

## Tutoring in the multicultural Business classroom

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**Abstract:** *This paper evaluates a program designed to enhance the effectiveness of university business program tutors in teaching in the multicultural classroom. The research evaluates the needs of international students in business tutorials through international student and experienced tutor focus groups and analysis of the relevant literature. Language issues featured very strongly as being of great concern, as well as attention to group processes and group facilitation skills, links to career issues, and facilitating interaction between local and overseas students.*

*The analyses of the needs of international students were then used to develop a program to facilitate the teaching efficacy of tutors in the multicultural classroom. The program utilised a training seminar and a tutor peer mentoring system. Peers will evaluate the tutor's classroom performance with international students using criteria derived from the strategies taught in the training seminar. International students will also rate the effectiveness of the strategies employed, providing valuable information on strategies that can be employed to enhance learning in the multicultural classroom. Tutors were also given insight into their teaching style by application of the multicultural personality questionnaire (MPQ) and an assessment of their teaching experiences and philosophies. The evaluation of this program and assessment of international students needs in tutorials provides important direction for enhancing the learning experiences of international students.*

### Introduction

The Australian University business classroom has become multicultural in composition, if not multicultural in teaching orientation. The enormous importance of international students is reflected in their contribution to keeping Australia's universities vibrant in the face of increasing Federal government cutback in funds (AVCC, 2003). This importance, however, may not be reflected in the teaching orientation within the multicultural business classroom (Hellmundt, Rifkin & Fox, 1998). This paper investigates the needs of international students in the University business classroom through the eyes of international students and their tutors. The needs are matched with strategies from the literature and those suggested by tutors and students, to produce five important strategies to increase participation, understanding and interaction amongst international and local students.

### Background

#### *Internationalisation of Australian higher education*

Australia's universities continue to attract increasing numbers of overseas students at both the undergraduate and postgraduate levels, with most students coming from non-English speaking (NESB) backgrounds (AVCC, 2002). Of the ten major source countries of international students, seven are countries where English is not the major medium of educational instruction (Malaysia, Hong Kong, Indonesia, China, Thailand, Taiwan and Norway). In 2000, after Switzerland, Australia had the highest percentage of foreign students (12.5%) as a percentage of all students (foreign and domestic students) amongst OECD and non-OECD countries (AVCC, 2002). Amongst Australia's major exports of goods and services, education ranks ninth in terms of value in 2000 – 2001 (AVCC, 2002). The Australian university tutorial classroom, therefore, is typically multicultural and multilingual in student composition.

### *Challenges for tutors in the multicultural classroom*

The challenges for tutors in the multicultural classroom have been identified through a number of research projects. Students from non-English speaking backgrounds (NESB) have been recognised as often participating poorly in discussion based tutorials (Flowerdew, 1998). The reasons for this lack of participation have been identified as fear of losing face (Bond, 1996), differing expectations on the need for participation (Ledwith & Seymour, 2001) and language and communication difficulties (Desiraju & Gopinath, 2001). Tutors face the challenge of fairly marking written assessment from NESB students where the work is characterised by frequent grammatical errors (Mohan, 1992). Tutors must also deal with the difficulty that international students face in relating to or applying concepts that are strongly framed within the confines of the Australian context (Hellmundt *et al*, 1998). Tutors also find it difficult to encourage critical thinking and analysis amongst students whose previous educational experiences have neglected or discouraged this approach (Smith, Miller & Crassani, 1998). All of these problems can be magnified when a tutor is in a subordinate role to a course convenor, with little or no control over what or how the class is taught.

### *Tutor competencies in teaching international students*

Co-operative learning techniques and concepts that help students to learn together have been recommended and tested in the multicultural university classroom (George, 1994). Co-operative learning involves groups of about four members working together on a task where members are individually accountable for their part of an outcome that requires a co-operative effort for successful completion (Johnson & Johnson, 2000). A specific strategy is the "think-pair-share" technique developed by Lyman (cited in George, 1994) where students listened to a question about a reading, were given time to frame an answer and were paired with a learning partner for conferring, before being called on randomly to share their collective answer with the class. A "drill and review" strategy has also been successfully tested in multicultural university classrooms (George, 1994). This strategy divides the class into dyads with one student recalling what was taught (driller) and one student listening and responding to the review (reviewer). Roles would be reversed for other exercises, and this dyad would remain together throughout the course. Using an experimental research design, George (1994) was able to demonstrate with 61 undergraduate psychology students from differing cultural backgrounds, that the group that employed these strategies demonstrated improved student achievement and attitude towards instruction. Only a very small minority of these students, however, were from NESB backgrounds, and so the application of these strategies to the Australian multicultural university classroom is unclear.

Another co-operative learning strategy that has been used with diverse classes is the peer tutoring method (Slavin, 1990). This method usually involves a more permanent tutoring relationship between a higher performing or more advanced student and a peer, and has been shown to improve the academic performance and attitude of both the student tutor and peer through the processes of recall, explanation and motivation required by the peer tutor (Slavin, 1990). For this method to be of benefit to tutors in the multicultural university classroom, however, it needs to be integrated into the tutorial session itself.

Experiential learning theory also helps to inform the development of teaching competencies for tutors in the multicultural classroom (Murray, 1993). This theory has been defined as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 1984, p.41). Helping students to identify and share their experience related to the concepts being discussed in tutorials helps to tap into and open up the diversity of experiences and perspectives available in the multicultural classroom. Adler (2002, p.146) suggests that multicultural groups "have the potential to invent more

options and create more solutions than do single-culture teams." This sharing of experiences and perspectives, however, are more likely to occur when the group is able to recognise, understand and respect cultural differences, where the value of diversity is recognised and encouraged by the facilitator and members, and where the facilitator is adept at providing positive feedback on process and output to the group (adapted from Adler, 2002). Using experience in the cycle of conceptualising, acting, experiencing and reflecting can only occur when the variety of cultural experiences present in the classroom are validated and shared. An international student may not make the connection between their experience and a relevant new concept if the contextual framework and illustrations used seem exclusively linked to the host culture (Mainemelis, Boyatzis & Kolb, 2002). Hence the tutor can facilitate the process by using a variety of international illustrations and validating relevant and diverse cultural experiences when they are shared.

### *Group formation strategies*

Two of the important factors in forming groups with culturally diverse individuals are the explicit establishment of group norms and group roles (Johnson & Johnson, 1997). These factors are particularly important in conducting and planning the first meeting of the tutorial group.

Groups norms are "the group's common beliefs regarding appropriate behaviour, attitudes and perceptions for members" (Johnson & Johnson, 1997, p.21). Although norms are commonly regarded as being culturally bound (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988), it is possible to be deliberate in their prescription within a new group. Group theorists (Johnson & Johnson, 1997) and intercultural communication theorists (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988) define norms differently, where the negotiable aspect of norms in group theory roughly equates with the meaning of rules in intercultural communication theories. Norms or rules need to be made explicit in the first tutorial, often through a process of discussing behaviour and attitudes openly, so that an alignment of expectations amongst students from different cultural backgrounds is possible. Rules in groups are "co-determined principles" (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988, p.68) and are often established in tutorials through a collective listing of "what will make the tutorial successful" and "what will make the tutorial unsuccessful" in the first tutorial meeting. To help students in following the rules, students should record these rules for later reference. Assessment requirements will also determine the rules for tutorial participation, and these should be recorded in the course/ subject student guide.

A role is seen as a "set of expectations defining the appropriate behaviour of an occupant of a position toward other related positions" (Johnson & Johnson, 1997, p.20). In intercultural terms, the dimensions of roles could be seen in terms of "(1) the degree of personalness of the relationship; (2) the degree of formality expected in the participants' behaviour; (3) the degree of hierarchy present in the relationship; and (4) the degree of deviation allowed from the 'ideal' role enactment" (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988, pp.71-72). These dimensions have significance for the tutor who is attempting to build a teaching relationship with students, and again the tutor must make explicit how they see their teaching role and what role they expect the students to play in the class. This concept is especially relevant to tutors from cultural backgrounds that differ from the majority of the class, particularly with regard to "personalness" and formality in use of titles, allowance for interjections, methods of addressing the tutor and fellow students and the teaching style of the tutor.

The challenges of forming and developing the tutorial as a group must also take into account the particular processes that characterise diverse group management. Table 1 presents an outline of the processes involved in building a diverse task oriented group, which has relevance to tutorials where task based activities or teams are part of the

learning process. Of particular importance is the recognition that diversity within a group makes trust building and developing consensus more difficult. The recognition, acceptance and understanding of differences as well as the ability to recognise and develop similarities are important competencies in managing group diversity.

**Table 1: Managing diversity based on the team's stage of development**  
(Adler, 2002, p.151)

<b>Stage:</b>	<b>Process:</b>	<b>Diversity makes the process:</b>	<b>Process based on:</b>
Entry: Initial team formation	Trust building (developing cohesion)	More difficult	Using similarities and understanding differences
Work: Problem description and analysis	Ideation (creating ideas)	Easier	Using differences
Action: Decision making and implementation	Consensus building (agreeing and acting)	More difficult	Recognising and creating similarities

### *Personality factors in teaching*

The multicultural personality questionnaire (MPQ) was administered to participants prior to the workshop to provide insight into their attributes and attitudes as they relate to interacting across cultures. The dimensions presented in Table 2 have been shown to be positively related to international orientation and cross-cultural performance (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2000, 2001; Van der Zee, Zaal & Piekstra, 2003; Van Oudenhoven, Van der Zee & Van Koorten, 2001).

**Table 2: Multicultural effectiveness personality dimensions**  
(Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001)

<b>Personality Dimension</b>	<b>Definition</b>
Cultural empathy	The ability to empathise with the feelings, thoughts and behaviours of individuals from a different cultural background.
Open-mindedness	An open and unprejudiced attitude toward different groups and toward different cultural norms and values.
Emotional stability	The tendency to remain calm in stressful situations versus a tendency to show strong emotional reactions under stressful circumstances.
Social initiative	A tendency to approach social situations in an active way and to take initiatives.
Flexibility	A tendency to regard new and unknown situations as a challenge and to adjust one's behaviour to the demands of new and unknown situations.

### **Methodology**

In 2003, five researchers from the Faculty of Commerce and Management at Griffith University designed a project to develop tutors for teaching in the multicultural classroom. With funding from a faculty teaching grant, focus groups and surveys were used to assess needs, a workshop and peer mentoring system were used to address

needs, and peer assessment and surveys will be used to assess outcomes.

*Focus groups and surveys.*

A facilitator from outside of the university ran a focus group of five international students from a variety of backgrounds including Taiwanese, Chinese, Indian, Malaysian, Vietnamese and an Arab student from UAE. The facilitator also ran a focus group for five experienced business tutors. The questions used in the focus groups are listed in Tables 4 and 5. A modified version of the nominal group technique (Delbecq, Van de Ven & Gustafson, 1975) was used, with individuals generating ideas independently before bringing them back to the group. These ideas were then compared and categorised to distil key themes. Students were then able to vote for the three most appropriate responses to the focus group questions, with three points for the most appropriate response, two points for the second most appropriate and one point for the third most appropriate. The most popular responses to each question are listed in Tables 4 and 5.

The tutor-training workshop was advertised to experienced tutors in the Griffith University Business group, and 33 tutors responded positively to the invitation. The tutors completed a pre-workshop survey that included the Multicultural Personality Questionnaire (MPQ) (Van der Zee & Van Oudenhoven, 2001) and a scale on teaching experiences and philosophies (Appendix 1) derived from the literature search on problems encountered by tutors in the multicultural classroom. Participants were asked eight questions with responses being from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree (Appendix 1). Participants were also asked to list the three main difficulties they have teaching or assessing international students and the three best strategies they have employed to provide a better educational experience to international students. These responses were analysed using thematic content analysis (Strauss, 1987), and the results are listed in Tables 7 and 8.

*The workshop and peer mentoring*

Based on focus group feedback, the workshop program was based on five sessions, and the objectives for the program are presented in Table 3. The first session dealt with different educational models through dividing the workshop participant group into groups based on their knowledge or experience of different national education systems or values. These groups then reported back to the main group, illustrating to participants how diversity becomes a valuable resource in discussion based instruction. A panel of international students presented their own perspectives on tutorials, and participants rated this as the most valuable session in the post-workshop evaluation. A session on enhancing participation and engagement was followed by group discussion where various strategies to improve participation were presented and discussed. A final session dealt with the practical issues of marking international student's assignments.

**Table 3: Program outcomes**

<b>Outcomes</b>
1. That international students will have improved learning experiences due to the incorporation of more appropriate teaching and communication approaches in the classroom, as well as more equitable marking of their assessment.
2. Better integration between international and local students through equipping tutors with better skills in involving international students in classroom discussion and activities, thus benefiting all students through exposure to a wider range of experiences and perspectives.

3. Tutors will benefit from increased cultural awareness and the acquisition of classroom facilitation and management skills for dealing with diverse groups.
4. Tutors will have an increased ability to assess international students more fairly and consistently and so reduce their marking and moderation time.

After the workshop, participants were paired together and were to make arrangements to “sit in” on at least one of their partner’s classes. Partners rated the tutor using the criteria derived from the analysis of student needs and from the proposed strategies for improving multicultural tutoring (Appendix 2). The aim of peer mentoring is to offer each other valuable teaching feedback and suggestions regarding their teaching techniques and strategies for international students. This data is still being collected at the time of writing.

## Results

Table 9 reports the major responses of the focus groups regarding the use of language in tutorials. Both students and tutors listed language problems as being their major concern in tutorials, and both groups provided simple strategies to address this problem. Language issues appeared a total of six times in the focus group responses listed in Tables 4 and 5, indicating the strength of concern regarding this issue. Problems and suggested solutions regarding group participation also arose in five focus group responses, again indicating that this is a major issue of concern for both staff and students.

**Table 4: Major student responses to focus group questions**

Q.1	<b>What have you found challenging/difficult about participating in tutorials/workshops and in interacting with tutors at Griffith?</b>	
i	Some people have a problem with communication - accent and also cultural bias in teaching attitudes - participative versus authoritative.	7
ii	Some seemed to be inexperienced in teaching.	6
iii	Equipment problems.	4
iv	Lecture notes should be posted four hours before the lecture itself so that students who have difficulty with the language could prepare themselves.	4
Q.2.	<b>What would you say are the needs of international students in tutorials/workshops and in dealing with tutors?</b>	
i	Participants need to be encouraged to interact - facilitating a more encouraging environment.	13
ii	Feedback about choice of career and the subjects they might need to choose was a need for many students.	8
iii	Different cultures have different past experience in ways of conducting exams. Indian students do not have experience with multiple-choice questions.	4
Q.3.	<b>What would make tutorial/workshop participation and interacting with tutors more effective for your learning?</b>	
i	Tutors should act as a bridge between lecturer and tutor.	6
ii	Lecturers need to be more friendly.	5
iii	Lecturers need to have respect for students.	5
iv	Lecturers need to be more accessible.	4
	<b>What do you think are the strengths of having a mix of cultures in the tutorial/workshop classroom?</b>	
i	Learning to adapt is a vital component of our future work,	10

	e.g. adapt to accents.	
ii	Different insights resulted because we learned from other cultures, represented a wider point of view.	6
	<b>What weaknesses /problems do you see in having mix of cultures in the tutorial/workshop classroom?</b>	
i	Language difficulties resulted.	9
ii	Some people found the difficulties too challenging and the discussion became a boring argument along race lines.	7
iii	Inexperience of how to participate in a tutorial by some.	5
	<b>What advice would you give to tutors who want to improve their effectiveness in teaching international students?</b>	
i	The lecturers need to speak slower, be more casual with less compulsory activities e.g. assessments etc.	6
ii	In the beginning of the semester, students groups should be helped to formed groups, and these groups should be formed with a mix of cultures.	6
iii	Be adept in practice at facilitation of opinions, accepting all points of view.	4

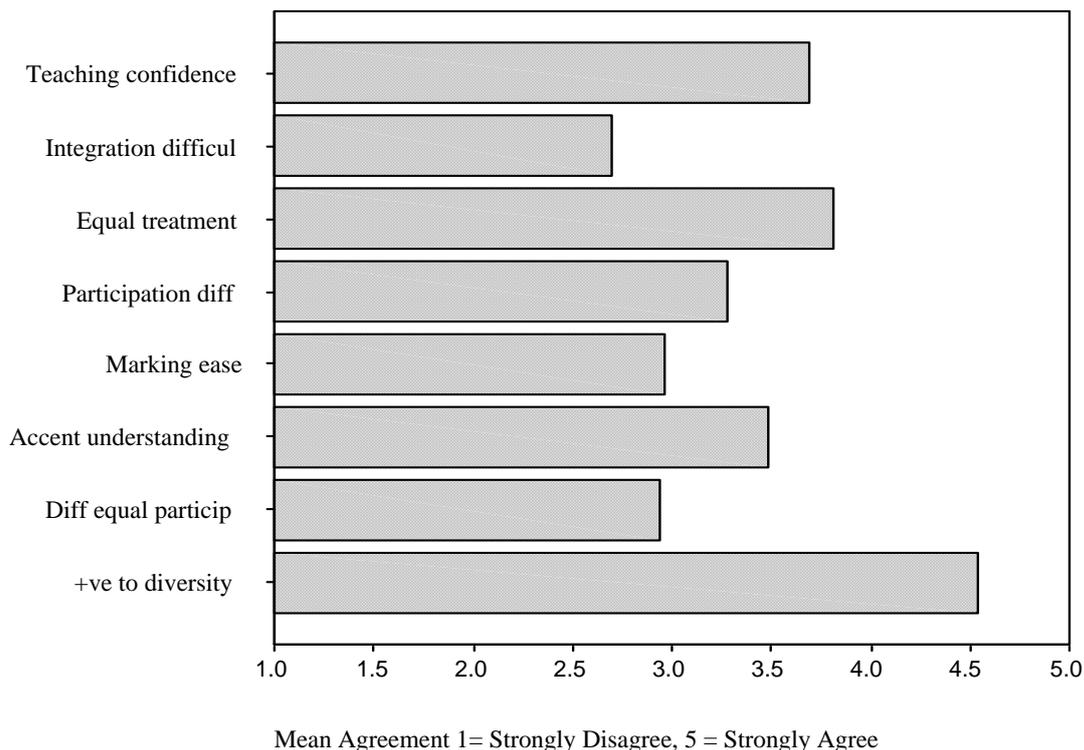
**Table 5: Major tutor responses to focus group questions**

Q.1	<b>What have you found challenging/difficult about participating in tutorials/workshops and in interacting with tutors at Griffith?</b>	
i	English language skills not up to standard for many students - how does a tutor know whether the point has been understood?	15
ii	Cultural values intervene to impede learning - shyness, for example.	5
iii	Some International students tend to come to lectures for a while then drop out when they find they cannot benefit from them.	4
Q.2.	<b>What would you say are the needs of international students in tutorials/workshops and in dealing with tutors?</b>	
i	Better English is a key need.	15
ii	Passivity and lack of confidence in participation.	4
iii	Encouragement and lack of intimidation/intolerance by local students.	4
Q.3.	<b>What would make tutorial/workshop participation and interacting with tutors more effective for your learning?</b>	
i	Tutors should foster inter-cultural participation and experience for International students as well as locals.	10
ii	There should be extra introductory sessions for International students.	5
iii	The "common time" experiment at Logan should be expanded throughout the system.	4
iv	Groups should be chosen to create diversity of cultural experience - a mixed demographic is preferred.	4
Q4.	<b>What do you think are the strengths of having a mix of cultures in the tutorial/workshop classroom?</b>	
i	It breaks down communication barriers based on culture.	8
ii	Cultural exchange increases students' sensitivity and awareness.	7
iii	Cultural stereotypes tend to be broken down.	4
iv	The security blanket that cushions some students is removed - a move beyond the comfort zone experience which is beneficial.	4
Q5.	<b>What weaknesses /problems do you see in having mix of cultures in the tutorial/workshop classroom?</b>	
i	Some students become shy as a result of the experience.	8
ii	Some International students are ostracised by the local students with	6

	an assumption that poor English skills mean low intelligence.	
iii	The process of the tutorial is slowed by the International student participation disadvantaging the local students.	4
Q.6.	<b>What advice would you give to tutors who want to improve their effectiveness in teaching international students?</b>	
i	Establish group norms at a session in the beginning of the semester. This should include reference to the diversity of cultures within the class.	7
ii	Be approachable/accessible.	6
iii	Establish rapport.	6
iv	Encourage a supportive environment in class.	5

In responding to questions prior to participation in the “Tutoring in the Multicultural Business Classroom” workshop, participants were overwhelmingly positive towards the idea that international students’ diverse experiences can contribute positively to a class (Figure 1, Table 6). The tutors, however, found it difficult to get international students to participate in class discussions (mean of 3.28 towards agreement to the statement – Table 6). Although tutors felt confident teaching international students (mean of 3.69), they were obviously experiencing some difficulty in marking international students’ assignments fairly (Table 6).

**Figure 1: Tutor teaching experiences and philosophies**



**Table 6 - Tutor teaching experiences and philosophies**

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Confidence teaching international students	34	3.69	.923
Difficulty integrating international and local students in the classroom	34	2.69	.911
Treating international and local students equally	34	3.82	.981
Difficulty getting international students to participate in class discussions	34	3.28	1.155
Ease in marking international students' assignments fairly	34	2.97	.973
Comfortable understanding international students' accents	34	3.49	1.126
Difficulty getting equal participation of local and international students in project work	34	2.94	.865
Belief that international student's diverse experiences can contribute to a class	34	4.53	.855
Valid N (listwise)	34		

The responses to open-ended questions on the pre-workshop survey (Table 7) indicate a similar pattern of concern with language and class participation evident in the focus group results (Tables 4 and 5). Although a majority of participants were comfortable understanding international students' accents (Table 6), there were language problems evident beyond accents (Table 7).

**Table 7: Tutor difficulty responses to pre-workshop survey**

<i>Please list the main difficulties you have teaching or assessing international students.</i>	<i>Content analysis</i>
Language problems	20
Participation in class discussions	20
Integrating local and international students in groups	7
Marking	5
Confidence of students	3
Different learning expectations	3
Plagiarism	2
Discrimination issues	2

Tutors seemed to cope with the challenges of tutoring international students through providing individual attention in consultation hours, via email, after the class or even during class (Table 8). A number of tutors tried to overcome the language problems through careful listening and making a special attempt to understand and empathise with international students (Table 8).

**Table 8: Tutor teaching strategy responses to pre-workshop survey**

<i>Please list the best strategies you have employed to provide a better educational experience to international students.</i>	<i>Content analysis</i>
Individual attention	16
Listening, understanding and empathising	9
Encouraging or requiring mixed cultural groups	7
Use international examples	6
Encouraging participation and discussion	5
Use their cultural experiences	4
Speak clearly/ paraphrase	3
Use personal experiences/ examples	3
Using group activities	3

### Discussion

There do appear to be widespread problems in the multicultural classroom that are likely to have an impact on the effectiveness of tutorial participation, and in particular tutorial discussion and participation in project groups. Tutors in this study had developed their own strategies to cope with these challenges, from “penalising for failures” to “talking to them individually to assess their understanding.” From the wide range of strategies suggested by participants, from the strategies identified in the literature review and from the author’s personal experience, the following strategies attempt to address language and participation problems in particular.

#### *Use of language*

Students and tutors agreed that language problems were a major issue in the Australian University business tutorial classroom. A number of suggested responses to these problems were suggested, and these have been collated in Table 9. Adler (Adler, 2002, p.95) has a more comprehensive framework for utilizing a second language in cross-cultural interactions, including the important aspects of verbal and nonverbal behaviour and strategies for accurate interpretation. This framework was utilized in the workshop instruction.

**Table 9: Language related focus group responses**

<b>Use of language responses from focus groups</b>	
Ineffective language use	Effective language use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heavy accents</li> <li>• Speaking too fast</li> <li>• Using colloquialisms</li> <li>• Terms based on stereotypes</li> <li>• Use of stereotypes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Try to speak clearer English</li> <li>• Use a moderate speech speed</li> <li>• Explain colloquialisms</li> <li>• Use inclusive language</li> <li>• Be both tentative and respectful when describing your perceived characteristics of another culture/nation</li> </ul>

### Discussion facilitation strategies

#### *“Break Up and Report Back”*

This simple strategy divides the tutorial group into smaller groups of two, three or four participants. Participants in the student focus group felt that the tutor dividing the class

into groups was usually better than self-selection. The reason given was that this helped to create more culturally and linguistically diverse groups than does self-selection. After division into small groups, the tutor would assign a question for each group to address, or ask all groups to address a list of questions. Each group would be given a time limit to complete the task and informed that one person should be appointed as the reporter back to the larger group. This provides a less threatening small group environment where the student with weaker language skills can test out their understanding as well as their responses to the questions asked.

*"Think, write, share"*

The class is asked a question and then given a time limit in which to write their answers down in point form. Students will then be asked to share their answers with the class, and in most cases, students with weaker English language skills should be asked first. This is to help the "ditto" type responses as answer points are progressively exhausted as students provide their answers in turn. This method is similar to the "think-pair-share" method (George, 1994), however the "think-write-share" strategy as suggested here may help students who require more time and help to frame their responses in the language of instruction.

*"Question clarity"*

Students identified the simple act of providing questions visibly through writing on the board or on OHTs as being helpful in answering discussion questions. The visual prompt helps to provide an anchor point for the student, which is especially useful when students question themselves about whether they understood the question in the first place as the discussion drifts away from answering the question itself.

*"Peer explanation"*

In the tutor focus group, tutors questioned what they could do when they perceived the "glazed look" of students who did not appear to understand what was being taught. Tutors agreed that simply asking "do you understand?" or "any questions?" would rarely yield a satisfying response, particularly when admitting confusion may be seen as a "loss of face" to some students. An effective strategy that can be employed in this situation is to ask who in the class is clear on the point being explained. These "experts" can then be assigned to small groups of students to help explain the concept. These "experts", are likely to gain more in the process through the "peer tutoring" benefits previously described (Slavin, 1990). This strategy applies the principles of the "peer tutoring method" (Slavin, 1990) within the university tutorial classroom in a changeable and concept specific basis.

*"Student examples"*

In order to help tap into the diversity of experiences within the class, students are asked to think of an example from their own experience or from their reading that may illustrate the concept being discussed. This helps students to connect tacit knowing and explicit knowledge (Cuncliffe, 2002), an important step in engaging in a reflexive dialogue. Similarly, the recognition of experience helps in the experiential learning process (Kolb, 1984). Students could write a few points on their example within a time limit, and then the tutor selects a few students to share their ideas with the class based on what they have written. This strategy is a tutorial application of the "jigsaw method" where all students are recognised as being specialists in particular areas and they then work to help other students understand their area of speciality (Sharan, 1994).

### *Other strategies*

Marking issues were addressed in the workshop by training tutors in using the assessment based criteria guidelines provided by the university. Strategies for addressing grammar or spelling problems included asking the student to resubmit after having the assignment checked by a native speaker, having only part of the assessment criteria related to grammar and spelling or failing the item due to its incomprehensibility. A clear policy on these issues is needed so that consistency can be achieved across the university.

### **Conclusion**

This research emphasises that the major issues of teaching in the Australian university business tutorial environment center on language problems, gaining effective participation of international students in discussion based activities and the integration of local and international students in project groups. The findings affirm and expand previous research in the area. A number of strategies have been derived from staff and student suggestions and these include language strategies, group facilitation strategies and integration strategies. An instrument for measuring tutor competence in the multicultural classroom has been developed for peer and student based assessment.

This research is limited in assessing the needs and deriving strategies in relation to tutoring students in the multicultural classroom by drawing a sample only from the Commerce and Faculty of one university. Less than ten students provided an international student perspective, whereas 34 experienced tutors provided the perspective of the tutor experienced in tutoring international students.

Further research is needed to establish the validity of the proposed multicultural tutor competencies instrument and the evaluation of the program is still incomplete. Further testing of the proposed strategies with international students is required, to establish whether they do indeed assist in improving the effectiveness of tutoring in the multicultural classroom.

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## Appendix 1 : YOUR TEACHING EXPERIENCES AND PHILOSOPHIES

what extent do **you** agree with the following statements regarding your teaching?  
(Please circle the answer that is most applicable to you)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>

- |  |   |   |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I feel confident teaching international students.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. I find it difficult to integrate international and local students within a classroom setting,                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. In class, I treat international and local students equally.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I find it difficult to get international students to participate in class discussions.                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. I find it easy to mark international students' assignments fairly.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. I am comfortable understanding international students' accents.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. I find it difficult to get local and international students to participate equally in project or assignment work. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. I think international students' diverse experiences can contribute positively to a class.                         | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

9. Please list the **three main difficulties** you have teaching or assessing international students:

- a.
- b.
- c.

10. Please list the **three best strategies** you have employed to provide a better educational experience to international students:

- a.
- b.
- c.

*THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION!!*



**Appendix 2 -MULTICULTURAL TUTOR COMPETENCIES**

what extent do **you** agree with the following statements regarding your tutor’s performance?  
(Please circle the answer that is closest to your impressions)

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

- |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. The tutor encourages students to participate in class discussions.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. The tutor recognises and encourages different cultural or national perspectives in the class.                              | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. The tutor encourages local and international students to form task/ discussion groups together.                            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. The tutor does his/ her best to make me feel comfortable in approaching them if I need individual help.                    | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. The tutor presents examples that I can relate to.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. The tutor sometimes breaks the class into pairs or small groups to discuss issues or answer questions.                     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. The tutor speaks clearly and slowly enough for me to understand what they are saying.                                      | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 8. The tutor sometimes calls on students who have experience or knowledge of an area to share with other students.            | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. Sometimes the tutor asks a question and gives us time to write down our answers before sharing with the rest of the class. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. The tutor uses visual aids such as writing on the board, OHTs, or powerpoint to help ask questions or clarify points.     | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. Overall, I found this tutor helped me to learn through effective facilitation and teaching skills.                        | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. Marking criteria was provided for my work that the tutor assessed.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. The tutor marked my work by using the given criteria.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. Our tutorial has clear ground rules for participation.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. I felt the tutor showed respect for students and their opinions.  | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. The tutor acted as link to the lecturer as necessary.   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |