the lecturer interviewees' responses. Perhaps this is because the students nominated lecturers whom they liked and who use different approaches to teaching and learning. The descriptions that the lecturer interviewees gave of their teaching and learning practices, are consistent with the key aims outlined in the University's strategic plan of providing critical and intercultural learning opportunities for students. Although some of their responses indicate a lecturer-directed context, confirmed in my own observations of their classes in action, most of them had found ways to broaden student thinking on a range of issues, which will be discussed in the next chapter.

6.10 The lecturers' perspective on the purpose of tertiary study

I'm trying to look at how critical you can get, you know. Don't just tell me this is what it is, this is what it does. What I want you to do is to tell me is it good, is it bad, who is it good for, who is it bad for and if it is bad, why have these rules been made. What are the power questions behind it? Who benefits? Who does not benefit? (Salman)

The ten lecturers interviewed discussed the purpose of teaching and learning in a tertiary context as promoting independent and critical thinking skills in students, particularly looking at and evaluating issues/problems from multiple perspectives. Importantly, most of them discussed including the different cultural backgrounds of students as a resource to broaden the thinking of all. They report encouraging students to question the framework and the assumptions underpinning theories, as encapsulated in the above quote. Looking at the issues relevant to their subject areas from different perspectives, such as a Marxist or an economic rationalist perspective as well as from different cultural perspectives, indicates the use of a critical pedagogy. Nearly all of their comments suggest a strong adherence to a critical
pedagogy in their classrooms. The following are two examples of the kinds of comments they made.

I think it's good for students to see that it's possible to address the same situation in different ways and still have a positive outcome, multiple perspectives. There's no one correct answer. There are multiple answers and what you want them to learn is the process of evaluation. If you go through that evaluation process and you learn a big negative, the big mistakes you can fix up in multiple different ways. (Frank)

To be engaged in thinking. I don't want to teach them what to think. I want to teach them how to think, I guess. It is a personal issue... It is the way of thinking, which is changed. So I get some kind of engagement and some kind of development of a critical faculty... Providing a much more analytical way of looking at the issues and more understanding of the concepts and content but also the political and social realities. I guess, I did my own evaluations after a comment made by students of how they would never look at the same thing the same way again. So, even in terms of a BBC report, a so-called neutral source or even a textbook or journal article, I find they would never look at it the same way again... I found it difficult to do because it took me a long time for myself to do that in my own thinking, so that was a blast for me. (Salman)

Their responses suggest a key aim of their teaching is to change students' conceptions through interaction and engagement with each other and with the issue. This perception of teaching is referred to in the literature as being at the highest level of what constitutes "good" teaching (Biggs, 1999; Prosser & Trigwell, 1997).

This group of lecturers sees their role as a facilitator, learning in concert with their students, rather than as a presenter of information and facts. There was also a keen sense of preparing students for the world of work where they will have to engage with others. Arslan's comments are representative of the others' comments.

They learn through interaction so they know what others are thinking about the same questions. That will train them up to share knowledge with others in the future. Learning is a two-way interaction, give and take. The lecturer is not the most learned person in the world. There is no-one in this class that doesn't have more knowledge than that. If you know more than I do, then contradict me. Don't consider the lecturer as the most learned and the only person who knows anything, I like to be contradicted. When I am contradicted, then I know I am doing something and that I am being listened to. (Arslan)
However, his comments about international and local students’ attitude to learning are revealing.

*International students like to be spoon-fed. Local students are very independent. I know my Asian students want me to tell them everything so that they don’t have to do anything. Just swallow everything and then simply vomit on the exam paper. (Arslan)*

In this example, he appears to have a stereotypical view of international and local students’ learning approaches. Nevertheless, as reported in Chapter Eight, he also commented that both his international and local students report positively on participating and interacting with each other, inside and outside the classroom.

Lecturers also stated expectations that students will learn how to construct an effective argument. Katerina explained:

*I am trying to teach the skill of holding your ground in an argument because I think when they’re graduates that makes them less vulnerable to exploitation. I see myself as a facilitator. I am lucky to teach in an area where it isn’t the case that there is a body of facts that you must learn by the end of your time because you’re going to be a bridge builder. I think I facilitate the development of certain skills. That’s what I hope to do and I encourage the development of critical and analytical skills and a number of other generic skills along the way. I see it as facilitating how to find things out, how to put them all together and how to behave confidently within the vicinity of published opinion without becoming anti-intellectual. (Katerina)*

Her responses suggest a drive for student self-empowerment.

A key finding of the study is the lecturers’ use of the cultural diversity in their classes. Most of them discussed seeing international and local students as a resource for each other, using their different experiences to see issues from multiple perspectives. Their comments indicate that they have implemented an intercultural dimension to both their teaching practice and their assessment practices. Arslan and Katerina’s comments reflect what some of the others said.
If the students have some background in different cultures, I use the students as a resource and I ask them to tell us about their experiences and how the subject is treated differently in different countries. (Arslan)

I am creating, I hope, a space in which it is routine to consider your own position and some of the assignments I set, you have to think about your own position as critic. I am asking students explicitly to look at their gender and cultural background and think about how that may influence their readings on the subject. (Katerina)

The other lecturers made similar comments about using their own experiences or asking students to describe an experience they have had as a tool to promote students’ critical thinking skills. Their comments demonstrate an emphasis in their teaching of looking at issues from multiple perspectives, multiple in the sense of how people from different backgrounds view an issue but also multiple in the sense of taking different positions, according to a political doctrine, gender, or a different cultural perspective. Asking for examples from different perspectives situated in the students’ own experience are strategies that the students reported on as helping them to engage with the concepts and broaden their understanding and is key to the use of a critical pedagogy (Freire & Shor, 1987).

Another key aspect to a tertiary education, according to the lecturers, is to promote and develop independent learning in students. Peter explained:

I’m pushing them into independent critical thought and independent learning and some of them you push and they just soar and you know it is just wonderful to see that they’re going to be fine. They’re already doing independent critical thinking and stuff. Others you push out of the nest and they just hit the ground and it’s a shocking experience. The ones that hit with a sudden crash who came in this morning were local students, aghast as they had never got such bad marks for an essay. They never knew that this was expected. This was something different from their experience in other classes that they’d done before and this is what I am worried about. (Peter)

His comments suggest that some of his students had not experienced being given diagnostic feedback with the aim of promoting critical and analytical thinking skills. Some of the students made the same comments (see section 8.14).
Only Caroline and Jo were not as articulate as the others about the purpose of tertiary study. However, the views that they did venture concur with the others. For instance, they discussed broadening the students’ worldviews and encouraging students to present an effective argument from different positions, but they did not discuss using international students as a resource as part of their teaching approach.

**Summary**

While the lecturers’ responses reflect the use of a critical pedagogy, they emphasised different aspects, such as facilitating independent learning, teaching students how to construct an effective argument, and seeing and evaluating issues from multiple perspectives. The majority of the lecturers report seeing the cultural diversity of their classrooms as a resource and use it to foster and promote different ways of thinking in their students. Questioning the framework and assumptions and preparing students for the world of work were other key aims of the lecturers in their teaching practice. Their responses suggest that they teach from a student-centred perspective and are aware of their teaching beliefs and assumptions, something that is encouraged in the literature (McKay & Kember, 1997). However, most of the lecturers also discussed certain constraints that impact on their ability to teach these skills.

### 6.11 Constraints to “good” teaching practice

The size of classes is a major constraint to what the lecturers consider to be “good” teaching practice for the majority of the lecturers interviewed. They talked about the difficulty of tailoring their classes to suit the huge range of ability, experience and language skills of students in a class. They also talked about the anonymity of large classes and how they cannot have the same interpersonal interaction with students as they do in small classes. Most of their comments suggest that the number of students in a class impacted on their ability to have a student-centred, interactive class, which is what they would like, as opposed to a lecturer-directed and structured one. For instance, Mark reflected:
Minimising the amount of teaching we have to do and in a sense, there’s a logic behind that to get the students to do more and more. So it’s not as daft as it seems, but how do you do that with 200 students, without increasing your own workload dramatically? (Mark)

However, the lecturers who give lectures with a large number of students did discuss different strategies that they use in large lecture theatres that promote interaction between students themselves and among students. For example, Frank and Arslan ask students questions and wait for a response. Frank moves around the lecture theatre and up the aisles to close the gap between him and the students, which, from my observations, seems to encourage students to respond. Arslan asks students to form a group and pool their responses with one acting as reporter, writing up a summary of their responses on the whiteboard at the front of the room. Students commented positively on this strategy, particularly as they often formed multicultural groups, which diversified their way of looking at the issue. International students also commented that, in the small groups, they felt more confident to speak up and contribute their opinions than in large lectures.

Peter has an activity, fondly described as “Minties Moments”, where he asks students questions and they have to run down the aisles to the front to tell him. If their answer is correct, he gives them the lolly. Other lecturers like Katerina have organised their teaching and learning material around the compulsory large lectures so that they have what Katerina calls ‘a collage of experiences’. Although her lecture is lecturer-directed and structured with little interaction among students or between herself and students, she described her approach as modelling ways in which students can present arguments or take different positions to an issue. These lecturers’ responses suggest that they have worked out ways to teach large classes that are compatible with their beliefs about teaching and learning.

Lack of time, tight budgets and heavy workloads were the other key constraints to their teaching practice. Some specifically mentioned that a lack of time impacted, not only on how much preparation they could do for a class, but also on the amount of feedback they could give students, either written or during consultation hours. The lecturers indicated that they want to give extensive written and oral feedback to
students so that they can be aware of their strengths and weaknesses but that time and budget restraints impeded their ability to do so. Peter, Martin and Mark also discussed specifically that a lack of time impacted on their ability to improve their teaching skills and collaborate with other colleagues to pool resources and ideas.

For some, like Salman, a lack of time meant that they were unable to consult and collaborate with tutors to adequately prepare and oversee their teaching. Salman also mentioned that his intention to climb the University ladder meant that he is not prepared to spend a lot of time organising teaching material. His research interests are his main priority, as not only research is what he prefers to do over teaching, but he sees having publications as being rewarded with a higher position on the academic ladder.

With all their responses, there was a sense of frustration at not being able to work with students in the way they would like because of class sizes and lack of time. There was also a sense of stress and exploitation in the amount of work they do. They recognised, too, that the tutors, who work for them, are also exploited in the amount of work they do. This observation was corroborated by the three tutors interviewed, who are employed at the lowest end of the academic ladder. They described how some of their teaching time is not financially compensated for, for instance, in the extra time they spend in giving students written feedback and in consultation hours with students. Preparing tutorial activities was something else that was not adequately remunerated, as, for some classes, they have to prepare material with which they themselves are unfamiliar and that takes time.

Other serious constraints to their teaching practice these three tutors discussed were a lack of teaching training and preparation. They talked about the expectation of them that they know automatically how to teach, which, they said, was not correct. They had been surprised that they had been given no training before venturing for the first time into the classroom. A lack of control over what they have to teach and how it is assessed were other issues of importance that impact on the way they teach. Some assessment tasks and readings they are told to give students, they noted, dictate what
they teach and how. They said the coordinator decides the curriculum and assessment tasks without consultation with them. The precariousness of their employment was yet another issue that affected their ability to plan ahead. Their responses indicate a certain amount of emotional stress in not knowing what their position will be the following semester as well as a sense of being exploited in the amount of work they do. Their comments suggest that these concerns are not conducive to help them meet the key aims espoused by policy makers at the University.

The issues of being given adequate feedback, lack of personal interaction between instructor and students in large classes, and lack of teacher training were brought up by the students as well. They are discussed in future sections.

While this group of lecturers enjoys teaching and researching at the tertiary level, their comments revealed a high level of stress and a sense of being overworked. The constraints, they discussed, seriously impede their ability to accomplish what they described previously as the purpose of a university education - developing the independent, critical thinking and intercultural skills in students. Despite these constraints, they still see their achievements in terms of student learning and developing independent, critical thinking skills.

**Summary**

This chapter has explored international and local students’ beliefs about learning as being about developing their independent critical and research skills, applying theories to real life situations rather than committing “facts” to memory, and being active learners rather than passive absorbers of information. Lecturers’ views about the purpose of a tertiary education concur with those of the students. They articulate their own role in the learning process as being to create a student-centred context where students learn how to construct an argument from different positions, question taken-for-granted assumptions and prepare themselves for the world of work.
The next chapter looks at the experiences of students and lecturers in a lecturer-directed and structured context, where some of these constraints and their impact can be seen in practice. The chapter that follows addresses students’ experiences and perceptions of interactive teaching contexts that reveal both international and local students want to have a voice in the tertiary classroom with lecturers acting as facilitators.
Chapter Seven

7 Didactic, lecturer-directed learning

7.1 Introduction

You'd go into a lecture and they just use PowerPoint or whatever it is. Just flash up all this stuff on the screen and you had to write it out basically. So I reckon there wasn't any teaching, it was just copying things down. The lecturer can't help you because like there's 600 of us, so I think he was just there to spit out the information and use the mouse or whatever. (Tonja L)

The following findings report on the purpose of lectures as seen from firstly the students’ perspective and then that of the lecturers. The data indicated that students do not find sitting passively copying down notes a rewarding learning experience. However, they had the expectation that, in some lectures, this is what they have to do because they need to reproduce the same information in exams. They report that they would prefer lecturers to point out how theories work in practice and they want their ways of knowing and different cultural contexts included in the examples given by lecturers. The students noted that seeing examples from different cultural perspectives broadened their understanding of a concept, but when the issues under discussion were limited to the Australian context, the international students stated they felt alienated (Huxur et al., 1996). Having the time to think about the information being presented and having lecturers point out the different perspectives to an issue were consistently referred to by the students as assisting their learning as well as helping them to develop their critical learning skills.

The data from the lecturers indicated that they had the same goals in their approach to giving lectures as the students. Instead of using ‘a conventional kind of academic narrative which purports to establish...the whole and definitive “truth” about a particular text or theoretical problem in question’ (Moore-Gilbert, 1997, p.75) that favours the dominant Australian group, the lecturers discussed how they include different perspectives and stories from different cultural contexts. Instead of seeing the cultural diversity of their classes as problematic, most of them discussed using the
different cultural perspectives of students as well as their own backgrounds as a resource and saw the diversity as a positive teaching and learning experience. Importantly, most of their responses indicated that they consciously do not favour the dominant group but value the experiences of both local and international students as sites for intellectual inquiry (Rizvi & Walsh, 1998).

The lecturers described the number of students in a lecture as ranging from just three to between forty and six hundred in some subjects. One of the key issues that lecturers and students described as impacting on the teaching style they employ is the number of students in a class. The evidence from this study suggests that at least some lecturers employ a wide range of teaching strategies, despite their reported constraints of large numbers of students required to attend their lectures. It must be noted that Caroline and Jo do not give lectures in their capacity as tutors, so their comments are limited to classes of twenty or so students.

The students interviewed saw most lectures as being non-interactive and one-directional. They reported that lecturers present information and explanations of the theory and the textbook as well as give guidance about assessment tasks. They expected to sit quietly and listen. However, they also reported that it helped their learning and understanding when the lecturer shifted the attention at times onto the students with the use of interactive activities, such as giving lollies to reward responses. They all had difficulty with attempting to listen and take relevant notes with understanding at the same time, as detailed under subsequent sections. Guidance in understanding the textbook was something that both lecturers and students agreed on as one purpose of lectures. The student interviewees described lectures that are one-directional but interesting because of the lecturers' ability to relate theories to practice, their use of examples, in particular international examples, and their guidance, which helps them understand the concepts in the textbook.
7.2 The course textbook

7.2.1 Support in understanding the textbook

I think the textbook has got a lot of stuff that you don’t need to use and the lecturer just highlights the main points of that chapter and those are the points that you pick up in the exam and take out. I think that’s the main point of a lecture. (Michelle L)

A key function of lectures, as seen by the students, was for the lecturer to explain and highlight the relevant sections of the prescribed textbook that they need to know for assessment purposes. Going to the lecture where the lecturer highlighted the key points saved them time as well as assuring them that they knew which key points they should learn for assessment purposes, mainly to reproduce in exams. Their responses indicate that they see one of the purposes of lectures as giving them a better understanding of the course textbook than if they tried to read and understand it on their own.

Some of the students, like Tonja (L), Michelle (L), Jane (L), Lorna (I) and Li-Chin (I), made a particular point about how hard they find reading the course textbook. Li-chin explained:

I think that for me, I can’t read the textbook, I can’t understand it. It would be easier for me to attend the lecture. A lot of lecturers set out the material. (Li-Chin I)

The international and local students both commented on their difficulty in understanding the language used as well as the concepts in the textbook. The students pointed out that being given the main points in the lecture made reading the prescribed textbook much easier. The international students discussed having to use the dictionary a lot in order to understand the textbook. The local students agreed that they too have to do the same thing to be able to understand the jargon used as well as the concepts. Lorna (I) commented:
It's very difficult (reading the textbook) because it's my second language. I have to check the dictionary all the time for the meaning. (Lorna I)

However, some international students, like Ali, stated that they did not attend lectures because they could read the textbook at home by themselves. He argued that it was a waste of time for the lecturer to go through the course textbook in lectures. Per also described it as a very inefficient use of time to go through the textbook in lectures. They both said they much preferred to listen and try to follow points with understanding. They wanted the lecturer to discuss theories and their relation to real life, as discussed below in section 7.4. These responses suggest they want to gain an understanding of the application of theories in practice rather than listening to the lecturer explaining the key concepts in the textbook.

Other international students, such as Soane and Lorna, have developed their own independent learning strategies to understand the textbook and hence the lecture. They try to go through the relevant chapter of the textbook before the lecture. Lorna commented:

...prepare the chapters before you go to the lecture, so it helps us to understand the topic but sometimes you don't have time to read through the whole chapter to understand the whole chapter. (Lorna I)

Nikolai (I) pointed out that sometimes the academic texts and readings have incorrect or superficial information. For example, he mentioned one textbook which, he said, describes all the major religions in the world and their differences in one paragraph when, in reality, he recognised many differences between them that were not dealt with sufficiently in half a page. The implication in his response is that lecturers need to point out inconsistencies, superficialities and the assumptions in textbooks, something to which the lecturers interviewed also referred. The lecturers' responses suggest that they try to help students develop their ability to critique texts rather than accept views at face value. The following critical incident report provides an example of this modelling perspective.
Critical incident report Thursday 11.30

A one-hour lecture with 50 students approximately, who ranged in age from about 18 to 50 years old, sitting silently in a small lecture theatre with the lecturer out the front using the overhead projector.

On entering the room, there seemed to be an intense atmosphere with students appearing very focussed and concentrating on the lecturer presenting (I was a little late). The lecturer began by going through some of the readings, suggesting students highlight certain parts. The students were either reading or writing and they all seemed very attentive. They were silent, but they appeared comfortable in stopping the lecturer when they were unclear about something to ask her to repeat a point. She, in turn, seemed comfortable with students interrupting her as well and gave the information required before continuing.

Some nodded their heads agreeing with a point she made, looking up at her. She gave her own opinion about some of the points in the readings and also her opinion about how to go about doing the assignment. ‘If I were you, I would be doing...’. She used words like ‘thinking’, ‘guide the reader’, ‘look for examples’, ‘avoid unsupported evidence’, ‘develop a strategy’, ‘make decisions about’, ‘explain your opinions’. She asked, ‘Are there any questions?’ Someone asked a question and she answered him using his name.

She left time - a minute or so - between topics, seemingly as a deliberate strategy for students to finish copying down from the last overhead and perhaps for herself to collect her thoughts, before moving on to the next topic. At one of these gaps in her presentation, a student interrupted, ‘What were the dates again?’ and she repeated the information. She exhibited a sense of humour, punctuating some of the more dry facts with some funny comments that made both her and her audience laugh. She seemed well aware of her audience, maintaining eye contact with different individuals, smiling and making a few jokes. She often gave her personal opinion about something, explaining why she was giving them particular information. ‘The reason why I’m doing this is...’
The lecture described above was mainly one-directional, but the students remained interested because of the presentation skills of the lecturer. She gave them time to digest her points and suggestions as to how to go about an assignment she had given them where they were expected to construct an effective argument. So, although some of the students discussed their difficulty in reading the textbook, this lecturer provides one example of how she demonstrates the different positions taken in textbooks to help their understanding. She also was open to responding to students' comments and questions.

7.2.2 Lecturers' views on academic texts and readings

_The textbook that I use is a difficult one and certainly provides plenty of scope for the better students, the more capable students, but I'm hoping that the lectures provide an introduction for the students who have difficulty with the ideas._ (Peter)

The few lecturers who brought up the issue of using a course textbook spoke of their difficulty in choosing textbooks and readings. They are aware that some of the readings they give are difficult and complex but, they said, they have little choice because of the paucity of readings on their subjects. Furthermore, it seems there are few readings in their subject areas written from a perspective other than from the US or the UK, with some Australian exceptions.

Peter, as indicated in the quote above, described how he uses the lecture time to give students a basis, a platform from which they can increase their understanding of the topic, including the ideas in the textbook. He deliberately chose a particular textbook to analyse as it has more of what he calls an English style than the usual American prescriptive texts, which he described as having lists of ten things to be learnt in the chapter. This kind of approach, he says, does not suit his style of teaching. The course textbook he uses tries to give an understanding, an analysis and a variety of interpretations rather than what Peter describes as “recipes”.

Salman talked about the absence of textbooks that have different cultural perspectives. All the examples given are American. This is where he draws on his
own experience in different countries and where the participation of the high percentage of international students (60 to 95 per cent) in his classes is crucial for students to gain a broad perspective on the issue. He has students from China, Sweden, India and Germany, among others. He said, there is very little work done from an Asian perspective because, he thinks, that those who publish in his area come from an Anglo-Saxon background. He described how, due to the political nature of the perspectives he wants to take within his subjects, the journal readings for students are of a very high linguistic level of complexity. The perspectives he wants to discuss, he said, do not exist in a textbook and that is why he gives students journal articles to read. International and local students both tell him that they have to use multiple dictionaries and spend a lot of time reading these selections.

The other lecturers also lamented the absence of texts that contain a number of different perspectives. However, some of them, like Martin, use this to point out to students in lectures that they need to be aware that the authors are writing from a particular perspective with particular assumptions. Katerina was another lecturer who described how she uses the lecture time to model different positions that can be taken with regard to understanding the assumptions and perspectives in a variety of readings. Their responses suggest that they encourage students to develop a critical approach to their reading.

Summary

The lecturers’ viewpoints about course textbooks, then, concur with those of the students. They are aware of the difficulty of the set texts and appear to use lecture time to explain concepts and key points in the textbook and selected readings. The local students’ interviewed suggest that they rely on the lecturer giving them key information from the textbook in lectures rather than learning independently. However, the international students’ interview responses about reading the textbook on their own, as opposed to waiting for the lecturer to explain the content in the textbook, suggest an independent approach to their understanding of the textbook. For some students, this use of lecture time was stated to be beneficial for their learning.
For others, their responses, as described in the next section, suggest a sense of disappointment and intellectual frustration that some lecturers do not teach beyond the textbook in lectures. The difficulty of meeting the needs of a diverse range of students in large lectures was discussed by the lecturers as being one of the key constraints to what they see as “good” teaching practice. A key constraint described by the students to “good” teaching practice was having to take down copious notes with only a superficial understanding.

7.3 Note taking in lectures

I can’t write and listen ... It’s guaranteed that the moment they toss the overhead, it’s the most important bit for the exam ... I’m writing at 100 miles an hour trying to get down the information. You can’t listen and write that information at the same time ... They’ll put up an overhead or two and you’ve got to write down a few extra notes but you can only understand it when you are actually listening to what they’re telling you rather than just going crazy trying to get it all down. (Jane L)

Note taking was not a popular teaching and learning strategy for either international or local students interviewed and surveyed in the study. They both reported the difficulty of taking notes in lectures with understanding because lecturers speak too fast, present too much material or change overheads too fast. Their responses do suggest that they will be expected to know and reproduce information that the lecturer has imparted in the lecture, primarily for exam purposes. For a few, taking notes in the lecture helped their understanding of the key concepts and theories, and the prescribed textbook, as mentioned above. The majority of the interviewees, however, expressed an overwhelming sense of frustration in trying to take notes and follow with understanding what the lecturer presents. For instance, Michelle (L) described her experiences of lectures thus:

You just walk out of lectures and nearly cry. Because there’s so much and there’s just no way you can get a top mark ... This is what you are given, this is how it works and now we’re learning why it works. There’s just so many things, so many different functions. It’s just unbelievable ... I mean I walk out with three or four things but you have to really go and put the work in and even then, it’s impossible to comprehend everything that they say. There’s no way you can store it. (Michelle L)
She said she did not learn in lectures because ‘you’ve got so much information and they go through it so quickly, you haven’t got time to think about it. You just write’. There is also a sense that she has to ‘store’ information – in other words, remember and regurgitate information. Candy (L) expressed similar sentiments. She said:

*Here’s the work. You don’t know what they’re talking about and you just copy, copy down and hope that one day, you will understand what’s happening because there’s no way you can grasp the concept from just one lecture.* (Candy L)

Tonja’s (L) comment at the start of this section also indicates her experience of lecturers presenting a lot of information very fast that students copy down. Their comments indicate that they leave lectures frustrated at the amount of content to be taken down at the expense of gaining insight, in particular, being able to think about the content and ideas presented. International student, Per, on the other hand, chose to listen rather than copy down notes. He stated that taking notes from lecturers’ overheads was a very inefficient use of time. His response suggests that he prefers to listen and think about the concepts being presented rather than copy down notes from the lecturer.

**Critical incident report Monday 5.30**

*Two-hour lecture in a large lecture theatre (seating for over one thousand) with about 200 students ranging in age – from 18 to 50 – and differing cultural backgrounds.*

*The lecture theatre had a table and projector on a stage. There is a gap of about four metres between where the seating starts and the stage. The room was dark but the lighting on the stage was such that the lecturer was clearly visible on the stage, speaking into a microphone. The lecturer remained standing behind a table and gave a PowerPoint presentation, sometimes leaning forward, sometimes pointing to points on overheads. There were some two hundred students, some talking, some taking notes, others yawning, some sleeping. There were three rows of students fairly near the front who were attentive and who took notes and looked up at her on the stage. The others were very spread out right to the back of the theatre.*
The lecturer looked around the theatre, trying to engage her audience. She used a lot of examples from the US, with a lot of jargon and colloquialisms, such as flea markets. She also gave examples about student contexts. For example, she talked about young people, such as themselves, buying products because of peer pressure. She used what I considered to be some rather difficult vocabulary, words such as erroneous, referent power, coercive and phrases like “shoot you in the foot” that she did not explain. Often, she commented, ‘I don’t know whether you have this in Australia but in America it is like this and this’. No examples from other countries were included. However, she did give examples from her own work experience, ‘When I worked in London, we did ....’ and from journals.

She often asked rhetorical questions, such as ‘Give me some feedback’. After one hour, she gave the students a ten-minute break and asked students to collect fliers on the stage. Only about five did so. Most of the students left the lecture theatre, either for a cigarette or to get supplies of drink and food.

Two of my students came up and talked to me about how much they like the subject and how interesting they find it. She often referred to what is or what is not in the textbook and challenged some of the things in the textbook too. She made comments to the points she had on overheads and indicated where she was up to by leaving a pencil next to the point under discussion.

There was no break in the flow of the lecture for students to make notes or simply to digest what she was talking about. Each new topic was introduced with the cue “now” ... with added emphasis. She presented a lot of information. Only a few students in the front middle rows took notes. The others did not appear to be fully concentrating on what she was saying as evidenced by their behaviour. For example, five students sitting in front of me were reading the newspaper. Others were talking amongst themselves, from what I could hear about their personal lives and some were asleep.
What I noticed in this lecture was the amount of information the lecturer presented that I found hard to keep up with. Although the content of the lecture was interesting to me, she did not seem to take into account her audience by leaving time between the different points for students to digest or take notes. Also, all the examples she gave were American. These issues were brought up consistently by the students as making learning from a lecture difficult. The following critical incident report illustrates a different approach to teaching in the same lecture theatre.

**Critical incident report Monday 5.30 in the same lecture theatre as described above**

**100 students more or less spread out in this large theatre, varying in age from about 18 to 50.**

This lecturer also used overheads, but he stood in front of the desk on the stage. He appeared to speak fairly slowly, using a lot of arm gestures, and he moved around a lot. ‘Can you hear me at the back?’ he asked, and a group of students called out, ‘Yes’. As in the other lecture, students came and went as they pleased while he was talking. As they left and returned, they often were talking amongst themselves, which gave a disrupted feeling to the lecture. His lecture consisted of a lot of overheads with key points to which he referred by leaving a pencil at the point he was making. He also had diagrams to illustrate a point. His overheads seemed very clear, laid out in a logical sequence with enough detail about what each point was about. A lot of people, about a half of the room’s occupants, were trying to copy everything down, even though he had told them that the same notes were available in the Resource Room, before the lecture. He had given me a copy of all the overheads before the lecture that allowed me to see the sequence of the points he was making.

He gave examples and explained them in depth and carefully, for example, he explained ANZACS. He explained phrases and concepts painstakingly. He often repeated points or returned to a point, which suggests he was trying to keep the students focussed and also give them time to make notes about the particular points he was making.
He asked rhetorical questions. ‘Remember the overhead I used last week?’ and then linked the points to what they had done in the tutorials. ‘Does this make sense? Why is diversity a management issue?’ he asked, perhaps to capture their attention. Sometimes, they were the sort of questions that students may well have asked themselves at a particular juncture in the lecture. Often, he mentioned that they needed particular points for the exam and some students who had not taken down notes before, quickly picked up their pens and pencils and wrote the points down. Again, he seemed to be trying to keep their attention. He also referred to other readings that they might find useful. He seemed to be suggesting that they take a wider approach, looking at the issues from different perspectives.

He brought in the Pauline Hanson factor, a then current political issue and I noticed a lot of international students looked up from their notes when he mentioned her name. He summarised her position as being about a small group subsuming, wanting others to be just like them and then went on that we want to move away from this negative approach and look at how we can value diversity within a society.

‘I just want to touch on .... ’ he said often, appearing to be justifying why he was talking about a particular issue. He seemed to want to close the distance between himself and the students, although this is very difficult to do because of the set up of the room. He stood in front of the podium and moved around a lot. He looked around, seemingly trying to have eye contact with students, even though it was dark. He spoke slowly and clearly, repeating key points, explaining certain expressions. He did not gloss over them but gave detailed explanations, using simple English.

This lecturer seemed to be aware of his audience and tried to meet their needs as best he could by referring to topics they had done previously and points that they would need for the exam. He repeated points and showed how they linked with other points that suggests he was trying to help them keep focussed and to guide them to the key issues. Both international and local students interviewed commented that being able
to get the notes — and they were extensive ones for the lecture described above — before the lecture is something they find particularly helpful for them to be able to understand the lecture. These strategies are the ones that students interviewed commented positively on. The following graphs indicate the frequency of note taking in a subject the surveyed students liked while the lecturer talks.

![Graph](image1)

*Figure 7.1: Taking notes in a subject they like*

The students’ rated responses to taking notes in a lecture they like do not support the student interviewees’ reported intense dislike of taking down notes nor do they support the students’ responses to the open-ended survey questions about what contexts meet and do not meet their needs. Perhaps students made a distinction between “taking notes” and “copying notes” as the bar chart below indicates.

![Graph](image2)

*Figure 7.2: Copying from overheads in a subject they dislike*
As indicated in the table below, this finding is statistically significant at the .0006.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. side</th>
<th>pvalue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20.791</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.0006</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 7.1: Statistically significant finding

The local students demonstrated an overwhelming dislike of classes involving a lot of copying notes with 83 per cent identifying a lot of copying in a subject they dislike. The international students were not as demonstrative but still there were 57 per cent, double the 29 per cent who identified infrequent note taking in a subject they dislike.

There were 16 international and 42 local students who explained on the two open-ended survey questions that a more formal context, where they have to take notes and listen to a lecturer without any interaction, does not meet their needs. Four local and four international students specifically complained, in question 11, on the survey, about having to take notes in lecture as a learning activity that does not meet their needs. They stated their dislikes as follows:

- **Constantly writing notes. (LF 16)**
  - Writing down lots of notes because I find that when I look over them, they don't make any sense. (LM 104)
  - Passive sitting and taking notes all the time without any time to practise. (IM 88)
  - Writing down what the lecturer said/put on overhead without having time to understand it. (IF 80)

Only six students, one international and five local students, claimed to like a more formal learning context where they sit quietly and take notes.

- **Take notes, more clear explanation during the class, more example. (IF 95)**
- **Lecture notes/overheads. I can see what is needed and know what to study. There is no guessing/little confusion. (LM 61)**
This is a significant finding and does not support the views of some in the literature who contend that students, and international students in particular, like to sit quietly and take notes (Ballard & Clanchy, 1987; Samuelowicz, 1987). Important for the study also is that, indeed, only one international student on the open-ended question on the survey reported liking subjects where she sat and took notes.

7.3.1 Strategies for note taking

Local student Jane (L) and international students Ali (I), Millie (I), Elaine (I), and Lorna (I) elaborated on the issue of listening for understanding and writing down notes at the same time. They suggested that they be given notes prior to the lecture that would help them to follow and they could then add their own notes to the relevant parts. This strategy would necessarily involve evaluation and analysis on their part of the material being presented rather than just blindly copying down everything for fear of missing some key information. They noted that some lecturers did not want to do this because they were frightened that students would not attend the class. Jane commented:

...I find that some subjects they actually give you lecture notes as you walk in the door. He hands it to you and I find that better when you are actually reading it and he’s talking, I can’t write and listen. Like in one of my subjects, they started doing that (giving notes beforehand) and there were those people who were like, “Oh I don’t need to go to that” but they lose out because they didn’t realise that they needed extra things to those notes, but you had the basis there and you could build on that. (Jane L)

Lorna (I) added, that when notes are left after the lecture, it was too late to be helpful as she was preparing for the next lecture.

R: What do you think about Jane’s suggestion to have the notes before?

Lorna (I): It’s a good way but in the uni the lecturers do like you to go to the lecture and after one week of the lecture, you can go to the Resource Room to photocopy the notes but I think it’s a little bit late because we have to prepare the next lecture and then we don’t have the time. I think it’s better for the students before.

The three lecturers interviewed who mentioned note taking were aware that often they
did not leave students enough time to read the notes left in the Resource Room. For
them, it was an issue of being overloaded with other work and not having enough
time to make the notes available before the lecture. However, they did comment that
students engaged more in thinking about the issues under discussion when they knew
that the notes were or would be available.

Some students, like Sofia (L), Harish (I), Nikolai (I), Eli (L), and Tonja (L), however,
were able to write down notes and add their own thoughts to the notes they had taken
from overheads. Their comments suggest that they think about what it is they are
writing, adding their own thoughts, either in the lecture or by themselves. Sofia said:

*I usually make it up all myself. If there’s overheads, I use them as a guide
but I make my own notes. (Sofia L)*

Harish (I) concurred:

*Basically the same. I take down notes to remember what has been said in
the lecture and all the points that are not on the overhead I would put
down as well.*

Tonja (L) added:

*You try and think and from what I saw from those notes, if I have any
other ideas I just jot them down. I don’t know, I use those like a stimulus
whereas I try and think for myself. I take into consideration the other
views I come up with and I write them down. (Tonja L)*

Tonja’s comments suggest that she is evaluating different views and not just
accepting what the lecturer has chosen to impart. Other students commented on
taking notes, not only to remember key points but also the extra material not available
elsewhere, like points from a video. Taking notes in class rather than photocopying
notes that the lecturer (sometimes) leaves in the Resource Room also saved them time
and money – photocopying is expensive, they said.
For some international students, like Soane (I) and Lorna (I), making their own notes themselves from the course textbook prior to the lecture helped them understand the material presented in the lecture. However, they also commented on the poor quality of notes that are sometimes given in lectures. For instance, they described how some lecturers give only the headings out of the textbook. International students Elaine and Nikolai took the initiative and made their own notes from the textbook after the lecture. Soane also pointed out:

_It is funny to find out that they have got everything from the chapter. No words from them at all. Just like they’re summarising the whole chapter. There’s no extra from them except presenting it._ (Soane I)

This comment seems to suggest that he wants something more from the lecturer than just summarising the textbook with notes on overheads. His views concur with what some of the lecturers described as their difficulty in pacing the class to fulfil the needs of a large range of different abilities of students.

### 7.3.2 Lecturers’ views on notes

Although note taking was of concern for the students interviewed, as evidenced by the comments above, and seemed to be a key teaching strategy experienced by all of the students in lectures, only three of the ten lecturers interviewed discussed note taking in their classes. They mentioned that they attempt to have the notes ready before the lecture so that students do not need to write everything down and can then concentrate on what it is they are talking about. The others did not bring up note taking in their lectures as a particular learning tool they expected students to use. Instead, they talked about a variety of teaching strategies and resources they employ to interest students and, in some cases, actively involve students in the learning process.
Summary

Students’ responses overall, both from the interviews and survey, indicate the understanding that they needed to take notes from the lecturer, even for those who made their own notes, either before or after the lecture. Most of them gave the impression that they copy down everything from overheads rather than evaluating and noting down key points because of lack of time and the amount of information the lecturers impart. Some of the international students, however, demonstrated taking the initiative in making their own notes, which suggests an independent approach in their taking responsibility for their learning. However, there was concern by the students about how much understanding they have of the notes they make in class and reproduce for assessment purposes (Ramsden, 1988). Their use of the words ‘present information’, ‘store’, ‘summarise’, and ‘copy down information from overheads’ does not suggest a dialogic method of teaching. It does suggest a lot of information being presented in a one-way transmission from lecturer to student, with little questioning or discussion, which contradicts what the lecturers interviewed said they are trying to do.

It was not clear how aware lecturers are of students’ perception of the need to take notes and their difficulty in taking notes and understanding the argument at the same time. It was also not clear whether the lecturers interviewed intended their teaching styles to call for or encourage students to take notes at the expense of gaining insight and understanding. Factors, such as formal teaching and directly transmitting knowledge, that influence students to take a more surface approach to their learning, such as copying down notes without understanding, are comprehensively addressed in the literature (Gow et. al, 1992; Gow & Kember, 1993; McKay & Kember, 1997; Ramsden & Entwhistle, 1981).

7.4 The application of theory in practice

*If you don’t have the theory and the practice all together, you just go right like this thing is happening, you’ve got the theory in front of you. It’s*
in the book. Maybe it's right, maybe it's not, but if you put them altogether, it's like yes, this thing happens. (Ali I)

Although the students' comments suggest a lot of content being presented in lectures that they have difficulty in taking down and understanding, they also discussed lectures where the application of theory in practice was shown. For them, this was another key purpose of lectures, and they particularly liked lecturers demonstrating the application of theories with examples that they could relate to.

For international students Harish and Nikolai, what made some of their lectures interesting was when the lecturer presented a theory but then gave his or her own opinion that, they said, was almost always different. This difference in opinion they found interesting and made them think about the viability of the theory. Their responses suggest a high degree of using their critical and independent thinking skills as opposed to the previous comments of students about copying down information, without thinking. What follows is an interchange involving three student participants, Nikolai, Harish, and Tonja in a focus group.

Nikolai (I): He actually does give you the theoretical background and then he gives you his own opinion, which is almost all the time different to the general point of view.

Harish (I): And that is interesting.

Nikolai (I): It does make sense and makes you think whether the theory is really right.

(R): So it encourages you to think about your own theory like Tonja is saying or your own point of view?

Harish (I): Yes, with the examples he provides.

Their responses indicate that they like the challenge of seeing a theory and its application from different perspectives. Another dimension to relating theory to practice came from Tonja (L). Her comments suggest that she wants her classes to involve students and relate theory to practice rather than the lecturer transmitting knowledge. She said:
(She) Makes us do Kindergarten activities just to learn the pronunciation and that just to interest us, to show us that it's not just something out there but it's something that can be applied. She had us dancing around the classroom and you know, just acting out stuff and sentences just to make it more real. (Tonja L)

Ali also reported liking being able to see the application of theory in practice. His comments (see the start of this section) suggest that he does not take at face value what is stated in the course textbook, and he is aware of the possibility that the theory may not work in practice. He is ‘amazed’ when he sees how the application of theory in practice actually works. He wants lecturers to relate the issues to the “real world”. Michelle also talked about wanting to learn how to apply the theory in practice. Her responses and Candy’s and Jane’s, too, combined memorising information with learning how to apply it to particular situations. They pointed out that, in their professions, they will need to know certain information and how to apply it to different situations. Jane, however, stressed several times the importance of knowing how to apply the theory rather than only memorising, without meaningful understanding.

The following bar chart supports the interview findings. The rated responses to the question of lecturers demonstrating the application of theory reveal that over 70 per cent of both local and international students like a subject where the lecturer demonstrates the application of theory to practice. Only 13 per cent local students rated relatively infrequent use of such links in a subject they liked and just 6 per cent of international students indicated the same.
The following bar chart demonstrates the international and local students' clear preference for themselves to practise the application of theory. There were similar responses with 66 per cent of the international students rating a 4 or 5 and 67 per cent of the local students rating a 4 or 5.

Responses to question 10 on the survey about what kinds of learning experiences meet their needs reinforce these points. There were five international students and ten local students who specifically commented on the survey that they liked being able to see the links and the practical application of the theory. Implied in some of their responses is that seeing the application helps them to think about the concepts. Representative of their comments are:
Comprehension, lots of practical examples so that I can see the links and it is easier to understand the concepts. (IF 80)

Learning by doing, application to practice because it is more realistic. (LM 45)

Applying theories in practical situation, particularly groups. Acting out with other people. (LM 5)

Practical - it encourages me to participate and think about what I am doing. (LF 10)

These data were compared with the responses from question 11 on the survey, which asked what kinds of learning contexts do not meet their needs. Of the 58 respondents who indicated that a lecturer-directed teaching and learning context does not meet their needs, there were four local and two international students who commented in addition to not liking a context where there is no application of theory to practice. A selection of some of their comments follows:

Chunk and chunk of dry theory being thrown at me. I learn by looking/studying examples that make use of the theory. (IF 85)

Constant drills of obscure grammatical points with no accompanying examples or its usage or practice of the same. (LM 12)

These comments support the views of the student interviewees about wanting to see the application of theories in practice rather than having lecturers transmit knowledge and theories without demonstrating their application.

The students, however, seemed aware of barriers to understanding the application of theories in practice. The international students particularly pointed out that lecturers need to go beyond the local context in demonstrating the application of theories, so that they can locate themselves and their ways of knowing within the context of what is being taught. Ali (I), for example, questioned the relevance of some of the theories presented in compulsory subjects, because, he said, they will be of no use to him when he returns home, as they do not apply to the situation in his country. Suggested in his response is that lecturers should view theories from different perspectives, including international perspectives, a link to a critical approach to teaching and learning that is unique to this study.
The students' comments indicate that they enjoy lectures that, although one-directional from lecturer to student, give them the opportunity to think about how concepts and theories relate in practice. So, despite their earlier comments about some lecturers presenting a lot of content at the expense of their gaining understanding, their other comments suggest that, in some lectures, they are being encouraged to think about theories and concepts and their application in practice. In particular, they reported liking lecturers who refer to examples, and international examples as well, to illustrate their point. Using examples from multiple perspectives, not only promotes students' use of critical learning skills, but also an inclusive classroom and a context where the perspectives of students from different backgrounds are visible and where diversity is celebrated rather than silenced.

7.5 The lecturers' use of examples: Inclusiveness/exclusiveness

Lecturers giving examples, especially from other countries, was a clear favourite teaching and learning strategy for the students. The international students, in particular, liked lecturers who give examples from other countries, not only English-speaking countries. It made the lectures interesting, they said. Importantly, giving practical examples in different cultural contexts that the students can relate to, helped with their overall understanding of the subject. Examples that students talked about included buying a can of Coke, or a bottle of shampoo, managing different kinds of people, and analysing the competitiveness of a company. They emphasised the point that the examples discussed must be ones that everyone can understand.

Critical incident report Tuesday 14.30 Second semester

One and a half hour lecture 50 students approximately sitting right in front and spread out all the way to the back in the medium sized lecture theatre (seating capacity 150)

The lecturer punctuated his lecture with some very funny jokes about real life situations; for instance, he talked about buying McDonalds, cooking utensils.
shampoo. There seemed to be a collective sigh of recognition with students looking up and nodding and smiling. For example, he asked them about the shampoo they buy. ‘What does it tell you on the bottle? Shampoo twice, right. What a brilliant strategy - you have just washed your hair and it tells you to do it again! And then what else do you buy when you buy the shampoo?’ Three, four, five students at a time called out answers. ‘You buy conditioner’. ‘Right, so now you are buying two products.’

The above description illustrates the use of a familiar example, shampoo and conditioner, as a strategy to promote understanding about the subject under discussion, in this case marketing. International and local students responded to his questions eagerly and enthusiastically, judging by the number of responses and a great deal of laughter generated from his questions.

While this lecturer talked about examples that were familiar to all of his audience, other international students like Soane (I), Elaine, Millie and Ali spoke about lecturers talking about Australian-based companies, such as Telstra and BHP, companies about which they had no idea when they first arrived in Australia. The international students gave numerous examples of how they had felt excluded because of the choice of examples the lecturer gave. In some of their subjects, also, only examples from English-speaking countries were given, some of which were unfamiliar to them, which impeded their understanding of the subject as well as leaving them feeling excluded.

The students pointed out also that care has to be taken that the examples given are not only accessible to all but that they are appropriate and contextually correct. Nikolai (I), Li-Chin (I) and Harish (I) had experienced lecturers giving examples about their countries that, in their view, were incorrect. For example, in one lecture, Nikolai reported:

They said Russians only like local made chocolate but it’s not actually the case. They do like imported things... They got an article from somewhere but obviously my opinion was more related than theirs. I have spent my
whole life there so I should know better but I didn’t want to push my opinion. I didn’t want to let them down. (Nikolai I)

The implication here seems to be that Nikolai did not want to be publicly questioning the lecturer’s knowledge, although he felt he knew more about the issue than the lecturer.

Soane (I), not only liked lecturers who included examples from England, the US and Europe, but he himself brought up examples from his country, Tonga. For instance, he brought to class and presented a manual that he had developed in concert with AusAid consultants in Tonga. His comments suggest that he does not wait to be included in the examples given, but he takes the initiative and includes his own perspective himself. This is just one instance where he demonstrates his use of independent and critical thinking skills to broaden the perspective of the other students and the lecturer in class. His responses support the argument in this study that international students want their voices heard in the tertiary classroom, something that is sometimes refuted in the literature (Barker et. al, 1991; Bradley & Bradley, 1984).

As previously reported in Chapter Six on the lecturers’ views about the purpose of tertiary study, they all stated that they ask students for, as well as give examples of, different perspectives to the same issue. Salman, Katerina, Frank and Arslan deliberately ask students how their subject is treated in the students’ own country as a strategy to include the voices of all and for students to broaden their knowledge by learning from each other. Some of them described how they tell students stories of their own experiences, either in coming to Australia for the first time and the different kinds of experiences they have had as well as their experiences of different cultures and their ways of doing things to demonstrate a point. While Jo, Caroline and Mark were less clear about the inclusion of the students’ different cultural viewpoints, they still recognised the importance of giving examples that students can relate to for their overall understanding.
In subjects they liked, most students surveyed reported frequent use by lecturers of giving international examples.

![Figure 7.5: Lecturers' use of international examples in a subject they like](image1)

In subjects they disliked, most students reported little use of international examples.

![Figure 7.6: Lecturers' use of international examples in a subject they dislike](image2)

As indicated in the table below, this finding was statistically significant to the .0006.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Side</th>
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<tr>
<td>21.903</td>
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*Table 7.2: Statistically significant finding*
These statistics demonstrate that 60 per cent of local and international students like subjects where the lecturer gives international examples often. They are supported by 75 per cent of local students and 51 per cent of international students who indicated not being given international examples in a subject they disliked. Of significance to the study is the higher percentage of responses given by the local students than international students to lecturers never giving international examples in a subject they disliked. It suggests that they like subjects where the lecturer gives international examples. Although giving international examples is not something readily found in the literature, it is of interest as it is a strategy that promotes an inclusive classroom, benefiting both international and local students’ thinking.

Summary

Using examples from different cultural contexts goes to the heart of creating an inclusive classroom and links a critical pedagogy with the inclusion of both international and local students’ perspectives to the same issue (Alcock & Alcock, 1997). This link of using the different perspectives of both students and lecturers with the use of a critical pedagogy, then, recasts students who are sometimes seen to be “the problem” to being a valuable resource for the learning development of all, a key argument of this study. International students’ expertise specific to different cultural contexts is not silenced. Instead, the students and lecturers at the focus of this study agreed that giving space and voice to the different perspectives students have on an issue has an important part to play in the development of their intellectual capital, in particular their critical learning skills. Their responses suggested that inclusion of different perspectives and experiences is embedded in some lecturers’ teaching practice and curriculum, something the literature points to as being essential to realise the aims of internationalisation of higher education (Knight & de Wit, 1995; Rizvi & Wlash, 1998).

7.6 Effectiveness of teaching strategies

You are still captivated about what the person thinks. Like for example
PS. He’s basically a stand-up comedian. He is so good at what he does. I
mean, he knows his work backwards. He involves his own personal experiences in all lectures... he keeps the class interesting. (Harish I)

Lecturers, who include their own personal experiences as well as having a deep knowledge of their subject and a sense of humour, were reported on positively by the students interviewed. Harish’s comment above is indicative of what the others said about what makes lectures interesting. Although most of their lectures are not interactive, some of the lecturers’ personality and presentation skills were such that the students maintained a strong level of interest throughout the lecture, which stimulated their thinking. Nikolai weighed up possibilities for interest in lectures, saying:

_I don’t know how he does it but maybe it’s just his personality... there are quite a few lectures that are not interactive. Very seldom have the opportunity to ask a question or if he does, he’s not really expecting an answer, but it’s still interesting._ (Nikolai I)

His comment suggests that there are one-directional lectures with rhetorical questions asked that he nevertheless found interesting because of the lecturer’s personality.

Eli (L) also suggested that it was the way a lecturer delivered a lecture and their personality and idiosyncrasies that stood out. She talked about one lecturer who interspersed his lecture notes with references to other topical issues, so that she commented, laughing, that it made her think about what she copies down. Her response suggests that she does make notes with understanding (unlike the comments made earlier about note taking) and that this lecturer is aware of some students’ tendency to copy everything down, without paying attention to or thinking about what it is they are writing, which is something the lecturers interviewed did not elaborate on.

Sofia (L) and Candy (L), too, commented on the need for lecturers to have some charisma, show interest in the subject and have a sense of humour. They said:
Candy (L): Charismatic. I think that’s very important that someone has some charisma. I mean, if you’ve got someone who has no presence then the lecture has no presence. I have very little respect for people with no presence.

Sofia (L): And also, you can tell if they’re interested in the subject too. Like if they’re just there because they have to get through this subject for this week. It’s like if they’re bored, you get even more bored because you know nothing about it anyway, so there’s nothing there to hold your interest.

Candy gave an example of what she meant by lecturers with some presence. Unlike Harish’s and Nikolai’s experiences of lectures with no interaction and rhetorical questions, Candy described one lecturer who asked a question and if a student thought (s)he knew the answer, (s)he had to run down the steep decline of the lecture hall and tell the lecturer the answer. If it was correct, he gave them a mintie (a peppermint sweet), which led to this activity being described as “Minties Moments”. Another gives students a break after twenty minutes and puts on different kinds of music in order for them to refocus their concentration. These teaching strategies were discussed by the lecturer interviewees and suggest that they have thought of ways to maintain students’ interest to stimulate their learning. They shift the attention away from themselves and on to the students.

Another aspect to what the students saw as lecturers being effective in class was the use of particular strategies to impose discipline in the class. The international students were particularly frustrated when lecturers did not impose discipline and allowed students to talk while they were giving a lecture. Nikolai and Harish, for example, said they wanted the lecturer to exercise their authority over those who talk/misbehave in class. The two made an interesting use of the pronouns ‘they’, ‘we’ and ‘I’, when commenting on a point, beginning with a distancing use of ‘they go’ ‘they want’ to the personalising ‘we pay’ to the individualising ‘I want’. Their comments suggest that they include themselves in this argument. Nikolai said:

*Because people like me and Harish want to learn. They go to university because they want to learn something and well, we pay a lot of money for it. People sitting at the back talking are distracting, so I am not getting*
the content of the lecture well enough and the lecturer wants to give a lecture and I want to take it and the people at the back are interrupting.

Per and Soane (I) also specifically brought up what they described as the noisy, immature behaviour of students, particularly local students, in lectures. Their comments suggest that they want the lecturers to use their authority to establish a conducive learning context. The need for lecturers to establish their authority in the classroom, although their approach described here is one-directional and not a dialogic method of teaching, is another key concept of a critical pedagogy and is discussed in Chapter Three.

Other students, however, commented on the lack of compelling teaching strategies to maintain students’ interest and concentration. For instance, Eli (L) found that a lot of students do not pay attention in lectures because of the length of the lecture - two hours - and the teaching technique, such as, lecturers continuously going through overheads without breaks. She stated she did not learn or remember much and that the style of presentation sent most students to sleep. The organisational ability of lecturers, or lack thereof, was mentioned several times with both international and local students commenting that it was hard to concentrate in a lecture for a full two hours, without a break.

Some students commented that a lack of teacher training may be the reason for the perceived poor teaching skills of some lecturers. Candy (L) and Jane (L) stated that they believed some lecturers had not had any training in teaching and lecturing and, despite being brilliant in their knowledge of the content, they were limited in strategies to convey that knowledge. Jane commented:

This is said too much as a general rule but I do think it’s true that some lecturers are academics primarily, not teachers and so they might be extremely intelligent ... but they have no way of getting that information to you. You look at teachers, they go to teachers college and they do a degree in teaching so they’ve got the message behind it, but often the lecturers are just postgrad. students that are researching in that topic. They’re not actually taught how to give that information across so they’re just up there. They’re lecturing what they know, but they’ve never been taught how to teach this information. (Jane L)
Her response suggests she has experienced lecturers imparting knowledge in a one-way direction without particular strategies to help students’ understanding. Other students made similar comments. For instance, in Tonja’s earlier comment, her use of words such as ‘flash on the screen’ and ‘spit out information’ suggests lecturers using technical equipment that may not be very helpful for some students’ understanding. Her comments suggest too that some lecturers are trying to cover a lot of material very fast and superficially. What can be inferred from her response is that copying down notes is a poor substitute for what she perceives to be teaching, ie involving the class, as she consistently indicated. There is also the idea that the lecturer is not able to help students with their learning as there are too many of them in the lecture for them to be aware of each individual’s needs. In other comments, she claimed that some lecturers are unclear about their teaching objectives. She said the objectives of the lecture were not made clear, either implicitly or explicitly. She argued that a lot of lecturers were there because they were paid to be, rather than for the love of teaching.

On this issue of teaching skill and teaching strategy, three local and three international students responded to the open-ended question 11 on the survey that they do not enjoy what they consider to be unclear lectures where the lecturers give unclear explanations and are ‘bad in communication’.

_Sometimes, lecturers don’t make much sense! (IF 40)_

_Continual copying off overheads without thorough explanation. (No 37 LF)_

The lecturers themselves brought up their frustration at having had no teacher training or not having the time to establish collegial contexts where they can share ideas and expertise in their teaching with colleagues. Lack of time also impacted on their ability to plan lessons as they would like. They also brought up the difficulty they have of tailoring their teaching to the diverse range of ability/experience levels in large classes. Nevertheless, their description of the kinds of strategies and activities they use suggest they have considered ways to stimulate the learning of students and to create an inclusive classroom where different opinions and perspectives are fostered and promoted.
The lecturers’ responses about the teaching strategies they use in lectures correspond with the students’ reports about how they like lecturers to teach in lectures. They talked about making use of different resources, such as giving music breaks, showing videos and slides, and giving PowerPoint presentations to interest students. Some of them discussed specific strategies that they use to involve students, such as role-plays and simulations. Peter described his "Minties Moments" activity just as the students did. Arslan talked about how he asks several students for a recap of the previous lecture that is written up in point form on an overhead. He also asks them to form mini groups and pool ideas with a reporter elected to write up the best ones on the white board in front of the lecture. He specifically mentioned that he tries to ensure that students understand what it is he is explaining as, he noted, the lectures are for the students’ benefit, not for him.

Frank explained using different strategies to actively involve the students, such as a round robin technique where everybody is expected to respond. He moves around the lecture theatre and up the aisles, indicating with his arms, eyes and a nod of the head to students to answer his questions, as noted in my observations of his classes. He described how he does not like the term “lecturer” as it implies ‘one-directional communication’ and ‘the students might as well watch a television set’.

Salman, like Peter and Arslan, explained how he tries to talk in lectures in an understandable way about complex issues. He uses news articles that present similar issues as the more difficult readings he gives to his postgraduate classes, so that the students are exposed to different perspectives. He described how he sets up students in groups of six acting out a situation so that they can understand a particular process he is trying to teach. Sometimes, he asks for two alternative perspectives, for and against, and in smaller classes, he structures the class to give him four advantages and then turns the argument around to ask for four disadvantages.

Other lecturers said they felt constrained by the size of their classes in terms of giving an interactive lecture. Nevertheless, lecturers, like Katerina, Martin and Paul, described how they model different positions that can be taken, exposing the
industrial, political and social implications and significance of the information they impart. Only Mark did not indicate that he uses any particular strategies to foster critical learning skills in students. Both he and Jo said they considered lectures to be one-directional, where students take down key points from overheads and where they are provided with guidance for exams.

**Summary**

The views expressed indicate that the majority of the lecturers, who agreed to be at the focus of this study, employ a variety of teaching strategies in their lectures to help students understand the key concepts and their application, in particular to view issues from multiple perspectives. The strategies they described encourage students to engage with the content and sometimes, with each other. They also promote the development of their critical thinking skills in seeing the issues from multiple perspectives as well as noting the power issues involved. Instead of viewing the cultural diversity in their classes as “the problem”, the majority of these lecturers make use of the different perspectives to broaden students’ thinking and understanding of the issue.

The strategies they described coincide with the views of the students about what makes a lecture interesting. Challenging the theory presented in the textbook and seeing its application in practice as well as discussing a lot of different examples ties in with both the students’ and the lecturers’ views about the purpose of a tertiary education. These findings support some recent studies that contend that students want to be engaged in their learning and to see issues from multiple perspectives, and not be spoon-fed information to be reproduced in assessment tasks (McKay & Kember, 1997).

However, there was an obvious absence of reference to note taking by most of the lecturers. It was not clear whether they were aware of the perceived need of students to take notes or whether the students were describing lectures other than those of the lecturers at the focus of this study. Note taking was seen by the students to be a
necessary, but usually problematic teaching and learning tool, mainly because of the lack of time to think about and understand what it is they are copying down. This finding also supports data presented in the previous chapter where students have indicated that they want to develop and use their critical and independent thinking skills rather than reproduce content given to them in a one-way transmission. These findings are further explored in the next chapter, which focuses on the students' and lecturers' views about interactive, student-centred teaching and learning contexts.
Chapter Eight

8 Interactive, student-centred learning

It's where we sit down and discuss questions and I have a chance to see other people as well. Getting to know other people. Studying the country and the customs. We really have to interact and have an exchange of ideas. (Li-Chin I)

Just be patient for international students like to speak up! (an international female participant in the survey)

The international and local students agreed that student-centred, interactive contexts, where they have opportunities to share their opinions from different perspectives, including different cultural perspectives, promote the development of their critical thinking skills, a key aim of a tertiary education as espoused by the University and the lecturer interviewees. Rather than seeing the different cultural perspectives of students as a deficit or something different to the “norm”- the dominant Australian group of students (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Beasley & Pearson, 1996), - the students reported that exchanging ideas from different perspectives broadens their understanding of a subject. The sense of self and self-confidence is boosted, too, for both international and local students.

The students had strong opinions about wanting to voice their ideas in class discussion and assignments, and they referred to particular strategies that helped them achieve this, which are discussed in this chapter. The students reported that situations, where dialogue is encouraged among international and local students and among students and their lecturers, promote a deep understanding of the topic under discussion. One argument sometimes mounted against revising curricula and teaching practice for culturally diverse classrooms is that “standards” – presumably academic standards – will lower (Brunet, 1993; Phillips, 1994). This group of students, however, reported positively on strategies that are inclusive of student voice, both international and local, something that they pointed to as being mutually
Students' abilities to voice their opinions, however, depended on a number of interlinking factors, some related to the physical lay-out of the room and the number of students in the class, others related to the lecturers' teaching strategies and attitudes. These, they reported, either gave them a sense of inclusion and recognition of individual value, boosting their self-confidence, or left them with a sense of marginalisation and exclusion. The international students, especially, stated that there was a tacit assumption on the part of some lecturers that international students do not wish to speak up and participate in class activities and discussion. However, both international and local students cited particular examples of seemingly being overlooked or ignored by lecturers in class discussion. They also recognised strategies that some lecturers use that help them give voice to their perspectives about the topic under discussion. In sum, students reported that lecturers can create a context of inclusion, one that celebrates cultural diversity, instead of silencing student voices, by including different cultural perspectives of students. Inclusion occurs via dialogue, selection of topics, the physical layout of the room, and a range of classroom strategies.

### 8.1 A context of inclusion

*The tutor remembered all our names. She's asking us by name and that's very good. Makes us participate more. I have noticed this from the last three tutorials that she noticed that three Asian students never spoke up so she keeps telling them, "This time you answer this", and then she points to a girl and makes us really feel that we are in the classroom.*

(Soane I)

One simple strategy that the students reported helped them voice their opinions was lecturers inviting them by name to enter into dialogue with each other. Lecturers knowing and referring to students by name plays a crucial part in fostering and promoting participation in class discussion and activities for both international and local students. This seemingly simple point is symbolic of many of the underlying
concerns of intercultural communication, raising questions of identity and crossing barriers to facilitate dialogue among international and local students to their mutual benefit. Importantly, by asking students for their cultural perspective, their identity as international students is recognised and valued rather than being seen, and sometimes silenced, as different and the “other”.

The students reported that when a lecturer asks individual students, and asks them by name for their opinion, they feel their individual perspective is valued and recognised. It demonstrates to them, they said, that there is the expectation that they, the students, will have their own opinion that is valid. Their voice and experience are then seen as legitimate sites of inquiry by themselves, the other students and the lecturer. Three lecturers interviewed, however, reported deliberately not asking students and international students, in particular, for their opinions, as they were afraid of embarrassing them or “putting them on the spot”. Implied in their responses is that students, and international students specifically, may have difficulty in responding, and that therefore they do not want to be asked, a point the students at the focus of this study refuted.

In contrast, the students made a particular point about wanting lecturers to direct questions to them specifically. Nikolai (I), for example, added that when a tutor directs questions to him about something fairly simple at first, he can build up his confidence to the point where he will volunteer contributions himself. He responded:

R: Would it help you if they actually asked you?

Nikolai (I): Yes it would, but maybe something easy, something that wouldn’t require me to go into a very complicated sort of discussion, at least at the beginning. Then, when I feel more relaxed, I would probably speak up myself. Sometimes, they have to actually make people speak, for example direct the question to this particular person like what do you think about... not just anyone in the tutorial who’s listening, but this particular person. The person might feel awkward or embarrassed the first time, but the second time, it will be easier and easier.
Soane (I) agreed:

*With another tutor if she wants a question to be answered, she looks at the list and says, “OK, Soane answer this question.”* I like it that way because we want to put up our ideas. We’ve got this thing in our minds but to present is the hardest thing.

Li-Chin (I) added:

*Sometimes the tutor notices that some Asian students are pretty quiet and so they would give them a chance to talk... Maybe they ask them, “What do you think?” or looking into their eyes, body language.*

Underpinning their responses is their appreciation of lecturers inviting students to contribute and including them in the discussion. Sofia (L) made similar comments. She also recognised that lecturers who know the names of students give accurate participation marks. She stated:

*I think it helps if the tutor knows people’s names because I’ve been asked twice in the last two weeks what my name was and that’s thoroughly off-putting because you’ve been in the class for the last twelve weeks. I know this is pretty extreme but my Contract teacher took pictures of us all and every week, she’d pull it out while we are doing questions and then test us all. Like it sounds pretty bizarre but when you have to get a participation mark, at least you know she knows who you are and she’d call on people if she knew they weren’t talking and I think that helps. (Sofia L)*

Other students who brought up assessment marks for participation, including Millie (I), Li-Chin (I) and Candy (L), said they were encouraged to give their opinions because of participation requirements for assessment, and this they found to be quite ‘OK’.

Some, like Jane (L), Candy (L), Sofia (L), Ali (I) and Lorna (I), reported that knowing other students in the class - at least their names - makes them feel more comfortable in class, boosting their confidence which helps them to speak up and interact. Lorna explained:
When I first enter the university going to my first tutorial, I feel really nervous because I don’t know anybody in the class, but a few years later I feel more confident because I have seen these people around me. Maybe we do the course before [a previous subject] and then we meet each other in the same tutorial, so I’m more confident, more comfortable to sit in the tutorial. (Lorna I)

Per (I) and Li-Chin (I) discussed this issue in terms of crossing barriers and by making the effort to introduce themselves to the others in the class, they noted feeling a sense of unity and cohesion within the class.

Another strategy to promote an inclusive classroom was for lecturers to invite students to give their perspective about an issue and to refer to international examples. Nikolai (I), Harish (I) and Tonja (L) debated together:

*I think when a lecturer asks a person, “OK you are from Taiwan. You’re from Russia” I think that’s a bit of a cop out. Why can’t they just ask, “What’s your opinion?” instead of using that screen of their culture because it seems a fake. I think it’s patronising. Oh well what do you do in Taiwan as if they’re different from our culture. (Tonja L)*

Nikolai disagreed with her, replying:

*Well, they are different. They ought to bring out that difference in the culture. That’s why he targets people and what more better chance to actually ask people of that culture which is something they are very familiar with.*

Nikolai’s response corroborates his earlier comment about being asked to talk about something with which he is familiar, in this case, something to do with his country. His response also indicates that he sees having a culturally diverse classroom as an advantage to learn first hand about cultural differences. Bringing up examples from other countries was a strategy that the students enjoyed, because it helped with their learning, while also creating an inclusive classroom. Ali pointed out that by including perspectives from other countries, including his own, Pakistan, made the subject under discussion more relevant for him than if the discussion focussed only on an Australian context.
These ideas recur in students’ statements and indicate the importance students attach to including examples from different cultural perspectives in class discussion. Creating a context where students act as a resource to broaden the perspectives of all is a strategy that some of the lecturers referred to as well. This finding is one not widely acknowledged in the literature.

International students, Ali, Lorna, Millie, Elaine and Soane, discussed other strategies that they themselves use to boost their confidence in participating in class so they can feel included in the discussion; for example, preparing material or questions before class. Their strategies indicate an independent learning approach, taking the initiative and responsibility for their learning.

Having time in class to prepare responses also helped students to contribute. Soane (I), for example, described how, in one subject, students have to discuss a question and jot down the group’s ideas. He said:

*We have a big group like seventy, eighty people and you can’t even say anything with a big group but when you present in a group of five or six, I get a chance to contribute. Yes and also two people in our group were doing Masters and they really helped us with the concepts of the subject and they really helped us to understand. The group was mixed myself, one Indonesian guy, two Australians, and one girl from Fiji. (Soane I)*

Tonja (L), Jane (L) and Harish (I) suggested that lecturers can help students to be included in the discussion by showing confidence in them. Tonja stated:

*...just giving them that confidence, giving them the opportunity to build up their confidence, their ability and showing them that you have that confidence in them.*

Harish (I) elaborated:

*Yes, it would be the same. Providing that encouragement for the students to get into class and speak and voice your own opinions, whatever it is as long as you get that out of your system, out of your shell.*
Jane (L) added:

So, it's been really good that we've been able to speak up and talk and give our opinion and things. It's helped my development.

The tutor’s strengths in encouraging participation and interaction were also recognised by local students Eli, Candy and Jane. Jane explained:

I think it’s got an awful lot to do with how the tutor or the demonstrator runs the practicums or the tutorials, even the lectures and also the shape of the lecture theatre. I think it also affects how you know people (Ali (l) and Lorna (l) mmm in agreement) and whether there is time within the class to interact with the other students. Things like that. (Jane L)

Jane’s comment coincides with Tonja’s later comment about how important they see that it is for the lecturer to use strategies, including the seating and set up of the room, to encourage interaction and a sense of inclusion. Issues of time and seating arrangements are important considerations about expectations and creating a context where students see that it is appropriate to give their opinions (Biggs, 1997).

The following bar charts reveal that nearly identical percentages of international and local students reported a high frequency of having an opportunity to give their opinions and feeling able to ask questions in a subject they like. Over 75 per cent of both international and local students reported “often” or “a lot” for giving opinions, and 85 per cent of both reported similarly on being able to ask questions in a subject they like.
These findings support those of the interviewees that both international and local students like learning and teaching contexts where they have the opportunity to give their own opinions and ask questions. Of interest to the study are the nearly identically high responses of international and local students. These findings refute those in the literature which persist with the conception of international students as passive, silent learners and as having different learning styles from local students (Barker et al. 1991; Bradley & Bradley, 1984; Samuleowicz, 1987).

Of the 31 responses from the international students who wrote comments on survey question 10 that they like an interactive, experiential context, there were five who specifically noted liking subjects where there was discussion. Some elaborated that
they felt they could then voice their ideas and build their confidence to participate in debates and presentations.

*Participation is useful, share idea. (IM 1)*

*Speak up in class. It can give me experience and confidence in doing other presentation. (IF 72)*

*Oral presentation because I need it to persuade someone at business in the future. (IM 73)*

*Debating in class. (IM 67)*

*Presentation skills. I have opportunity to talk before the people (IF 68)*

Of the 50 responses from local students who wrote comments indicating that they like an interactive learning context, there were six who highlighted learning from discussion, debates and presentations.

*Discussion of issues, active debate, less formal, use of questioning - I tend to recall a heated debate than a lecture. (LF 28)*

*Discussions, feedback (to reinforce key concepts); practical examples from teacher and follow through with practical examples of my own. (LF 94)*

These findings support the views of those in the literature who argue that the use of particular teaching and learning strategies can foster and promote interaction and discussion and that lecturers should not assume international students do not want to participate in class discussion (Chalmers & Volet, 1997; Renshaw & Volet, 1995). In addition, the students pointed out the important role lecturers can take in valuing and using the cultural capital students bring to the tertiary classroom as a resource, and that this strategy broadens the perspectives of all, providing critical and intercultural learning opportunities (Volet & Ang, 1998).
8.2 A context of exclusion

While the students seemed very much aware of lecturers’ strategies and the approaches that created an inclusive context where they felt confident in giving their opinions, they seemed just as aware about what made them feel excluded from the discussion. International students, especially, described how they feel that they are sometimes not given enough time to work out what it is they want to say or they perceived that they were overlooked because of their appearance. They reported having the impression that their opinions were not being sought by the lecturers. This view is corroborated by some of the lecturer interviewees, who said that they do not seek out the opinions of international students for fear of embarrassing them.

International students reported that language barriers, including lecturers and students speaking fast, using slang and referring to unfamiliar Australian examples, increased their sense of exclusion.

The international students seemed to be saying that they experience being disadvantaged because some students and lecturers do not take their communication needs into account. However, local students also shared similar perceptions of being ignored by some lecturers who allow a select few to dominate the discussion. They both commented on lecturers focussing on a few selected students who dominate the discussion to their marginalisation or exclusion. Sofia (L) explained:

*There’s about four people she knows the names of and who talk a lot and who are very intelligent, who go to the library a lot and everything else, so she’ll call on those people constantly... I find that really frustrating that she really concentrates on a few people... Yesterday, she asked me to be more specific about something and I was trying to get my mind around it, but then someone else will come up with it. Then she starts talking to him so that once that happens, you don’t feel like talking any more, ‘cause it’s like I’m not good enough my contribution to class. (Sofia L)*

The sense of exclusion seemed to diminish Sofia’s self-confidence. This is also expressed in her perception that the lecturer only knows the names of a select few.
She expressed that it was up to the lecturer to make the effort to learn everyone’s name, commenting, ‘Some don’t even bother to learn our names’.

**Critical incident report Monday 10.30 Room 19:**

20 students sitting in a small seminar room with desks arranged in a circle

The students were given a topic by the tutor to debate the pros and cons in groups of four or five, with whoever was sitting next to them. After about ten minutes, the tutor asked them to sit back in their original places and posed some questions to the class. There were two mature-aged women students who consistently led the discussion. The tutor took down their points on the blackboard in front of the class but only after she had evaluated their responses. This sometimes meant that she changed the original response from the student quite dramatically. She used a brainstorming approach that seemed to elicit responses from the same small group of students. The three Pakistani women sitting in traditional dress did not volunteer to speak to the issue and neither were they invited to do so.

The above incident report is an example of how some students, in this case, local mature-age students, dominate the discussion with the implicit permission of the tutor, who did not invite the others to give their opinion. Jo was another tutor, who did not refer to strategies for including international students in class discussions with the implication that he does not specifically ask them for their opinion. He said that he had no particular strategies to promote class discussions and lamented the lack of teacher training at the University.

Millie, Lorna, Elaine and Soane, and other international students had also experienced Australian students dominating the discussion. They said that unless the tutor asked them specifically by name, they did not get a chance to put their ideas forward. They also pointed out that some local students go off the topic to talk about local affairs about which they have no idea, which adds to their sense of exclusion. Nikolai (I) explained:
In tutorials, there are usually two or three people who always talk and everybody else would know this. Then again, there will be two or three people who would say nothing at all during the whole semester so I don’t know. Most of the tutors go the easy way. They communicate with the people who talk and just ignore the people who don’t talk. Sometimes, the people who don’t talk, it’s not because they are stupid but because they are shy. Instead of helping them speak out, the lecturers and tutors go the easy way and just focus on the people participating. So they appeal to people who participate. (Nikolai I)

Underpinning his response is the perception that some lecturers do not actively include all students in discussions. Nikolai discussed further:

Back in my first year in Tasmania, I didn’t know. I didn’t feel that my English was good enough to speak out in tutorials so I just kept quiet, and the tutor never actually asked me what I thought about the subject matter of discussion. (Nikolai I)

Li-Chin (I) agreed with Nikolai. He said:

Li-Chin (I): And you’re thinking they are only talking with those who talk and talk. I think the lecturer is biased.

R: How do you mean biased?

Li-Chin (I): Like he says. The lecturer only speaks with the people who speak out. Yes Yes maybe... they go to that person because sometimes I understand that our accent is different. We tend to speak slowly and probably the tutor is thinking, we are slow thinkers trying to think word for word to get across the point. That’s how I experience. Some of my friends have told me the same experience.

R: What they don’t get a chance to speak up?

Li-Chin (I): Yes, like the tutor won’t understand.

They reported perceiving some lecturers to be making negative assumptions about them as international students and their ability and willingness to make a contribution. The point this group of international students makes consistently is that they want the opportunity to give their views in a non-threatening context. Talking about what is familiar to them and having the time to work out what they want to say are just two strategies they reported that help them to speak up in class discussions.
Eli (L) claimed that some lecturers do not realise how embarrassing it is when they ask a student to repeat their point because they have not understood them. The point about the tutor not understanding what they are saying is an issue that one lecturer interviewee, Caroline, brought up. She said it was one of the reasons she does not ask the international students in her classes for their opinion, as she is afraid she will not understand what it is they are saying because of their accents. Her response indicates that she has not considered strategies to overcome this problem.

Both Lorna (I) and Elaine (I) agreed with the above statements and added that they perceived that because of their appearance, some lecturers do not ask for their opinion. To them, the lecturers appeared to ask only the Australian students. Elaine said:

*Because sometimes the Australians their first language is English, the tutor will just ask them how they think, but never ask an Asian girl.*

The issue of appearances and identity resurfaces where Harish and Nikolai describe some of the assumptions made about them because of their appearance. For example, Harish described how a lecturer had singled him out in a lecture and made a comparison between him and a blond-haired girl sitting behind him. The lecturer told the class that the subject under discussion would be handled differently by Harish than by the girl sitting behind him because his first language is not English. Harish concluded that the lecturer had made the assumption about his language skills because of his skin colour. In fact, his first language is English and the girl’s was Swedish. Nikolai told a story about how, on his arrival to lecture for the first time, he was ushered on to the stage in front of a large audience and introduced as the Sales Representative from a bank that the class had been expecting. He had to explain in his then poor English that he was, in fact, a student from Russia. He concluded that because of his formal attire of suit and briefcase, the appropriate attire at his former Russian institution, they had assumed him to be the businessman expected.

Timing was a particular issue for some that affected their ability to engage in class discussion. Elaine (I), Lorna (I) and Millie (I) reported that they want to be given
enough time to translate their answers from Chinese to English. They often found that by the time they had done the translation of what they wanted to say, the discussion had moved on to another topic. Elaine (I) explained:

I think it's very hard because my English is not fluent and some Australians speak very fast and I can't be clear about what it is they are saying. Sometimes if the lecturer asks some questions and I know the answer, I have to work very fast to talk. If I wait for the others to speak, then I can't have the opportunity to speak out. (Elaine I)

Her response suggests that, sometimes, local students do not allow her time to voice her opinion and that she has to break into the discussion on her own. The other international students also commented on local students speaking fast and using slang that impedes their ability to understand what is being discussed. Having the time to prepare answers before having to respond, as mentioned previously, was a key strategy that helped students understand the language needed to be able to join in the discussion. Language difficulty was an issue not confined to the international students. The local students also commented on the difficulty they have in understanding the academic English used in some readings, for example and they, too, expressed a need to prepare beforehand in order to be able to join in the discussion.

Tonja (L) claimed that some lecturers do not allow enough time for discussion, something to which some of the others also alluded. Her responses also suggest that some lecturers have structured their class where they present a lot of content rather than encourage student voice. She added that some lecturers exploited students' international status. She said:

Some lecturers would encourage (participation), some wouldn't because we're always strapped for time and they just want to power on through the lecture. I haven't seen them use many effective teaching strategies. That's the obvious difference. They're international students and they try to profit from that but after a while it wears a bit thin. I don't think lecturers have the time or the initiative to do that. A lot of them, from my understanding, are underpaid and the fact that they are giving us a
lecture is enough. I don’t think that they really feel that they should do any more. (Tonja L)

She was critical of the lecturers’ interest in or ability to include all their students in discussions, and she stated that some had no genuine interest in students’ opinions.

Survey responses indicate that students like subjects, where there is time given for discussion. Approximately 70 per cent of both local and international students who responded noted frequent occurrence of having time for discussion in a subject they like. Only three per cent of local and eight per cent of international students responded as never having time for discussion in a subject they like.

![Figure 8.3: Time given for discussion in a subject they like](image)

As indicated in the table below, this finding was statistically significant to the .0468.

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Table 8.1: Statistically significant finding

It was not just time for discussion and being called on that students noted. Some reported on the structure of some classes that did not encourage student voice. For example, Eli (L) described one of her classes thus:
The tutor just walks around to each individual person and just asks someone, "Have you done the homework, can you tell me what this is?" There's not a lot of participation in just one question. Like you don't get information for all the questions. It's more like each one of us would give the information. (Eli L)

In one of Ali's (I) and Per's (I) subjects, the tutor asked someone to read a passage and then they were supposed to discuss issues. However, nobody spoke up, and the tutor was left to make his own points. In another class, the tutor left the room leaving the students to discuss the issues themselves, so they felt the tutor had little commitment to the subject, and he 'couldn't be bothered' to initiate discussion. My observations of these classes support their view.

Critical incident report Wednesday 12.30 Room 19:1030
Six local, four international students sitting at desks in a semicircle with the tutor at the head of the table

Everyone was silently reading as I entered the room. The tutor was also reading a copy that he had marked up, highlighting the points he wanted to make. He started reading aloud and broke off, 'Can anyone answer this question?' He looked around the room at each class member but no one spoke so he answered the question himself. 'Can anyone see a problem with this? I'll give you a hint.' But no one answered and again, he responded himself.

He asked questions that often required a yes/no answer. When he asked the class in general for responses, the students looked away or down, avoiding eye contact, shifting in their seats uneasily until he answered the questions himself.

In the class described above, the students did not seem to know each other, an observation substantiated by the participants in the study. The tutor did not use any of their names either, which may suggest that he does not know them or is not confident in remembering them. He seemed unfamiliar with particular teaching strategies to encourage student participation in class discussion, a point he confirmed. Knowing
and using students’ names as well as directing questions to individuals are two strategies that the students reported favourably on as helping them to be included in the discussion.

Another key issue for both international and local students, such as Sofia (L), Jane (L) Per (I) and Ali (I) was when lecturers pointed out that they had given the “wrong” answer. They reported that this destroyed their confidence to the point that they did not volunteer opinions again. Eli (L) also stated that some lecturers did not seem to realise how ‘embarrassing’ it can be when they indicated that it was the wrong answer. She also explained that she did not like being ‘confronted’ with giving an answer. Jane (L) reported staying quiet in some classes because she was afraid of saying something stupid, commenting:

*I don’t say anything because I’m scared. I guess I am afraid of failure and also of saying really dumb things.*

Tonja (L) described her frustration when the lecturer did not explain to her where she had gone wrong. Rather than students having a discussion about issues from different perspectives, her description indicates that there were right and wrong answers.

*I just feel like I was in an assembly line, you know. Go in, take notes, go out, go home and spend hours trying to do these rotten activities. Like these questions. Then go to the tutorial and try and the tutorial was really just to correct them. See if you got them wrong or right. Not really to explain to you why they were wrong. (Tonja L)*

She continued in her assessment about lecturers wanting students to think in a particular way, to adopt their way of thinking about an issue, commenting:

*...sometimes you really think that the lecturers want you to adopt their mode of thinking and I think it all boils down to the fact that they are the expert and you're just a student and they want to disciple us. That's how it feels sometimes. They want to make us into disciples. It's true!* (Tonja L)
The idea of lecturers indicating to students that their answers are “wrong” or “stupid”, and even encouraging them to think along the same lines as they do, is quite the opposite to the use of a critical pedagogy. Underpinning this approach to students is the idea of the lecturer having the one correct answer, not viewing issues from multiple perspectives, and certainly not entering into a dialogue of possibilities, as critical theorists promote.

Summary

The international and local students reported that they want to voice their opinions, and they recognised particular strategies that lecturers employ to help them to participate, including being specifically asked by name to give a perspective and being given enough time to formulate a response. The international students particularly appreciated having the opportunity to relate issues to their own cultural background and to speak about what was familiar to them, which boosted their confidence to speak up and interact. All their responses indicated that they enjoy sharing different perspectives with each other, as it helped with their learning, in particular broadening their outlook and understanding of a topic, a point to which they consistently refer. However, they reported similar perceptions that some students dominate discussion while lecturers seemingly ignore other students, (such as the students interviewed), both of which contributed to their sense of exclusion (and see Mullins et al., 1995). Their responses suggest that lecturers who focus on creating an inclusive context, where students have opportunities to give their opinions and where it is considered appropriate to do so, will benefit all students, both international and local (Biggs, 1997).

8.3 The lecturers’ views on interactive, student-centred learning

If the students have some background in different cultures, I use the students as a resource and I ask them to tell us about their experiences and how the subject is treated differently in different countries. (Arslan)
Rather than viewing the cultural diversity of their classes as a deficit (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991) or even denying the impact of international students on their teaching style and the curricula (Brown & Atkins, 1988), the majority of the ten lecturers interviewed integrated an intercultural dimension into their curriculum and teaching approaches. They discussed a variety of different strategies and activities they have developed to encourage student interaction and dialogue in class. In particular, they talked about using student experience, including that of international students, as a resource to promote the development of students’ critical thinking skills by exchanging opinions and modelling different ways of viewing an issue. Rather than seeing international students as different and deficit to the dominant group, their ways of thinking and learning are valued as legitimate sites of inquiry.

The lecturers talked about giving examples and asking students for examples of the familiar, of something that the students can relate to, whether they be from Australia, Iran or Sweden, to explore the issues from different cultural viewpoints. They also discussed encouraging students to see wider implications – such as the social, historical and power issues, as discussed in Chapter Six. Only one lecturer’s description of international students in the classroom suggested that she saw them as being disadvantaged and different from the local students, mainly because of perceived language difficulties. Another described how she did not want to put either international or local students “on the spot” by asking individuals for responses. Jo did not refer to international students in his classes, although he did say that he thought by the end of the session, each student will have spoken up on an issue they find of particular interest to them.

The others elaborated on how they enter into a dialogue with students as well as encourage an exchange of perspectives in order to develop students’ critical thinking skills. Salman, for example, described how he asks students what they found strange on arrival in Australia. For him, he says, it is the banking practices here that he found and still finds ‘absolutely ridiculous’. He talks about his experiences living and working in other countries. He also includes Australian students by asking them whether they have visited a particular country and what they had found strange.
The lecturers gave numerous examples of how they try to relate concepts to something that students from all cultural backgrounds can understand, for instance, buying everyday products like shoes and shampoo or using Microsoft computer software. Salman gave the example of asking students about buying a can of Coke in New York and Tehran. Would the experience be similar or different, and then how would it be different? The lecturers described how they try to keep things on common ground so that whether the students are from Taiwan, India, Sweden or Australia, the students will be able to relate to the concept. In this way, they encourage students to see the familiar from multiple perspectives.

Most of the lecturers described how they expect students to speak up and give their opinions in class discussion. Frank, for example, explained that he does not ask rhetorical questions; he expects responses, and he does not point out when their answer is not correct, something that the students commented on specifically as encouraging them to contribute. He explained:

_I like to talk with students in the lectures and so I ask questions in the lectures and I think students feel pretty much that they can make a comment and they won't be put down if it's not correct._ (Frank)

He stated that, from the feedback he has received, both international and local students feel comfortable to contribute their opinions in his class. He noted that some students from different cultures may not be used to speaking up and are sometimes quiet to start with, but he notices that as the semester progresses, they speak up more and more, although, he says, he does not force anyone to.

**Critical incident report: Tuesday 14.30 second semester 1998**

40 (approximately) students sitting and talking with each other in rows in a medium-sized lecture theatre (150 - 200 seats)

_Frank, the lecturer stood at the front and seemed very relaxed and in a good mood as he often smiled, laughed, and told jokes with lots of hand and body movements. Even though he is high up the academic ladder and was conventionally dressed in suit and_
tie, students called him by his first name, which suggests an informal relationship between him and the students. He asked students questions and went up the aisles and, from his hand movements and a nod of the head, indicated to students if they could answer the question. And they did. Questions were knowledge focussed, for example, ‘Who can remember the SOLO campaign? What was that about?’ He also asked students to give insights as to how this campaign was marketed, making links with the theoretical diagram he had on the overhead. He told stories demonstrating how the concept relates in practice. He asked questions about how things are called here compared with the US, a strategy that may indicate to them that they have expert knowledge as well as him.

When a student answered, he would repeat what they had said with the tag ‘right’. In fact, he often used the word ‘right’. ‘This is what happens right’ with his voice rising. Sometimes, he asked a question while standing in the front. He made eye contact with individual students throughout the lecture theatre while waiting for a response. He always got one, sometimes with several people calling out. The first two rows were filled mostly with international students, including Millie, (one of my interviewees who had suggested that I attend the class), and they too often gave answers. In fact, the international students in the row behind me gave answers the most frequently.

By moving toward students, he managed to close the distance physically between himself and the students, which may be indicating to them he wanted and valued hearing their response. Being physically close also appeared to give students more confidence to respond than calling out answers across the divide of the lecture theatre. Repeating what the students said with the tag ‘right’ suggested to me legitimating students’ responses and an eagerness on his part for students to be following what he was saying.

These observations suggest that students felt a high degree of comfort in giving responses and opinions about the issues at hand. His strategies of moving toward students, looking at individuals and telling stories that the students can relate to also confirm how he himself described conducting his class.
Katerina also told stories about herself and how coming from England gave her the sense of ‘being a learner in Australian culture, and I talk about things that I don’t understand or that have taken me a long time to understand’. What she finds interesting too is that Australian students have a different history in relation to her subject so, she says, she is learning about her subject from another perspective. She explained:

*Katerina: I talk about being an outsider to that system and I am fairly deliberate about that because as the semester goes by, I am creating, as far as possible, a space for students who are not from Australia to make that part of their learning experience.*

R. How do you do that?

*Katerina: By making visible the ways in which it is part of my learning experience. I am creating, I hope, a space in which it is routine to consider your own position, and some of the assignments I set, you have to think about your own position as critic. I am asking students explicitly to look at their gender and cultural background and think about how that may influence their readings on the subject.*

However, Katerina expressed reservations about particular teaching strategies that others use to promote speaking up in class. She, like Salman who made similar comments, distinguishes between non-participating students and mentally alert and attentive students, a point referred to in some recent studies (Chalmers & Volet, 1997). She did say that, from time to time, she asks particular students by name for a response but moves fairly quickly if they appear not to be able to respond. Her comments referred to both local and international students, although she did specifically refer to international students when she discussed the setting up of a listserv for discussion purposes. Her concern not to embarrass students by waiting for a response is at odds with the desires of students, both local and international, who reported wanting more time to be able to think about their opinion. She said:

*I am wary of techniques that run the risk of appearing disrespectful to people, who are, in fact, good listeners. I am wary of some educational theory that makes teaching entertainment and I am particularly wary of that teacher as entertainer, learner as audience model. As a result, I am possibly too cautious in the classroom about what seems to me to run a bit close to party games, butchers paper and markers. I am particularly*
anxious not to patronise students or to put them into situations that they might find uncomfortable. I am aware that for some students speaking in public is so distressing as to be completely counter productive. I am not interested in forcing people to speak out. (Katerina)

Caroline also commented that she did not want to embarrass students or herself by asking specific students for a response. She did, however, talk about one class where the international students’ responses had been very interesting, and the local students had listened attentively to them. Her comment did not suggest the students engaging in dialogue with each other but rather the international students talking about an issue from their perspective, talking with her while the class listened. Her comment also indicated that this was a one-off occasion and not one that she had repeated, despite what she noted as significant student interest. She did not elaborate, so it was not clear why this was so.

Nine of the ten lecturers interviewed did, however, describe particular group activities they have designed to promote interaction among students, such as students sitting in a circle, doing a round robin, preparing role-plays, forming groups and pooling ideas, which are reported back to the class. These activities help students to get to know others in the class, as well as giving them time to work out what it is they want to say, something that the students reported as heightening their comfort zone in speaking up and exchanging ideas and perspectives. These strategies I observed in their classes. For example, in Arslan’s class, forming groups and pooling ideas provoked energetic discussion among students from diverse backgrounds, including Saudi Arabia, Germany, Pakistan, Hong Kong, the US and Taiwan.

Another strategy Katerina has developed to encourage students to interact with her and each other is to set up an electronic listserv. She explained that some students, both international and local, may not want to participate in class discussion, but they have the opportunity to express and voice their opinions with others in this forum. It has been a success, she stated. She has found that students keep in touch after the completion of their degrees, including international students on their return home. She talked about some international students responding to a comment or a criticism of something after class using this forum, which she finds ‘absolutely thrilling’
because she can keep track of where they are in their thinking and reading. She described this forum as having become a ‘student-led initiative’.

Caroline, Martin and Peter organise debates to promote interaction and student voice. Peter has structured his class where the students themselves have the responsibility for organising the debate. The Chair has the responsibility to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to speak. He commented that, for some students, speaking up may be ‘a very scary thing in a foreign language’, and so the student acting as Chair encourages students by specifically asking them for comment, ‘so that they don’t have to fight their way into the debate’. He appeared to be aware of the difficulty some students face in joining in the discussion. Asking students by name for comment was one strategy that the students themselves discussed as being particularly helpful for them to be included in class discussion. Structuring the class, where the activity is student-led, may also help foster interaction and participation in discussion and may be seen as a more conducive context that a lecturer-directed class because of the shift in power.

**Critical incident report Monday 5.30**

15 students, 7 international, 8 local ranging in age from 18-25 in a small lecture room (30 – 40 seats)

'Wait, wait until I have finished!' called out an international female student when another international student broke into the conversation with his opinion. Each member of the dissenters' team had time to comment, debating with each other, rationalising arguments, giving opinions, joking and laughing. They seemed to be very well prepared, with evidence of wider reading, giving examples. They acknowledged each other's ideas, 'mmm that's a good idea'. Some realised that they were talking more than others and the more vocal tried to hold back to give the others a chance to respond. The Chair commented, 'Please let some of the others speak!' and asked individuals specifically for their comments. Toward the end, the discussion was thrown open to the class and all of the students asked a question or gave an opinion. The Chair deliberately seemed to make sure that everyone had made a
comment by asking individuals for their opinion. The lecturer sat on the side, silent and waited until the Chair invited him to comment ten minutes before the end of class.

These observations corroborate Peter’s comments that students in his class are encouraged to give their opinions by having the opportunity to be well prepared before the debate. The Chair was also aware of the need to ensure that each class member had the space to be included in the discussion. These observations suggest also that international students in the class were confident enough to break into the discussion themselves, perhaps because they have been supported throughout the semester. In addition, it was a student-centred activity and there seemed a clear expectation that their opinions were sought. Their opinions were not evaluated as being wrong or right. They were all welcomed.

8.4 Asking “wrong” questions

While being told they have given the “wrong” answer, or even a stupid answer, was an issue of serious concern for the students, as evidenced in their comments above, only a few lecturers mentioned this point particularly. However, as reported previously, they did point out consistently that they want to encourage students to see issues from multiple perspectives rather than focussing on one “correct” view. Paul explained:

> I just try and get the students to ask as many questions as possible and I know that they don't ask questions because they are afraid of what they're asking. They're afraid they'll look stupid. So this is normal in my very first lesson I say no question is a stupid question and if you don't ask it, I'll just assume that you understand everything and I will steamroll ahead so you've got to ask that question. (Paul)

They reported that they judge students on their depth of argument, their ability to make a constructive argument using examples or evidence to support their position as well as their ways of thinking about alternatives, rather than focussing on whether their response is “right” or “wrong.”
Summary

The comments of this group of lecturers suggest they have developed strategies to promote a student-centred classroom where students are encouraged to share ideas and opinions. Some of them particularly referred to their use of international examples as a resource for the mutual benefit of both local and international students, a strategy the students commented on positively. Instead of seeing the cultural diversity of their classes as something different, or as a deficit, or even denying its existence, as some in the literature suggest (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991), this group of lecturers models their teaching strategies and curricula to include different perspectives, with the aim, they said, of developing students’ critical thinking skills.

While the majority of lecturers discussed particular strategies they use to promote class discussion, there was one lecturer who stated that she deliberately does not ask international students for their perspective because she is afraid of embarrassing them. She seemed to perceive that international students may have difficulty in responding or prefer not to give an opinion, a misconception that is comprehensively addressed in some recent studies (Biggs, 1992, 1997; Chalmers & Volet, 1997; McKay & Kember, 1997).

8.5 Students’ opinions about multicultural group work

People coming together and asking each other questions... 'cause if I sit with different people who have different beliefs you talk to them and you raise some questions. You kind of learn more 'cause you're not thinking from one perspective, You're thinking from all the perspectives from different people. (Ali I)

The international and local students agreed that group work in multicultural groups gives them different insights to the issue and provides them with critical learning opportunities. Unlike the findings of some studies (Mills, 1997; Volet & Ang, 1998), this group of students reported significant benefits of working in multicultural groups. Neither do their responses support the assertions of some that international students have difficulty in using problem solving and critical thinking skills or in exchanging
ideas with local and other international students (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Samuelowicz, 1987). In this study, local and international students interviewed reported that they learn more and gain a deeper understanding of the concepts working in groups than working by themselves. Furthermore, they said they enjoyed the opportunity of meeting students from different cultural backgrounds and exchanging opinions.

In the classroom, the students said they see each other as a valuable learning resource. Ali (I), for example, described how he learnt much more discussing issues with people from different backgrounds than if he worked with students from the same country of birth as his own. Li-Chin (I) agreed. He described his experiences of interacting with students from other cultural backgrounds to his own thus:

R: Do you do group work with people from different backgrounds or not?
Li-Chin (I): Yes yes. Like from Australia and some from India, Hong Kong.

R: Do you choose the group members or are you put into groups?
Li-Chin: Usually we choose, but some subjects the lecturer will say different nationalities in a group.

R: And why do you think they do that?
Li-Chin: I think more interaction, better understanding.

Other international students made similar comments. Harish and Nikolai, for example, made use of the different cultural perspectives of group members for their assignments and presentations by viewing the issue under discussion from their different perspectives. Tonja (L) also described enjoying getting to know the different perspectives on issues from students of different cultural backgrounds. She commented:

I'm the sort of person who likes to mix with people from other cultures and to find out basically the way they think and what their expectations of things are. Because in Australia you tend to be with people who also think in an Australian way, even though they might have their European background. But coming to uni and mixing with people from say
Local students, Eli, Candy, Jane and Sofia concurred that they enjoyed learning about different cultures and customs. Sofia added that she did group work with people from different backgrounds, not necessarily from different countries, but with people from Sydney, from Canberra and from rural areas.

Some students commented on the benefits of learning to work with people from other backgrounds for their future careers. Ali (I) explained:

"... if I work in a multinational or I work somewhere else other than Australia or Pakistan, maybe I’ll have talked to the people before and I will kind of know what these people are like. You can’t get these things out of books. Like you have to get to know people. (Ali I)"

Millie (I) elaborated on this perspective. She said that in some of her subjects, it was compulsory to form multicultural groups because they had to explore the cultural differences of different marketing strategies of a company’s branches in different countries. Her response indicates that she likes being able to see the theory in practice, too. It also indicates that cultural difference is valued and integrated into the teaching and learning practice. She commented:

"It’s quite good for practice because in the book we don’t actually know about the cultural differences. It just talks about the theory but we can know the actual differences between the countries when we do the practical. (Millie I)"

Candy (L), Jane (L) and Michelle (L) realised that, in their fields, no one works alone so it was good practice to learn to work with other people. In particular, they added that they could apply their learning to other subjects and to work situations. Li-Chin (I) explained how group work gave him practice in defending his ideas, boosting his self-confidence, and getting along with people whom he did not necessarily like. He said:
... we have to learn how to accept and work with a person even though we
don’t like it. Interactions like so we can understand better even though
not everybody thinks the same way. Sometimes there are situations where
you really have such a battle trying to convince the other person that he’s
not right. So I think it’s a way to be more self-confident in order to
convince others. I think self-confidence is really important. (Li-Chin I)

Boosting self-confidence is a recurring theme and is discussed under each appropriate
section.

International and local students commented positively about specific teaching
strategies that encourage students to work in groups, in particular multicultural
groups. Soane (I), for example, described a strategy in one of his classes thus:

R: So you were learning from each other is that what you are saying?
Soane (I): Yes yes. We’re given twenty minutes every two-hour lecture to
research the question and then one of us will take down the ideas and
every week we present our ideas of the group but you don’t have to stick
to the same group all the time. Whoever is sitting next to you will be your
group for that week.

Soane regularly changed groups each lecture so that whoever sat near him became his
group for the week. He reported enjoying this class time as he gained new insights
from different people and, in these small groups, he had the confidence to contribute
his opinions. From other comments he made, it was clear that these groups were
multicultural groups. Li-Chin (I), Tonja (L) and Sofia (L) also talked about classes
where the students got into groups and quizzed each other over a question or issues to
do with an assignment. Sofia explained:

I really enjoy that kind of learning rather than just being told things. And
that’s one thing that impresses me about the Faculty as well because
instead of having lectures, they have seminars so a lot of learning stuff is
within small groups and within that seminar, you break up into small
groups and do the learning that way. That works really well for me. (Sofia
L)

Sofia emphasised learning independently with the lecturer providing guidance rather
than imparting knowledge as well as students learning from each other. She said:
I like finding out things for yourself and bringing it back and encourage people to teach each other, which I think is important... Like I mean if we get something wrong or if we need direction, they are there to help us and you can bring up points and examples and relate it back. Like I think it's good to learn from other people and you get to do your own research and stuff too. (Sofia L)

Implied in her response is for the instructor to act as a facilitator and for students to broaden their knowledge by sharing ideas and learning from each other, a critical pedagogical perspective.

International students, Ali, Lorna, Elaine, Millie and Soane, said that often the tutor mixed up the groups so that there was at least one international student per group for students to see a different perspective. The lecturers' comments concur with these responses and indicate that they have consciously included an intercultural dimension to their activities and assignments.

For Eli (L), group activities were fun. She commented:

There's more interaction and it's fun and because it's fun, you learn more and you learn faster.

All participants said that sometimes they could choose their group and other times they were put into groups by the tutor/lecturer. They liked this strategy as they got to know each other, and it increased their comfort zone, which made speaking up in class easier.

Despite these stated benefits to doing group work with students from different backgrounds, some of the international students commented on particular difficulties they have in working with local students. Their comments seemed to relate to group written assignments as opposed to some of their comments above that appear to relate to classroom interaction. Elaine, Millie and Soane claimed that some local students do not want to work as hard as they do and were not as keen to gain high scores. They sought out other international students to do group work with rather than risk working with local students, some of whom they described as being 'freeloaders'.
Lorna expressed the perception that some local students do not want to do group work with Asian students. She commented:

*Some Australians they don't want to do group work with the Asian because of the mark, because some of them they feel that the Asian students they contribute less than themselves and sometimes they think that we can't understand what they say. Also sometimes they have to spend time because sometimes we don't understand and they have to spend more time to explain to us. That's my personal opinion. Sometimes, I feel that they don't want to spend group work with the Asian.* (Lorna)

She also discussed the practical difficulties of working with local students who were only on campus for a limited amount of time before they went off to work. However, in a different interview, she commented that she liked to do group work with students who have some work experience, like herself, because they could think 'more widely'.

Despite their earlier comments about the benefits of working with students from different backgrounds, Millie and Elaine (I) reported that it was easier for them to work with other students from Hong Kong because they could communicate with each other. Being able to "communicate" comes across as a multifaceted idea involving both language and culture. They stated that there was a shared understanding about the difficulties of working in another language, as each group member had difficulty with English expression.

As noted above, they also stated that there was a shared understanding about the amount of work and effort required. However, when they too had difficulties with some group members not doing their share of the work, they felt they could tell them to stop being lazy and 'order' them to do their share because they came from the same or similar cultural background. They stated that if they worked with students from other backgrounds than their own, particularly Australian students, they would not be able to do so. Volet and Ang (1998) identified similar reasons that SEA students gave for their preference to work with students from similar backgrounds, including what they describe as “cultural-emotional connectedness”; language; pragmatism; and negative stereotyping (p.10).
Nevertheless, the students at the focus of the current study agreed that group work afforded them the opportunity of sharing experiences and gaining more ideas than if they worked on their own.

Local students also complained about some group members not contributing their share or not doing the work to the same standard as they aspired to. Sofia and Candy, in particular, complained how sometimes they do all of the work to make sure that it meets their own high standards. Their comments suggest the problems were also with local students. They said that it is difficult to know beforehand how well the group will work, even if they are friends. Sofia described doing group work with some friends that was disastrous as they did not do the required work, while Jane described how she often does group work with friends as she knows they will not let each other down.

Making friends from doing group work was something that the international students brought up as a benefit to doing group work. Li-Chin explained:

> It's a time like three people we probably we get to know each other and we really get together and talk about ideas. Like we have to come up with our own what other information is relevant, what other information is not relevant and so we probably exchange ideas... you have to think about what is important for you to include in the report and usually the report has a word limit 2000 or 3000 words, but like sometimes there are really bad group members as well that don’t turn up in time. (Li-Chin I)

However, they also commented that even though they might work well together as a group, they found it hard to continue the friendship after the work had been handed in. They gave varying reasons for this, such as local students only being on campus for class, living far away, or just not having the time because of other commitments. This they found very disappointing.

All students interviewed noted experiencing similar difficulties regarding organising time, sharing responsibilities, and keeping in contact with group members. Local and international students described how frustrating group work can be when group members are unreliable, do not attend meetings or dominate the meeting, do not
contribute their share of the work, or leave the work until the last minute. Sharing resources was also an issue. Li-Chin explained:

> Everyone is assigned their part but if you get group members who only just do their part, like they literally get away with it and they don't even care about other parts like what I do. I might be reading some article and think, Oh this might be good for the other person and pick it up and just give it to the other person rather than some group members they don't, that's all. (Li-Chin I)

Candy (L), Sofia (L), Eli (L) and Lorna (I) also pointed out that group work requires a high level of collaboration, especially in the writing up stage so that the work is cohesive, and that this was made difficult if some group members did not exercise good time management.

Survey responses about group/pair work revealed similarities among international and local students' experiences and preferences. Forty-four per cent of local and 42 per cent of international students responded that group work is undertaken “a lot” in a subject they like. Sixteen per cent of local and 26 per cent of international students responded that group work is never used in a subject they like.

![Figure 8.4: Group/pair work in a subject they like](image)

Responses in regard to a subject they dislike indicated that little or no group work occurred for 80 per cent of local and 61 per cent of international students. These
findings suggest that both international and local student like subjects with frequent group work, and dislike subjects with infrequent group work.

Figure 8.5: Group/pair work in a subject they dislike

These bar charts, however, do not indicate whether the group work was in multicultural groups. Question p did, however, ask them to rate how often a lecturer encourages mixing of international and local students in a subject. Students responded that lecturers encouraged the mixing of international and local students in a subject that they dislike infrequently 80 per cent for local and 69 per cent for international. These results suggest that both international and local students do not like subjects where the lecturer does not encourage mixing of international and local students.

Figure 8.6: Lecturer encourages mixing in a subject they dislike
The students' comments on the open-ended questions on the survey were similar to those of the interviewees. Both the international and local students reported that group work helped them to broaden their ideas by exchanging views to find a solution. They also referred to team work and helping each other. Of the 31 responses from international students who indicated that an interactive context meets their learning needs, there were six who specifically mentioned liking group work. The following are representative of comments from the international respondents.

*I like to learn in groups because you can get ideas of what the others are thinking and exchange opinions.* (IF 43)

*Group assignment, know how to deal with people and learn some culture about others.* (IM 70)

*Work team because it helps to solve a problem and find the good solution.* (IM 71)

Of the 50 local students' responses to the same question 10, there were ten who noted that group work meets their learning needs. They described how group work gave them different perspectives, learning how to work as a team as well as working things out for themselves.

*Group work because you get a range of perspectives as well as able to give your own answer. Feedback - to let you know how you are going.* (LF 90)

*Group work, informal nature of lectures, encouragement to participate, tutors who show a genuine interest in assisting learning, given a reading list.* (LF 103)

In response to the open-ended question 11 on the survey, what kinds of activities do not meet their needs, there were only three international and four local students (out of a possible 114) who wrote that they do not like doing group work. There were several different reasons given for not liking group work, which were the same as those given by the interviewees. For the international students, their English ability was a barrier. Not knowing or fitting in with the other group members could also be problematic. For the local students, there were concerns of people not contributing their share while others preferred working independently.
Group work with strangers. I've never been a team player. Plus I don't feel right with them. I'd say that's the self defence mechanism to my mentality. (IM 83)

Team group because it takes longer time to finish if I don't fit with the group. (IM 56)

Group work is a waste - I prefer to work individually when learning/studying. (LM 101)

Group work when you get people who do not contribute. (LF 111)

Question 13 asked students whether they worked as a group or independently when completing a group assignment. There were 27 local and 29 international students who reported working as a group. Thirty local and six international students reported that they divided the work up and then got together to discuss their different parts. Seven did not indicate whether they worked as a group or not. These responses suggest that the international students preferred to work as a cohesive group rather than divide the work up to be completed individually (and see Volet & Ang, 1998).

Summary

International and local students agreed that group work, particularly group work with students from different cultural backgrounds, broadened and deepened their knowledge of the subject. A significant finding of the study is their recognition of the value in gaining intercultural insights to issues and the opportunities to develop their critical learning skills from doing group work. Other benefits of doing group work they recognised as being exchanging ideas, coming up with a variety of solutions or ways to tackle a problem, and seeing things from multiple perspectives. Learning how to work with different people, preparing them for their future careers, and becoming more self-confident were described as other long-term benefits. Furthermore, they reported enjoying working with students from different backgrounds. It afforded them a rich learning environment. These findings do not corroborate the views of some in the literature who contend that international students prefer a more passive, formal teaching and learning context and have difficulty in working in groups (Pearson & Beasley, 1996).
However, the international and local students had both experienced particular difficulties with group work, such as the practical issues of contacting people and organising meetings as well as the concern that each group member contributes their share and makes a quality contribution. The international students stated that they preferred to work with other international students, often from similar cultural backgrounds because they had a shared work ethic as well as a shared understanding of the difficulties of working in a foreign language. Their views are supported in some recent studies (Volet & Ang, 1998). Volet and Ang (1998) point to studies by Biggs, (1987, 1992); Volet and Renshaw, (1995); and, Volet, Renshaw and Tietzel, (1994) that show the high level of achievement by international students from Chinese ethnic backgrounds. The authors argue these students may well be less inclined to undertake group work with local students, if they consider them to be less work orientated than themselves (Mills, 1997; Volet & Ang, 1998). Furthermore, they emphasise the important role lecturers play to encourage or even engineer multicultural groups so that students do not miss out on gaining insight and understanding of cultural perspectives (Knight & De Wit, 1995).

In this study, the local students made similar complaints about the work ethic of others. It may be implied that having the same work ethic is not necessarily a cultural consideration but more an individual concern (Mugler & Landbeck, 1997; Volet & Ang, 1998).

8.6 Lecturers’ strategies and activities to promote group work and interaction among local and international students

*It (interaction) is initiated by the students rather than by me. I am doing the tutorials, and I do get interaction with the overseas students in the tutorials.* (Peter)

The lecturers saw numerous benefits for students in doing group work, and they described particular strategies and activities to promote group work and discussion, including setting up debates, role-plays, group brainstorming, and simulations. Their
description of particular strategies they use confirms that of the students. Some
lecturers were much clearer than others as to their strategies in fostering multicultural
group work and the benefits for students in gaining intercultural insights. There was a
hesitation on the part of a few to force students to work with students from different
backgrounds, although most of them had strategies for class work, such as icebreaker
activities that encourage students to mix. Paul, for example, described his approach
thus:

I try to do as little talking as possible. I just try to get them to come up
with as much as possible. I try to get them to respond to each other,
rather than me responding. (Paul)

His response suggests that he wants to give students space to discuss with each other
rather than simply respond to him, to enter into a dialogue with each other. Salman’s
comments suggest a similar perspective:

I’m looking for that level of interaction with students talking to each other
so that their level of thinking, their level of analysis becomes a lot more
apparent rather than waiting for me to give them the “right” answers.
(Salman)

Arslan was very specific about the different strategies he uses to promote interaction
among international and local students. His classes have a very high proportion - at
least 50 per cent of international students - and in some, there are only international
students. He explained that he asks them to choose a topic with international
implications. Each group of four must have both international and local students, men
and women, so that they can draw on their experience and expertise, which is then
reflected in the project, both as an oral and written presentation. He talked quite
animatedly about how interesting this made the presentations. Another strategy he
employs is asking the students to get into different groups each week with a different
group leader each time to discuss the readings. In this way, Arslan claimed he gets
‘maximum interaction’. Caroline also described the same strategy. The students pool
their responses and choose the best ones, which the group leader then writes up on the
board and talks about to the rest of the class. This strategy involves not only the
sharing and refining of ideas but also evaluating and negotiating skills. It also gives students time to formulate their ideas and responses in a non-threatening context, something the students reported on positively.

Frank is another lecturer who deliberately asks students to form groups with at least one international and one local student on each team of five in order to broaden their thinking. Each week, each group is allocated resources, information and money to do a simulation where they have to decide on the best strategy and compete with the other groups. They enter the data onto a computer disc that they give to him each week, which they evaluate with him after class together. The students at the focus of the study reported enthusiastically on this strategy. Another strategy that Frank uses to open the class up to each other is an expectation raising exercise. He asks them to think about what an employer would expect of the class? What would the University expect of the class? What do they expect of the class? And then he turns it around and describes what he expects of the class. Students do this exercise in pairs or in groups, beginning by introducing themselves to each other. Frank explained that the activity gets them to feel more comfortable interacting with each other and with himself in the class.

Mark’s responses were characterised by an almost complete absence of discussion about specific teaching strategies that he employs. He talked about group discussions, case studies, role-plays and group presentations but avoided detailing how they were organised or their rationale. When asked what his teaching philosophy is, he asked what I meant by the question, which could indicate that it may not be something he reflects on or discusses, at least in these terms. Jo also was unclear about different teaching approaches and expressed interest in having some teacher training to improve his teaching ability.

Peter talked about interaction among international and local students as being student initiated. However, he noted there is not always a lot of interaction between international and local students as they both have their cliques. He said, it is not surprising that they stick together with people they know. His comment below
suggests that he sees the lack of intercultural interaction as involving both the speaking skills of international students and the listening skills of the local students. He emphasised the point that if local students put more effort into listening to their international counterparts, there would be better communication between the two groups.

Peter is one lecturer who recognised the dual roles local and international students play in the success (or otherwise) of their intercultural interactions (Volet & Ang, 1998).

Caroline, Katerina and Jo seemed unsure about teaching strategies to involve international students in class discussion. Caroline said she found it embarrassing when she could not understand students’ accents. Katerina voiced her concerns about not wanting to force students into multicultural groups or to speak up in class discussion. She commented that she would like some suggestions as to how to offer international students support in class discussion without patronising them.

**Summary**

The responses from this group of lecturers suggest that they recognised the value of group work, and for some, multicultural group work, which they engineered specifically so that their students gain intercultural insights into the issues involved. Others were concerned not to force students into doing group work with people they appeared not to want to work with or know. However, all lecturers’ comments suggest that their classes are student-centred with a lot of time given for group discussion and interaction. The students also expressed awareness of both the positive outcomes of
working in multicultural groups as well as the potential difficulties in organising time and putting in equal contributions with a shared sense of work ethic.

8.7 Assessment tasks

8.7.1 Presentations

... if you are going to work in a lab, you are going to have to present your research whatever and I think that they do help you to have confidence and be able to stand up and to talk to a group of people. Like we said, if you know something, you should be able to explain it and when you give a presentation, you should be explaining what you know rather than just regurgitating. (Jane L)

International and local students’ interview responses about presentations revealed many creative, interactive presentation skills that helped them to find a solution or see a problem from a different perspective. The international students, in particular, talked about giving presentations in multicultural groups. For some, learning how to give an effective presentation boosted their confidence to speak in front of people and was good preparation for their future careers. Rather than delivering content, the students discussed taking the initiative, using their critical thinking skills, and applying a theory to a practical situation. Their responses indicated that they have a clear conception of the academic criteria necessary for both their learning and for gaining high scores, such as taking the initiative or/and providing an in-depth analysis and critique of issues involved (Volet & Chalmers, 1992; Volet & Renshaw, 1995). Of importance is that the students, and the international students in particular, reported no specific difficulties in meeting the criteria, either in their use of English language or their critical thinking skills.

Harish (I) and Nikolai (I) stated the importance for their presentations to involve group work with students from different cultural backgrounds from their own. All the examples of presentations they gave involved applying theory to real life situations, taking the initiative, and using problem solving and critical thinking skills. For example, they described one where they had to critique another group’s presentation. They said they had done a good job because they were able to point out the
contradictions in the other group’s presentation, which is one of the criteria they are marked on. For this work, they had to analyse and evaluate the arguments in an executive summary for a particular company as well.

They used descriptors, like ‘What was exciting ...’ ‘We realised ...’ ‘We made comparisons ...’ ‘I tried to analyse the software using this model’ ‘It made us think’ that indicate that they had practised using critical and problem-solving skills. The following critical incident report documents my observations of one of their presentations.

**Critical incident report Wednesday evening 17.30**

**Fourteen students from eighteen years old to early thirties seated in a horseshoe with no desks in front of them in a small seminar room**

On arrival, it was clear that the four presenters, one female from Hong Kong, a male from Pakistan, Harish from India, and Nikolai from Russia had spent some time rearranging the room, piling the desks on the side of the room. They had placed a table and two chairs out front, strategically placed an overhead projector so that the screen could be seen by all, and organised a television with two videos cued to the right scenes. Nikolai was in a Russian outfit and the female presenter from Hong Kong was dressed in a Chinese dress. The other two, Harish from India, the other from Pakistan, were dressed in business suits. Some dishes from these countries had been prepared on a side table for easy access for the presenters to pick up and offer to the class. The other students were from many different countries, including Hong Kong, Saudi Arabia, the US, Pakistan, Scandinavia, Dubai, and Australia.

The four student presenters set the scene with an overhead with the title of a major multinational company and the questions under discussion. Two of the presenters sat in the chairs at the desk set up in front of the class, where they began with a role-play. They took on the roles of executives, preparing to visit Russia and Hong Kong to determine what kind of marketing strategy for a particular shampoo would be the most successful. They questioned whether the strategy should be country specific, i.e.
the product marketed taking into account certain cultural aspects specific to a certain audience, or as one general global marketing strategy that should be able to be translated and understood anywhere in the world.

The presenters set the scene for a visit to Russia by firstly putting up an overhead of a picture of a plane, then playing some Russian music, and then displaying a picture of Moscow. Nikolai appeared in traditional costume, welcomed the two marketing "executives" with a glass of vodka, Russian cake, and appropriate conversation (according to Nikolai) between business executives in his country. They then played the advertisement on video in Russian that they had translated into English on large overheads. They repeated the scenario for a Chinese setting with the advertisement in Chinese with the female presenter offering Chinese delicacies to the class.

They brought up the different cultural dimensions exhibited in the advertisements. Nikolai told the class that musicians in his country are highly regarded and have high status, which is why his group had featured a musician. The young woman from Hong Kong pointed out that young women in China have become more determined to have a career and be independent, which also gave some background to the advertisement. At the end, the presenters asked the class for their opinion; 'So, what do you think?' Students volunteered their opinions, sometimes arguing with each other. The lecturer seemed to stand back and let them talk, but then, after a few minutes of student discussion, he interjected with a question. There was a silence while they seemed to be thinking of an appropriate response and then one answered, and he nodded his assent.

Later, the lecturer asked the Chinese student to put up her overhead of her translation of the Chinese advertisement and to cover it up. He then asked if anyone in the class could translate the advertisement, and two other Chinese students offered to do so. They seemed a little surprised to be asked, evident in their giggling, but then attended to the task carefully. They seemed to be pleased to being doing something that only they could do as they conferred with each other and then looked at the lecturer for recognition.
The lecturer invited discussion by going around the room and asking each student what the advertising campaign in each of their country was for the same product. A lively discussion was generated. The students spoke with a certain amount of authority starting off with, ‘Well, in Pakistan, (in Saudi ..), we have this... We do this...’

At one point, the Chinese presenter interrupted and asked, ‘Can I ask a question?’, which she then did, and they all stopped talking to listen to her, looking at her and nodding their heads. Then, the lecturer asked for responses from the local students. Later, he asked each presenter to say a sentence about one aspect of the campaign and about the product, price, distribution and promotion. They seemed surprised at this request by the astonished look on their faces, but still gave well-focused answers that revealed an in-depth knowledge gained, in part, from wide reading and research on the subject. They mentioned how they had spoken to the director of the company in Sydney, who had revealed certain information. Another quoted statistics to support his point of view. Their responses suggested to me a depth of reflection and metacognition.

This incident demonstrates how one lecturer invited discussion by asking students to relate the subject under discussion to their own cultural background and experience. Students talked with apparent confidence and authority about their countries. The presentation itself seemed to involve a lot of creativity, seeing the issue from a number of different perspectives, and it appeared confidently executed. Although for two of the presenters English is not their first language, they seemed to have no apparent difficulty in being understood or in getting their point across to the class.

Ali and Li-Chin (I) also described a similarly creative approach to giving presentations. Li-Chin reported excitedly about giving presentations when they were not expected to deliver content but give an interactive presentation that involved the audience. He said that was a ‘really wonderful way of presentation and assessment as well’. He also talked about giving presentations in multicultural groups. Eli (L),
Elaine (I) and Millie (I) talked about presentations where they are given a scenario and they have to act the part of a manager and present a problem and possible solutions to the class. The amount of discussion they are able to generate among class members was a part of their final mark.

Sofia (L) described how much she enjoyed the different perspectives and different students’ presentation styles. She agreed with Per (I) and Jane (L) that group presentations can provide beneficial preparation for their future occupations as they saw them as being directly related to their future field of work. In particular, Jane claimed that giving presentations at university helped her self-confidence and her ability to explain things and make sure that others have understood her. Lorna and Ali in a focus group agreed with her. Jane’s comments, on this point and on assessment, also suggest that she does not value memorising and regurgitating information but rather, she wants to gain a deep understanding of the material that she can then explain to others.

The students’ responses about presentations suggest an interactive, creative, hands-on approach to giving presentations, demonstrating the use of independent and critical thinking skills. Neither group reported specific difficulties in meeting the criteria. The survey responses revealed similar insights. There were five international and six local students who responded to the open-ended questions on the survey that they particularly enjoyed debates and gaining confidence in giving oral presentations. The international students’ responses suggest that they like to have the opportunity to practise their speaking skills while the local students’ responses indicate they felt they learnt more from open discussion than listening to a lecture.

*Speak up in class. It can give me experience and confidence in doing other presentations.* (IM 72)

*Oral presentation because I need to persuade someone in business in the future.* (IM 73)

*Oral presentations, group work, communicating in tutorials.* (LF 77)

*Discussion of issues, heated debate, less formal use of questioning – I tend to recall a heated debate than a lecture.* (LF 28)
8.7.2 Lecturers’ views on student presentations

The lecturers seemed to share similar views with the students about presentations. They expressed a desire for students to use their independent and critical thinking skills and give an interactive presentation. They talked about presenting a critique and analysis of an issue or a reading, with a particular focus on viewing the issue from different perspectives. Some of them specifically mentioned that learning how to give effective presentations was good preparation for the students for the world of work as well as learning how to work effectively with different people.

In Frank’s, Salman’s, Arlan’s and Peter’s classes, students are asked to form multicultural groups to give presentations. The lecturers stated that there is a clear expectation that students view and analyse issues from different perspectives, including different cultural perspectives, and that students not just read off notes, imparting content. The lecturers explained that students will have to present in the world of work, so they want to give them the experience of having to convince an audience that they know what they are doing and are able to respond to questions. They also learn to work in different teams where they have to learn how to deal with different people’s motivational levels. Mark described a presentation in his subject students have to give about setting up a business in different parts of the Asia Pacific. He noted that some of the students brought their own in-depth knowledge of a country to the presentation. He added that students are encouraged to access information on the Internet and from other sources to supplement their knowledge. From these presentations, he said, students gain a broader understanding of the international issues that impact on his subject.

The lecturers described how they look for the depth of argument, the level of engagement with an audience, body language and eye contact, and use of visual aids. They made a particular point that a presentation is not just reading out from notes but providing an analysis and informed debate about an issue. Katerina said she encourages her students to view presentations as a feedback session and as an opportunity for students to find out their strengths and weaknesses. Although the students present individually in her class, I witnessed a strong sense of collaboration
with the class and the energetic promotion of discussion about something of interest
to them. Her description of these presentations also suggests that she wants a high
level of reflection and evaluation by students of themselves and their learning.

Martin described one student presentation as being one of the most successful he and
students in his class has ever seen as being focussed on resolving conflict and
understanding culturally diverse points of view. There were three international and
two local students in the group and, at first, they reporting having trouble
understanding each other well enough to do the group assignment. In their
presentation to the class, they gave a chronology of the processes they had gone
through to resolve the conflict and to do the assignment. He said:

They took each other 's roles and talked about what had happened over
the ten weeks. It was terrific. It was really moving, the process of it. One
of the students in the class said that she had probably learnt more from
that presentation than she had ever learnt. So that was to my satisfaction.

Caroline and Jo detailed their disappointment with the quality of some students’
presentations. Caroline’s comments suggest that some of the students’ presentations
are disjointed, non-interactive and badly time managed, something my observations
corroborated. Her comments referred to local students, not international. She noted
that some students do not appear to have had any preparation in how to give effective
presentations, although she gives them suggestions prior to their presentations. As
with the other lecturers interviewed, she marks students on their ability to engage the
class, their understanding of the topic, their reference to readings, their use of visual
aids, their time management and team work skills. She talked about a good
presentation as being interactive with discussion and debate encouraged, where
students have done the readings and presented a coherent argument, particularly
presenting as a group rather than as four individuals.

Jo’s comments about student presentations suggest that he wants them to show that
they have understood the readings by presenting key points in their own words. His
responses suggest a much more content-orientated approach to assessing their
presentations than for the other lecturers. He talked about judging the fluency of
students in reading out their presentation rather than providing a critique or analysis, as mentioned by the other lecturers. My observations confirmed that there was little class discussion, either with him facilitating or from volunteers from the class.

Summary

Most of the lecturers interviewed shared similar perspectives about presentations with the students in that they want them to develop their independent thinking skills and learn how to construct an effective argument. They described how they want them to learn how to critique and analyse issues. Most of their responses suggest that they are preparing students how to work in teams effectively with some of them actively engineering multicultural groups so that students can learn to see different perspectives. These lecturers said they consciously use the different cultural backgrounds of their students as a teaching and learning resource to broaden the students' understanding of the subject. Also, they expressed a desire to boost the students’ confidence in giving effective presentations, a skill that they stated will be of use to students in the world of work. The students’ description of their presentations revealed a high awareness and use of critical and independent thinking skills. They described analysing issues from different perspectives, giving interactive and creative presentations with a high level of class involvement. None of them reported any specific difficulty in meeting these criteria.

8.7.3 Written assignments

Sofia (L): I had the most fun doing those essays than I think I’ve done in any other subject.

R: What was fun about it?

Sofia (L): We did a psychoanalytical and a feminist reading of it and I really enjoyed it. You don’t get to do that kind of stuff at school and so the experience of that was really good too.

Sofia was one of three local students interviewed whose statements suggested a high degree of using independent and critical thinking skills in written assignments. All of the international students also described how they enjoy analysing and evaluating real
life problems and providing recommendations. They discussed how they choose a topic of interest to them, undertake research skills and then write an analysis based on a theoretical model. Their responses suggested a teaching and learning context where they are expected to take the initiative, critique and analyse the issues.

Contrary to the views of some in the literature (Ballard, 1991; Ninnes et al, 1999), the international students reported no specific difficulties in completing written assignments, either with their English language or in the use of their critical thinking skills. Some of the local students, however, still appeared to have difficulty in exercising independent and critical thinking skills as well as constructing an effective argument. While three local students discussed their assignments in terms of this critical perspective, the other three talked about their assignments in terms of having to present 'dead set information' and completing repetitive work-sheets where there was no room for opinions or constructing arguments.

All of the international students described undertaking independent research on a topic of their choosing with undisguised enthusiasm. Nikolai (I), for example, discussed some research he had done on a special interest of his to do with the software industry. In this particular subject, he was able to choose a real life issue, research and analyse a problem, and relate it to theory discussed in class. Li-Chin (I) was another international student excited about a group project he had done with three students from Indonesia, where they had chosen to research the marketing policy of Harley-Davidson motor bikes in Australia. They interviewed employees in Sydney as well as a local outlet to find the information they needed. Li-Chin’s sense of accomplishment is evident in his comments:

_We didn’t get a really high mark but we think we did a really wonderful job. We’re happy, like a sense of achievement that we actually learnt so much about other things because from the textbook, we realised that the book says something like that but it would never struck a deep impression in us. We would not be able to remember it but to have that hands-on experience, it’s really different from reading. Sets up thinking and simulating it all._ (Li-Chin I)
His remarks suggest that he enjoyed applying the theory from the course textbook to a real situation. It also suggests the use of problem-solving and critical thinking skills as well as building teamwork with students from a different national background from his own. (He is from Singapore and they are from Indonesia, although some may be of Chinese descent). In another interview, he talked about learning how to use the Internet, evaluate material, and use critical thinking skills. He also described his developing ability to become more independent in his research.

Harish (I), Lorna (I) and Elaine (I) also had subjects where they had to choose a company, research the background, and write an analysis with recommendations of what the company should do. They talked about having to find information, research and critique a topic using many skills such as interviewing people, collate the data and write reports with recommendations. They reported liking doing these kinds of assignments because they saw them as being useful for their future careers as well as seeing how theory taught in class operates in the “real” world.

Millie (I) talked about one subject, which she identified as her favourite, where the students had to form multicultural groups and do a simulation of a marketing strategy competing against other student groups. Each week, each group was allocated resources, information, and money. The group then had to decide what was the best marketing strategy to compete with the other groups. She noted that this exercise was very like her view of real life, and it gave them practice in how to operate a business, managing resources and staff. She also talked about a questionnaire they had to conduct over the telephone about a particular product of their choice. She said she had been taught the theory in lecture, and this was a good opportunity to put the theory into practice as well as work things out independently. She said:

_I find it’s good, practical one because you have to work it out._ (Millie I)

Some of the local students were equally enthusiastic about their analytical assignments. Sofia, for example, reported that writing analytical essays from different perspectives was particularly rewarding. Eli (L) described similar research assignments as the international students had done with the same level of enthusiasm.
Michelle, Jane, and Candy (L), on the other hand, talked about how they have to find information and present the “facts”, although Michelle and Jane said that sometimes they are asked to critique a particular program. They emphasised several times that they have to know and memorise certain facts as well as be able to apply that knowledge to certain situations. Giving their own opinion was something they claimed was not accepted by the lecturer. Jane explained:

*Jane (L): The ones I have to do are like more sciency. You can’t have your own opinion. You’ve got to give someone else’s. You’ve got to produce other people’s opinion.*

*R: Why do you think you can’t give your own opinion?*

*Jane (L): Because basically we can’t because you haven’t done the research and you really can’t say your opinion.*

Tonja was another local student who was very critical of one of her subject areas that she had failed because of what she considered to be its reliance on memorisation for assessment that is heavily weighted towards exams. She described these subjects as where she had to share the same opinion as the lecturer and not construct her own arguments.

*Some will say directly I don’t agree with this theory or this opinion. They’ll tell you directly or they’ll tell you in other ways by bagging out a mode of thought and you pick up on that. I mean you’re not stupid. (Tonja L)*

She reported preferring her later choice of subjects where she could exercise her critical and independent thinking skills and construct an argument supported by secondary sources.

The local and international students both reported that they preferred assignments where they were able to critique issues and apply theory in practice. It would seem, however, that the choice of subjects and the way they are taught dictated the approach students took.
8.7.4 Lecturers’ views on written assignments

The ten lecturers interviewed emphasised their aim of improving students’ abilities to critique and construct an effective argument in essays, by employing evidence to support their views. The lecturers reported giving other assignments to prepare students for the world of work by creating real life scenarios where students learn how to apply the theory taught in class. They described research assignments where the students have to come up with a question, design the research, collect data, then write and present the findings in a report format. They pointed out that they want students to broaden their understanding of the different contexts of the subject. They described assignments where students have to take on a role, find both secondary and primary information sources, make decisions and evaluate the impact of those decisions, manage certain resources, and make recommendations. They see these assignments as helping students to understand what it will be like in the real world, with the relationships between the various aspects of an issue, deadlines to meet, and work within a team. They also talked about the benefits for students of evaluating their own work as well as learning from their mistakes.

Only Jo and Caroline stated that they felt limited to asking students to do the weekly readings and prepare answers to set questions because of their low status – as tutors – within their respective departments. They did not have the opportunity to devise other kinds of assignments and were not consulted about the assessment practices of the courses, which were decided by the co-ordinator alone.

However, all of the lecturers described in detail how the majority of their students, both local and international, have considerable difficulty in critiquing and analysing issues and texts in essays. They noted that this lack of critical ability for both international and local students was a result of their prior learning experiences, which they described as being characterised by rote learning. Of importance to the study is that they made no differentiation between the prior teaching and learning experiences of international and local students, an insight that the comments of the students support. They talked about how some students’ written work displays little evidence of reflection or metacognition. They explained that they give extensive feedback on
students’ first essays to identify their strengths and weaknesses with suggestions on how to improve their critical writing skills. Some of them also added that students do not know how to reference or find references, and some of their work does not make sense. Paul said:

*And it’s not just the international students. I have quite a few people straight out of the HSC – some shockers!*

None of the lecturers considered poor English expression in essay writing as specifically an international student issue. They all pointed to both international and local students as having problems with English expression in essays. Peter commented:

*I think English expression is an issue but it doesn’t fall neatly into local students, Asian students. A lot of our students are Asian students, who come from Asian communities themselves and some students from overseas are brilliant. I have had some Indian students who have an extraordinary vocabulary and ability to articulate ideas. Sometimes they seem to have an interest in philosophical issues, which interests me, more so than the locals. (Peter)*

All of the lecturers explained how they do what they can in terms of giving feedback to students on their written English expression as well as how to construct an argument, not ‘a battery of facts’, as Katerina described. They also refer both local and international students to the Learning Development Unit for extra help. Unlike some of the lecturers described in students’ comments above, these lecturers all stressed that their aim is to promote the critical and independent learning skills of students where they learn how to take and support a particular position.

**Summary**

The lecturers at the focus of this study clearly stated their aims in promoting students’ abilities to be critical and to look at issues from different perspectives. They noted that both international and local students can have difficulty in this regard, and they
outlined particular strategies they employ to help students. Of particular significance is that the lecturers did not attribute poor English expression and critical writing skills to the international students only. They specifically referred to local students who have considerable difficulty in expressing and constructing arguments while noting that some international students have a superior ability in articulating their points of view.

None of the lecturers concurred with some of the local students’ comments that, in some subjects, they are not allowed to voice an opinion and instead are expected to copy the lecturers’ views. Perhaps, this is an indication that these students have still not sufficiently grasped the concept of constructing an argument using supportive evidence. Or, the students’ descriptions may be of lecturers other than the ones interviewed. The lecturers’ and students’ descriptions of research assignments were, however, identical and suggest that the students engage enthusiastically in these kinds of assignments because they see them as useful for their future careers. Also, students reported enjoying doing them as they find them to be rewarding learning experiences.

8.8 Assessment practices

8.8.1 The students’ perspective

*I think in all disciplines the way they assess is barely OK. It was a bit of a worry because you had this huge exam at the end, 60% and if you didn’t reach a certain percentage, they failed you. Really for me, I wasted a year and I was going OK in class but when it came to the exam, there was so much to remember. They could have made the assessment a lot fairer.*

(Tonja L)

Anger and a sense of powerlessness over assessment practices were evident in the comments of both local and international students. Some stated that they could not understand how they had been awarded a mark and were mystified by what they considered to be unclear marking criteria. Others described the marking system as a game, the rules of which only the markers knew. They also described what they considered to be blatant discrepancies in the marking systems of tutors for the same assignment. Not knowing how they were progressing because of inadequate feedback
or unexplained weighting systems of marks were also issues of concern, and for one local student and one international student, a devastating and costly experience.

Understanding their progress in terms of marks was an issue cited by several of the student participants. Both Tonja (L) and Li-Chin (I) described how, in one subject, the students were told that a piece of work was worth a certain amount but they were not clear if the mark was a percentage of the overall mark or a part of another mark. They both recounted experiencing frustration and disappointment. In another subject, Li-Chin reported that the lecturer refused to allow him to see his exam paper to find out where he had gone wrong. In fact, the lecturer told him to return three weeks later, and when he did, the lecturer was on holiday. Li-Chin was left with a feeling of being cheated out of passing the subject as, when he added up his other marks, he did not believe that he could have failed the exam by such an extent. Both of these students expressed that these experiences cost them dearly as they had to find the money to support their studies for an extra semester.

Other students also reported not knowing how they were progressing because of how the assessment tasks had been structured. Michelle (L), for example, explained that she had been given nine assignments that were all due at the same time at the end of the semester. She described another subject where she had to write two, 10,000 word reports but only one was marked, and they were not told which one would be counted. Candy (L) and Jane (L) also commented on the number of assignments required that were worth very little in terms of marks. These three students expressed a sense of feeling overwhelmed with the number of assessable tasks throughout the semester, including writing reports on their practicals and doing computer-based multiple-choice quizzes as well as preparing for a ‘massive’ exam worth 60% at the end of the semester. They expressed their concern about managing their time so that they could address the assignments as they would like. They also reported that the number of assignments did not allow them the time to address the subject as they would like and that exam-based assessment did not adequately reflect their knowledge and understanding. Candy said:
I don’t like a lot of them in that I don’t think that it actually shows if you know the work or not. Especially the long questions. Maybe if they broke them down. Because in the exam you can just forget one thing and just because you forget the one thing doesn’t mean you don’t know how to do the other parts. So if you don’t know how to start – you can know the middle bit and you can know the end bit but if you don’t know how to start, you’re in big trouble. (Candy L)

Tonja (L) also pointed out that memorising material for exams was not an accurate measure of a student’s knowledge or understanding of the subject and encouraged superficial learning, that she promptly forgot. She said she avoided doing any subject with a large proportion of marks attached to a final exam. She explained:

I try and avoid exams. When I look in the calendar, if it’s got an exam I always think about it and I think OK because I don’t like them for starters. I think I don’t get much out of them. I just learn the work and then I sit in the exam and I spit it all out and I walk out and just empty, empty my mind. (Tonja L)

International students, Soane, Ali and Per, specifically commented that they liked being assessed throughout the semester rather than have a heavily weighted exam at the end of the semester. Having assessable tasks throughout the semester encouraged them to work continuously, they reported, and they learnt more than ‘swotting up’ for exams at the end of semester, they said. Their statements indicate a similar view to those of the local students above in that they claimed that exam-based assessment encouraged a superficial learning approach.

Some students discussed subjects where they had been given no feedback at all. They complained of having no means of understanding the rationale for the mark, either in terms of what they had done well or where they could improve. Li-Chin said:

Li-Chin (I): And some, you just get a mark. I hate it.
R: What no feedback?
Li-Chin (I): Nothing.
While for some participants unclear expectations and inadequate feedback were an issue, Jane stated that she found the comments written on some of her assignments particularly frustrating and disconcerting. She said:

*Jane (L)*: ...I just feel I am hitting myself against a brick wall when I write essays. The lecturers write the most awful things like comments on your essay and to me it lowers my self-esteem...

*R*: Are you saying that the feedback is negative?

*Jane (L)*: Yes, the feedback you get is not positive criticism. It's negative.

Other local students, Eli and Michelle, also talked about the negative feedback some lecturers had given a class, as a whole. They said that some lecturers created low expectations among students by telling them that they expect a certain percentage of them to fail. This kind of approach to students suggests that these lecturers might be using their authority and position of power in a way that intimidates and undermines students. The use of this kind of authority is an example of authoritarianism and is not an example of the democratic relations in the classroom that are inherent in critical pedagogy.

Another issue of concern noted by some of the students was when the marking criteria appeared dubious to them. Candy (L) and Sofia (L) described one instance where two students had done the same work but were given widely disparate marks by two different tutors. Harish (I) and Nikolai (I) also expressed their disappointment with their mark for one of their presentations described in a critical incident report on pages 223-225. Despite giving a group presentation, they reported, the lecturer gave each of them a different mark, the criteria for which none of the group members could understand, nor did they feel that it explained to them. Of concern to Harish and Nikolai was the female presenter from Hong Kong, who had prepared the most work, was given the lowest mark of them all, something they said was unfair and due to stereotyping of the lecturer of both her gender and her cultural background.

Ali (I) and Jane (L) also questioned the marking criteria of some tutors and cited the example where a tutor had encouraged them to take a particular approach, but a
different tutor had marked their work and had taken marks off because of their approach. Tonja, Sofia and Candy stated that, in some of their work, they had to give the same point of view as the lecturer to get good marks. Their use of the words ‘set answer’ and ‘reproduce’ does not indicate they expected to use critical thinking skills but perceived rather a degree of rigidity and conformity expected in their work. They discussed together:

*Sofia (L):* I think in my subject it's pretty much the same. They just want you to have a set answer and it's just potluck if you happen to reproduce the answer they expect you to give. 'cause I got quite a good mark on this essay and I personally wouldn't have expected that way. It was not all that much different from one of my friends. It was just that I had structured it in a way that the lecturer agreed with.

*Candy (L):* It's true. It's the way they are used to. I know that.

Candy continued discussing the issue of presenting a different point of view to the lecturer, describing one particular essay that she had written that had been given one out of a possible fifteen marks. She implied that the poor mark was in response to her presenting a different argument from the one the lecturer had presented in class. These reported marking practices are at odds with statements of the lecturers interviewed, who stressed the importance of students developing their independent and critical learning skills. One can surmise that the lecturers interviewed were not the ones described by the students, or if they were, the problem is not necessarily of capricious and authoritarian practice, but a problem of lack of transparency in marking methods. That is, the lecturers had not clearly conveyed how they were marking and why, which some might argue is itself a violation of the tenets of critical pedagogy.

Soane (I) and Candy (L), however, reported being given specific marking criteria, which they found very helpful. Candy’s comments, though, indicated that she would like to know the criteria before writing the assignment so she knows the sort of things the lecturer is looking for. She said:
That's really good because you can see exactly what they're talking about, but beforehand you wouldn't know that's what they wanted, so you're playing a guessing game. (Candy L)

Ali (I) and Jane (L) agreed:

Ali (I): I had this essay and they had the best thing that you can ask for. I didn't do well in the essay but the best thing is if the teacher breaks the essay up into different marks. Like I would give you 3% for your writing style. I will give you 2% for the grammar and I will give you 5% for the structure...

Jane (L): You know where you are at. In some subjects, you wouldn't have a clue where you've got your marks.

Ali (I): You just get a mark.

Jane (L): You don't know where your strengths and weaknesses are.

Local students Tonja, Sofia and Eli reported that self- and peer-assessment gave them a sense of responsibility for and an involvement in their own learning, and this they liked. Eli explained:

...she did it with the postgraduates and she wanted to try with us because instead of treating us like kids, we are the ones assessing ourselves. We know how much we're putting in out of three. We assess ourselves, how we are participating in tutorials. It's really interesting. It's a bit scary too. (Eli L)

Among the students surveyed, there were one international and five local students who reported on the open-ended questions not liking subjects which rely on memorisation for assessment that is heavily weighted towards exams at the end of the semester. Their comments indicated that they felt that an exam did not accurately reflect what they had learnt. There were another three international and two local students who specifically mentioned that they wanted a lot of feedback from the lecturer on how they were going and where they could improve. Their comments below suggest that at least some students like to have an informal, friendly relationship with their lecturer where they feel comfortable in asking for feedback. A selection of their comments follows:
Exam is not an accurate reflection of what I know. Nervousness leads to forgetfulness. (LM 18)

Final exams I always choose in them. They are more an indication of rote learning than your understanding of the concepts. (LF 64)

Teacher is like my friend and willing to discuss with me. (IM 81)

Freely talk with the lecturer and get quick and good response that can make me more understanding and interest in the subject. (IF 6)

8.8.2 The lecturers' perspective

(with regard to assessment and feedback) You cannot do a good job. The value of your work feels just awful. You're just part of a sausage machine of contemporary education and it's unfair to students. (Peter)

While the students reported numerous examples of being given inadequate feedback, the lecturers interviewed emphasised the importance they attach to giving students precise and diagnostic feedback on assignments in order for them to see their strengths and weaknesses. However, they claimed that a lack of time and budget considerations provided serious constraints for them to do this. They voiced perspectives similar to those of the students about self- and peer-assessment as strategies that encourage students to evaluate their work and develop independent and critical thinking skills.

All of the lecturers described giving extensive feedback for students to see their strengths and weaknesses. They talked about their development of marking criteria sheets for students to understand where they need to improve, and they also spoke about encouraging students to make use of the Learning Development Unit. Katerina, Martin, Mark and Peter described how they evaluate students’ very first piece of writing to show them their areas of strengths and weaknesses.

For Peter, Caroline and Salman, of particular concern was not having enough time to give all students the same detailed feedback. They articulated this as an equity issue, both in terms of the tutors whom they considered were not remunerated properly for their efforts and the students, some of whom did not receive detailed comments when the budget was exhausted. Salman added that the quality of the feedback depended on
the experience of the tutors who marked the students’ work. His tutors regularly changed each semester (he did not elaborate on why this was so) he explained, so he has not had the opportunity to build up a pool of knowledgable and experienced tutors.

Frank’s and Martin’s statements suggest that they want students to reflect on their work and learn from their mistakes. Frank described, in particular, a collaborative effort between himself and the students, explaining that he tries to get them to see the impact of their decisions as well as judge their own efforts. His comments suggest that he is trying to encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning and having them evaluate their strengths and weaknesses, and what they need to do, not just waiting for his opinion.

*R:* What about anything that makes a teaching and learning situation successful?

*Frank:* I think self-feedback, self-monitoring. If they can see the results of what they do themselves so they’re not necessarily seeing being evaluated as only by the instructor, then it’s kind of like an authority that stretches them. Whereas if they can see the response or the result that their decision, their effort has made, then they can make that adjustment themselves as to what they want to do, how much effort they want to put in and it’s much more real world. There are some problems, you might lose some authority. (laughter)

Frank’s comment indicates his use of a dialogic method of teaching where he balances the delicate act of knowing when to withdraw from being a facilitator and allow the students to set their own agenda for their learning (Shor & Freire, 1987).

Katerina said that she encourages her students to learn from each other by giving each other feedback on their presentations, which the student can then include in his/her written presentation. As with Frank, she stated that she wants her classes to be used as growth opportunities and for students to be open about their weaknesses and use the opportunities to improve them rather than develop compensatory strategies. She contended that she is very honest with them, and explains to them how, as a student,
she developed strategies to disguise her weaknesses in conducting research when she would have benefited from learning how to overcome them.

She said she gives clear expectations of what she is looking for in their work. She emphasised that she is looking for a constructive argument, not a battery of facts. She said that if students want to re-submit a piece of work and remedy a problem, she is ‘absolutely delighted’ and they can be assured that only the highest score will be recorded.

Jo also discussed feedback in terms of looking for students’ understanding of the topic and arguments to support their own position. He said that his efforts were directed to check that students had given their own opinion. He did not discuss giving an evaluation of the students’ strengths and weaknesses and or suggestions on where they might improve.

**Summary**

What emerged from the data is that issues pertaining to international students’ specific difficulties to meet academic criteria did not arise. In fact, the local students had more difficulties with some assessment tasks that the international students who prepared more thoroughly. The findings do not support those of others, which contend that international students have more difficulty in using critical thinking and problem-solving skills than local students (Ballard, 1991; Beasley & Pearson, 1996). There were three international students who perceived a bias against them by some lecturers in terms of assessment because of their cultural background. The others reported no specific difficulties in completing assignments or being given marks that showed bias against or for them.

The issue of assessment, however, seemed to be of extreme concern to both groups of students in regard to fairness and allowing them to see their strengths and weaknesses as well as to receive suggestions for improvements. They reported instances where they had either received no feedback or unconstructive feedback or marks that they
considered did not reflect the quality of work they had completed, without explanation. Some of them also reported that some of their work was not marked at all.

Others noted concern that the structure of their courses seemed to encourage a superficial level of learning where they had to memorise large amounts of information to be reproduced in exams. They also stated concern about the number of assignments required to pass a subject despite little, if any marks being attached to each assignment. Their concern seemed to be not just the few marks attached but the lack of time they felt they had to complete the work, which, they explained, prevented them from gaining a deep understanding. They all noted preferring continuous assessable tasks, although some were overwhelmed at the sheer volume of work they were expected to complete, as noted above. Their responses suggest that they did not feel that they had enough time to complete these assignments to their satisfaction as they had so many at the same time.

All of the lecturers, on the other hand, emphasised the amount of time and effort they spend in giving students diagnostic feedback to improve their critical and analytical skills. They described the value in students making their own assessment of their work and each other’s work as it encouraged students to use their critical thinking and evaluating skills. Not surprisingly given their statements on other issues, none of them reported not giving students feedback. Neither did they mention writing negative, unconstructive comments, though such perceptions may best be viewed from the eyes of students. Lecturers and students seemed to agree on what they value in assessment, apparently seeing assessment as a means to help students develop their independent and critical thinking skills.

8.9 The impact of students’ experiences at the University

*It has made me more open-minded and ready to learn about other cultures – it has enriched my life immensely.* (a local female survey response)

*It broadens my insights as we have different cultures and experiences. Previously I just moved in my own culture but now I have learnt many*
Lectures, tutorials and assessments constituted only a portion of what students reported as impacts of their life at the University. They also discussed positive and negative aspects of cultural difference and identity. The students reported that they had enjoyed and benefited from the learning and teaching experiences where they have had to work independently, use their initiative, research and analyse, create interactive presentations, and learn how to apply the theory in practice. For example, Harish (I) enthused:

*My experiences here have provided me with creativity. It has unleashed my mind, my imagination.*

Their ability to look at issues from multiple perspectives was also something that they pointed to as a beneficial learning experience. Ali (I) and Per (I) discussed together:

*Ali (I): The issues are basically not just yes and no. The issues are more than that. I won't need that (talking about a topic discussed in one subject) after I go for a job in a bank but I know that the issues are more than just yes and no. You have to think about all the perspectives of the thing before you take steps.*

*Per (I): Yes, I agree with that. It just makes you think.*

Their statements indicate an awareness of the development of their critical thinking skills. Both local and international students referred to broadening their knowledge as well as having a different life experience studying at the University. Elaine (I), in a focus group with Michelle (L) and Elisa (L), commented:

*Elaine (I): Coming to Australia to study at university is another kind of life*

*R: Another kind of life you're experiencing?*  
*Elaine: I think it's different and it is another reason why I came here*  
*R: OK, to get a different experience?*  
*Elaine: Yes.*
Elaine’s statement suggests she was aware that she had gained a new experience studying in Australia and confirms what she said previously about her awareness of the differences of the two different educational systems, the one she had experienced in Hong Kong and the one at the University.

Some international students stated that they had gained an increased awareness of racism and stereotyping that had helped them to see their own countries in a different light as well as broadening their intercultural understanding. Nikolai described how he realised that he needs to be open to people who come from a different background to himself and not stereotype them according to their cultural background. He explained:

...again the stereotypes are there and they put barriers to communication, you know, I wouldn't go and talk to this person. They are this and this but what I realise here is that these stereotypes are not true. You have to explore. (Nikolai I)

Lorna (I) also reported opening herself up to other people and ways of seeing things. She described her experiences at the University as impacting on her in very personal ways. She commented:

My personal opinion is when you see things in Taipei, it is very narrow. When you look at things, it's very narrow and when I study, I saw that people are different. I saw that everything has changed. You have a broader view on not just your own country but the whole world and that will change your attitude, your behaviour to see more, to achieve more, to make friends. (Lorna I)

Her statement suggests that her experiences at the University have impacted positively on her in a myriad of ways, where she noted that she has broadened her outlook and views on a whole range of issues. Other international students, Millie, Elaine and Ali, also described how their experiences at the University have heightened their awareness of their own culture as well as Australian culture. Ali was particularly enthusiastic about experiencing the different cultures of both his home country of Pakistan and University life in Australia. He said he saw himself fitting in
with both, although he commented that his religion, Islam, does impact on some aspects of his life here in Australia, particularly recreational times.

The international students noted, however, an awareness of how their appearance can lead them to be stereotyped as representatives of their respective countries. Some of them, though, like Harish, took it as a challenge to see the contradictions and nuances in the representation of their cultural identity. Harish (I) was adamant that he did not want his cultural background to lead to him being stereotyped as being like other Indian students on campus. He explained that he did not want to mix only with other Indian students for either recreational times or academic assignments. He stated he was conscious of having changed his outlook and some aspects of his behaviour as he wanted to have an experience, not just gain an education, which he claimed Indian students, who group together, were missing out on. His responses suggest that his experiences at the University have given him ‘the opportunity to explore the nuances and contradictions of their situation. It allows international students to turn towards creating new identities, new ways to represent themselves, and to challenge the often distorted representation of themselves by others’ (Meynert; 1998, p.37).

Nikolai, Harish and Tonja discussed together how important it is for students and lecturers to see international students as individuals and not group them together as “international students”. Tonja argued that it is important for local students to make an effort to get to know international students and elaborated on the contribution that international students can make in terms of seeing issues from different perspectives. She said:

*Getting Australian students or students who live here to not see international students as just international students but to see them as other people who have a different way of thinking, a different lifestyle not just someone who is culturally different, just as a different person. ’cause I know for a lot of people who live here in Australia or Anglo Saxon, they just tend to see them as international students but maybe seeing them as different people who maybe have been brought up differently and have different things to contribute. (Tonja L)*
Nikolai recounted stories of some of his experiences of being stereotyped as “Russian”, with a sense of humour. He described how he had been asked a lot about whether he had worked for the KGB as a spy. After a while, he said he answered in the affirmative adding, jokingly, that both his mother and father were also KGB spies. He recalled not finding these particular experiences as difficult as when he was excluded from class discussion because of his international student status. One instance that he described as traumatic for him was on his arrival at the airport in Tasmania, where he wore a suit and tie as is the tradition for students at his former elite institution in Russia. The University representatives who were there to meet him walked straight past him as he later realised he was not dressed as they must have expected a student to be. He could only understand his name being called over the loud speaker but not the instructions in English as to what he should do and recalls feeling very lost. This recollection speaks to the issue of the student’s experience of cultural expectation of the outward identity of what a student looks like, which is something that some of the local students from a non-Anglo backgrounds also reported.

Eli, a local student originally from Malaysia, reported less stereotyping about her appearance at the University than at school. At the University, she said she had not experienced any racism because she said ‘there are more “spaces” and there’s no conformity’. She described how she talks to international students and introduces herself, both in and out of class, to see whether they can be friends. She said she has a good understanding of what international students may be feeling, both in their personal and academic lives, and she tries to offer her support in whatever way she can. Candy was another local student who had come from another country, South Africa, some years ago. She described how she felt she had lost some of her identity in the move to Australia and did not see herself belonging to either Australian or South African culture. One might conclude that international students are not the only ones experiencing issues of personal and social identity.

Some of the international students claimed that some lecturers had a bias against them because of their cultural background. Li-Chin, for example, stated that some of
his lecturers seemed biased against students from Singapore, his country. He explained that one lecturer had given a description of Singapore that was negative, and, in his opinion, untrue. Another lecturer had given a student from Singapore a lower mark than the other group members because of her cultural background, so Li-Chin believed. Nikolai explained that he had also experienced lecturers describing aspects of his country wrongly and, in his opinion, negatively. So, while they reported that they like lecturers to include perspectives from their countries, care must be taken that the examples given are correct and do not perpetuate stereotypes or negative images.

Millie and Elaine, two students from Hong Kong, voiced particular concerns about the views of Pauline Hanson’s One Nation Party. They wanted to know whether her views reflected those of the wider community, including the University community. They asked:

*I want to know if Australians hate Asians. Hanson says this. I want to know if Australians hate Asians. I think that most of Australia hates Asia.*

Their friends and family were worried about their safety, although, they said, that they had not personally experienced racism and ‘loved’ being in Australia. However, they said that they believed that their appearance and international student status had sometimes led to them being excluded from class activities and discussion. One of the reasons they reported that they had come to Australia to study was to improve their English, so they described this exclusion as a negative and disappointing experience.

Making friends with students from different cultural backgrounds, both in and out of class, was something that all students discussed with enthusiasm, although the international students expressed disappointment at the small number of Australian friends they had been able to make. While the local students discussed animatedly the different cultural backgrounds of new friends they had made, some of them also noted that they knew few students from countries in Asia. They agreed that there were few international students enrolled in their subjects, so they suggested that that could be a reason why they knew so few. They added that one reason they had enjoyed taking a
communication subject was the opportunity to interact with so many students from different backgrounds. Jane also claimed that a lot of international students spend their time studying and that many students form a group with students from the same cultural background as themselves, which she said she found understandable but which made getting to know them difficult.

The international students, on the other hand, expressed disappointment at being able to make few friendships with local students. Ali (I), for example, explained that he had made friends with other international students, especially those who were studying Foundation Studies when he first arrived and that he had particular friends whom he met at different venues, such as local nightclubs on different days. But, he noted he had few Australian friends. Both Elaine (I) and Millie (I) described how they made friends with Australian students while doing group projects but had found that, when the project was finished, they found it hard to keep in contact and stay friends with them. They suggested this may be because local students were not on campus as often or as long as they and they believed that many of them leave to go to work or lived far away. Li-Chin (I), on the other hand, reported taking the initiative himself and instigating the creation of networks of students across campus, of both local and international students. He had an extensive network of friends, he reported, including Australians with whom he went out to dinner and to parties. He said he had had no problem making friends with Australians.

This disjuncture between local students, who claim that international students group together and do not wish to mix with them, and international students’ disappointment at not making more friendships with local students is addressed in some recent studies. Volet and Ang (1998) report the same reasons being given as those described above for this lack of social intercultural interaction and suggest that lecturers take a more active role in encouraging and supporting intercultural interaction among local and international students.

Eli (L) was one student who explained this lack of mixing as being due to misunderstanding between Australians and international students and described a key
barrier as language difficulties. One way of breaking down barriers, she suggested, was for lecturers to put an international student in a position where they must interact with Australians and they with international students. This way, barriers can be broken down and dialogue encouraged. This strategy was one the lecturers brought up as being useful to promote interaction that helped with broadening students’ perspective on issues. It is referred to in some recent literature as a useful strategy to encourage both international and local students to gain intercultural insights (Volet & Ang, 1998).

The findings to the last two open-ended questions on the survey, however, revealed many touching and compelling appraisals about how contact with students from different cultural backgrounds has broadened their outlook and shown them different perspectives. The students surveyed also reported having gained intercultural understanding and increased appreciation of people from different backgrounds, which they see as beneficial in both their academic and personal lives. Both local and international students wrote the same enthusiastic observations about their experience of getting to know students from different cultural backgrounds.

Forty-one of 72 local students responded that indicate their teaching and learning experiences with international students have opened their minds to many different perspectives and ways of knowing and thinking. Appreciating different cultures and an increased tolerance toward people from different backgrounds was evident in their comments. In many of their comments, there seemed to be recognition of personal development due to their contact with international students which has enriched their lives. A selection of their comments follows:

*It has expanded my mind – grow as a person. An essential part of uni – something that I wish everyone can enjoy.* (LM 18)

*It has made me appreciate different cultures. My friend took me to China Town for lunch and it was a great experience. Realise different opinions, ways of doing things, but have that in our own culture too.* (LF 3)

*I am more open-minded, accept people, their cultures. Am less judgemental/racist.* (LM 5)
Increased tolerance, made me more culturally aware, especially in difficulties in communication. Brought in new examples and perspectives. (LF 8)

Mixing with different cultures has broadened my mind. Reflected in different learning styles. (LM 49)

Some of the responses came across as particularly personal. For instance:

I love getting to know international students. (LF 29)
It has made me so much happier. I love learning about their cultures and hopefully, I will be able to go and visit them in their countries. I love them. I love hearing about learning what they do and how they feel about interacting with other students. (LF 77)

Of these 41 responses, eight suggested that lecturers and the University should devise strategies to actively promote intercultural interactions, which were described as being mutually advantageous in a myriad of ways, being beneficial for their future careers as well as promoting increased tolerance and understanding. A selection of the comments follows:

Lecturers need to actively promote communication and feedback from international students. They have a lot to offer – we can learn a lot from each other with globalisation increasing. (LF 57)
It has enhanced and made me aware of life in this world. So many people that we must be open-minded. There should be an assignment or something that focuses on different cultures – suggest ways for interaction. I think that people should realise that we are all the same but different. (LF 69)
My contact with them has made me realise that there are so many different cultures to learn about. It has opened up my mind. Should integrate the learning of another language or have subjects on cultures. This would give Wollongong uni students the edge. (LF 75)

There were another 17 local students’ (apart from the 41 reported above) responses that indicated recognising the value of intercultural interaction with international students in broadening their outlook and increasing their tolerance toward other cultures. However, they reported that this contact had not affected their learning. The following sum up their viewpoints:
I've always appreciated the perspectives of international students and it hasn't impacted on my learning. (LF 10)

Broadened outlook to a more global perspective. It hasn't affected it at all. (LM 31)

Has made me more tolerant of other cultures in some ways. Not really affected my learning. (LM 55)

Their comments reflect a contradiction in that they reported that the contact has broadened their outlook, but not their learning. A broadening of outlook must mean, however, that they have changed in some way ie they have learnt something new. Their comments suggested that they have separated out their textbook learning from their experiential learning, something that occurs several times in this section.

Three comments by local students suggested there is little contact among international and local students because of the nature of the subjects being studied.

Lack of contact has resulted in my naivety and ignorance, yet uni life has opened my mind towards cultures. Has not affected my subjects as they are all science. (LF 47)

There were another 11 local student responses stating that there has been no impact or very little impact with no other comment. Only three responses on this question were left blank, suggesting that nearly all local students had a positive viewpoint about local-international interaction.

Of the 42 responses from international students, there was only one respondent stating that contact with students from other cultural backgrounds has had no effect on his learning or personally. All the other responses, apart from eight left blank, indicated that the contact had been beneficial in a myriad of ways. There were 11 who reported that mixing with people from different cultural backgrounds gave them more ideas and different perspectives. Of these 11, there were four who specifically described advantages of this contact for their future career. A selection of their comments follows:
I can learn from other people from different backgrounds and get used to it when I go to work. Sometimes, these people can give me new ideas. (IF 6)

We can have more ideas from contact with different cultures and increase our knowledge. (IM 1)

There were another eight who explained that contact with students from different backgrounds gave them insights into other cultures, with three of them suggesting that it has helped in different ways with their learning.

I got more understanding about their culture, therefore I can adapt more easily and my English got better. (IM 96)

People are all the same. There's always an initial barrier. Once they manage to break through that you are more comfortable with them. Be more tolerant and observant of what others from the culture like and dislike. (IF 85)

Now I realise the advantages of my country rather than the disadvantages. It has helped me to improve my listening ability. ((IM 73)

This contact made me learn more about other people from other cultural backgrounds. This is good – more open-minded. (IM 46)

One response suggested that the lecturer mix different cultures together for group discussions so that she can learn more about different cultures. Another three stated that they had made friends from their contact with students from different cultural backgrounds, and two noted that international students can help and support each other, both with their learning and personally.

Group discussions are very good as you get to know more people since I think interaction and social life are important besides studying. (IF 80)

It affected me how I treasure life. I like a balance of social and study life but studying in a second language is a tough job. I realise that I have been here for four years and mixed around all nationalities but the intercultural communication has certain barriers that are hard to speak. (IM 83)

Another four commented that they felt that their confidence has been boosted from interacting with people from different backgrounds.
Communicating with other people seemed difficult for me before coming to Australia but now it’s easy as long as you learn to speak up and this helps in most of my subjects. (43 IF)

Given me more confidence to speak up and communicate better with other people. (IF 72)

Four more international students took the opportunity to make particular suggestions about what they would like lecturers to do to help them feel included or to help them understand what is being discussed. They commented on their difficulty with lecturers’ use of slang and unusual words and asked for lecturers to exercise patience with international students. One student wrote:

No effect. However, it would improve if more contact with other cultures. I think sometimes international students are not taken into account during lectures – sometimes it is hard to understand their speaking. (IF 40)

There was only one who commented that there was no effect on either their learning or their outlook on life and there was another who wrote ‘don’t understand’.

Summary

The international and local students’ comments, particularly on the survey, reflected that their interaction had itself seemed to increase awareness of the benefits of interacting with each other. They noted a broadening of their perspectives and outlook on life and becoming more tolerant and respectful of people from different cultural backgrounds. The international students reported also that the contact has boosted their confidence as well as helped them to make friends. The local students made comments about how personally rewarding the experience of interacting with international students has been and how they felt it has opened their minds to see different perspectives as well as gain an appreciation of different cultures.
8.10 Conclusion

International and local students reported that they enjoy using and developing their critical, analytical and independent thinking skills, and the lecturers interviewed described strategies that they said enhance intercultural interaction and classroom dialogue that cultivate these skills. These findings confirm those previously discussed in Chapters Six and Seven. The students’ comments revealed similarities in their views about passive, lecturer-directed contexts, where they perceived that they must listen and take notes to be memorised for exam purposes. They discussed animatedly different contexts, which promote interaction with each other and with the content, as well as different kinds of research and assignments that they had completed where they noted that they had taken the initiative and used a creative, critical, and analytical approach.

Strategies that were reported on particularly by both students and lecturers were those promoting speaking up in class and interaction among local and international students, so that they could see an issue from different positions. Both lecturers and students said that they see cultural diversity as a valuable resource that deepens and broadens students’ thinking as well as improving their critical and intercultural understanding and awareness. International students, in particular, described specific approaches and contexts that they had found helped them to voice their opinion and participate in class discussion and activities. Most lecturers indicated that they integrated intercultural dimensions into both their assessment and teaching practices. They said that they have structured activities and assessment tasks so that students have to mix with students from different backgrounds to be able to complete a task. The lecturers and students reported similar viewpoints on both the benefits and the difficulties of doing group work in multicultural groups. However, they also discussed how learning about the different perspectives of their group members had, they felt, broadened their thinking to find multiple solutions to a problem.

Both lecturers and students indicated that the use of a critical pedagogy, particularly a dialogic method of teaching, is a valuable teaching strategy that provides students
with critical, intercultural, and independent learning opportunities. Other benefits they noted included students gaining an increased intercultural awareness and understanding because of this kind of teaching approach. Some students described their teaching and learning experiences as having helped them become aware of racism and stereotyping of people, both in Australia and in their home countries. Underpinning their statements seemed to be a sense of personal development and change in their thinking about a wide range of issues based on their interactions with others, including their attitudes to people from different cultural backgrounds.

The last chapter, Chapter Nine, will make links between the key findings of the study and the literature as well as make some recommendations for future research, teaching approaches and policy initiatives.
Chapter Nine

9 Key findings and implications for teaching and research

This last chapter returns to the research questions posed in Chapter One and links the key findings from the study to those theories and studies critiqued in Chapter Three and referred to throughout the thesis. The chapter concludes with some suggested recommendations for future research into teaching strategies in intercultural contexts, and policy requirements for the internationalisation of tertiary study.

The exploration of the teaching and learning experiences of international and local students at the University has revealed pedagogical, personal, and social impacts that the intercultural context has on both students and lecturers. What became clear from the study was the similarity of viewpoints when local and international students’ responses were compared. By far the majority of students at the focus of the study reported similarly that they liked student-centred, interactive teaching and learning contexts where they engaged in dialogue with each other to explore their different perspectives. They described specific types of learning context that they found conducive, both to positive interaction and to their learning. In such contexts, they gained a deep understanding of the content and issues. They expressed a particular liking for applying theory to practical situations, including undertaking extensive research into real life situations.

Both international and local students explained how student-centred, interactive contexts promoted their critical thinking and intercultural communication skills as, they said, they learnt to discuss with each other and see different ways of thinking about issues. The data argue against the claim in some other studies that international students avoid discussion and debate because their learning styles are different from those of local students (Barker et al., 1989; Bradley & Bradley, 1984).
The similarity in views of international and local students about the need for class participation and interaction is a key finding of the study. Both reported a desire for opportunities to interact and share ideas with each other in the classroom. They voiced similar opinions when they described certain strategies that lecturers use that include them in class discussion and similar opinions for strategies that they feel alienate and marginalise them. Strategies, such as asking students by name for their opinion and giving them time to prepare and discuss responses in small groups, students reported, encouraged them to voice their opinions to the mutual benefit of local and international students and their lecturers (Chalmers & Volet, 1997; Hellmundt et al., 1998; Volet & Kee, 1993). Students are then no longer silenced objects, critical theory notes, with their identities defined and interpreted by others, but subjects who give voice to their own individual and diverse experiences and ways of making meaning and producing knowledge (Freire, 1996; Giroux, 1986, 1988; Walsh, 1991). Encouraging group discussions in class, some international students reported, also helped their confidence in their spoken English skills, which, in turn, may lead to improved spoken English ability.

The international students explained, however, that contact outside of class was difficult to maintain with local students, even after successful completion of a group assignment. They expressed disappointment at the small number of Australian students they had made friends with. Local students also recognised that they had made friends with only a few international students. A key recommendation of this study is for lecturers to set assignments that require students to work in multicultural groups over an extended period of time so that they have the time to build more genuine relationships as well as learn to work as a team and develop intercultural understanding.

The findings indicated that unless lecturers actively encourage multicultural group work with both international and local students, international students were more likely to work with others from similar cultural backgrounds to themselves. In this study, some of the lecturers described how they make multicultural group work a requirement for students to be able to complete the task. Students described seeing
each other as a valuable resource of knowledge while also having the opportunity to build relationships with each other.

Although the lecturers interviewed for this study described supportive strategies, local and international students also noted particular situations where they had felt overlooked and excluded, for example, when a lecturer allowed a select few to dominate discussion. Both groups claimed that a lack of time was an issue, as by the time they had worked out what they wanted to say, discussion had moved on to another topic. Others attributed being overlooked to their international identity and appearance explaining they felt that their ability to contribute was questioned and their opinions not sought. These misconceptions about international students are comprehensively addressed by Chalmers and Volet (1997), Biggs (1992; 1997), and McKay and Kember (1997) who report similar descriptions by students. The misconceptions that international students do not like interactive learning contexts and do not want to speak up in class discussions persist, both from anecdotal evidence, including two of the lecturers interviewed in this study, and in literature discussed in this thesis as a deficit approach to the cultural diversity of Australian tertiary classrooms (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991).

The findings from the current study do not support the ethnocentric deficit focus of some studies in the literature, where it is claimed that international students are passive, quiet learners reliant on the lecturer for information that they memorise with little understanding (Ballard, 1987; Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Pearson & Beasley, 1996). These studies understand international students’ experiences of tertiary study in Australia in terms of their perceived difficulties in critical and independent thinking, which are then attributed to students’ past educational experiences and cultural background (Samuelowicz, 1987). Such studies suggest that international students must be at a disadvantage because of the poverty of their previous educational experiences that are not as “good” as those of the dominant culture. They are marginalised by dichotomies of “us” and “them” and placed within clearly defined boundaries, silenced and excluded.
Additional misconceptions can be seen in many studies, where “international students” are depicted as one homogeneous group from South-East Asia (Ballard, 1987). Burns (1991) and Fox (1996) note that little, if any, recognition of the differences among students is given or explored. The individual experiences of international students from various South-East Asian cultures and other countries are, then, excluded from the discussion.

By contrast, the data from this study indicated that both local and international students had had similar teaching and learning experiences prior to university study where they were not encouraged to use or develop their critical and analytical skills. They both described similar experiences where they felt they were expected to memorise and reproduce the teacher’s point of view in assessment tasks, particularly exams.

However, the international students emphasised the level of difficulty of the material they had to memorise and indicated that they were used to memorising with a deep understanding rather than a surface, superficial approach. Biggs (1997) and Volet and Chalmers (1997) have pointed out a subtle difference between memorising with understanding and memorising with no, or little understanding, and suggest that it is unhelpful to cast international students as surface learners, incapable of using the most strategic approach suited to the task at hand. Furthermore, as Biggs (1997) points out, such a “surface learner” generalisation viewpoint does not explain the high academic success rate of some international students in Australian institutions. The data from this study, then, do not support the views of some that international and local students start university study with qualitatively different learning experiences (Ballard, 1987; Samuelowicz, 1987), nor the implication that local students begin university with well developed critical and analytical thinking skills.

The international students described clearly the kinds of learning approaches required at the University, which they described as speaking up and sharing ideas, taking the initiative and being responsible for their learning, and using and developing their critical and analytical skills. They reported little difficulty in meeting these
requirements and do not support the literature, which contends that they have particular problems because of their poor English language skills (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Beasley & Pearson, 1996). This finding does not support the literature and anecdotal evidence from some lecturers, which contends that they have particular problems because of their poor English language skills, especially in relation to using critical and independent learning approaches (Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Beasley & Pearson, 1996).

One must acknowledge that the group interviewed does not necessarily represent a cross-section of all international students in terms of English language ability. However, it is not the focus of this study to investigate the language proficiency levels of international students on arrival to University. It is obvious that students from various overseas countries where English is not used widely, and where English may be a third or fourth language for a student will require additional language support to build up their proficiency, including their understanding of English language for academic purposes. What seems to occur, though, is that some students’ less than perfect levels of English language proficiency are taken as an indicator by some lecturers and researchers that the students’ learning styles are “deficient”, or even that their levels of intelligence are “poor”. The findings from this study indicate quite clearly that there is no relationship between the first language of the student and their learning styles or intelligence.

Nevertheless, some literature reports that the perceived poor English skills of international students colour much of lecturers’ perceptions about them and the way they teach (Robertson et al., 2000), often leading to self-fulfilling prophecies, as Biggs (1997) points out. This study, on the other hand, recognises the use of particular strategies lecturers can put in place to support international students’ learning that can be beneficial to both their learning and that of local students. International and local students interviewed and surveyed described how rewarding the learning experiences had been in a range of ways, including their personal development in opening themselves up to different experiences and learning to think about issues from multiple perspectives.
Three of the six local students interviewed, on the other hand, described the difficulties they had in learning to write critical essays as well as in taking responsibility for their learning. They complained that, in some subjects, they were required to memorise huge quantities of information that they needed to reproduce for assessment, that they said was heavily weighted towards exams. They described experiencing considerable difficulty in memorising with an understanding of the application of information that they said was imparted by their lecturers in a one-directional transmission. The other three local students interviewed reported similarly to the international students and were enthusiastic about the opportunities they had to critique and undertake research.

The findings suggest that the kind of learning opportunities students had experienced depended on the kind of teaching and learning context established by the lecturer and capitalised on by students (Biggs, 1992, 1997; Gow & Kember, 1993; Volet & Renshaw, 1996). Instead of focussing on students' cultural backgrounds as determining the kinds of learning possible and the teaching approaches necessary, this study argues that lecturers need to align their objectives, their classroom practice, assignments and assessment tasks to ignite the kind of learning required (Biggs, 1996d, 1997; Chalmers & Fuller, 1996; Jackson, 1997; McKay & Kember, 1997; Prosser & Trigwell, 1997; Scollon & Scollon, 1995; Shuell, 1986). The findings indicated that when a context was established where students were supported with what constructivists call the “scaffolding” to speak up, to make learning a process of critical inquiry and to learn independently (Greenfield, 1984), students participated (Renshaw & Volet, 1995) and learnt the skills of critical and analytical thinking.

In line with this finding is that of Volet and Renshaw (1995) who found that the goals and perceptions of study settings of students from South-East Asia and from Australia became similar over just one semester. They provide further support for the view that it is specific characteristics of the teaching and learning context that impact on how students learn, not their cultural background.
Other findings from this study indicated that both students and lecturers recognised the cultural capital that international students bring to Australian tertiary classrooms and the role lecturers and local students play in promoting intercultural learning. This is an important finding as it recognises the roles that both lecturers and international and local students play in a two-way dialogue of listening to each other (Spivak, 1990) as well as having the opportunity to voice opinions. These opportunities, international students reported, helped them to improve their spoken English, which for some of them was a key reason for attending an English-speaking university.

The findings suggested that the group of students interviewed had been open and sincere in their attempts to gain intercultural understanding, since openness and sincerity are key elements of uncoerced, authentic intercultural communication (Fox, 1996; Fox, 1997; Habermas, 1987; Young, 1992). Such a context is characterised by ill-defined boundaries and is student-focussed instead of student silenced. Recognised, too, however, is that there are many grey areas – things change, one situation can become another, people act differently in different situations. The study theorises that it is the culture of the context that needs to be examined when discussing student learning, not the cultural backgrounds of students. It posits that a person’s cultural background is not static nor are there universals that describe it. Rather, it is flexible and ever changing in response to different contexts, including the culture of the university and the university classroom (Rizvi & Walsh, 1998). This clearly contradicts the position of Hofstede, whose stereotypical descriptions of cultural attributes of people from various countries assume a uniformity and fixedness of those cultures (Hofstede, 1991).

A key purpose of a university education is often stated as being about interaction and changing conceptions rather than about transmitting and reproducing knowledge (Biggs, 1997; Marton et al. 1993; Prosser & Trigwell. 1997). The students at the focus of this study indicated that their teaching and learning experiences at the University had changed their perceptions to give them an increased appreciation of both cultural diversity and the richness of different ways of thinking. Both international and local students reported that their interactions had opened their minds to different ways of
thinking as well as becoming more aware of stereotyping and racism. International students in this context were not seen as being “different, deficient or disadvantaged, dominated by the local context” (Fox, 1996). The data from this study indicated that their active participation in the learning process was mutually beneficial; it served to broaden the perspectives and understanding of both local and international students.

Some might contest these findings arguing that the 15 students at the focus of this study, as well as the 114 students who were surveyed, had all taken a Business Communication subject where the promotion of intercultural interaction was a key teaching and learning strategy embedded in the teaching practices of the tutor and lecturer and in the assessment tasks. Countering this potential bias is the fact that both the student interviews and the students' survey responses addressed a range of subjects beyond Business Communication. In addition, most were enrolled in Business Communication as a required, not an elective subject, so a self-selection bias in the survey sample is less likely (though possible). Their comments suggested that students were sensitive to certain styles of teaching and not merely swayed by their experiences of the one subject.

Most of the lecturers interviewed supported what the students had described as their teaching approach. The lecturers reported acting as facilitators, giving space to affirm the voices and experiences of students. In such contexts, knowledge is not seen as the fixed possession of the lecturers, where the act of learning is reduced to the transfer of knowledge to passive, silenced students (Shor & Freire, 1987). Instead, the students and lecturers worked together to produce meaning and new knowledge that included the voices, experiences and values of both international and local students to their mutual benefit (Giroux, 1988; Walsh, 1991). The students reported that not only did these experiences improve their critical thinking skills and ability to think from different perspectives, but they also promoted acceptance and appreciation of cultural diversity and the individually diverse and original experiences of both students and lecturers (Mills, 1997; Volet & Ang, 1988).
It seems that most of the lecturers who agreed to be at the focus of the study teach at what the literature considers to be the highest conception of teaching. That is, they focussed on changing perceptions through interaction rather than transmitting knowledge for reproduction (Chalmers & Fuller, 1996; Marton, Dall’Alba & Beaty, 1993; Prosser & Trigwell, 1997). Their comments do not suggest they employ what Freire calls a “banking” approach to teaching and learning where lecturers fill students’ empty heads with knowledge that needs to be reproduced (Shor & Freire, 1987; Freire, 1996). Most of them appeared to be very much aware of challenging students to think about the different positions taken on an issue, who benefits and who is silenced, so that the students gained an understanding of the power issues and power inequalities involved (Giroux, 1988; 1997; Smyth, 1989). Crucial to the study was the demonstrated interrelationship between the use of a critical pedagogy and the inclusion of international perspectives where cultural differences were valued and different viewpoints sought. By exposing different perspectives to critical inquiry, students gained a deep understanding of the ways in which some are marginalised/alienated/dominated to the benefit of others and how this contributes to power inequalities (Giroux, 1988; Smyth, 1989), including racism and stereotyping, in and out of the tertiary classroom.

Among the key findings in this research was the significance of lecturers’ attitudes toward their students in intercultural contexts, and the important influence that their pedagogical strategies had for students. The lecturers’ comments suggested that many had integrated an intercultural dimension, not only in their teaching approaches but also in assessment tasks. These approaches indicated that they promoted students’ backgrounds and experiences as legitimate sites for intellectual inquiry (Freire & Shor, 1987; Giroux, 1997; Walsh, 1991). Students can, then, locate themselves and their ways of knowing within the context of study, as this writer has discussed at length in other work (Hellmundt et al. 1998). Rather than seeing the cultural diversity of their classrooms as problematic as some other studies suggest (Burroughs-Lange, 1996; Goodman, 1994; Pearson & Beasley, 1996), most of the lecturers and the students interviewed saw it as a resource to broaden the thinking of all students.
The students reported similarly that they preferred lecturing and tutorial approaches which integrate different examples, including international examples, and which include different cultural contexts in discussions and assignments. The issues are then seen to be both relevant and of broad significance to the thinking and ways of knowing of all students, not just the dominant local group of students. Instead of legitimating only the local students’ ways of knowing and producing knowledge as sites for intellectual inquiry, the majority of the lecturers interviewed reported that they employ specific strategies to make visible the experiences, perspectives and values of international students, too. Their explanations suggest that they work together with students in the production of knowledge and subject that knowledge to critical inquiry (Shor & Freire, 1987). They do this by including different cultural dimensions in their teaching approaches, activities, assignments and assessment practices (Rizvi & Walsh, 1998). It is increasingly recognised in other research that, if internationalisation of universities is to produce such key outcomes as “global learners” able to participate and contribute in multicultural environments, it is essential for lecturers to include international dimensions in curricula and teaching practice (Knight & De Wit, 1995; Rizvi & Walsh, 1998).

The study has documented some of the lecturers’ strategies that promoted successful intercultural interaction among students in as much as students reported favourably that such interactions gave them a deep and broad understanding of the subject as well of each other’s viewpoints. The lecturers discussed a range of activities, such as small group discussion with a student reporting back, asking students about their experiences of different cultural contexts, giving assignments that have an international focus where students had to use the different cultural backgrounds of their group members as a resource, strategies that are also reported by Chalmers and Volet (1997). However, they did not report how often they use such strategies nor how often they consider it necessary to promote critical thinking in students.

The model below presents a theoretical framework depicting a shift from one kind of context where international students are seen negatively and where student voice is
silenced to a context where all student experiences are included and tolerance and acceptance of cultural diversity is promoted.

The lecturers that students recommended be interviewed for this study appear to be much more enlightened in their teaching practice than those often described in the literature (Burroughs-Lange, 1997; Prosser & Trigwell, 1997). They showed up as examples of best practice in the eyes of the students. Indeed, the descriptions the lecturers gave of their teaching practice and philosophy demonstrate the application of critical theory and a dialogic method of teaching. Many of the lecturers at the focus of this study have had international experiences or are from different cultural backgrounds, which may account for their intercultural understanding and ability to
integrate international perspectives into their teaching and assessment practices. This research suggests that the “preferred” attributes of new in-coming lecturers should include international experience and demonstrated intercultural awareness in order to meet the aims of the University.

The findings indicated that students could also identify many instances of poor teaching practice by lecturers. They described subjects with a heavy emphasis on memorisation for exams where they had little understanding of the application of that knowledge. They described lecturers who give inadequate feedback or no feedback at all, who appear to have a negative bias toward students of different cultural backgrounds, and who use negative and stereotypical examples of different nationalities. The international students cited examples of being excluded from class activities and discussions, seemingly because of negative associations with their cultural background. It is therefore essential that further research into the attitudes and teaching practices of lecturers across campus and across faculties be conducted to determine their attitudes to intercultural awareness and their ability to include international perspectives in their curricula and teaching practices. Professional training programs could then be put in place to target and address the needs of lecturers.

This recommendation is supported by the comments of three of the instructors at the focus of this study who specifically referred to their need for teacher training, in general, as well as support in understanding the needs of international students. In particular, the two tutors new to teaching in a university context lamented the lack of any training and the lack of consultation with more senior lecturers with regard to assessment tasks and course content.

The findings also indicated that, in some subjects, there is a mismatch between the kinds of learning outcomes that students, lecturers and key policy makers discuss as being essential to meet the aims of the University and the kinds of learning contexts that students are provided with. For example, some of the students described lectures with over 300 students where the lecturers seemingly presented a lot of information
that students felt they were required to memorise and reproduce in exams. These subjects included science subjects, which have a long tradition of didactic transmission of knowledge that students need to know to be able to progress to the next stage in their learning of the subject requirements (Tobias, 1990). Other subjects students referred to seemed to be ones where students would be entering a profession, such as Sports Rehabilitation and Accounting, on the completion of their degrees where the demands for professional accreditation dictate curriculum content. In these subjects, the students reported little, if any, interaction with students from different cultural backgrounds, which suggests that initiatives to promote intercultural interaction need to be put in place. The research points to the need to interview, observe, and survey lecturers across different faculties and subjects to determine whether their teaching and learning contexts are conducive to meeting the espoused key aims of producing “global learners”.

This study points to another recommendation that lecturers learn to be open about and reflect on their assumptions and beliefs about students and student learning so that they can create an inclusive classroom to the benefit of all, as advocated by Kent (1993) and Osterman and Kottkamp (1993). The research indicates the urgent need for lecturers to have opportunities and be encouraged to establish collegial environments to pool resources and discuss teaching strategies to support the development of both international and local students’ critical thinking skills and intercultural awareness.

To sum up then, this study has looked at contexts where both lecturers and students endeavoured to create a context of inclusion where student voice was valued and where knowledge was created in partnership. Such an approach was seen as conducive to making learning a process of critical inquiry, where lecturers and students consciously created inclusive intercultural communicative contexts. A key recommendation of this study is that lecturers need to actively promote and carefully monitor intercultural interactions of students so that students learn from multicultural contexts and build lasting relationships with each other (Volet & Ang, 1998). As noted in the literature, intercultural communication can easily descend into
miscommunication or distorted communication with dangerous and harmful results (Fox, 1997).

The study recognises the important role lecturers can take in the process while also recognising the skills needed to promote intercultural communication. It also recognises, as critics of a critical pedagogy point out, that it is often assumed that lecturers will have the necessary skills and that they themselves are above racism and sexism (Ellsworth, 1992; Gore, 1993). The international students at the focus of this study reported instances of racist attitudes toward them by lecturers. They claimed that some lecturers perpetuated negative stereotypes about them as representatives of their country, had given them lower marks than other group members, and had excluded them from discussions and activities because, they presumed, of their cultural background or appearance. To address these concerns, the study recommends professional training across the whole campus so that the rich social forum that cultural diversity offers is appreciated and integrated into the teaching practice for the mutual benefit of students and lecturers.

The necessity for lecturers to have an understanding and appreciation of the cultural capital that international students bring to the tertiary classroom cannot be underestimated. While policy makers often focus on marketing strategies to attract international students to Australian universities, this study argues that it is crucial for the students to experience a teaching and learning context that appreciates their ways of thinking and encourages students to learn from each other.

Internationalisation of tertiary education must mean more than clever marketing policies and isolated “internationalisation” committees. Internationalisation must also include an internationalised curriculum that is actively promoted and supported throughout the University community in order for students to realise the key aims of a tertiary education, among those being students as global learners, able to function in multicultural environments (Fox, 1995).
Some of the strategies documented in this study are not difficult or time consuming, and yet the students report that they make a huge difference to their learning and personal experiences. However, as noted previously, curriculum demands for professional accreditation as well as subjects with a long tradition of didactic transmission of knowledge may dictate the way in which lecturers teach and, hence, the way students learn. These claimed constraints need to be investigated to determine in what ways students can learn the skills they need for their professions but at the same time expose these to critical inquiry—a key challenge promoted by critical theorists (Shor & Freire, 1987).

The cultural diversity of Australian tertiary classrooms provides a rich opportunity to promote interracial acceptence and cultural understanding as well as to broaden students’ and lecturers’ ways of thinking and viewing the world (Volet & Ang, 1998). The students, both local and international, reported enthusiastically on the impact of an intercultural context as giving them new ideas and different perspectives on subject matter and increasing their understanding and appreciation of different cultures. It has given them, they stated, new insights and broadened their thinking. These findings indicated that the aims of a tertiary education, including developing students’ critical, independent and intercultural skills, espoused by students, lecturers and key policy makers are being realised, at least in some classes, at the site of the study.

Lastly, the outcomes of this study point to the need for more empirical research into the pedagogical, personal and social impacts of both local and international students’ intercultural interaction in Australian tertiary contexts. Strategies that promote multicultural group work both inside and outside of class, so that students can learn from each other and build social and work relationships, also need to be investigated further and documented. There is scant research published on the impact of intercultural teaching and learning contexts on student learning, student interaction and cultural understanding for both local and international students. Little has been published by international researchers (Pederson, 1994; Volet & Ang, 1998), especially from the perspective of international students who have experienced the
intercultural context of Australian universities and who have returned home. This is important to gain an inside perspective from international students who have experienced an intercultural teaching and learning context in Australia to gauge the kinds of impact it has had on them.

This study has given a voice to both students and lecturers about their teaching and learning experiences to enable them to be heard in the research literature. More studies undertaken by both local and international researchers will illuminate further the issues of internationalisation of the tertiary curriculum and the roles of both local and international students, and their lecturers, in the process of promoting intercultural understanding.
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Appendix A: The themes

Each of the themes and sub-themes are presented here with an example of each from the data.

Key theme: Students’ purpose and experiences of tertiary study
Sub-themes:

Thinking skills
Example: *I think that some courses are trying to teach you how to think* (my emphasis) rather actually learn [memorise] the things like this subject here. *(Jane (L))*

Independent learning
Example: *I mean if you go to uni, you are expected to do something yourself.* *(Per (I))*

Applied knowledge
Example: …*mainly with formulas learn how to apply them rather than actually memorising them* *(Ali in agreement – yes).* *(Jane (L))*

Post-study employment/career
Example: Per (I), Ali (I) and Jane (L) noted that learning how to give effective presentations and write reports was good preparation for the world of work.

Life experience
Example: *I think it’s just the basic idea of how structures work and how institutions work and how it can affect how our society works.* *(Sofia (L))*

Teaching and learning contexts that meet students’ needs
Example: *I like to get a hands-on perspective.* *(IM 21)*

Teaching and learning contexts that do not meet students’ needs
Example: *Formal, downward communication where the tutor only tells you the answer of the homework but you can’t give your idea.* (IM 1)

**Students’ previous teaching and learning experiences: A comparison with those at the University**

Example: *Here they encourage you in different areas to speak up. They encourage different behaviour patterns. There, (in Russia), you are encouraged to memorise and regurgitate in the exam. Here, it is the other way around. You are encouraged to understand the concept.* (Nikolai I)

**The lecturers’ perspective on the purpose of tertiary study**

Example: *What are the power questions behind it? Who benefits? Who does not benefit?* (Salman)

**Constraints to “good” teaching practice**

Example: *Minimising the amount of teaching we have to do and in a sense, there’s a logic behind that to get the students to do more and more. So it’s not as daft as it seems, but how do you do that with 200 students, without increasing your own workload dramatically?* (Mark)

**Key theme: Didactic, lecturer-directed learning**

Sub-theme: *The course textbook*

Further sub-theme: *Support in understanding the textbook*

Example: *I think the textbook has got a lot of stuff that you don’t need to use and the lecturer just highlights the main points of that chapter and those are the points that you pick up in the exam and take out. I think that’s the main point of a lecture.* (Michelle L)

Further sub-theme: *Lecturers’ views on academic texts and readings*

Example: *The textbook that I use is a difficult one and certainly provides plenty of scope for the better students, the more capable students, but I’m hoping that the*
lectures provide an introduction for the students who have difficulty with the ideas.

(Peter)

Sub-theme: **Note taking in lectures**

Further sub-theme: **Strategies for note taking**

Example: *Passive sitting and taking notes all the time without any time to practise.*

(IM 88)

Further sub-theme: **Lecturers’ views on notes**

Example: … only three of the ten lecturers interviewed discussed note taking in their classes.

Sub-themes: **The application of theory to practice**

Example: *If you don’t have the theory and the practice all together, you just go right like this thing is happening, you’ve got the theory in front of you. It’s in the book* (Ali I).

**The lecturers’ use of examples: inclusiveness/exclusiveness**

Example: *They said Russians only like local made chocolate but it’s not actually the case. They do like imported things... They got an article from somewhere but obviously my opinion was more related than theirs. I have spent my whole life there so I should know better but I didn’t want to push my opinion. I didn’t want to let them down.* (Nikolai I)

**Effectiveness of teaching strategies**

Example: *Charismatic. I think that’s very important that someone has some charisma. I mean, if you’ve got someone who has no presence then the lecture has no presence. I have very little respect for people with no presence.* (Candy (L))

Key theme: **Interactive, student-centred learning**

Sub-themes:

**A context of inclusion**
Example: *It’s where we sit down and discuss questions and I have a chance to see other people as well. Getting to know other people. Studying the country and the customs. We really have to interact and have an exchange of ideas.* (Li-Chin I)

**A context of exclusion**

Example: *There’s about four people she knows the names of and who talk a lot and who are very intelligent, who go to the library a lot and everything else, so she’ll call on those people constantly...I find that really frustrating that she really concentrates on a few people...* (Sofia L)

**The lecturers’ views on interactive, student-centred learning**

Example: *If the students have some background in different cultures, I use the students as a resource and I ask them to tell us about their experiences and how the subject is treated differently in different countries.* (Arslan)

**Asking “wrong” questions**

Example: *I just try and get the students to ask as many questions as possible and I know that they don’t ask questions because they are afraid of what they’re asking. They’re afraid they’ll look stupid.* (Paul)

**Students’ opinions about multicultural group work**

Example: *People coming together and asking each other questions... ’cause if I sit with different people who have different beliefs you talk to them and you raise some questions. You kind of learn more ’cause you’re not thinking from one perspective. You’re thinking from all the perspectives from different people.* (Ali I)

**Lecturers’ strategies and activities to promote group work and interaction among local and international students**

Example: *It (interaction) is initiated by the students rather than by me. I am doing the tutorials, and I do get interaction with the overseas students in the tutorials.* (Peter)
Assessment tasks

Further sub-themes: Presentations

Example: ... if you are going to work in a lab, you are going to have to present your research whatever and I think that they do help you to have confidence and be able to stand up and to talk to a group of people. (Jane L)

Lecturers’ views on student presentations

Example: They took each other’s roles and talked about what had happened over the ten weeks. It was terrific. It was really moving, the process of it. One of the students in the class said that she had probably learnt more from that presentation than she had ever learnt. So that was to my satisfaction. (Martin)

Written assignments

Example: I had the most fun doing those essays than I think I’ve done in any other subject. Sofia (L)

Lecturers’ views on written assignments

Example: And it’s not just the international students. I have quite a few people straight out of the HSC – some shockers! (Paul)

Assessment practices

Further sub-themes: The students’ perspective

Example: And some, you just get a mark. I hate it. (Li-Chin (I))

The lecturers’ perspective

Example: You cannot do a good job. The value of your work feels just awful. You’re just part of a sausage machine of contemporary education and it’s unfair to students. (Peter)

Sub-theme: The impact of students’ experiences at the University

Example: It affected me how I treasure life. I like a balance of social and study life but studying in a second language is a tough job. (IM 83)
Appendix B: The survey

A Case Study Investigating Students’ Perceptions and Experiences of Teaching and Learning in an Intercultural Tertiary Context

Doctoral Candidate: Susan C. Hellmundt

Supervisors:
Dr. W. Rifkin (Department of Management)
Dr. C. Fox (Faculty of Education)
Dr. W. Vialle (Faculty of Education)

Survey: For Undergraduate Business Communication Students
Spring session 1997

As part of my doctorate entitled above, I am undertaking research into students’ perceptions and experiences of university teaching. I want to find out what kind of impact these experiences may have on intercultural communication among students and lecturers. The focus of this survey is to find out what you think about the teaching and learning experiences you have. Also I need to find out what you think about contact with students from different cultural backgrounds to your own.

I would really appreciate it if you were able to complete this short survey. Your consent will be indicated by completion of the survey. Anonymity and confidentiality are assured. Results of the survey will be available on request.

Should you not wish to be part of this study, do not complete the survey. If you have a problem with any of the questions, feel free not to answer them or alternatively, ask me.

Many thanks!
Please circle the appropriate answer and fill in the blanks

1. Are you an international or local student? male or female?

2. What is your nationality/ cultural background? (e.g. Chinese Malay)

________________________________________________________________________

3. In which country were you born:

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

4. What else should I know about your background that effects your experience here at the University of Wollongong? e.g. gender, age, work experience, travel, where you grew up ...

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

5. Please list one of your favourite subjects and one least favourite subject so far i.e one that you like (subject 1) and one that you don’t like (subject 2).

1. ________________________________________________________________

2. ________________________________________________________________

6. For each subject you listed above in question 5, I would like to know about your experiences in lectures and tutorials. In the table over the page, please rate from 1 to 5 your experiences according to the scale.

1 never/ hardly at all
2 infrequently/not much
3 sometimes
4 often
5 very often/a lot
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experiences</th>
<th>Lecture Subj. like (1L)</th>
<th>Tutorial Subj. like (1T)</th>
<th>Lecture Subj. dislike (2L)</th>
<th>Tutorial Subj. dislike (2T)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Taking notes while lecturer talks (not from overheads)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Copying from overheads</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecturer uses videos, power point, slides etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecturer gives you key points</td>
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<tr>
<td>You identify key points</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group/pair work</td>
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<tr>
<td>Opportunity to say own opinion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Time given for discussion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feel able to ask questions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feel confident to speak up in class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of experiential, hands-on, interactive strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecturer shows application of theory in practical examples</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students practise application of theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecturer gives international examples</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students encouraged to use international examples</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lecturer encourages mixing of local and international students</td>
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7. How many times per session are you required to give oral presentations?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>subject 1</th>
<th>subject 2</th>
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8. What percentage of your total assessment mark is based on your oral ability and participation/presentation skills?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>subject 1</th>
<th>subject 2</th>
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9. What percentage of your total mark for each of the subjects is based on exams?

<table>
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<tr>
<th>subject 1</th>
<th>subject 2</th>
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10. Which kinds of learning experiences work best for you? Why?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

11. Which kinds of learning activities do not meet your needs? Why?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

12. When you are asked to complete a group assignment, do you work mostly on your own or do you work together as a group? and do you work with different groups or mostly with the same group?

________________________________________________________________________
13. Describe in general your contact with students from different cultural backgrounds to your own:

1. in lectures

2. in tutorials

3. for academic work outside of class

4. socially

14. How has this contact (or lack of contact) affected your general outlook on life?
15. How has this contact (or lack of contact) affected your learning of particular subjects?

16. Anything else you would like to tell me? For example, do you have any suggestions or comments that you think may contribute to this study or may lead to improving intercultural communication? Please feel free to add them here.

Thank you for your assistance!
Appendix C: The bar graphs

A complete set of bar graphs can be found overpage.
Taking notes in a lecture and tutorial you like

A1L

A1T
Taking notes in a lecture and tutorial you dislike

A2L

A2T
Copying notes in a lecture and tutorial you like

B1L

B1T
Copying notes in a lecture and tutorial you dislike

B2L

B2T
Lecturer uses videos, PowerPoint etc. in a lecture and tutorial you like
Lecturer uses videos, PowerPoint in a lecture and tutorial you dislike

C2L

C2T
Lecturer gives key points in a lecture and tutorial you like

D1L

D1T
Lecturer gives key points in a lecture and tutorial you dislike
You identify key points in a lecture and tutorial you like.
You identify key points in a lecture and tutorial you dislike.
Group/pair work in a lecture and tutorial you like

F1L

F1T
Group/pair work in a lecture and tutorial you dislike

F2L

F2T
Opportunity to say own opinion in a lecture and tutorial you like

![Bar chart for G1L](image)

![Bar chart for G1T](image)
Opportunity to say own opinion in a lecture and tutorial you dislike

G2L

G2T
Time given for discussion in a lecture and tutorial you like

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Percent</th>
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<th>International</th>
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<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

H1T
Time given for discussion in a lecture and tutorial you dislike

H2L

H2T
Feel confident to ask questions in a lecture and tutorial you like
Feel confident to ask questions in a lecture and tutorial you dislike.
Feel confident to speak up in a lecture and tutorial you like

### J1L

![Bar chart showing percentages for different levels of confidence in speaking up in lectures and tutorials, comparing local and international students.]

### J1T

![Bar chart showing percentages for different levels of confidence in speaking up in lectures and tutorials, comparing local and international students.]

324
Feel confident to speak up in a lecture and tutorial you dislike
Use of experiential, hands-on activities in a lecture and tutorial you like

![Bar chart K1L]

![Bar chart K1T]
Use of experiential, hands-on activities in a lecture and tutorial you dislike

K2L

K2T
Lecturer shows application of theory in a lecture and tutorial you like

L1L

L1T
Lecturer shows application of theory in a lecture and tutorial you dislike

![Graph of L2L](image1)

![Graph of L2T](image2)
Students practise application of theory in a lecture and tutorial you like

M1L

M1T
Students practise application of theory in a lecture and tutorial you dislike

M2L

M2T
Lecturer gives international examples in a lecture and tutorial you like

N1L

N1T
Lecturer gives international examples in a lecture and tutorial you dislike

N2L

N2T
Students encouraged to use international examples in a lecture and tutorial you like
Students encouraged to use international examples in a lecture and tutorial you dislike

O2L

O2T
Lecturer encourages mixing of local and international students in a lecture and tutorial you like.
Lecturer encourages mixing of local and international students in a lecture and tutorial you dislike.