Navigating Cultural Sensibilities:
Respect and Provocation as Pedagogical Partners

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Abstract: This paper explores how teachers employed in preparatory programs designed specifically for international tertiary students construct and navigate the moral dilemmas arising from differing cultural sensibilities, and how their positions can be shaped by an on-shore or off-shore setting. Teacher interview talk pertaining to the selection and avoidance of certain topics and pedagogical activities is analysed to display the ambivalence and moral dilemmas for teachers embedded in these programs as they try to show respect for cultural differences, yet seek to prepare students for a culturally biased, and potentially insensitive educational setting. Interviews with teachers employed in similar on-shore and off-shore programs are contrasted to display the impact place has on teacher positions and discourses. A major dilemma arises for language teachers committed to communicative pedagogy, as they try to provoke classroom discussion for language learning, and participatory student behaviours as desirable Western pedagogic behaviour, through the use of controversial topics.

Introduction
Like other Western economies, Australia has pursued a highly successful series of policies aimed at recruiting full fee-paying students from other countries to its higher education institutions. 'Since 1994, the number of international students in Australia has risen 73 percent' (McMurtrie, 2001: 45). In 2000, international students (N = 95,607) comprised 13.7% of the total enrolment at Australian university onshore campuses (DEST, 2001). Moreover, 1,009 offshore programs had been designed and implemented by May 2001 between Australian universities and overseas higher education institutions, mainly in China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore (AV-CC, May 2001). Indeed, while the United States (US) still dominates the market in terms of international student enrolments, its percent of the market share has fallen from 39 per cent in 1982 to 30 per cent in 1995 (McMurtrie, 2001). Furthermore, Australia draws more students from Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia than does the United States (McMurtrie, 2001). This fall in the US market share of international students has been attributed to the aggressive marketing campaigns of Australia, Britain and other European countries.

The growing flow of international students to Australian universities (on-shore or off-shore campuses) is producing
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new patterns of classroom interactions, new constructions of classroom curricula and educational programs, new modes of professional teacher talk, and new employment positions (such as teacher of international students, international officer, counsellor). Indeed the category of full-fee paying international student marks a significant departure from the earlier aid/development discourses surrounding overseas or foreign students (Auletta, 2000). For example, academic preparation programs termed variously as 'Foundation', 'Bridging', 'Uniprep', 'EAP' (Cobbin, Barlow & Gostelow, 1993) have been designed specifically for international students. These courses aim to develop generic English language proficiency, communication, study and computing skills, pre-requisite disciplinary knowledge and a level of familiarisation with Australian academic and social/cultural practices. Thus these curriculum programs, along with teacher-student classroom talk, and teacher professional talk about international students constitute new discursive productions within Australian universities. The term discourse is used here to refer to "a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or 'social network'" (Gee, 1991, p. 3).

This paper examines one site of discursive production pertaining to international students, namely, teacher interview talk about pedagogic work in foundation and English language study courses. Specifically, it examines how teachers talk about negotiating national, political, religious and cultural/ethnic sensibilities in their pedagogic relations with international students onshore or offshore. It is proposed that the negotiation of different sensibilities sets up unresolvable dilemmas for many teachers. On the one hand, foundation studies teachers are expected by their employers and end-user faculties to impart Western knowledge as well as strategies (English language, study skills) for effectively acquiring this knowledge. This entails a process of pedagogic inculcation or re-socialisation. On the other hand, these teachers are expected by their profession and policies of cultural inclusion to respect cultural/ethnic, religious and national differences in a global knowledge society increasingly fractured by identity politics (Castells, 1997; 2000).

While numerous research studies have now begun to focus on teaching/learning with regard to international students, none have examined teachers' talk in terms of negotiating different sensibilities. The focus of the research to date has been on cross-cultural pedagogy, learning support, counselling services for international students, and emotional factors contributing to educational success (Ballard, 1987; Ballard & Clanchy, 1997; Ingleton & Cadman, 2001; Jacob & Greggo, 2001; Mori, 2000). Within these texts, the international student, generally understood to be of Asian background, is often depicted as 'culturally different' in ways which carry negative connotations: reliant on memorisation, capable of plagiarism, accustomed to highly structured learning environments, and an uncritical consumer of teacher and textbook knowledge (Ladd & Ruby, 1999). These learning attributes are deemed to cause 'culture shock' for Asian students in the Australian/Western university context, and 'reverse culture shock' on return home (Ballard & Clanchy, 1997).

In contrast to the aforementioned studies, our aim in this paper is not to essentialise or fix cultural attributes in the body of the 'Other', that is, the international student body. Rather, we aim to examine how culture(s) or discourse(s) are actively constructed in teacher talk about everyday classroom and social interactions (Bauman, 1999; Dooley, 2001; Eisenhart, 2001). Specifically, we examine the construction of the category 'international student' in and through the professional talk of teachers employed in university foundation and intensive English language programs. Our intention here is not to refute/critique the different educational/informational resources that international students bring into the Western university classroom. Nor is it to deny the linguistic, emotional and other social difficulties encountered by international students within current Australian university social structures. We aim rather to shift the focus of research investigation to the active co-construction or production of culture/discourses in and through teacher talk about international students.

The analysis of teacher interview talk is undertaken in three parts. In the first section a description is provided of the empirical case study from which data were selected for this paper. This is followed by an explanation of the analytic tools used in the study. The third section turns to an elaboration of the different pedagogic strategies reportedly deployed by teachers in navigating cultural/ethnic sensibilities in the context of contradictory and ambivalent discourses of internationalization and pedagogic re-socialization. We propose that different pedagogic models constitute different teacher and student identities, and therefore differential acquisition of knowledge and orientations to meaning (Bernstein, 2000; Janks, 2002; Dooley, 2001). Pedagogic models are thus crucial sites of discursive power struggles.
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An Empirical Case Study: Pedagogic Work with International Students

The data collected for the empirical study on exporting higher education involved a total of 52 interviewees, 26 in offshore campus contexts in Indonesia and 26 in on-shore contexts in Australia. All participants were involved in course administration, teaching, and/or recruitment of international students. Efforts were made to interview students, and Indonesian national and expatriate educators offshore, and international students and their teachers/administrators in Australian on-shore campuses. In the onshore context, interviewees were employed and/or studying in the Technical and Further Education (Norfield TAFE) or university sector (Goodwind University). In the offshore Indonesian context, interviewees were employed in five organizations, namely three Australian universities (Aussie Uni 1, 2, 3) that had developed partnership arrangements with Indonesian private education companies, one English language institute that had formerly offered education-as-aid services and was now in partnership with an Indonesian organization (Aussie Language Institute), and Australian government departments involved in advertising and recruiting Indonesian students for the Australian export market (Australian Government Organisation). The interviews comprised only one component of the data corpus collected for the study. Other data sources included curriculum materials, brochures and audio or video-recordings of classroom lessons. This paper specifically draws on interviews with teachers working in foundation programs in on-shore (N=9) and off-shore (N=8) settings. In what follows the tools and/or strategies developed for the analyses of teacher interview data are elaborated.

Analytic Tools: Theorising Teacher Interview Accounts

It is proposed that teacher interview data provides access to professional talk about classroom practices in the context of working with international students, and also constitutes a mode of discursive/cultural production. When producing accounts of classroom practice, teachers take up positions within professional educational discourses by aligning themselves to particular interest groups such as subject-specific affiliations (e.g., English as a Second Language Teachers Association), modes of pedagogy (e.g., progressive vs conservative approaches), years of experience (e.g., having previously worked off-shore) and/or ethnic or religious identifications (e.g. secular, Christian, Islamic modes of pedagogy). Thus teachers draw on a range of professional educational discourses in articulating their pedagogic position in relation to international students. These articulations are not considered 'reflections of a fixed state-of-mind or enduring beliefs, but a response to past experiences that is simultaneously a commitment to future experiences' (Eisenhart, 2001: 217). Thus they carry some legacy from the past, but also launch individuals into the future. Consequently, discursive productions are 'identified, not by individual statements of beliefs, but by patterns in the ways participants act in classrooms, label their own efforts, and describe themselves to others with whom they normally and regularly interact over time' (Eisenhart, 2001: 217). As such, teacher interview talk about classroom practices with international students is a specific manifestation or realisation of professional pedagogic discourses.

Bernstein (2000, 1996) theorized pedagogic discourse as comprised of instructional and regulative components. Thus pedagogic discourse is the set of rules or principles of power and control by which instructional and regulative discourses are selected and organised to constitute classroom curricular texts and practices, and to talk about such pedagogic practices. Power relations refer to the strength of insulation between categories of texts, agents and spaces, and may be weak (blurred boundaries) or strong (distinct boundaries). Control relations refer to who controls what in the constitution of curricular texts and pedagogic practices, and may be weak (students have more control) or strong (teachers, textbook, employing authority has more control). Instructional discourse is the knowledge that is selected and organised for teaching and learning purposes. Regulative discourse establishes internal order within the instructional discourse because it generates principles of selection, organization, pacing and criteria of skills, concepts and information (i.e., the arbitrary internal ordering of school knowledge). It also assembles theories of instruction, and thus contains within itself 'a model of the learner and of the teacher and of the relation' between teacher-learner (Bernstein, 1996: 49). In terms of our research interest, the ways in which teachers talked about negotiating 'cultural' sensitivities in terms of selection and organization of curricular content provides insights into the power and control struggles constituting different models of pedagogic practice. It also provides insight into the regulative or moral discourse constituting the internal ordering of pedagogic practice.

The following questions were formulated to guide the analyses of teacher interview data:
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- Who selected and organised curricular content pertaining to cultural sensibilities?
- How was this curricular content organised (sequenced, paced)?
- What models of the teacher, student, pedagogic relation, curricular content were articulated in teacher interview talk about negotiating 'cultural' sensibilities?
- What criteria were used to evaluate student acquisition of knowledge about negotiating different sensibilities?

Reportage of Data Analyses

Most of the teachers interviewed for the study referred to differences in learning styles between international students (Asian) and Australian students. However, a number of the teachers adamantly pointed out that they did not engage in a simplistic, cultural stereotyping of the cohort of learners. Rather, they accounted for their pedagogical practices in terms of differences in *learning environments, teaching environments*. Typically the teachers portrayed the students' home teaching/learning environments as quiet, passive, non-individualised due to large student numbers, and respectful of teacher and textbook knowledge. Further, teachers suggested that students' preferred mode of pedagogy was memorisation and rote learning. This mode of learning, in turn, was seen to produce pedagogic subjects who relied on memorisation strategies and appeared unwilling to become *risk-takers*.

Teachers working in both settings expressed caution about what topics pertaining to sensitive or controversial issues were introduced into the classroom, and how these topics were discussed/negotiated. However, and crucially, there were significant differences in the ways in which teachers accounted for classroom practices in the onshore and offshore context. For example, none of the teachers in the off-shore context used the deliberate pedagogical strategy of provoking controversy as a way of generating classroom discussion. Their most common pedagogical strategies used to deal with controversial issues included: researching topics, role-play, and comparing/contrasting reportage of events in Indonesian and Australian newspapers. By contrast, in the on-shore context a number of the teachers suggested that students needed to be explicitly taught via the use of texts that might be considered sensitive or controversial in their home nations. Moreover, they argued that they selected pedagogical models with the explicit intent of eliciting student discussion, debate and articulation of individual opinions.

The analysis now turns to examining the variety of pedagogical strategies reported by teachers when discussing issues/topics that they considered to be sensitive or controversial in both the onshore and offshore contexts. We thus construct portraits of pedagogic practice from the interview accounts of teachers (Lightfoot, 1983; Delamont, Coffey & Atkinson, 2000).

**Pedagogical Strategy: On-shore - Studied Avoidance**

Teacher A taught in an on-shore preparatory program for prospective Master of Business Administration (MBA) students, mostly from Thailand, Hong Kong and Korea. His particular course was concerned with business communication. In this selection of data the interviewer asks Teacher A about his marked choice of the simplistic "cats and dogs" topic for an observed group discussion exercise wherein students were to collaboratively plan the structure for a compare/contrast expository text.

**Extract 1:**

R: *Now the choice of topic for the task you set up was to compare "cats and dogs"... Do you want to talk about your reasons for choosing that topic?*

Teacher A: *Well, with Thai students it's okay because they don't dislike dogs. With Chinese I run into problems because a lot of them think that a dog is a dirty animal. It's not something that you have around the house, such as we have in Australia. But cats and dogs, I think, are probably simplistic which is why I choose them. They're easy to understand. Almost everybody knows what a cat and a dog is. When we do compare and contrast essays I don't want to encumber the exercise by dealing with intellectual ideas that are not understood. So I take really simple ideas but I keep on trying to reinforce that academic assignments are on topics a lot more complex than cats and dogs but the same thing applies ... So once we have a good foundation of comparing any two simplistic things then we can get into the heavier material with greater number of paragraphs and more complex compound sentences but the structure is still the same.*
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(2 turns omitted)

R: ... What other potential topics do you see as sensitive for this group?

**Teacher A:** Oh, well, I actually looked at it the other way. I tried to think of things that wouldn't be sensitive... Things that are universal. If I don't use "cats and dogs" I also use "rainbows"... Because I try my best to keep any kind of politically sensitive material out of the class. I just pick things that I'm happy with that people know that they're common things so we don't stumble over what do we mean by "rainbow"?... And we can get down to structuring it, looking at the components.

R: So with this last semester with the events of New York (September 11, 2001) has that been discussed in the classes at all?

**Teacher A:** No. No. I can hear myself saying once in a while when we come to topic "X" that we're not looking at this from the "political" viewpoint. We're looking at it from a "language" viewpoint. ... In terms of the New York event - no it never quite came up as such. And, in fact, I do have an Arabic man in that class. No, I just stay away... I don't think it's necessary to bring it in for what I'm doing. ... Not that it shouldn't be spoken about or should be avoided but in the material that I'm going over with them it's not appropriate. It's not necessary. ... I'd have to really drag it in and I'm not so sure that there's any reason to do that .... I guess I also don't want to make any of the students feel responsible for their government's action. ... Why make them feel uncomfortable by bringing up topics that really aren't germane to linguistics? They might be central to marketing or other subjects, but not linguistics.

Teacher A offered the most extreme account by a teacher in an on-shore or off-shore setting of a pedagogic position where potentially sensitive or controversial topics were consciously averted. In the above data extract, Teacher A professed to studiously avoid what could be sensitive topics in favour of the 'simplest', so the heuristic intention of the activity (eliciting compare/contrast generic structures) was not **encumbered** with complex intellectual ideas. Thus the topic choice was part of his pedagogic strategy in staging the students' engagement with the instructional discoursce. He also justified this choice in terms of his reluctance to engender unnecessary student emotion, as well as run the risk of forcing students to wear collective versions of their culture/history. He carefully sanitised the curriculum, and stripped it of real intellectual engagement, so the linguistic aspects of the target genre could be foregrounded and performed in a ritualistic fashion. Teacher A also suggested that the subject of linguistics unlike other subjects such as marketing is demarcated by strong boundaries which exclude potentially controversial or sensitive topics.

Teacher A's pointed avoidance of controversy in the classroom sits uncomfortably with his account of the importance of eliciting student discussion in foundation programs.

**Extract 2:**

R: And your reasoning behind obliging them to ask ... a number of questions through the presentation?

**Teacher A:** Well, because I feel that here at the university when they take part in group activities it's something that a lot of them don't want to do. ... And I'm being really onerous on them by insisting that they participate because part of the whole tutorial thing is allowing someone to understand what you're thinking about. ... So I try to suggest to them that this involvement, the give and the take, the turn-taking is part of what we do. And I think part of our educational process is more argumentative in the true sense of argument not tantrum.... It's more argumentative than a lot of other cultures where they accept someone's discretion and that's it. Whereas, here, we go for the chink in the armour and we say, "Well, now wait a minute, mate. What about that time? Why didn't it work then?"... And that's argumentative: the pros and cons. I try not to change them as people but I try to expose them to the fact that our situations are going to be a little different.
In extract two, Teacher A constructed questioning and group participation as a Western genre designed to accomplish intellectual engagement and scrutiny of ideas. Thus, he expected students to actively participate or communicate in tutorial discussions. He provided two explanations for taking up this pedagogical position. First, he suggested that international students need to develop communicative skills in the argumentative style of Western pedagogic discourse. Second, he proposed that talk makes visible student thinking processes, and therefore is a crucial teacher evaluative resource.

Of particular interest, is an important disclaimer, or rider, that Teacher A placed on his previous discourse: *I try not to change them as people but I try to expose them to the fact that our situations are going to be a little different*. Through this discursive construction of the teaching/learning process, Teacher A attempted to distance himself from a potential charge of constituting colonial/neo-colonial pedagogic relations by socialising students into new pedagogic identities. His pedagogic position was substantiated through recourse to a discourse of choice, that is, offering students alternative knowledge/models. This careful distinction is present in other teachers' discourse, and perhaps is their way of dealing with the difficult moral ground they are on - whereby ideally all cultures are equal, but some are more equal than others in this location - preparing students for a biased non-inclusive setting, while still valuing their cultural difference. By moral ground, we are referring to the domain of decision making in teaching practice that is decided by recourse to judgements of values, ethics, or some normative sense of what one 'should' do, as opposed to decision making that is decided with recourse to ostensibly rational decisions based on professional knowledge of what 'is'.

**Pedagogical Strategy: Off-shore - Negotiating Critique and Diplomacy**

Two teachers, Teacher B and Teacher C, working in the offshore context, suggested that they engaged students in sensitive or controversial topics by comparing and contrasting reportage of events in different texts authored and produced in Australia and Indonesia. In addition to the texts presented in curriculum packages, both teachers used newspaper articles produced in the different nation states. Moreover, both teachers attempted to engage students in developing critical literacy skills in relation to reading all texts. However, such critical pedagogic engagement was cautiously undertaken given that the teachers were often unaware of the complexity of ethnic/cultural/religious hierarchies within the class of students. Both teachers explicitly argued against the use of deliberately provoking controversy as a strategy for eliciting student classroom talk.

**Extract 3:**

_R_: Can you give other examples of your concerns about teaching English language and study skills to students at this offshore campus?

(12 turns deleted)

**Teacher B**: Um, ... we did this one reading (included in Aussie Uni 2 book of readings), and I looked at it and I thought: "this is going to be really really dodgie". But then I thought "well these people intend to go to Australia so this is something that they are going to come up against all the time".

_R_: Hmm. What was the content?

**Teacher B**: ... it was an article written about this sorry state of Indonesia. And human rights abusers in East Timor were brought up, and things in China were brought up. ... And, I was in the classroom starting to read the article, and I was getting really, really uncomfortable thinking, "gone too far, gone too far this wasn't fair." And the students were near the end of the exercise, and I was just more and more not wanting to hear the answers cause most of the questions begin with: what does the writer think about this? And the students were having to write something to the effect: the writer thinks that the Indonesian government is like this, is like this, is like this. And in the end I cut the activity short when I was going through the feedback process, because I thought: "I don't want to make them repeat this sentence anymore". And I thought: "I've got to break this tension at last! Because I guess the students probably thought this was my point of view as well". And I said "Alright, how much of this do you agree with?" ... And I gradually went over the exercise and asked them about their opinions of the article. One student said: "I think its making fun of South-East Asia", and I said, "I couldn't agree with you more." And then I said "at the beginning of the lesson, I introduced the article as some Westerners' objections to South-East Asia." I tried to get them to say this was
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about environment and pollution, and such and such, so that they weren't going to be offended. But I came out of the classroom thinking "that was horrible."

Teacher B took up an oppositional reading position in relation to the text. Specifically, she aligned herself with the reading position taken up by one of the Indonesian students, and distanced herself from the writer's position in relation to South-East Asia. Rather than asking students to read the text from the authoritative position of the Western author (what does the writer think about this), Teacher B modified the lesson by discursively granting the students some agency in relation to the text (how much of this do you agree with). However, her own discomfort in dealing with a pedagogic situation that she described as tense, dodgie and horrible prevented her from exploring the legacy of colonial relations within the curriculum content, or the different articulations of modernity and positions on issues of environment, pollution and human rights between Australia, the US and Indonesia. The teacher's choice to proceed with the set material despite misgivings needs to be contextualised within some understanding of her circumstance, being employed on a short contract with a high teaching load allowing minimal preparation time, and classroom texts set by the school management, not selected by the teacher.

Teacher C struggled with similar issues. In the following account she voiced her concerns about understanding the complex intra-cultural differences within the cohort of learners, and then selecting and organising knowledge to meet the needs of this classroom of students. This is evidence of what Bernstein (2000) refers to as the theories or models of the learner which structure the internal order of instructional discourse. Turner-Bissett (1999) suggests that teachers acquire this type of knowledge about their learners through empirical observations, professional discussions and readings.

Extract 4:

R: Do you tackle the multicultural issues in your cross-cultural studies course?

Teacher C: The multicultural thing, yeah. Um, (after looking at the Australian situation) we then look at Indonesia, the Indonesian situation and the different groups here and, you know, they do look at whether their own society does have elements of racism in it.

R: And how does that go?

Teacher C: Depends on the groups. Some of them get very uptight about that. ... we have a very high profile group here at the moment (indistinct) and they're just about to sort of go on to the ethical dilemma and (indistinct) issues and (indistinct) topics and racism, and it's a very difficult thing for the teachers to deal with, because we don't know all the hierarchies that are operating in the group or the dynamics. We could never know that. I'll never know what really is going on underneath the class, you know, the other agenda for the students even with the young ones that are more open and don't have the entrenched hierarchy.

As Teacher C articulated in the preceding account, the problem for the teachers working in the offshore context was not simply being aware of differences of acceptable and non-acceptable curriculum content material and approaches to teaching/learning in the official pedagogic discourses of the nation states of Indonesia and Australia. Rather, teachers also had to be aware of the intra-social, cultural, religious and ethnic differences within the group of students who often travelled from diverse parts of Indonesia to study at Aussie Language Institute. Although constituted as a national community, Indonesia has enormous diversity in terms of: geography (about 3,000 islands), religion (Muslims, Buddhists, Catholics, assorted Protestants, Hindu-Balinese, and 'animists'), and enthlinguistic groupings (well over 100 distinct groups) (Anderson, 1991: 120).

Both Teacher B and Teacher C were adamantly opposed to the pedagogical strategy of deliberately introducing provocative or controversial content material into the classroom to engage students' personal opinions.

Extract 5:
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Teacher B: Nonsense. Apart from my experience that students, particularly the girls, tend to just clam up. Some of the boys might give it a go, some of them are a bit more, bit more capable of doing it, but a lot of them would just clam up and get quite angry. Not maybe angry but resentful, that they need to do something that was completely against their culture. I think it is also their environment. If they were put, for example, in a completely multinational class then they might do it. But if they are sitting around with a group of Indonesians then they are going to behave like Indonesians in a group like that. That's what I think. I mean after that experience I wouldn't give anything to them if I wasn't completely sure that it was fairly tame. Ah, no I don't mean tame. Nothing is tame, but I would make sure that the material was not directly insulting to their government.

However, both teachers felt that the students needed some exposure and coaching on how to handle touchy subjects. Teacher B considered that the most appropriate teaching strategy in terms of dealing with sensitive material was to ask Indonesian students returning from studies in Australia to discuss their experiences. She gave an example of one of her fellow Indonesian teachers explaining his personal strategy for dealing with racism when he was studying in Australia: ...you just turn back to them and say "Well you're a bloody convict." Teacher C talked about her 'back seat' approach of handling politically sensitive issues through role playing, research tasks, and critical reading exercises, rather than eliciting students' personal opinions. The crucial point to be made here is that the moral order of the classroom, that is, the composition of the student population (completely multinational class vs group of Indonesians), as well as the context (offshore campus vs onshore campus) influenced the selection, organization and distribution of curricular content. Moreover, the regulative discourses constituting acceptable or appropriate models of the teacher, student and teacher-student relationship influenced the content, organization, and distribution of the instructional discourse.

Pedagogical Strategy: On-Shore- Deliberate Provocation to Generate Classroom Talk

Teacher D, an on-shore teacher, expressed no reservations about the strongly framed curriculum or pedagogy of the EAP or foundation studies programmes. Rather she suggested that the explicit objective of the courses was to acclimatise students to the cultures of learning in Australian universities. This meant that students needed to become familiar with both the content and styles of teacher-student relations in Australian universities.

Extract 6:

Teacher D: ... I think you would get a very different answer had you talked to me when I was teaching, say in Bangladesh or in Saudi Arabia or in Nigeria, which are the three Muslim areas I have lived in where I was, I'm sure, careful to some extent, of what I said so as not to offend people. But here, not that I'm trying to offend people, but I feel we are acclimatising these students to being in Australia. And rather than not say something because I might offend them, I will say something and say then that I realise that some people may not see this in exactly the same way because they might be Muslim or blah, blah but that's the way it is in Australia. And I feel that that's important that we don't avoid these things because if I were in their country I would be doing that. But here I don't. And I feel we're training them. You know most of them are going to be here for another two, three years and I think part of what we're doing is getting them used to the Australian scene. If there's somebody in the class who I know might be offended, I would say, "I know that you think differently about this." Or, "I don't want to offend you by saying this, but...". So I'll let them know that I'm aware of it but I don't tread around and think I'm in an Asian culture. I'm not. I'm in an Australian culture. In Bangladesh that's very different. I am in their country and I am doing things their way.

Teacher D's position was clear. The students had travelled to Australia to acquire an Australian qualification. Thus, there would be no or few changes made to the curriculum or teaching strategies to accommodate the needs of these diverse learners. Rather, it was the student's task to adapt or acclimatise to the knowledge in the curriculum packages and co-constructed in the classroom lessons. The teacher was in control of the selection and organization of classroom knowledge, and there was little negotiation with students on this matter. By her account, Teacher D acted in what she perceived to be students' long term interests, and her abrupt staging strategy aimed to bring these students into what
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Discussion

This paper has documented a marked range in the discursive productions of pedagogic models and practices in foundation and intensive English language programs intended to offer ostensibly the same educational experience, being an orientation to Australian higher education contexts. The teachers' accounts differed in how they resolved or worked around the dilemma of respecting cultural sensibilities, while encouraging the participatory behaviour desired in Western university classroom contexts. In on-shore settings, Teacher A orchestrated performances of student participation on simplistic or sanitised topics to avoid controversy; while Teacher D courted controversy and discomfort as a necessary part of her program of de-sensitising. In off-shore settings, the tensions seemed to be less manageable, more acutely felt and less easily resolved. By her account, Teacher B quickly adapted a culturally insensitive textbook activity to rescue herself and the class group from an awkward moment, though she acknowledged this is something that they are going to come up against all the time. Teacher C acknowledged the difficulty in knowing the complexity within her class group, and the impossibility of predicting the other agenda. Thus, in off-shore settings, where teacher is Other, accommodations of the host culture are seen to impinge more on the teacher's control of curriculum and pedagogy.

These varying pedagogic constructions could be broadly described as occupying three positions on a continuum - one of 'effaced' avoidance at one extreme; one of pointed 'in your face' confrontation at the other extreme; and a middle ground, 'saving face' for both teacher and students. In this last category, exemplified by Teacher B's critical reading or Teacher C's 'back seat' approach, teachers attempt to find ways to distance the controversial from the personal.

Of the eight off-shore teacher participants, two did not touch upon the use of controversial or sensitive topics in class. Of the remaining six, one teacher recounted a class discussion on racism where students had literally nothing to say because they argued that there was 'no racism' in their country. This narrative of unsuccessful 'in your face' provocation was contrasted with the teacher's more successful and more mitigated 'saving face' pedagogies where students self-selected sensitive topics for independent research tasks, and where humorous exploration of 'cultural stereotypes' replaced discussions of domestic racism. All the other off-shore teachers similarly talked about 'saving face' pedagogies, such as discussing imaginary problems, coaching students on how to extricate themselves from discussing things they don't really want to discuss, and considering students' feelings and motivation in assessment practices. One of the off-shore teachers who acted as an institutional manager recommended a pedagogy perhaps more towards the 'effaced' end of the continuum, when he considered the ideal teacher to be non-judgemental, non-confrontational, supportive and approachable.

Amongst the nine on-shore teachers, there was a wider spread of pedagogic constructions in relation to dealing with risks associated with offending cultural sensibilities. Two teachers did not touch upon the use of controversial topics, beyond employing examples of biased statistics to (unsuccessfully) provoke discussion. One of these teachers talked about using my country topics, for the same reason of intellectual ease that Teacher A gave above, but in stark contrast to Teacher A's studied avoidance of any such topic pertaining to the students' political or cultural identities. This teacher expressed no fear of controversy or sensitivity surrounding such topics. Of the other seven interviews, Teacher A's, as demonstrated above, gave the most marked account of an 'effaced' pedagogy of avoiding controversy. One other teacher talked about choosing topics that are non-emotive but this was in regard to the sensibilities of scholarship students in the company of wealthier, self-funded students. Elsewhere, the same teacher spoke about how her students often get horrified in class discussions of newspaper accounts of their home country, suggesting frequent use of 'in your face' pedagogy.

Two on-shore teachers talked about employing a 'saving face' pedagogy to protect student sensibilities. One suggested that she mitigated her taste for 'fun' in the classroom in the face of student discomfort. Another claimed I try to be aware of some of the things that make them feel uncomfortable... If you have any sensitivity towards the students you do have to try and balance it out a bit.

Teacher D, as demonstrated earlier in this paper, gave an extreme account of 'in your face' pedagogy, but three other on-shore interview participants also constructed this more confrontational style of pedagogy. One teacher spoke of
introducing outlandish ideas to try and stimulate them into talking. Another considered that you can be understanding but you can't be too soft, ... because that won't help them.

These accounts of pedagogic work with international students all demonstrate the slippery, ambivalent moral discourses these teachers operate within, and the cross-cultural tensions/sensitivities they have to negotiate in the enterprise of exporting education. On the one hand, most of the teachers identified certain topics or practices that carry a potential for generating trouble in classroom interactions. In addition, Teacher A's careful denial that I try not to change them as people but ... voices the ever-present risk and awareness of accusations of neo-colonialism for these professionals as they go about their business of providing preparatory/foundation courses. This careful treading around cultural interference is echoed in other interview accounts. Another on-shore teacher expressed this dilemma and her own misgivings as: You can't just come and impose our Western, Australian methodology on them, although I think I probably do it more than I think I do. Teacher C, an off-shore teacher, recounted her supervisor's solution to this dilemma: It's important to get over the idea for the students that they're becoming 150% person that this new cultural awareness can actually increase their own awareness of their own culture and enhance their life ... that's what we're hoping for. She then added her own qualification: It sounds very, you know, idealistic but ...

Teachers in these preparatory courses constitute the front-line in the export of education, and wear risks and moral dilemmas on behalf of their institutions and end-users. They are the ones that have to live through the awkward moments of discomfort, offence or distrust with their students when sensitive topics are broached, and sensitivities are breached.

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Endnotes:

1. The term international student came into wide usage in official policies pertaining to Australian higher education during the 1990s, and was used to distinguish full-fee paying overseas students from domestic/local students (who were also expected to pay for tertiary education via full-fees or the Higher Education Contribution Scheme). The vast majority of the fee-paying overseas students have been ethnic Chinese from a small group of Southeast Asian countries, primarily Malaysia, Singapore, Hong Kong and Indonesia (Nesdale et al., 1995:23). The term foreign and international are used in the US literature.

2. The terms offshore education and twinning programs are used by the AV-CC (May 2001: iv) to refer to programs which contain the following elements:

- The program is conducted in accordance with a formal agreement between the Australian university and an overseas institution or organization;
- The program offered is taught partly or wholly offshore (distance education programs to be included only when there is a formal agreement with an overseas institution/organization to participate in some ways in their delivery);
- The completed program results in a higher education qualification;
- The Australian university has developed the program and has a responsibility for overseeing the academic standards.

1. For confidentiality reasons, all names of people and places used in this paper are pseudonyms.

2. Previous work completed from this study includes: Doherty (2001); Dooley & Singh (1998); Singh (forthcoming); Singh (2002); Doherty & Singh (2002); Exley (2001a, b)

3.
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| (1)Australian Government Organisation (N=4) | (1)Norfield TAFE (N=17) |
| (2) Aussie Uni One: (N=2) | (2)Goodwind University (N=9) |
| *Teacher A, *Teacher D. |
| (3)Aussie Uni Two: (N=3) | |
| *Teacher B |
| (4) Aussie Uni Three: (N=9) | |
| (5) Aussie Language Institute (N=9) | |
| *Teacher C |

Legend: * = Teachers who provided interview data analysed in this paper.

References:


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