THE USE OF ENGLISH AS A GLOBAL LANGUAGE IN MULTINATIONAL SETTINGS AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR BUSINESS EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

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This study explored the use of English as a global language in multinational settings, particularly in regard to business contexts. The study was undertaken from an applied linguistics perspective with an education focus. An ethnographic approach, combining both qualitative and quantitative data-gathering techniques, was employed.

An analysis of the language practices in two multinational companies, one in Malaysia and the other in Hong Kong, served to explore the global role of English. Such observation helped to identify the English and intercultural communication skills that business graduates will require to operate successfully in multinational contexts. Among the skills that were found to be important were the use of English for email communication; greater tolerance for and accommodation of the different accents and varieties of English; the ability to write informal reports in English; development of both oral and written communication skills in English to high levels; and the ability to work collaboratively with people from different national, cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

A case study was also undertaken with a 'typical' business class in an Australian tertiary institution, in order to gauge whether students were developing the above communication skills in the course of their studies. This case study showed that while students are equipped with quite sound knowledge of cultural and linguistic matters, they may not have the necessary intercultural communication skills to enable them to work effectively in multinational teams. The case study also showed that deliberate intervention to raise awareness of cultural and linguistic issues can be effective in developing students' intercultural communication skills.

Both of the above case studies have implications for the future preparation of business graduates. At tertiary level, trends in internationalisation of curriculum and the move to graduate attributes highlight the fact that intercultural competencies will be crucial, not only for business graduates, but for all graduates in future. In the multinational work contexts that graduates will face, this means that all users of English as a global language will have the responsibility for successful interaction, be they first or second language speakers of English: that is, all students will need to develop *interpretability* as well as *intelligibility* skills. More carefully considered teaching and learning approaches, which fully utilise the rich cultural diversity already existing in Australian universities, can assist the development of business graduates who will be more culturally sensitive and able to operate in international/ intercultural contexts.

There is scope for further research on similar themes with other multinational companies in the same or different locations; there is also much scope for further work in the area of internationalisation of curriculum, which aims particularly to develop graduates' intercultural communication skills to enable them to operate confidently in global and multinational settings.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CBS	Curtin Business School
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CME	Colloquial Malaysian English
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Technology
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
EGL	English as a Global Language
EIL	English as an International Language
ELF	English as a Lingua Franca
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
HK	Hong Kong
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
KL	Kuala Lumpur
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LFE	Lingua Franca English
SCOLAR	Standing Committee on Language Education and Research, Hong Kong
SME	Standard Malaysian English
TEFL	Teaching English as a Foreign Language

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Many universities and tertiary institutions all over the world claim to be preparing graduates for the global arena. Indeed, if university Vision and Mission statements are to be believed, they are aiming to do just this. The following are just a few examples:

- The mission of Harvard Business School is "to educate leaders who make a difference in the world" (Harvard Business School 2004);
- The Università La Bocconi, Italy, aims "to develop individuals who are well prepared and knowledgeable citizens of the world" (Università La Bocconi 2004);
- The Copenhagen Business School aims "to train Master's graduates who are competitive in an international labour market" (Copenhagen Business School 2004);
- The University of Technology, Sydney, asserts that its diversity "has created a vibrant and rich learning environment that prepares graduates for a borderless workplace" (University of Technology, Sydney 2004);
- The Queensland University of Technology aims "to provide an educational environment which will enable [students to develop the skills to] be able to work effectively and sensitively within the Australian and international community" (Watters 1997);
- A University of South Australia graduate will be expected to demonstrate "an international perspective as a professional and as a citizen" (University of South Australia 1997);
- The University of Western Australia aims to "advance, transmit and sustain knowledge and understanding, through the conduct of teaching, research and scholarship at the highest international standards for the benefit of the international and national communities, and the State of Western Australia" (The University of Western Australia 2000); and

- Curtin University of Technology aims for the development of students and staff as "citizens of the world, emphasising an international outlook, cultural diversity and informed respect for indigenous peoples" (Curtin University of Technology 1998).

Yet, in many instances, we have not clearly articulated what such internationalisation of curriculum actually means, nor have we identified precisely the skills that the 'global' marketplace will require of future graduates, although there have been some developments in this area in more recent years (Whalley, Langley, Villareal & College 1997; Knight 1999; Barrie 2004; Stier 2004). In regard to business communication, which is the focus of this thesis, there is much talk of intercultural or cross-cultural communication for business in the global arena. However, much of the business literature in this area is promulgated from a very Anglo-American perspective, viewing the rest of the world as 'the other' (Barghiela-Chiappini & Nickerson 2003; Kramsch 2002; Altbach 2004). The discourse seems to move along simplistic lines of what 'we' need to do to accommodate (do business with) the rest of the world and what 'they' need to do to accommodate (do business with) 'us'. The discourse has become even more myopic with the spread of English as a global language, falsely promoting the belief that if one is a speaker of English, a little knowledge of the 'other' culture will suffice to ensure effective intercultural communication. Nothing could be further from the truth: the global spread of English, in fact, makes the situation more complex (Kachru 1992; Scollon & Scollon 1995; Crystal 1997; Graddol & Meinhof 1999, Zachary 2003; Liddicoat, Eisenchelas & Trevaskes 2003). Indeed as Garcia and Otheguy (1989, p.2) state, "a serious consequence of the spread of English has been that it has created a false sense of mutual intelligibility".

In the narrowest sense, internationalisation in Australian universities is still seen by some as no more than taking Australian education offshore or attracting international students to Australian campuses – that is, as having an international student population. This factor could contribute to internationalisation, but as Hawthorne (1997) and others (Nesdale & Todd 1997; Volet & Ang 1998; Smart Volet & Ang 2000; Briguglio 2000; Liddicoat, Eisenchelas & Trevaskes 2003) have commented, there is, unfortunately, very little mixing between international and local students on Australian campuses and very little use is made in Australian classrooms of the rich cultural diversity within them. However, Sadiki (2001, p.2) warns us that:

> the internationalisation of the student body, which is likely to intensify even further in the twenty-first century, calls […] for cross-cultural rethinking of curriculum as well as of teaching and learning practices.

Moreover, internationalisation has not often been associated with the question of English for global communication. As Whalley et al. (1997, p.1) state:

> [In future] most [graduates] will need to function competently in social and work environments which are international and intercultural in nature. A new literacy, an intercultural/international literacy, is crucial to meeting this challenge successfully.

In the area of business education, internationalisation is often seen as having students acquire global perspectives through course content. Although this is praiseworthy, it will not necessarily equip students to operate effectively in a global context (Smart, Volet & Ang 2000; Eisenchelas, Trevakses & Liddicoat 2003). Acquiring the intercultural communication skills to do this is a much more complex process.

This, then, is an area where applied linguistics can make a contribution. The interplay of language(s) and culture(s) and their effects on human behaviour, particularly communicative behaviour, are the province of applied linguistics. Applied linguistics provides systematic insights into the interface between language and culture and theoretical tools to assist analysis. The area of intercultural communication, in particular, draws on the research traditions of cultural anthropology, cross-cultural psychology and sociolinguistics (Kim 1991). This study uses applied linguistics to analyse intercultural language behaviours in multinational workplaces and to suggest strategies to maximise intercultural communicative competence in undergraduate business students.

This thesis first addresses the continuing spread of English as a global language in order to assess what this might mean for future business communication. The literature around English as a global/international language is discussed, including the polemics around whether this might be interpreted as a sign of continuing colonisation/ expansionism on the part of the powerful countries which claim it as the national language (in particular those which Kachru [1985] calls the 'inner circle countries') or

simply a pragmatic development fuelled by other forces. Where there appears to be no disagreement is in acknowledging the very important position that English now holds around the world, and more particularly in the world of business.

This being the case, it was considered useful to examine the communication practices in a multinational company context, in order to ascertain how English is used, and to examine the interplay of English with other languages. Two multinational companies were identified and examined, one in Malaysia and the other in Hong Kong, in order to determine how English is used by employees in the course of their work. From such observation it was hoped to identify the English and intercultural communication skills that graduates might require to operate successfully in multinational contexts. This is not to say that other languages might not be just as important, or even more important than English in such contexts. However, the focus of this research is very much on the use of English in multinational settings, although employees' accounts of how they use their first and other languages are reported and analysed.

It was then considered appropriate to undertake a case study with a 'typical' business class in an Australian tertiary institution, in this case one that was studying international management, in order to gauge whether students were developing, in the course of their studies, the sorts of communication skills that had been identified as necessary/useful in multinational settings. Apart from the unit syllabus, which transmits certain content and skills relevant for international management to students, a trial activity to help develop intercultural communication skills in multinational student groups was undertaken to determine its effectiveness. A small number of academic staff in the Business Faculty were also interviewed in order to gauge their feelings about the way English skills are developed/taught within the Faculty, and to establish their views about the teaching of intercultural communication skills.

This study, then, aims to address several issues in regard to English as a global language:

- First, it will seek to determine the aspects of English for global competence that are required in an international workplace, by identifying and analysing the communication practices in two multinational companies;

- Second, it will seek to ascertain if the skills identified as necessary in the multinational companies are being developed in business courses in Australian universities through a case study undertaken with a 'typical' group of undergraduate students in a Western Australian Business School;
- Third, based on the findings of the multinational companies and student teams case studies, and drawing on what applied linguistics tell us about intercultural communicative competence, it will explore and discuss teaching and learning approaches which might best assist students to acquire desirable intercultural communication skills for operating globally.

More specifically, this thesis will address and seek answers to the following questions:

1. What English communication skills for business settings do workers require in order to operate effectively in multinational companies?
2. Is there a match between the communication skills required in multinational workplaces and those Australian universities aim to develop in business graduates?
3. Does undertaking an awareness-raising activity in the context of an undergraduate business unit develop valuable intercultural communication skills?
4. What can be done to further assist business students to develop the sort of communication skills they will require to operate effectively in international/ intercultural work environments?

This thesis is developed from an applied linguistics perspective with an education focus. An ethnographic approach was employed in the gathering of data, particularly from the two multinational companies that are the subject of this study. This approach, which is described more fully in Chapter 4, combines both qualitative and quantitative data, both, according to Le Compte & Schensul (1999), holding a legitimate place in ethnographic research.

The thesis is organised as follows. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature on English as a global/international language; it also discusses issues related to intercultural communication, with particular emphasis on the business context. Since the two multinational companies that are the subject of this study are based in Hong

Kong and Malaysia, it was felt that a brief overview of English in each location was needed in order to place the companies within their own sociolinguistic context. Chapter 3 provides a brief historical background and describes the dynamic developments occurring with English in Hong Kong and Malaysia. Chapter 4 presents the case study in the two multinational companies, describing data gathering processes, and providing an analysis of the findings. Chapters 5 and 6 provide a description of the 'Multinational Student Teams' case study implemented at Curtin University of Technology with an international management class of undergraduate students. Chapter 5 outlines the findings of a questionnaire designed to gather information about students' understanding and knowledge of linguistic and cultural issues relating to business contexts, while Chapter 6 reports the results of a structured intervention designed to enhance students' intercultural communication skills. Within an internationalisation of education framework, Chapter 7 then draws some implications for business communication education from the findings of the two case studies described in chapters 4, 5 and 6. Finally, Chapter 8 provides a summary overview and conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

ENGLISH AS A GLOBAL LANGUAGE

2.1 Introduction

The concept of 'English as a global language' (EGL) is not recent, describing a phenomenon that developed and drew momentum, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century. The term developed along with other similar terminologies, most notably, 'English as an international language' (EIL) and English as a *lingua franca* (ELF). This chapter provides a brief overview of the spread of English throughout the world to the point that it is labelled 'English as a global language' (a term made popular by Crystal in his eponymous 1997 publication), placing it into a historical and sociolinguistic context, and discussing how the phenomenon is viewed in the literature. While few writers dispute the existence of the 'English as a global language' phenomenon, there are those who favour this development, those who are merely interested in examining and describing it, and those who oppose it strongly and see it as an extension of past colonialism. This chapter will discuss these differing points of view. 'English as a global language' will then be examined in the sphere of business communication, and as the *lingua franca* that it has become in this context, with all the implications that this has for intercultural communication. Finally, the chapter will address issues of business education in the tertiary context and examine the implications of the 'English as a global language' phenomenon for equipping students with the skills needed to operate successfully in the global arena. The broader implications in relation to internationalisation of curriculum are explored more fully in Chapter 7.

2.2 English as a global language

The extent of the spread of English throughout the world, particularly in the second half of the twentieth century, is unprecedented. Ferguson (1982, in Kachru 1992, p.xv) in his introduction to the first edition of the volume 'The other tongue', states that:

> There has never before been a single language which has spread [as a lingua franca] over most of the world, as English has done this century […]. The spread of English is as significant in its way as is the modern use of computers.

Kachru (1992, p.67) himself stresses "the unique international position of English, which is certainly unparalleled in the history of the world. For the first time a natural language has attained the status of an international (universal) language, essentially for cross-cultural communication".

Moreover, the pace of the spread of English seems to be accelerating. While only as far back as 1997 Graddol was predicting that the number of 'native' or 'first language' (L1) speakers was likely to decline and the number of second language (L2) speakers was likely to grow, we know now that this has already happened (Yano 2001). In 1997, Crystal was estimating the number of L1 speakers of English in some 56 countries to be around 337 million, with L2 speakers estimated to be between 1.2 and 1.5 million. With increasing numbers of learners in China and India alone, we know that these figures for L2 speakers have increased significantly since then (McArthur 2003). While such expansion is hailed by some and decried by others, the march of English would seem unstoppable. But what shape will this expansion take? How will English be taught, learned, used and appropriated across the world? A definition of the variety of terms used to describe the spread of English across the world will be useful before attempting to answer these questions.

2.2.1 The labels for English as a world language

As well as a world 'lingua franca', English is increasingly labelled a 'universal', 'international', 'world' or 'global' language, with the last term seeming to carry the greatest currency in recent times. McArthur (2004) indicates that the terms each have a history reflecting different perspectives. He reports that the use of *world English* dates back to the 1920s, while *international English* has been in use since the 1930s and *global English* largely since the 1990s. McArthur indicates that 'world English' was an earlier term for what is now considered English used in the international sphere and encompassing different varieties, Creoles and dialects. The use of 'International English' or English as an international language (EIL) was, on the other hand, a more political choice, promoted in the United States by Larry Smith and in the United kingdom by Peter Strevens in the 1980s, although sporadic use of the term can be traced back to 1930 (McArthur 2004, p.7). The term 'teaching of English as an international language' (TEIL) arose to distinguish it from 'teaching English as a second language'

(TESL) and 'teaching English as a foreign language' (TEFL). While the terms TEFL and TESL are thought to be based upon promotion of idealised 'native speaker' models and are sometimes accused of underhanded post-colonial imperialism (Pennycook 1994; Phillipson 1992), TEIL is underpinned by a belief that English belongs to all its users and embraces native and non-native speaker varieties (Strevens, in Kachru 1992). EIL came closest, perhaps, to the idea of English as a lingua franca. 'English as a global language' (EGL) or 'global English', while probably linked to the globalisation rhetoric of the 1990s has been widely promoted through the work of Crystal (1997) and Graddol (1997 & 1999). 'English as a global language' (EGL) seems to be the term most in use currently to encompass the political as well as the linguistic and pragmatic aspects of the spread of English as a global lingua franca, although ELF is also used.

2.2.2 The spread of English and native speaker norms

The origins of the phenomenal spread of English are often attributed to the economic power of England in the 19th century and the similar position of the United States in the 20th century and currently (Crystal 1997; Brutt-Griffler 1998). Others argue that the British Council and the Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) 'machine' did much to promote the language as well (Phillipson 1992), while Bhatt (2001) for example, says that English spread both through linguistic imperialism and linguistic pragmatism. Crystal (1997) claims that English can now be termed a *global* language, firstly because of the numbers of people across the globe who use it to varying degrees: English has a large number of L1 speakers in a number of countries, has been made an official language in a number of others (e.g. Ghana, Nigeria and Singapore) and a priority foreign language in many more. This latter role has recently increased since the decline in communism and therefore in the status of Russian (McArthur 2003). These developments, says Crystal (1997), coupled with economic developments on a global scale, new communications technologies, the explosion in international marketing and advertising and mass entertainment, have also supported the continued expansion of English as a global *lingua franca*.

Kachru (1985) describes the spread of English as three concentric circles. The countries where there are most L1 speakers of English (e.g. UK, USA and Australia) represent the 'inner circle'; the countries which were formerly colonised and where English is now the official language (e.g. India & Singapore) form 'the outer circle'; and those where

English is increasingly being taught as a foreign language (e.g. China, Greece & Poland) are in the 'expanding circle'. In more recent times there has been some criticism of this model (Graddol 1997) in that it places the 'native speaker' at the centre, and therefore, symbolically in the most important position. Graddol makes the point that the centre of gravity in regard to English as a global language is shifting to the L2 speaker. However, Kachru (1997) also recognises this, and there is little doubt that his work has done much to promote the recognition of other varieties of English (particularly those of South East Asia) as languages/Englishes in their own right. Kachru (1997) talks of 'nativization' of English, whereby a country uses English for an extended number of functions in internal contexts, thus gradually making the language its own. This becomes, according to Kachru, 'functional nativeness' as opposed to 'genetic nativeness'. The former is what has happened to countries which use English in the outer circle, which have now made it their language or their English.

The issue of varieties of English gives rise to the question of just who is a native speaker and to what extent native speaker norms are, or should be, held up as a model for international/global English. Davies (2004, p.431), who has researched this issue over a number of years (see also Davies 2001 & 2003), concludes that the concept is full of ambiguities, "since it is both myth and reality." He nevertheless defines a 'native speaker', in applied linguistics terms, as one who has acquired the language early (i.e. in childhood) and 'native speaker' status as related to personal and group identity, and the assumption of shared cultural knowledge. Davies (2004) sees the decision to label a 'native speaker' as a sociolinguistic choice that should be left to the individual. In relation to English as an international language, he sees the differing points of view reflecting a political stance vis a vis the current role of English in the world and the status accorded to different varieties. He acknowledges that this issue places pedagogy in a precarious position and that teachers themselves are the ones who often promote the 'ideal' native speaker norms.

There is some intense discussion, however, about just how valid some of the varieties are and to what extent they can claim to be a part of the international or global English phenomenon. Is there one international/global English or are there many? Are all varieties acceptable for international purposes or not? Widdowson (1997) in his controversial article 'EIL, ESL, EFL: global issues and local interests', while acknowledging that varieties of English have developed, largely in former English

colonies, says that they have developed too differently to continue to be a part of the same original language. He sees them serving largely internal, social purposes and not international, global ones. He argues that English as an international language is English for specific purposes – largely scientific, technological and business, and should be a language that is linked to international, not national communities. Widdowson's views attracted much, largely negative, reaction. Deneire (1998) proposes that a focus on multilingualism might be much better than Widdowson's idea of ESP. Brutt-Greiffler (1998, p.384) accuses Widdowson of, among other things, leaving the authority of inner circle English "securely in place" and of relegating outer circle varieties to "local varieties which have no global currency". She also argues that there is no such thing as a core and a periphery in English as an international language – or if there is, it is political rather than linguistic. Intelligibility across international varieties of English is perfectly possible (for example, between Australian English and American English speakers); if it is possible among inner circle countries, there is no reason why it should not be possible among all English-using communities. The solution, she suggests, is not in approaching EIL as ESPs, but rather in putting into practice a program for effective international communication that passes responsibility not only to outer and expanding circle users for *intelligibility*, but also to inner circle users for *interpretability* (terms introduced by Candlin 1982). "Effective communication presupposes that *all* of the parties transcend culture-bound parameters" (Brutt-Griffler 1998, p.390). Kachru (1992, p.67) agrees, stating that:

> Whatever the reasons for the earlier spread of English, we should now consider it a positive development in the twentieth century world context. We should realize that this new role of English puts a burden on those who use it as their first language, as well as those who use it as their second language. This responsibility demands what may be termed 'attitudinal adjustment'.

Kirkpatrick (2004a & 2004b) posits that since most future communication in English will be between L2 speakers, we might be better to focus on English as a lingua franca (ELF) and establish what this means for teachers and learners of English, particularly in the ASEAN countries. Further to the tests by Smith (1992) on intelligibility, Kirkpatrick (2004a) also carried out some tests with speakers from nine ASEAN countries. His tests confirm that intelligibility is not dependent upon close approximation to the pronunciation norms of 'native speakers' or of traditional varieties of English, but on

other factors, including L2 speakers' disposition to interactions in ELF, which he maintains are characterised by mutual understanding and co-operation. Kirkpatrick (2004a, p.14) suggests that "a tolerance to variation, coupled with a focus on mutual co-operation and intelligibility, should become key principles in language teaching [which] will lead to more effective cross-cultural communication".

2.2.3 The politics of English as a global language

No matter where one stands in regard to English as a global language, no one denies the dominant position English has achieved worldwide or that its spread seems to be accelerating. However, this development is not hailed universally as a welcome event. And whether we consider it a good thing or otherwise for English to hold this position, we need to keep in mind the cautions of writers such as Phillipson and Skutnabb-Kangas (1999, p.21), who remind us of "the responsibility to examine how a command of English relates to contemporary power structures".

Pennycook (1994, p.24), too, warns us of the link between English and power, so that "to view [the spread of English] as beneficial is to take a rather naively optimistic position on global relations and to ignore relationships between English and inequitable distributions and flows of wealth, resources, culture and knowledge." Pennycook discusses the cultural and political implications of English and stresses that teaching English, especially through the world ELT 'machine', is not a neutral activity, as some would maintain. Indeed, he argues that those who consider the spread of English to be 'natural', 'neutral' and 'beneficial' are deceiving themselves, since they ignore that English is also the language of world capitalism and of much of the world's literature. He maintains, moreover, that English has a much more potentially destructive force in that it carries the discourses of colonialism (Pennycook 1998). In colonies of the past, English often acted as a gatekeeper to positions of prestige and authority. Pennycook maintains that English continues to be an international gatekeeper in other ways; and the discourses of colonialism continue from the historic origins of colonisation until today, as can be seen, for example, in Australia, from the fairly recent racist discourse of Pauline Hanson and her followers in One Nation, an extreme right-wing minor political party. He therefore argues strongly for a 'critical' applied linguistics approach in an examination of the spread of English as a world phenomenon and warns us of the need

to be aware of ELT as a non-neutral activity in a post-colonialist context (Pennycook 2004).

Phillipson (1992) and Skutnabb-Kangas (1995) go further and warn that the spread of English may be responsible for linguicism (i.e. the death of other languages). Yano (2001) would seem to agree with this, stating that while, on the one hand, global English provides a wonderful unprecedented resource for world communication, on the other hand, it can push us towards monolingual and monocultural perspectives. Graddol (1997) and Bolton (1999) disagree with this, stating that it is often the national vernaculars such as Hindi, Putonghua and Bahasa Indonesia, for example, which threaten the smaller languages. They argue that English for many is, and is used as, a *second* language, and does not therefore supplant their first language. Crystal (1997, p.5) although he states that "there is the closest of links between language dominance and cultural power, and this relationship will become increasingly clear as the history of English is told" has been roundly criticised, particularly by Phillipson (1999) and others (e.g. Kayman 2004), for under-emphasising the political role of English as a global language. Crystal (2000) has defended himself by saying that although there is a danger that English could swallow up some of the smaller languages, it is not by any means always English that can be blamed for language demise, as Bolton (1999) and Graddol (1997) quoted above, would agree. Swales (1997) warns us that the danger is always there for English to become 'Tyrannosaurus rex' (the title of his article is 'English as Tyrannosaurus rex') and that writers such as Phillipson, Pennycook and Bhatt (2001) have at least helped ESL practitioners to question their motives and approaches and to become more aware of the potential for English to swallow up all before it. In particular, some decry the impact of English (especially through world entertainment and the media) leading to the 'McDonaldisation' (a term attributed to Phillipson) and the 'coca-colanization' of culture.

However, contrary to trends in other communication media, there are indications that the World Wide Web may stop, or at least slow down, the unstoppable march of English. By the mid 1990s, about 80% of the web was thought to be in English. Graddol (1999) had predicted that the amount of English content on the Web would fall. This has, in fact, happened. Crystal (2001) states that since 1998, the number of new non-English websites has surpassed the number of new English websites and he has found more than 1,000 languages on the web. His research estimates that 90% of Web pages

in Japan are now in Japanese. He concludes, therefore, that "the future looks good for Web multilingualism […] the Web offers a World Wide Welcome for global linguistic diversity".

Ironically, those countries which are ex-colonies and which could be thought to have fears about English supplanting their first language seem to regard the situation differently. In places such as Singapore, India and Hong Kong, for example, the language of the ex-colonisers is seen as necessary for social mobility and economic progress. Even Malaysia, which established Bahasa Malaysia as the national language in the 1970s, now strongly promotes English in order to bolster Malaysia's international standing and to help it achieve its (economic) Vision 2020 (Gill 2002; Jayasankaran 2002). Similarly, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) sees the development of high levels of English proficiency amongst its workers as essential in order to maintain its position as a leading international economic centre in South East Asia, while parents regard English as essential for their children's social mobility (Flowerdew & Scollon 1997; Hong Kong Government 2003; Li 1999 & 2002). Li (2002, p.29) for example, states that:

> It is misleading and inaccurate to see those Hongkongers who are positively inclined toward learning English as victims of the hegemony of this former colonial language; rather, they are pragmatically minded people acting in their own best interests.

This pragmatic embracing of English because of the advantages it confers is also echoed in the Singapore situation. Ghim-Lian Chew (1999, p.41) in discussing the choice of English as the official language of Singapore states:

> When it came to the crunch they [Singaporeans] valued a situation that left traditional cultures open to risk but with increasing material returns as preferable to the full retention of ethnic pride and culture but with diminishing material returns […]. There is a pragmatic multilingualism in existence [in Singapore], a situation where the population has knowingly done a calculation and views the adoption of English not so much as a threat to their own languages but as the key to the share of the world's symbolic power: towards the accumulation of cultural, political and economic capital.

Indeed, some of the ex-colonies consider the warnings about the hegemony of English, coming as they do from largely 'inner circle' speakers, as patronising. For example, Bisong (1995, in Graddol & Meinhof 1999, p.42) maintains that "Nigerians are sophisticated enough to know what is in their interest and their interest includes the ability to operate with the lingua franca [English] in a multilingual situation." So it would seem that while these and other countries are not unaware of the hegemonic power of English, they, nevertheless, consider that the advantages outweigh the possible disadvantages. As Julian Amey states (in Graddol & Meinhof 1999, p.17) "Although there are some concerns about American imperialism, there is a belief that young people need English to be internationally competitive. That's the trend in places like Malaysia and the one emerging also in South America". Perhaps, in concluding this section, we might do well to heed the words of Halliday (2003, p.416):

> International English has expanded by becoming world Englishes, evolving so as to adapt to the meaning of other cultures […]. Rather than trying to fight off global English, which at present seems to be a rather quixotic venture, those who seek to resist its baleful impact might do better to concentrate on transforming it, reshaping its meanings, and its meaning potential, in the way that the communities in the outer circle have already shown it can be done.

In regard to this thesis, the issues would seem to be how EGL issues influence interactions in business contexts and the possible implications for business education. The following section addresses these issues.

2.3 English in business communication

There seems little disagreement that much business interaction all over the world takes place in English, or that English is regarded as the lingua franca of international business (Bargiela Chiappini & Nickerson, 2003; Harris & Bargiela Chiappini 2003), although this view does not always go unchallenged. Moreover, given the trends discussed above, a growing number of interactions will be between L2 speakers of English from different national/cultural backgrounds and a shrinking number will involve L1 speakers (Graddol 1999; McArthur 2003). In this sort of scenario, 'native speakers' of English will not necessarily be advantaged. Indeed they might well be disadvantaged, lulled into a false sense of security by the belief that "everyone speaks English", so no extra effort is required.

Harris and Barghiela-Chiappini (2003, p.155) argue that although business settings have been a site of language contact for many years, "it is only fairly recently that the language of business has been approached in a more systematic way as a discrete area of study". Indeed the article by Ann Johns (1987), which Harris and Barghiela-Chiappini cite as 'seminal', now seems somewhat dated although it was written just seventeen years ago. The most interesting aspect of Johns' article, entitled 'The language of business', is that it encompasses a range of languages and not just English, as might be presumed from the title: the monolithic role of English was not yet taken for granted in 1987. Indeed in the conclusion to this article, which provides a review of relevant 'business' literature, Johns (1987, p.12) states that: "there still isn't enough literature in languages for business." Things have moved quickly in more recent years. Harris and Bargiela-Chiappini (2003, p.156) note that:

> If historically, commerce has been a rich site of language contact, in the contemporary world, globalization has had an impact on corporate issues at both a local and a global level to such an extent that situations involving language contact are probably confronted on a daily basis by a great many multinational corporations, and the multicultural, multilingual workforce is a reality for many companies.

In these situations, the language contact being referred to is often (but not only) intercultural communication with a variety of English as the lingua franca (ELF). Or it may be the case that business communication in ELF is what dominates the business communication literature. In a review of the publication *Business Communication Quarterly* (journal of the Association for Business Communication, previously the American Business Communication Association) from 1936 to 2000 Lewis (2001, p.39) indicates that 'international issues' began to become dominant in the 1980s and continued into the 1990s in this publication:

> In the 1990s […] international topics outpaced all others with a total of 86 articles during the decade, spurred on, most likely, by the widespread increase in international business.

The 'internationalization/globalization' rhetoric of the 1990s was, as would be expected, influencing views about business communication. The topic has certainly dominated not

only in sociolinguistics literature but in more recent years, also in management literature, where the work of Hofstede (1980 & 1991), Adler (1997), Trompenars (1997) and earlier by Hall (1976) is *de rigeur* in business courses. Unfortunately, much as the above authors might warn us of the dangers of stereotyping - Hofstede (1991, p.253), for example, imparts to the reader "a caution against using the country scores obtained from the IBM research for the purpose of stereotyping"- this is exactly what business students (and sometimes academics) tend to do with the theories of the above writers. Zaidman (2001, p.434) who refers to Hofstede's as the 'global-culture approach', concluded from his study with Indian and Israeli managers that communication problems among international managers are better explained by focussing on differences among the discourse systems that have an impact on the participants' communication behaviour (a discourse/practice approach) rather than on global categories of cultural difference. Ulijn (2000, p.197) too, cautions that "[Hofstede's] scores on the five dimensions of Power Distance, Individualism, Masculinity, Uncertainty Avoidance and Confucian Dynamism do not lead automatically to conclusions about how cultural groups perceive each other and how they communicate in intercultural interaction." Studies of professional and corporate cultures, according to Ulijn, are also needed to arrive at a truer picture.

2.4 Intercultural communication in business

In business communication, then, researchers have moved to issues of intercultural communication to try to raise awareness of the complexity of people with different languages and cultures interacting in multinational settings. This is largely out of necessity, for as Bilbow (1997, p.461) says: "The world of business is shrinking: and as it does, languages and cultures are colliding in the workplace with increasing regularity". Claire Kramsch (2002, p.275) states that intercultural communication "whether it is called international, cross-cultural or intercultural communication, between people of different languages and cultures has been an obsession of the last century". As Kramsch (2002, p.277) also points out, however:

> there is a distinctly US American discourse that imposes itself on the whole intercultural endeavour [so that] the concept of intercultural communication as it is currently used can be easily highjacked by a global ideology of 'effective

communication' Anglo-Saxon style, which speaks an English discourse even as it expresses itself in many different languages.

So while intercultural business communication now provides a primary growth area for language contact studies in business settings, most research in intercultural communication has been published in English in western countries (Harris & Bargiela-Chiappini 2003). However, one counter move towards this tendency, as we have seen above, is the fact that English can no longer be seen to be one language or one variety but, particularly in its role as a *lingua franca*, encompasses many varieties and therefore expresses many cultural/intercultural realties. Gilsdorf (2002, p.364) calls this English a "polymorph business language [which] is alive, healthy and 'morphing' in many ways, and what we call Standard English is a moving target".

As well, the approaches to intercultural communication are no longer limited to the 'global-culture approach' referred to above, which, while it has its uses, is now balanced by an awareness of its limitations. Zaidman (2001, p.410), for example, states that "the limitations of the global culture approach are that complexity and variation in communication patterns are often ignored and the approach is insensitive to adaptation of communication strategies." Zaidman and others (Cai & Donohue 1997; Francis 1991; Adler & Graham 1989) suggest that a 'culture-in-context approach' which analyses discourse in situated intercultural interactions is much more fruitful. In sociolinguistics, the work of discourse analysts such as Gumperz (1979, 1982 & 1996), for example, has shown that at every level, from general notions about how to get things done, or about what is relevant or significant, down to the most specific features of stress and intonation in talk, different ethnics groups operate differently. He has also shown how these communicative differences feed into the process of evaluating individuals and stereotyping them.

The work of Scollon and Scollon (1995) stands out in the discourse approach to intercultural communication. The authors maintain that most miscommunication in business contexts arises not out of poor use of grammar or mispronunciations but because of differences in patterns of discourse. They see the discourse of cultural groups as one of a series of discourse *systems* including corporate, professional, generational and gender systems. None of the discourse systems is static (just as culture is not static) and professional communication usually involves communication across as well as

within discourse systems. The issue becomes more complicated because we are all simultaneously members of multiple groups or discourse systems and we cannot be defined simply by our membership of any one. Thus, for intercultural communication to be successful, a shared knowledge of context is required. The expanded view of language advocated by Roberts, Davies and Jupp (1992) would seem to be supporting the 'shared knowledge of context' advocated by Scollon & Scollon. Their 'expanded view of language' would include knowledge of 'schemata' (the cultural and social knowledge brought to an interaction) and 'frames' (strategies and assumptions which allow for an interpretation of the interaction) as well as language uses and forms. The authors call this a 'grammar of discourse', which is much more difficult to learn than a grammar of linguistic forms. Highly formalised situations such as job interviews, for example, depend on the interviewee being familiar with the schema and frame for this interaction in a particular cultural context in order to be judged positively.

On the other hand Varner (2000), from the business communication discipline, argues that to teach intercultural communication to business students is not enough. What she proposes is a theoretical framework for intercultural business communication which sets it apart from intercultural communication and international business. Intercultural business communication, she says, is "more than the sum of its parts […]. In intercultural business communication the business strategies, goals, objectives and practices become an integral part of the communication process and help create a new environment out of the synergy of culture, communication and business" (Varner 2000, p.45).

Whichever approach we might think more suitable for teaching intercultural communication in business, it is clear that in future, being an L1 speaker of English will not, of itself, suffice. Intercultural communication skills will be needed and should be developed by *all* parties involved in a business interaction. Candlin's (1982) and Smith's (1983) idea of *interpretability* being just as important as *intelligibility* makes everyone responsible for effective intercultural communication.

2.5 Positioning the teaching of English communication for a business context

What sorts of English language skills, then, should we be developing in business students to equip them for successful interaction in a global context? Trends emerging from this survey of the literature would seem to imply that successful business communication in future scenarios, where many interactions will take place between non-native speakers of English, will require:

- a reasonably high level of competence with English at the linguistic level;
- knowledge of and familiarity with other English varieties/'Englishes'; and, most importantly
- cultural understanding and competence in intercultural communication.

2.5.1 Competence in English at the linguistic level

The English language teaching (ELT) business is a huge industry worldwide (not necessarily well-regarded by all, as we have seen above) with the British Council estimating that students learning English all over the world would reach 1,000 million in the year 2000 (Crystal 1997). In 2003/2004 the British Council alone taught English to some 500,000 people and administered 1.15 million professional and academic exams (British Council 2004). Large providers of transnational tertiary education, such as Australia, require minimum English language levels, often measured with international tests such as IELTS, for entry. Research by Davies, Hamp-Lyons and Kemp (2003) indicates that such tests are not without their problems, with the issue of which norms are internationally acceptable being at the forefront. Another concern, according to Ronowicz & Yallop (1999) is that most ELT courses all over the world teach only first level (literal) meanings and 'correct' grammar and only a limited amount of what the authors call 'second level meanings', i.e. culture specific meanings essential for effective intercultural communication. Moreover, there are real issues, as we have seen, about just which variety of English should be taught - a 'standard model', a local variety, or some sort of 'neutral' lingua franca, if such a creature exists. We have seen that Widdowson (1997) for example, advocates a 'standard' model as the only viable one internationally, though he has been strongly challenged in this view by a number of researchers (Brutt-Griffler 1998; Bamgbose 2001; Kirkpatrick 2004a & 2004b). Those who opt for the teaching of local varieties are sometimes going against

the tide of public opinion, so that while people happily and efficiently use local varieties in everyday interactions, they nevertheless regard them as lacking status. Norrish (1997, p.4), for example, points out that in Ghana, "recognition of local varieties comes mainly from local scholars in linguistic and literary fields, with public opinion lagging well behind". A similar view is expressed by those who propose that in some places, such as Malaysia, different varieties of English need to be learned for *intranational* and *international* purposes (David 2000). As Bamgbose (1998, p.5) says:

> On the one hand, non-native norms are seen as an expression of identity and solidarity, while on the other, there continues to be great admiration for native norms.

Yano (2001, p.129) suggests that a standard international variety of English may develop and that it should be "as simple and regular as possible in its linguistic forms, in its rules of use, and socioculturally as neutral as possible in order to attain high learnability and usability". Schneider (2003, p.19) disagrees, stating that:

> Personally I do not believe in the possibility of a uniform global norm, because such a linguistic system will always be artificial and thus not be acceptable as a carrier of one's identity to anybody (which is an inalienable function of language).

A compromise position seems to be suggested by Bhatia (1997, p.318), who states that:

> It is necessary to recognize nativised norms for intranational functions within specific communities, and then to build a norm for international use on such models, rather than enforcing or creating a different norm in addition to that. […] International English should be considered a kind of superstructure rather than an entirely new concept. The best way this superstructure can be added is by making the learner aware of cross-cultural variations in the use of English and by maximising his or her ability to negotiate, accommodate and accept plurality of forms.

A number of other researchers (Seidlhofer 2001; Jenkins 2000; Kirkpatrick 2004b) are also attempting to define what is sometimes called Lingua Franca English (LFE) or English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). The most recent work by Jenkins (2000, 2002 &

2004) and Seidlhofer (2004) relates to ELF in Europe. Kirkpatrick (2004a & 2004b) advocates strongly that this is the direction we should be taking more broadly, particularly in Asia. This point of view seems to be gathering momentum, overcoming earlier objections (for example, from Widdowson, 1997) that you cannot teach what cannot be described. Descriptions of ELF are in fact emerging, as is literature advocating what should be taught and how (Seidlhofer 2004; McKay 2002; Gnutzmann 1999). So it might be that a model of ELF or international English will indeed emerge and will be taught more broadly.

2.5.2 Knowledge of and familiarity with other 'Englishes'

We have seen that there are tangible differences in the way English is used in different countries/regions. At this point in time there is no standard model that can be offered internationally. As Pan et al. (2002, p.4) state:

> We know […] that the long insistence that the ability to speak English is enough to be able to work anywhere does not suffice, for the reason that there isn't just one *English*. There are many *Englishes* in use throughout the world, and the fact that one might grow up speaking "English" in Iowa is no guarantee that he or she will understand a word of a conversation in London's East End, much less in Sydney, Hong Kong or New Delhi.

Apart from extensive use of English in many parts of Asia and Africa, the European Union seems to be increasingly taking up English as its own lingua franca. While in 1989 the figures for the language of European Union documents were French 50%, German 9% and English 30%, by 1997 the figures were French 40% and English 45% with a sprinkling of other languages (Phillipson 2004). Moreover, this is not seen as a threat. As House (2004) states:

> Using English as a lingua franca in Europe does not inhibit linguistic diversity and it unites more than it divides, simply because it may be 'owned' by all Europeans – not as a cultural symbol, but as a means of enabling understanding.

Knowledge of the different ways English is used in different countries will therefore be not only advantageous but essential for business discourse. As Seidlhofer (2004)

indicates, ELF interactions often occur in influential networks such as global business, politics, science, technology and international media. Moreover "for the first time in history, a language has reached truly global dimensions, and as a consequence, is being shaped, in its international uses, at least as much by its non-native speakers as its native speakers" (Seidlhofer 2004, p.211).

It would therefore be foolish for those involved in business interactions in future to ignore the fact that others speak English differently and are making it their own language with their own cultural perspectives. Some of the data being gathered by Jenkins (2000) indicates that pronunciation is by far the most common cause of intelligibility problems in the use of English as an international language. Pronunciation also emerged as a major area of concern in the case study undertaken for this research with two multinational companies, particularly with Seacargo International whose employees dealt with ships' crews from all over the world (see Chapter 4). As part of raising awareness about world Englishes and ELF, business students need to learn accommodation strategies for different accents and different ways of speaking English. Fortunately, there is the possibility for them to do this in their everyday culturally diverse classrooms, although the potential is being largely ignored. Australian universities can rightfully claim to have very internationalised campuses in terms of student population, but research indicates that this rich cultural diversity goes largely untapped (Hawthorne 1997; Volet & Ang 1998; Smart, Volet & Ang 2000; Briguglio 2000; Nesdale & Todd 1997). Universities will need to align their practice with their rhetoric, if they are serious about wanting to internationalise their curricula for *all* students, both local and international, for it is relevant to both L1 and L2 speakers to develop accommodation strategies in order to ensure both *intelligibility* and *interpretability* in intercultural situations.

As Jenkins (2000, p.160) states:

> It is for L1 speakers [of English] to move their own receptive goal posts and adjust their own expectations as far as international uses of English are concerned […]. The perhaps unpalatable truth for 'native speakers' is that if they wish to participate in international communication in the 21st century, they too will have to learn English as an International Language (EIL).

2.5.3 Cultural understanding and competence in intercultural communication

Knowledge of other cultures has always been a requirement in intercultural contexts, but the situation is now a little more complex for, as Halliday (2003, p.417) suggests, "meanings get reshaped though ongoing interaction in the semiotic contexts of daily life [but] these have now become global contexts". Moreover, we are now more aware that "cultural knowledge is not a case of knowing information about the culture; rather it is knowing how to engage with the culture. Thus cultural competence is seen as intercultural behaviour" (Liddicoat 2002, p.7). This complexity is also reflected in the words of Kramsch (2002, p.275) who asks: "What is 'culture' in times of global economic exchanges, virtual hybrid forms of communication, and multinational corporate identities?" Pan et al. (2002, p.3) also stress that "the development of new interpersonal communication technologies makes the prospect of effective communication in international settings bewildering". In this sort of context, the 'global culture' approach, which tends to encourage stereotyping, is of little use *per se*, as has been indicated above, and needs to be supplemented by knowledge of business discourse and a culture-in-context approach. This goes beyond learning about the surface aspects and artefacts of a particular culture to learning about how people think, interact and solve problems in culturally specific ways.

In this area, there has been some analysis in Australia of professional discourse by, for example, Pauwels (1990a, 1990b, 1995) with health professionals, Clyne (1990 & 1994) in the area of industry and business, and other work related contexts (Beal 1990; Marriott 1990). In New Zealand, the study of workplace discourse by Janet Holmes (2002) and her team represents a huge bank of data. Such research tends to confirm the fact that where intercultural communication fails, this is often due to factors other than linguistic. Thomas (1983, p.110) suggests that we need to help students to "understand the way pragmatic principles operate in other cultures, encouraging them to look for different pragmatic or discoursal norms which may underlie national and ethnic stereotyping". Clyne & Ball (1990, p.8) report that: "communication breakdown, when it occurs, seems to be due to culture bound differences in discourse rules". Gumperz (1982, p.14) too, states that in intercultural communication "many of the meanings and understandings […] depend upon culturally specific conventions, so that much of the meaning in any encounter is indirect and implicit". Gumperz stresses the importance of these 'contextualisation' conventions, as do Scollon and Scollon (1995). It is the shared knowledge of 'context' which, in the end, will make for successful intercultural

communication, while its absence will lead to communication failure. As Scollon and Scollon (1995, p.118) put it:

> Within a particular discourse system, communications which are framed within another discourse system simply appear faulty or inefficient. One either does not interpret them or interprets them within the discourse system one is using oneself. This latter problem is the central one of intercultural communication. Communications which cross discourse system lines are subject to being either not heard or misinterpreted.

In intercultural business communication, where discourse lines are likely to be crossed often, interlocutors will require the skills to be able to interpret and understand each other's discourse patterns. This is not easy to do, and it is the reason why many materials and texts on professional communication are not very useful. According to Pan et al. (2002, p.3) "while there is some very important and useful advice in such books, most of them take the mistaken view that it is possible to standardize professional communication [and] mostly, these 'standards' are simply the cultural communication practices of North American business people." We have seen that this simply would not be effective in today's global business environment. The Western bias in many business texts, even those aiming to teach intercultural communication, was also noted by Munshi and McKie (2001), who developed a critical pedagogy to address this issue.

Pan et al. (2002, p.11) note that the features of communication that research has shown lead to communication difficulties in business/professional contexts include the following:

- Body language, dress, tone of voice;
- Use of space, layout, and design of both physical spaces and publications;
- The use of colours to reflect subtle impressions;
- Timing at the face-to-face level as much as the degree of punctuality in meeting deadlines;
- The use of meetings for negotiations as opposed to ratification of already agreed positions;
- Leading with main topics as opposed to leading with social relationships;

- Talking vs. silence; and
- Formal agendas vs. open discussion.

It is difficult to make rules about any of the above, since all intercultural encounters are contextualised. A 'grammar of discourse' is much more difficult to acquire than a linguistic grammar. Zaidman (2001, p.436) proposes that "international business education should include seminars that focus on awareness of differences in cross-cultural business communication as well as on culture-specific discourse systems that have an impact on business communication". Kim (1991, p.259) describes intercultural communication competence "not as a communication competence in dealing with a specific culture, but as the cognitive, affective and operational adaptability of an individual's internal system in all intercultural communication contexts". This sounds complex, and it is. Those who have analysed deeply intercultural communication leave us no illusion as to how difficult it is to acquire intercultural communicative competence. Scollon and Scollon (1995, p.252) warn us that:

> The professional communicator is the one who has come to realise his or her lack of expertise. One is, of course, expert in the natural discourse systems to which one belongs, discourse systems such as one's own culture, gender and generational discourse systems, and one's professional area of expertise. [However] intercultural professional communication requires outgroup communication in which one is never likely to take on full group membership and expertise […]. A person who understands the outlines of the pattern of differences and commonalities, but fully recognises his or her own lack of membership and state of non-expertise, is likely to be the most successful and effective communicator.

In spite of the level complexity of the task, Australian universities have the cultural diversity within their student and staff populations to enable them to begin to prepare business students for future intercultural encounters in the world of business. However, as already indicated above, this diversity is under-utilised in teaching and learning. Liddicoat, Eisenchelas and Trevaskes (2003) stress that Australia's universities still have a 'weak' interpretation of internationalisation, meaning largely that they emphasise the recruitment of international students, as opposed to a 'strong' view of internationalisation, which would encourage cultural pluralism and "improve [students']

capacity to interact effectively in intercultural environments." The case study that was undertaken in a Western Australian university as part of the research for this thesis (Chapters 5 & 6) does show, however, that students can learn something about intercultural interaction from each other in the course of their studies. Moreover, what is required is a re-thinking of activities which often already form a part of the curriculum rather than new content - activities that allow students to learn from each other's cultural perspectives. It also means that *everyone*, that is both local and international students, learns about effective communication in intercultural encounters (hence developing both *intelligibility* and *interpretability* skills, referred to above). The discussion in regard to pedagogy is taken up more fully in Chapter 7.

2.6 Conclusion

It can be seen from the above that the ramifications of English as a global language in business are far-reaching. They require that future business graduates, along with high levels of proficiency in English, develop an understanding of the varieties of English and of how English is used globally. Now more than ever, business graduates require sophisticated cultural understandings and sensitivity, which impact upon intercultural communication in a global environment. No doubt, some universities are moving in the direction of preparing students for the demands of such environments; however, in Australia, at least, the approach has not been consistent, nor have suitable strategies been integrated fully into the formal curriculum (Liddicoat et al. 2003). If we are serious about preparing business graduates for operation in the international sphere, then a much more consistent and deliberate approach is needed (see Chapter 7). In regard to English as a global language, the following words of Halliday (2003, p.416) aptly sum up the issues around this phenomenon, and where the future might lead us:

> The way it has turned out, English has become a world language in both senses of the term, international and global: international, as a medium of literary and other forms of cultural life in (mainly) countries of the former British empire; global, as the co-genitor of the new technological age, the age of information. So those who are able to exploit it, whether to sell goods and services or to sell ideas, wield a very considerable power. Many people would like to resist this dominance of English. The strategic response would seem to be: do away with English. Don't teach it or do anything to perpetuate its standing in the community. But most

serious thinkers believe that that won't now work: English is too deeply entrenched, and if people are deprived of the chance of learning it they are the ones who suffer. That was not the case 50 years ago, when English was just one international language among many, and it may well not be the case 50 years from now; but for the moment, that is how it is.

CHAPTER 3

ENGLISH IN HONG KONG AND MALAYSIA

3.1 Introduction

The two multinational companies which are the subject of this research are based in Hong Kong and Malaysia. It was therefore considered necessary to provide some background on the linguistic situation in Hong Kong and Malaysia, in order to be able to place each company within its own socio-linguistic context. A macro socio-linguistic approach is used to provide a brief historical overview and describe the current language situation in both places.

The section on Hong Kong discusses the use of Cantonese, English and Putonghua in Hong Kong and the reciprocal influence of these languages on each other and on the 'normal' flow of communication in Hong Kong society. The historical role of English in the ex-British colony is examined briefly, as is the current status of English, particularly its perceived important role in the 'global future' of Hong Kong as a regional capital. The use of English in a business context, which is particularly relevant to this research, will also be examined and the question of whether there exists a Hong Kong English variety will also be considered.

This chapter also examines the role of English in Malaysia, providing a brief historical overview from its colonial origins and then examining its current status. Language policy since independence in 1957 is discussed: the role and status of Malay vis a vis English is examined, as is the current strong reversal of policy in regard to English. Contrary to the situation in Hong Kong, there seems to be little doubt, or little disagreement in the literature, that a variety (or even varieties) of Malaysian English exists. The question of 'standards', relevant to both Hong Kong and Malaysia, will also be examined.

3.2 English in Hong Kong

The current position of English in Hong Kong has evolved from its history as a language of British colonisation in the region. The last 30 years or so, or what Bolton

(2000) calls ‘the era of late British colonisation’, saw Hong Kong become a wealthy commercial and entrepreneurial international city. By 2000, the population, which in 1961 numbered some 3.1 million, had grown to approximately 7 million. There is the belief, particularly among business and some government figures, that if Hong Kong is to retain its pre-eminent position as an international business centre in the region, then English needs to be promoted to higher levels, so that Hong Kong is not surpassed by, for example, Singapore (Bhatia & Candlin 2001). Indeed, as Bolton (2000, p.285) says, the 1997 change in sovereignty “not only signalled a transition from a colonial to a post-colonial society, but also marked the transformation of a colonial city to a global city”.

3.2.1 A brief historical overview

Bolton (2002a) traces the origins of English in China and Hong Kong back to the seventeenth century, when the first British trading ships reached Macau and Canton, and a form of Chinese Pidgin English developed as a result. With the annexation of Hong Kong in 1842, English also began to spread through various ‘mission schools’ which, as well as teaching the majority of the curriculum in English, also taught Chinese language and literature, thus creating a category of school referred to as ‘Anglo-Chinese’. Such schools had a significant impact on the linguistic history of the colony, educating a merchant class who played a key role in trade with Europe and America and promoted modernity in late nineteenth century China. The University of Hong Kong was established in 1911, increasing the demand for English-medium education, while the Chinese University of Hong Kong provided Chinese language instruction (Bolton 2002b).

By the beginning of the 1960s a complete secondary education was available only to an elite, for whose children an ‘elite bilingualism’ in Chinese and English was highly valued. The 1970s, however, saw the spread of mass education so that by the 1980s this elite bilingualism had begun to change to a ‘mass or folk bilingualism’, giving much greater numbers of students the opportunity to acquire some English at Anglo-Chinese schools and to become (at least to some extent) bilingual. At the beginning of the 1980s there were two universities using English, whereas today there are eight. In the broader population, census figures indicate 9.7% of the population claiming a knowledge of English in 1961, compared with 43% by 2001 (Bolton 2002a).

In the era of 'late British colonisation' (1960s to 1990s) it was not until 1974 that Chinese was recognised as a co-official language in the territory. The 1974 Official Languages Ordinance declared that Chinese and English would enjoy equality of use. A decade later, after negotiations for the handover in 1997, article 9 of the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) stated that English, as well as Chinese, could be used by executive authorities and legislative and judicial organs. In 1995 the Hong Kong government announced that it aimed to develop a civil service biliterate in English and Chinese, and trilingual in English, Cantonese and Putonghua (Lau 1995).

Language policy in the sphere of education has caused much discussion and debate, particularly since the 1970s. An attempt to promote mother tongue instruction in lower secondary school through a 'Green Paper' proposal in 1973 drew a strong reaction from parents, so that by 1974 the corresponding 'White Paper' opted for leaving the decision to individual schools. This vacillation in regard to a clear policy led to an increase in Anglo-Chinese schools, where English was used as the medium of instruction (though to varying degrees). The reality, according to Johnson (1994), was that there was much use of Cantonese and English in spoken form with English textbooks, this situation leading to code switching and code mixing, much of it reflected in the 'normal' patterns of language use in Hong Kong today (Pennington 1998; Li 2000). In 1997, however, the government took a firmer line and declared that only 100 schools (later amended to 114) would be allowed to use English as the language of instruction in place of Cantonese. Bolton (2000) suggests that this decision may have been taken as a way of affirming Cantonese identity in the face of the Chinese takeover in 1997. Whatever the reason, the situation is by no means fixed. Many parents see access to English as important for their children's social mobility and there is a strong push for English instruction from business interests. The government is therefore under pressure to improve English standards, particularly from the business community, which is "anxious that Hong Kong's economic prosperity and its status as a centre for international business, already dented by the post-1997 Asian economic crisis, might be further eroded in comparison with its regional rival Singapore, or its rapidly developing mainland competitor, Shanghai" (Bolton 2000, p.274).

3.2.2 The current language situation in Hong Kong

The current language situation in Hong Kong would seem to reflect all its sociolinguistic complexity as well as the more recent political changes brought about by the official 'handover' in 1997. Much of the immediate pre-1997 discourse and debates seemed to focus on the roles of Cantonese and English, particularly in regard to the medium of instruction in schools. The Hong Kong government's announcement in 1995 that its new language policy would be to develop a civil service biliterate in English and Chinese and trilingual in English, Cantonese and Putonghua has now become a confirmed policy for the whole population, reiterated in the report to government of the Standing Committee on Language Education and Research (SCOLAR, Hong Kong Government 2003). The government has accepted SCOLAR's recommendations for a series of strategies to ensure that the policy is achieved. In spite of this, there seems to be a situation of flux in regard to things linguistic, with tensions, at least at the policy level, emerging between the three languages. These tensions are viewed rather differently by language researchers and applied linguists on the one hand and by the business community, parents, and educators on the other.

3.2.2.1 Cantonese, Putonghua and English

The biliterate/trilingual policy for Hong Kong is not as easy to achieve as might appear on the surface. Firstly, the term 'Chinese' is used sometimes to mean Putonghua and sometimes to mean Cantonese. Indeed Bruche-Schultz (1995) questions this 'fuzzy' use of the term, which covers both the written standard (Modern Standard Chinese or Putonghua) and the spoken (Cantonese) vernacular. A series of Education Commission reports since 1974 have concerned themselves with English and 'Chinese' streaming in certain types of schools, but the 'Chinese' was never clearly explained, and it is only more recently that the trilingual situation is being flagged more clearly. There are concerns about the present and future status of Cantonese, "which is a major means of communication in most societal domains" (Bruche-Schultz 1995, p.297). Flowerdew and Scollon (1997) also note the possible confusion at policy level between the use of Putonghua and Cantonese, indicating that the role or functions of the two languages have not been clearly spelt out.

More recent, post-'handover' experiences, however, show that Cantonese may, in fact, be enjoying a resurgence, possibly tied in some way to the sense of identity that the

people of Hong Kong want to establish vis a vis the PRC. Although the Chinese spoken at the official handover of Hong Kong was Putonghua, since then "the leaders - like almost everyone in Hong Kong - have lapsed back comfortably into their native Cantonese" (Lague 2001, p.66). According to linguist Robert Bauer (in Lauge 2001) "Cantonese is now enjoying its golden age in Hong Kong", and could continue to do so because of the switch to Cantonese teaching in many Hong Kong schools. On the other hand, Bauer is somewhat less optimistic about its long-term future, predicting that while Cantonese may remain supreme for the next 25 years, it may eventually surrender to the pressure of Putonghua from the north. However, since in Hong Kong and the Guandong Province there are more than 60 million speakers of Cantonese, its fall from use is not a foregone conclusion. Bauer (in Lague 2001, p.68) reminds us that:

> Linguistic diversity is as important as ecological diversity […]; a person's language is a symbol of their social, political cultural and historical identity. If you take that away you have deprived that person of part of their identity.

The linguistic diversity in Hong Kong society may be greater than is commonly supposed. Bolton (2000) suggests that the 'monolingualism' of the Chinese population of Hong Kong is a myth, just as the lack of existence of a Hong Kong variety of English may be a myth. In Hong Kong, approximately 96% of the population is Chinese, with 88.7% of the population claiming the use of Cantonese as their usual spoken language, and 3.1% indicating the use of English in a 1996 census (Tsui & Bunton 2000). There was a rise in the proportion of people claiming a knowledge of English from 9.7% in 1961 to 38.1% in 1996, this increase probably in some measure due to the massification of education since the 1960s (Bolton 2002b). Pennington (1998) also reminds us that a simple 'bilingualism with diglossia' analysis of English for certain domains (usually written) and Cantonese for speaking and other domains may also be an oversimplification. Generally, when there is diglossia in a group, one language tends to be high status and one low status, with the low status language often associated with a minority group. In the case of Hong Kong, this could have been said to exist to some extent previously, in that English was the official language and was certainly used in written form and in the legislature as well as other official functions. However, Pennington (1998, p.4) indicates that since the 1960s, English has been losing the high status ground to Chinese and that, in any case, "the diglossic form of description between any two languages is in fact an idealization". Moreover, Pennington describes

the Hong Kong culture as not static enough to encourage a stable sort of diglossia. Hong Kong society is, she maintains, quite the opposite: "a community which is perpetually transitional, emergent and realigning – politically, socially, culturally and linguistically" (Pennington 1998, p.5). As well, the minority language tag just does not apply in the case of Cantonese in Hong Kong (Li 1999).

3.2.2.2 Code-switching, code-mixing and mixed-code

So what is the reality in regard to language use in Hong Kong? It would seem that many linguists agree that code switching and code mixing or 'mixed code' particularly between Cantonese and English, is common in the every day speech of Hong Kong people. Code mixing generally refers to the use of two languages at the clause or intra-sentential level, and code switching to the same at inter-sentential level (Li 2000, p.305). In Hong Kong there is much talk of 'mixed-code' to cover both of these aspects (see, for example, Boyle 1997; Pennington 1998; and Li 2000). Whether the practice is approved of or regarded as somewhat inferior, mixed code is a fact of life in Hong Kong, and indeed common in all contexts where two or more languages exist alongside each other. Pennington indicates that code mixing and code switching in a sense reflect the fast-changing pace and the entrepreneurship of Hong Kong:

> This new mixed language, which is based on new embeddings describing new things and expressing new meanings in the society, helps to express a range of newly minted identities and discourses required to meet the new and rapidly changing needs of the society and culture (Pennington 1998, p.25).

However, others see mixed code as inferior and even perhaps problematic. Nowhere has this issue raised more controversy or been more hotly contested than in the field of education, where mixed-code teaching has been condemned at an official level, but continues in the everyday reality of the classroom. In spite of various Education Commission reports urging that schools do not use mixed mode, this has, in fact, been the reality and probably still continues to be (Boyle 1997; Pennington 1998; Li 1999; Bolton 2000). Research by Johnson in 1983 found that a lot of code mixing existed and he indicated that there may not be a simple answer for bilingual situations:

> Separation of the languages is one simple, but possibly also simplistic, approach to the problem of bilingual education, and I am not convinced that there is anything intrinsically wrong with code switching in bilingual classrooms (Johnson in Boyle 1997, p.84).

The sixth Education Commission's Report of 1995 indicates that mixed-code is coming to be regarded as more acceptable, with mixed-code teaching seen as "a necessary educational expedient, inevitable given the constraints teachers work under, and a reflection of developments within Hong Kong society" (Boyle 1997, p.88). This stance is still some distance from Kachru's deliberate embracing of linguistic diversity as expressed in the following:

> In culturally, linguistically and ideologically pluralistic societies, there is a complex hybridity […]. I believe linguistic and cultural hybridity is our identity, [and] our major strategy is to acculturate the language in our contexts of use, on our terms, Asian terms (Kachru 1997, in Bolton 2000, p.283).

In the meantime, schools continue to have largely English language texts so that a form of classroom instruction where "an idea related to written materials is introduced in English, elaborated in Cantonese, then re-stated in whole or in part in English, is common" (Pennington 1998, p.8). The use of the two languages at tertiary level is different, however. Here, lectures, tutorials and laboratory sessions tend to be carried out in one language or the other, although English is maintained to a far greater degree with written genres.

3.2.2.3 The role of English in Hong Kong

One aspect of the hybridity of Hong Kong embraces the use and role of English or even of a Hong Kong English variety. As already indicated, the specific colonial history of Hong Kong has, of course, influenced the place of English in the HKSAR today. However, in some ways, the Hong Kong situation is different from other ex-colonies. For one thing, the role of English in Hong Kong, unlike Malaysia, Singapore and India, is not as a lingua franca amongst different ethnic groups (Li 1999; Tsui & Bunton 2000). The fact that it is a lingua franca in these other 'outer circle' countries has meant that different distinctive English varieties have developed which are widely accepted as

'Malaysian English', 'Singapore English' and 'Indian English', whereas this is not quite the case in Hong Kong. The opposite may be said to be true in Hong Kong where the use of English in everyday interaction among Cantonese speakers is discouraged and sometimes related to immodesty and showing off (Pennington 1998, p.14). Du Babcock (1999a, p.552) states that the use of English in everyday spoken interactions is, in many cases, positively discouraged, thus making it difficult for many Hong Kong employees to achieve high levels of proficiency.

Nevertheless, this does not mean that English is seen as having limited value. There is a strong view expressed among the business community, parents, and educators generally, that English is important for the future of Hong Kong. Flowerdew and Scollon (1997, p.429) state that for the community at large, "English has come to be seen as the international language of 'upward mobility', enabling Hong Kong people to enter university, to take on positions of greater responsibility in the Hong Kong international business world, or to go overseas to study or to emigrate". The business community, in particular, keeps reminding the government of the need to have young people with fluent English in order to enable Hong Kong to maintain its position as a leading business centre in the region. This concern was, and continues to be, so great that large private companies have donated literally millions of dollars to develop employees' English language skills (do Rosario 1994) and the government has also subsidised work related English language programs and the development of competency scales for the workforce (Hong Kong Government 2003). Choi (2003) accuses Hong Kong business interests of taking over the language debate to promote their own interests, which, he argues, are not necessarily in the best interests of a balanced education for Hong Kong's school children. The government's current stance through SCOLAR (Hong Kong Government 2003) would seem to reflect its commitment to ensuring the development of English to high levels as part of its 'biliterate/trilingual' push for Hong Kong. To this end, a very substantial financial commitment has been made to the training and development of language teachers, seen as an indispensable first step towards achieving established linguistic goals. Choi (2003) warns of the danger of the HKSAR schools policy, which, because of its focus on elite bilingualism for a small number of largely already privileged students in 114 schools, he labels a 'language selection policy'. Such a policy, he claims, can only lead to social divisions. Moreover, it is educationally unsound, placing stress on those children considered privileged because they attend an English medium of instruction (EMI) school, but who, in reality, have to contend with

receiving all their education in a foreign language. The policy is also unsound because it excludes other students from accessing the privileges that an EMI education seems to bestow on Hong Kong students. Choi claims that the desirable goal of different models of bilingual education available to all Hong Kong school students is finding no space in the utilitarian discourse being fuelled by business interests. This discourse, he maintains, is based on "a popularly held myth, vigorously promoted by businesses for their own interests, and also supported by certain academic discourses, that Hong Kong's economic survival depends on the availability of English language skills" (Choi 2003, p.692).

In relation to the concern about the strategic importance of English for Hong Kong, a whole discourse about 'falling standards' in English has also been taking place for some years, with its chief proponents often coming from the business community and in some cases from the teaching profession. The debate started in the 1980s, moved into the 1990s and continues unabated. Bolton and Lim (2000) refer to the ideology of a 'falling standards' myth, which they say reached its peak towards the end of the 1980s. T'sou lamented students' poor levels of English in 1983 and was followed by Yu and Atkinson in 1988 drawing similar conclusions (Bolton & Lim 2000). Bolton and Lim claim that a strong and recurrent strand of argument in the discussion on English was economic, "expressed through an identification of English with business, trade, and prosperity" with one editorial in the *South China Morning Post* in November 1986 stating that "English is pre-eminently the language of international trade, which is, and for the foreseeable future will remain, Hong Kong's *raison d' etre*" (Bolton & Lim 2000, p.432). The business sector has been vocal in the past and continues to lead the lament about falling standards of English. George Yuen, chief of the Better Hong Kong Foundation, says, "clearly, the standard of English usage has much room for improvement as Hong Kong strives to retain its status of being Asia's world city" (Suh 2002, p.56). Bolton and Lim warn that, as has been shown in many other societies, ideologies about 'falling standards' are often related to other factors, including social class divisions. The discourse, they claim, could be partly a reaction to the much larger numbers of students having access to English through education, and the spread of a mass bilingualism as opposed to an earlier, narrower, elite bilingualism (Li 1999; Bolton & Lim 2000; Bolton 2002a). Bolton and Lim (2000, p.435) conclude that "notions of linguistic proficiency and linguistic potential may need to be revised to

accommodate both the sociolinguistic realities of Hong Kong and the call for sensitive and imaginative agendas for language education."

There is also the belief that immediate pre-1997 emigration of large numbers of Hong Kong citizens drained the city of some of its fluent English speakers. Or it could be that, as Flowerdew & Scollon (1997, p.420) maintain:

> The growing presence of multi-national business organizations is placing demands on the supply of Hong Kong people fluent in English [and] because of the increased numbers who need to be bilingual, the overall standard of English of those entering universities and business has gone down.

3.2.3 The use of English in business in Hong Kong

Although, as can be seen above, a number of studies have addressed the use of Cantonese, Putonghua and English in Hong Kong society, particularly in the schooling and tertiary sector, the studies of the use of English in the workplace, or more broadly in the sphere of business, have not perhaps been as numerous. This issue has begun to be addressed in more recent years, not least because, as we have seen, the business community would seem to be the greatest promoter of the need to have workers highly fluent in English in order for Hong Kong to maintain an international edge. It is interesting for example, that since the handover in 1997, while English is considered to have lost ground to Putonghua in the areas of government, law and education, this is not the case in the area of business (Evans and Green 2003). Indeed, Evans and Green (2003, p.387) state that "judging by recent initiatives, it would seem that the use of English in the business and professional fields is one colonial legacy the HKSAR government is eager to maintain". A study by Pan (2000) on the use of code-switching in Guangzhou and Hong Kong workplaces shows an increase in the uptake of Putonghua, but Pan (2000, p.39) nevertheless predicts that "English will surely remain as an international and business language". Pan does not see the increased use of Putonghua as causing a decrease in the use of English: what she predicts, instead, is a more widespread trilingualism, which is, in fact, the official policy thrust of the HKSAR government. In any case, more recent studies by Bacon-Shone and Bolton (1998) show that Hong Kong has perhaps always been more multilingual than was previously thought.

A small number of recent studies (Ng and Tang 1996; Candlin and Bhatia 1998; Chew 2000; Nunan et al. in Bhatia and Candlin 2001) seem to reinforce widely held beliefs about the functions of English in Hong Kong business. The study by Ng and Tang (1996), where a small number of university graduates were surveyed, showed that the majority of these students believed their employers required them to have 'good' English for their jobs. The case study of a major Hong Kong bank by Chew (2000) illustrated that English is required especially for written reports and for communication at the highest levels. Nunan et al's study (in Bhatia & Candlin 2001) of a large number of accounting firms in Hong Kong found again an emphasis on English for writing, a finding echoed by Candlin and Bhatia's (1998) study of legal professionals, who also required English largely for reading and writing.

A few studies have examined the implications of code-switching and the use of the various codes in intercultural communication in the Hong Kong workplace. Bilbow's (1997) study of cross-cultural impression management in Hong Kong found that the cultural background of both speakers and listeners impacts on intercultural communication in the workplace and may cause misconceptions and distortions. A study by Du-Babcock (2003) of communication behaviours in small group communication in the workplace seems to confirm that culture influences turn-taking, speaking time, turn distribution and turn sharing behaviours.

The role of English in business in Hong Kong has been researched more broadly by Li (1999) and more recently by Evans and Green (2003). Li (1999) maintains that the need for English in Hong Kong is becoming more important as a result of the change in Hong Kong from a manufacturing-based economy in the 1980s to a service-based economy in more recent times. As a result of this, he suggests, there are now more positions requiring employees to speak at least some English and he points out that, in the world of business, promotion is often closely related to English proficiency levels.

Li (1999, p.76) also supports the findings of the above studies, asserting that:

> As in the early 1980s, in general the kinds of skills needed for English in the workplace are more receptive than productive and, where productive skills are required, needs for writing far exceed those for speaking.

Li has taken a further important step and differentiated the need for English in different occupations and at different occupational levels:

> In general, better English communication skills are expected of white-collar office positions […]. In the white-collar workplace, language choice for oral communication as in meetings and informal conversations tends to be Cantonese or mixed code, whereas written communication such as memos and minutes of meetings is dominated by English (Li 1999, p.77).

He also urges us to remember that in post 1997 Hong Kong, "English continues to be regarded by many, sometimes reluctantly, as an important symbolic capital, which is indispensable for both upward and outward mobility" (Li 1999, p.104).

The link between English language use and occupations/ occupational levels has been developed more fully in a more recent large study (1475 professionals) undertaken by Evans and Green (2003). Their findings in part support Li's work, but they make some finer distinctions. While they agree it is true that the demand for English varies according to sector, profession and rank, they maintain that personnel in the professional workplace now require active as well as passive skills. Evans and Green compared demands for English language skills in the government, public and private sectors and found a diminishing need for English in the government sector (where the importance of Putonghua, and also Cantonese, was increasing since 1997). They also found that Cantonese is the language most used at work unless there are non-Cantonese-speakers present. An exception to this would seem to be job interviews, where even all Cantonese-speaking panels will conduct part of the interview in English in order to assess the applicant's English language skills. The lowest use of all for English, not surprisingly, was for socialising in the workplace. Another interesting finding was that senior level employees use more English than those at the junior and middle levels in all macro skills and that engineering professionals have the highest use of all groups particularly for written communication. These findings are very similar to those found for the research undertaken with multinational companies as part of this thesis. Further discussion of similarities and differences will be presented in the relevant section (Chapter 4). Most importantly, Evans and Green (2003, p.404) conclude that:

> It would appear that at a time which is witnessing a diminishing institutional role for English in Hong Kong society, the role and status of the language in the professional workplace are being solidly maintained.

3.2.4 Does a Hong Kong English exist?

Amongst the issues around language in Hong Kong is the question of whether there exists, in fact, a variety of English that can be labelled Hong Kong English. While there seems to be agreement in the literature that there is, for example, a clear Singaporean and Indian variety of English, there is not the same agreement about a Hong Kong variety of English. According to the oft-quoted Butler (1997, p.106), the criteria for establishing that a 'legitimate' variety of world English exists include the following five conditions: 1) a standard and recognizable pattern of pronunciation handed down from one generation to another; 2) a number of words and phrases regarded as particular to the variety; 3) a history of the variety as part of the particular speech community; 4) a literature in the variety; and 5) reference works which indicate some objective analysis of the variety from within the particular speech community.

Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002) make the point that the above criteria might be applicable for *established* varieties, but might not work quite so well for *developing* varieties, such as the one they examined, that is, 'China English'. Hong Kong English would also seem to fall more into the developing, rather than the established, variety and according to Bolton (2000) meets all of Butler's criteria except perhaps the last, although there are developments in this area as well. Hung (2000) asserts that there is not really any dispute about the existence of a Hong Kong accent. Benson (2000, p.379) concludes that in relation to the Hong Kong context, it is clear that "many localised words can be satisfactorily accounted for in terms of semantic and pragmatic relations that are internal to the contexts in which they are used". Benson stops short, however, of stating that this fully meets Butler's second criterion, although implying that it comes close. Ho (2000, p.383) also makes a tentative claim at the fourth criterion, although, like Benson, she indicates there is some progress but "Hong Kong writing in English has not yet reached a critical mass whereby it can claim nomenclature and locality [and] the Hong Kong literary scene in the English language is still at the stage of formation". Joseph (1997, p.72), however, argues that a Hong Kong English is indeed emerging since the public

discourse of a 'decline in standards' and the discourse of linguists about a Hong Kong English are "two sides of the same coin, two ways of looking at the same phenomenon".

However, many others disagree even with this degree of progress towards a Hong Kong variety. Going back some 20 years, Luke and Richards (1982, in Tsui & Bunton 2000) observed that there was no such thing as a Hong Kong English. Some ten years later Tay (1991, p.327) noted that "there is no social motivation for the indigenisation of English in Hong Kong". Johnson (1994, p.182) would seem to agree, indicating that the notion of a Hong Kong variety of English has gained little support. A more recent study by Tsui & Bunton (2000) of a large group of language teachers in Hong Kong found that the model of English they adopted was exonormative. Indeed, the authors state that "there was not a single reference which discussed deviations from the model with a more favourable attitude" and that "the attitudes of Hong Kong's English teachers, together with those of the government and the business community, still show a preference for Standard English in formal communication" (Tsui & Bunton 2000, p.302).

The fact that linguists more easily accept a variety of Hong Kong English than does the population at large, and more particularly parents and the business community, is perhaps not surprising. The linguist is interested in linguistic and sociolinguistic reality, and from a language point of view one variety may be just as interesting as another to study. Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002, p.275) go so far as to suggest that a China English variety may be just what is needed in order to communicate effectively within 'outer circle' countries, particularly in Asia and that "the only circumstance in which the nativised variety may not be the appropriate medium of communication is when the primary function of English is as a means of communication with native speakers from the inner circle". However, it could be argued that language use and functions are not so easily categorised or prescribed *a priori*. Firstly, in a globalised world, although the number of 'outer circle' and 'expanding circle' speakers of English is greater than the number of 'native speakers' (Crystal, 1997) it is almost impossible to predict with exactitude for what future purposes one will require the use of English or any other language. Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002) further assume that since in places like China and Hong Kong English is not being used for intra-ethnic communication but rather to communicate with other non-native speakers in the Asian region, then local varieties can serve this role very well. However, they do caution that this will require

accommodation to various varieties on the part of speakers, depending on the cultural domain in which they find themselves – which rather defeats the purpose of learning a local variety instead of an exonormative 'standard'.

Kachru (1992) has urged linguists and teachers to re-think the way English is analysed and taught. He suggests that a framework that might have been appropriate for monolingual countries is now no longer appropriate to accommodate the growing number of varieties of English worldwide, which reflect a growing linguistic, cultural and pragmatic pluralism. "The pluralism of English must be reflected in the approaches, both theoretical and applied, we adopt for understanding this unprecedented linguistic phenomenon" (Kachru 1992, p.11).

Bolton (2000, p.281) concludes his call for the recognition of a Hong Kong English with the caution that "whether the discussion of 'criteria' set out here is sufficiently persuasive or powerful a signal to render visible a distinct 'variety', is perhaps less important than the desire to create a new space for discussion and discourse on Hong Kong English".

In the area of business, it seems indisputable that English is important for the future of Hong Kong, or at least is very much perceived this way by the business community and by parent groups and government as well. In the meantime, the people of Hong Kong continue to live their bilingual reality carried by "the dynamic forces underlying linguistic development, language spread and language shift […] which maintain populations by helping societies to carve out new niches and develop new resources to carry into the next generation" (Pennington 1998, p.35).

3.3 English in Malaysia

In the case of Malaysia, there seems little doubt that English is seen as having a very important role to play in carrying the country to the achievement of its Vision 2020 of 'developed nation' status and becoming a leader in the Southeast Asian region. As recently as July 2003, the Malaysian Minister of Foreign Affairs declared that:

> The sooner we accept that English has become the global language the better for us […]. We have to master the language so that we can develop our own individual capacities and this should, in turn, contribute towards Malaysia's continued

acceleration towards developed country status by the year 2020 as envisioned by the Government (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia 2003, p.2).

3.3.1 A brief historical overview

As with Hong Kong, the history of English in Malaysia is very much tied to its colonial past. However, the use of English did not develop evenly over the whole of what comprises modern Malaysia. For example, the different historical circumstances of Sarawak (where the Malay group was not dominant) have meant that English played (and to some extent continues to play) the *lingua franca* role that Bahasa Malay plays in other parts of Malaysia (Ting & Sussex 2002).

The Treaty of London in 1824 established British rule over the Malay peninsula, initially limited to the Straits settlements, encompassing Penang, Malacca and Singapore. However, after the discovery of tin, and with a stronger demand for rubber, British geo-political power reached further into the interior and led to the recruitment of labour from India and South China (Spaan, Van Naerssen & Kohl 2001). These developments led gradually to the Federation of Malay States, which gained independence in 1957, at which time the Malays, the largest group, gained political power and the Chinese and Indians were granted citizenship. According to a 1941 census, the respective ethnic groups were 49% Malays, 38% Chinese and some 13% Indian (Hall in Spaan et al. 2001). It was not until 1963, however, that Sabah, Sarawak and Singapore chose to join the Malaysian Federation, with Singapore withdrawing after just two years. The development of East Malaysia, consisting of Sabah and Sarawak, has thus been somewhat different to that of West Malaysia (the peninsula). Although Malay, Chinese and Indian languages, and English form the major language groups, Asmah (1988) estimates that there are about one hundred languages in use in Malaysia, including the languages of indigenous groups and foreign languages not spoken as a mother tongue.

The independence of Malaysia in 1957 did not lead to an immediate dismantling of English from the bureaucracy and in education. As Gill (2002, p.97) reports, “there was no drastic severing of English from the official linguistic scene - it was done gradually and pragmatically”. So it was not until 1969 that the transition from English to Malay as a medium of instruction began in schools and not until 1983 that it reached universities.

There can be little doubt that this move was made in the interests of nationalism and to unify the various groups making up Malaysia (Gill 2000; Spaan et al. 2001; Rampack 2002). In 1971 the National Culture Policy proposed that "the Malay language and traditions would form the core around which the languages and traditions of other ethnic groups would be incorporated" (Mandal 2000, p.1004). In the subsequent decade the Malay language made considerable inroads as it replaced English as the medium of instruction in education, although mother tongue education was also allowed at primary level in Chinese and Indian languages. Malay is now the lingua franca for the different ethnic groups in the country, still playing a unifying role, except in Sarawak where the Malays are a minority (some 21%) and the number of different languages makes it easier for English to be the lingua franca or for Mandarin, for example, to be the language used by the different Chinese sub-groups (Ting & Sussex 2002).

In a seeming reversal of policy, the government which pushed so strongly for the Malay language to be adopted as the national language in the 1970s is now promoting English just as strongly, in the belief that it is absolutely vital for Malaysia's economic future. And ironically, Mahathir, who was instrumental in the adoption of the push for Malay as the national language in the 1970s was, most recently, strongly urging his nation to get behind the push for more English, albeit with a certain inner reluctance: "We have to accept English whether we like it or not" (*The Telegraph* 2003). This conviction led to a policy which now sees the teaching of Maths and Science in schools through the medium of English and is likely to promote a greater emphasis on English at all levels of education (Jayasankaran 2002). This seemingly contradictory stance towards English and the national languages is easily reconciled by an oft-displayed pragmatic attitude. As the Minister for Foreign Affairs stated recently:

> More usage English does not necessarily mean less importance placed on our own languages, but it does mean that the country will have citizens who can compete both within the country and globally. Through better proficiency and mastery of English, we will have citizens who can lead Malaysia's development in the future, and ensure that our country can remain an important player on the global scene (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Malaysia 2003, p.2).

3.3.2 Language policy in Malaysia

From the time of declaration of Malaysian independence in 1957 language issues and language policy have been seen as most important for Malaysian interests and Malaysian nationalism, which has had to tread a delicate balance between the three major ethnic groups: Malay, Chinese and Indian.

Gill (2002) sees language policies in Malaysia as strongly influenced by a dichotomy between nationalism and pragmatism. The words of Datuk Matnor Daim (2000, p.22) from the Ministry of Education Malaysia, referring to the teaching of English in schools, clearly express such pragmatism: "we need to take our place in this global village and strive to be both nationalists, and at the same time, internationalists". Gill describes official language policy as moving through three phases: a nationalistic post-independent Malaysia phase; a liberation and expansion phase; and a linguistic pragmatism phase.

In *the post independence phase* (post 1957), when Bahasa Malaysia was instituted as the national language, it played a major role in enhancing feelings of nationalism. According to Asmah (in Gill 2002, p.96) Malay was best placed to fulfil this role because of its indigenity, its already existent role as a lingua franca, its position as a major language, its possession of a high literature and the fact that it once had been important as a language of administration and diplomacy in the Malay Archipelago. However, the Malay language occupied a fairly marginal role in public life and did not fully establish itself as the national language until after the political violence of 1969 provided a catalyst for greater change. The National Culture Policy of 1971 provided, among other things, for Malay to replace English as the medium of instruction in schools and in public life, a development which happened very gradually (Mandal 2000). According to Gill (2002, p.97), English "had to be deprived of its predominant official status" in order to allow the Malay language to establish itself. The role of English then became that of the first 'second language' in education.

In the *liberation and expansion phase*, the Malay language did establish itself but English also took root as the major second language and developed as a local variety (or varieties) which became "the source of much creative cultural production in Malaysia's ethnically and linguistically fragmented society" (Mandal 2000, p.1002). Malaysians, various people argue, have taken English but have given it their local stamp and made it

their own (Gill 2002; Mandal 2000; Nair-Venugopal 2000). In popular parlance this variety of Malaysian English is jokingly referred to as 'Manglish' (Ooi in Kitson 2003) or in its more hybrid forms as 'Englasian'. Contrary to the Hong Kong situation, however, there is no discussion about whether a variety of Malaysian English exists or not, but simply differentiation, in some cases, between a 'performance variety', commonly referred to as 'Standard Malaysian English' and an 'internationally acceptable variety' which is now being officially promoted (Gill 2000).

The current *linguistic pragmatism phase* sees a reconsideration of the role of English as absolutely essential to the future of the country which wants to achieve developed nation status through its Vision 2020. Mahathir promoted English at all costs, to the extent of equating the learning of English with a true (and new) nationalism:

> We have to learn the language of international communication, and the language of telecommunications, of computers, of the Internet […]. Learning the English language will reinforce the spirit of nationalism when it is used to bring about development and progress for the country […]. True nationalism means doing everything possible for the country, even if it means learning the English language (Mahathir Mohamad in Gill 2000, p.101).

3.3.3 The current language situation in Malaysia

The present language situation in Malaysia reflects, firstly, its ethnic composition, reported to be around 62% Malay, 29% Chinese and 9% Indian (Vatikiotis 1993b) so that while Malay is accepted as the national language and the medium of instruction in schools, at the same time each group (and sub-group) uses and maintains its language. This situation is not as simple as it may at first appear. There are all sorts of subtle ways in which the different languages are used concurrently (often by the same person) to serve a variety of social, communicative and pragmatic purposes (Ting and Sussex 2002; Le Vasan 1994; Nair-Venugopal 2000 & 2003; Norrish 1997; Gill 1999).

On another level, the current language situation and language policy direction very much reflect the tension described above between the national language Malay and the 'international language', English. While many agree that the re-introduction of English into mainstream schooling does not pose a real threat to the Malay language, and while

there seems to be widespread acceptance of this move in the media at large, there was some resistance to the proposed new policy directions from sub-groups such as the Chinese background speakers, who feared that it could undermine mother tongue education (Netto 2002a & b). Tan Seng Giaw (in Netto 2002a, p.1) of the opposition Democratic Action Party says:

> On the one hand, we have to strain every nerve to adapt to the modern world [and therefore promote English]. On the other hand, we must preserve mother-tongue education: Malay, Mandarin and Tamil for the Malays, Chinese and Indians, respectively).

This pragmatism is reflected even more clearly through the words of Union Leader Rampack (2002, p.24) who states that:

> Malaysians will have to be increasingly competitive to survive in a borderless economic environment brought about by globalisation […]. The English language is merely a tool to meet this objective, and certainly not the end. Bahasa Malaysia, as the national language, will continue playing its pivotal role of promoting national integration, with Mandarin and Tamil supplementing these efforts.

3.3.4 Malaysian English and the question of 'standards'

As well as needing to convince Malaysians that the strong promotion of English is in the national interest, the next big task the government faces, according to Gill (2002, p.102), is to ensure that the variety that is taught and mastered is one that "is universally acceptable, so that it facilitates international communication". Gill differentiates between 'institutionalised' varieties of Malaysian English, which have largely served the purpose of allowing Malaysians of different ethnicity to communicate, and the 'performance variety', commonly referred to as Standard Malaysian English, an 'internationally acceptable variety'. Gill takes a strong view about the variety of English that needs to be promoted to further Malaysia's national interest:

> It is time for countries in the Outer Circle who have post-colonial histories to take charge of language developments and work out standards of English appropriate and acceptable for their nation's needs (Gill 2002, p.105).

Gill (2002) and Nair-Venugopal (2003) suggest that Malaysian English no longer adheres to an exonormative British norm. Its own endonormative norm has been described by various linguists (e.g. Magura 1985; Baskaran 1987; De Souza 1993 in Gill 2002). However, Gill agrees with Crystal (1998) that colloquial Malaysian English will not do for the purposes of international communication and promotion of Malaysia as an international player:

> In the end it is intelligibility and acceptability of the quality of English among the international community that is important for the nation […]. Therefore it is essential for Malaysia to keep encouraging its people to be pragmatic nationalists and to provide opportunities for all Malaysians to master English as an international form of communication (Gill 2002, pp.110-112).

While some say that care needs to be taken not to downgrade or condemn local varieties since they can express a local identity and serve a communicative purpose (Norrish 1997), others argue that it is not necessary to use a variety of English to do this. Deputy Minister Fong put it quite succinctly: "We should recognise the different role played by the languages. One [English] is to do business, the other [Malay] to establish an identity" (Vatikiotis 1993a). Finally, Mandal (2000) warns us of the danger of promoting a purely utilitarian motive for English. He shows that creative cultural responses of Malaysians writing in English can offer a resistance to globalisation. For such authors, "the English language serves as a venue for renewed explorations of Malaysia's history, society and cultural identity. [Such authors] demand of the proponents of globalisation a more complex and pluralistic view of the economy, politics and culture" (Mandal 2000, p.1012).

In conclusion, there seems to be no disagreement that English takes its place as one of the important languages of Malaysia. The words of Asmah (2000, p.20) seem to aptly describe this situation:

> Malaysia has shown that Malay and English are both essential in nation building. It has come to accept English as an important tool in the social and professional life of the people […]. English now has come out into the open as an important language to be acquired by all Malaysians.

3.3.5 The use of English in business in Malaysia

We can see from the above that English is seen by government figures, in particular, and by the society at large, as very much the language of business. There is concern that the world of business requires people who are highly fluent in 'standard' forms of English and that if Malaysians do not develop these skills, they will be replaced by contract workers (Rampak 2002).

Some research into Malaysian workplaces since the 1990s indicates that English is very widespread, although in many guises. What the research reveals is, above all, the existence and use of a number of varieties of Malaysian English (acrolect, mesolect and basilect, described above), together with frequent code-switching and code-mixing (with either Malay, a Chinese language or an Indian language). Baskaran (1994) speaks of a 'Malenglish' which reflects Malaysian identity as well as creativity and is rooted in local realities and contexts. David (2000) sees the need for two types of Malaysian English: an intranational variety and an international variety, with the former for the expression of Malaysian identity and the latter for 'international purposes', including business. Similarly, Rajadurai (2004) refers to two varieties, one a 'standard Malaysian English' or SME and the other a 'colloquial Malaysian English' or CME. Rajadurai indicates that CME is a 'nativised' variety that is frequently used in the media and is highly valued for expressing cultural identity and solidarity among Malaysians. In advertising, CME is used to advertise everyday goods while SME is used to sell high status and foreign goods.

David (2000, p.42) states that: "English is the main lingua franca of [business and industry] and the need to master and use English is high among business executives." David also found a high level of use of English among professionals. Le Vasan (1994) and Sampson and Zhao (2003) also found a more prevalent use of English among the upper levels in business and the professions. However, according to Nair-Venugopal (2000, 2001, 2003) the issue is not so simple nor so clear-cut. Nair-Venugopal found that there are different subtle socio-linguistic reasons why people in the workplace use different varieties and that such choices are quite deliberate and not necessarily the result of having greater command of one variety over another. Nair-Venugopal challenges that there is an 'International English' or 'international standard' in use in

Malaysian workplaces. In a research project undertaken with HRM trainers in two large Malaysian companies, Nair-Venugopal (2003) found that different varieties of Malaysian English are used in the workplace for different purposes and that speakers switch to these sub-varieties quite deliberately for identity marking and solidarity. This is supported by earlier research into workplace use of English (Edwards 1989; Morais 1998). According to Nair-Venugopal (2003, p.27):

> Malaysian English is displacing many of the more standard forms and patterns of English traditionally prescribed for effective business communication in Malaysian contexts […]. Malaysian English is quite clearly being used for a number of uncontroversial reasons in the workplace. These are for reasons of 'cultural' preference as a community and for identity marking and solidarity between Malaysians and for communicative effectiveness and economy in dealing with the explication of work-related topics and the discussion of workplace issues.

Because of this, Nair-Venugopal (2001, p.47) calls into question the relevance of 'business English' and 'English for business communication' courses which "aggressively market" an exonormative 'standard' English for international and corporate business.

Ngeow (2003), who surveyed attitudes towards the use of different varieties in the workplace (an extension of an earlier survey of tertiary students by Crismore, Ngeow and Soo 1996) found that a 'standard' variety is favoured in principle (since Malaysian English is sometimes perceived as errors), but even so subtle and sometimes subconscious values influence people to use localised varieties. Moreover, generally people in the workforce thought that the standard of English had dropped and that particularly the use of English in the media should be improved (Ngeow 2003, p.263). Ngeow surveyed workers in both the private and civil sectors and found that those in the private sector had the strongest concerns.

A compromise position is presented by Gill (1999, 2000) who, while acknowledging that there is use and acceptance of different varieties of Malaysian English in the workplace, reminds us that acceptability and suitability should, in the final analysis, be determined by purpose and audience:

> The pragmatism [in the workplace] is that there are varying norms of acceptability/appropriateness for different audiences – there is a place under the sun for all types of linguistic realities. It is not just one norm of reference that influences everything. There is the acceptance of sub-varieties of Malaysian English in the workplace. But these are context and participant dependent (Gill 1999, p.228).

In future, the best placed workers will, of course, be those who can 'switch' with ease or who command a number of varieties. For the gatekeepers (those who are in the higher echelons of business) will still expect adherence to more standard forms. As Gill (1999, p.30) says:

> Whether one likes it or not, those in managerial positions are those who make decisions […] – it is they who decide on the acceptable standards of the emerging linguistic realities for Malaysians in the formal workplace.

In a more recent article (2002) Gill goes further and strongly promotes the teaching of standard Malaysian English as necessary for the nation's future. The local varieties, while they have their uses, do not need to be promoted as such – they will prosper in any case, acquiring prestige among the young (Rajadurai 2004). It is, however, important for 'outer circle' countries such as Malaysia, to develop deliberate policies to promote an 'internationally acceptable' standard variety of English (Gill 2002).

3.4 Conclusion

This chapter examined the use and place of English in Hong Kong and Malaysia. In both cases, a brief historical overview showed the origins of English in the colonial past and how the language has fared up until the present. English was then examined within the current socio-linguistic reality of the HKSAR and Malaysia. The role of English in relation to the major languages of each land was discussed and the interplay of these languages as they co-exist and impact upon each other was examined. In both cases, it seems that English is now regarded as inextricably tied to economic prosperity and that there is a strong push from both government and business to ensure that citizens acquire the appropriate language skills in English. This push, particularly in the case of Hong

Kong, is strongly supported by parents, who see access to English skills as access to upward mobility. The directions of formal and informal language policy were also examined, as was the question of standards, which is relevant to both locations. In Malaysia, perhaps more so than in Hong Kong, language policy has been more closely related to national identity and political interests have had to play a balancing act between national and international interests. The question of whether there exist varieties of Hong Kong and Malaysian English was addressed. The issue in Hong Kong seems unclear, or perhaps still developing, while, on the other hand, there seems no doubt that a variety or varieties of Malaysian English do indeed exist, although with varying status. Finally, the use of English in business in both locations was examined and discussed. Comparisons in regard to the use of English in both locations will be made with the data gathered through this research. The socio-linguistic issues raised in this chapter will echo and be further explored in a business context in the next chapter, which describes the multinational companies case study.

CHAPTER 4

THE USE OF ENGLISH IN MULTINATIONAL COMPANIES

4.1 Introduction

A great amount is written about communication in the workplace, much of it, according to Holden (2002) based not on observation but on theory. Indeed, Holden states that there is a dearth of linguistic data based on what actually happens in real workplaces. In this area the work of Holmes and her colleagues in New Zealand workplaces, involving many hours of recordings and interviews, making up "the largest and most representative corpus of naturally occurring workplace interaction internationally" (Holmes 2000), appears to be leading the way. For the purposes of this research, it was considered necessary to identify two multinational companies in order to examine the linguistic practices in such workplaces, with a focus on English. Two suitable companies were identified, one in Kuala Lumpur and one in Hong Kong. This chapter provides information about the two case study companies. It then describes the methodological approach that was adopted during a number of visits to the relevant workplaces, to collect data about the linguistic practices employed in such companies, particularly in regard to English as a global language. Other instruments developed and used to gather further data on employee perceptions and beliefs about English for communicative purposes are also described. Data thus gathered is analysed and the findings are presented and discussed. The implications of the data collected in these two multinational companies will then form the basis for discussion in regard to the preparation of business graduates for the global workplace in chapters 6 and 7.

4.2 The multinational companies case study

Two multinational companies were identified for the purpose of gathering linguistic data on the use of English as a global language in the workplace. The terms 'international', 'multinational' and 'global' are often used interchangeably in business literature, particularly with reference to companies and company operations. Levitt (1983), however, differentiates between these terms as follows: an international

company is one which simply exports what it does at home; a multinational company is one which adjusts its operations to the regions and countries in which it operates; and a global company is one which has a world-wide strategy for selling standardised products all over the world. Both of the companies used for this study best fit the definition of 'multinational company', in that they are part of a larger world wide operation which adapts its products to the markets in which they are located, in this case Hong Kong and Malaysia.

Several major cities in Southeast Asia were considered as places likely to have large companies where English is used as a global language. Eventually Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong were selected because Curtin University of Technology, where the researcher is based, has large numbers of students from these cities, as well as several offshore programs based in each one. It was therefore considered possible to contact companies through the University's Alumni Office or simply through contacts established in offshore programs.

The parameters outlined for suitable companies for this study were that they should:

- fit the above definition of 'multinational company';
- have a sizeable number of employees (say 40 to 50) in each of the chosen sites (it was thought that a sample of this size would provide a greater mixture of cultural and linguistic backgrounds); and
- have (a) workplace (s) where English is used quite extensively but not predominantly.

The names of suitable companies were obtained through the Curtin Alumni Office and also through contacts in offshore programs. Letters were sent to nine companies (addressed to the CEO/Managing Director) outlining for them the parameters of the research and asking for them to volunteer their company to be a subject of the study. Companies were informed that they would have a right to view the data collected for the project and that the highest standards of confidentiality would apply, in line with The University of Western Australia's Ethics Approval for this research. This method drew limited response and subsequently two companies whose Managing Directors had more personal contact with staff at Curtin University of Technology were more receptive, and when contacted agreed to take part in the study. For reasons of confidentiality the

pseudonyms Seacargo International (Malaysia) and Drinksoft (Hong Kong) will be used for these two companies.

4.2.1 Company Profile - Seacargo International (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd

The Seacargo International Group is a cargo inspection and testing company with a network of over 200 offices and laboratories worldwide. The company was founded in 1898 in the United States of America, but is now incorporated in Europe, where it has its Head Office. Seacargo International Sdn. Bhd was incorporated in Malaysia in 1986 under the Companies Act of 1965. The company has its Malaysian Head Office in Kuala Lumpur (KL) and five other offices employing around 50 people throughout Malaysia.

With its KL Head Office and the other smaller offices spread throughout the country, Seacargo International is capable of carrying out inspections anywhere in Malaysia. The main activities of Seacargo International include: loading and discharge inspection of edible oils, petroleum products, bulk and bagged dry cargoes, chemicals and general cargoes; general condition marine inspection; cargo and marine insurance survey; calibration of storage tanks, vessels and pipelines; and laboratory testing services. Company employees deal with 'clients' (from office employees to ships' crews) from all over the world. The KL office, which has some 16 people, including the General Manager for Malaysia, was the particular workplace observed and analysed in some depth for this study, although the smaller offices throughout Malaysia were included in the employee survey.

4.2.2 Company profile – Drinksoft (Hong Kong)

The Hong Kong Group of Companies (HKGC) is part of a very large group of companies which operate across the globe in a range of areas including property, aviation, marine services, trading and industrial operations and, of course, beverages. Drinksoft (Hong Kong) is one of 12 companies, and one of the largest of those operating in the beverages area in Hong Kong and mainland China.

A major American brand of soft drink was first imported into Hong Kong in 1928. HKGC acquired the rights to bottle this brand in Hong Kong in 1965. In 1991, the HKGC beverage section built the world's tallest modern bottling plant in the New

Territories, which gradually took over the company's other bottling operations in Hong Kong. At that time distribution and marketing systems were further upgraded, with the introduction of vending machines, a large fleet of vehicles and a computerised pre-sell and tele-sales system for fast ordering and delivery. As well, innovative advertising campaigns were introduced in the nineties.

The building in the New Territories is 19 storeys and 147 metres high and provides more than 70,000 metres of usable space. The plant includes production facilities, a warehouse, materials storage, a complete floor dedicated to waste water treatment, loading and parking areas and office/administration facilities. Some 1,100 people are employed in this operation.

Today Drinksoft Hong Kong is the leading ready-to-drink beverage manufacturer in Hong Kong, accounting for over 80% of the local carbonated soft drinks sector and over 85% of the cola market. It is also one of the ten largest bottlers of the particular American brand of cool drink products in the world.

4.3 Methodological approach

It was decided to adopt an ethnographic approach for this study, with the emphasis on first trying to understand the selected workplaces within their own context and on their own terms, as much as possible, and then gathering linguistic data about the use of English as a global language. Hymes (1977, p.8) indicates that the ethnographer "is likely to look at communication from the standpoint and interests of a community itself, and to see its members as sources of shared knowledge and insight". Saville-Troike (1982, p.121) warns ethnographic researchers, however, that we must be wary of observing from our own perspective: "the key to successful participant observation is freeing oneself as much as humanly possible from the filter of one's own cultural experience". She also advises that "interpreting the meaning of linguistic behaviour requires knowing the meanings in which it is embedded" (1982, p.23), that is, the relevant cultural context; and she has a particular caution for observation in multilingual settings:

> Clearly in multilingual societies different languages often serve differential functions, and a single a priori assumption regarding language might obscure enlightening sociolinguistics data (Saville-Troike 1982, p.48).

Le Compte and Schensul (1999, p.9) state that an ethnographic study is generally marked by the following characteristics:

- it is carried out in a natural setting, not a laboratory;
- it involves intimate, face-to-face interaction with participants;
- it presents an accurate reflection of participants' perspectives and behaviours;
- it uses inductive, interactive and recursive data collection and analytic strategies to build local cultural theories;
- it uses multiple data sources, including both quantitative and qualitative data;
- it frames all human behaviour and belief within a socio-political and historical context; and
- it uses the concept of culture as a lens through which to interpret results.

Genzuk (2002) states that the ethnographic research method has three key features or principles: naturalism, understanding and discovery. 'Naturalism' reflects the view that the aim of social research is to capture human behaviour in 'natural' settings, as opposed to, say, laboratories. It also means that the researcher should seek to minimise her/his effect on those being observed so as not to upset this natural balance. 'Understanding' refers to the fact that behaviour must be observed and analysed within its own terms of reference or cultural framework. That is, the researcher must first try to understand the culture of the group in order to explain the behaviour of group members within the particular cultural framework. And 'Discovery' refers to the fact that ethnographic research should be inductive or discovery-based. That is, the focus of the research is narrowed and sharpened and possibly even changed as the research progresses, as opposed to research which sets out to test a particular hypothesis. As Saville Troike (1982, p.4) explains, in ethnographic research, "the research design must allow an openness to categories and modes of thought and behaviour which may not have been anticipated by the investigator".

We can see that the various views described above are not dissimilar. Another important aspect of ethnographic research is, according to Van Maanen (1995), its 'storytelling', which, while possibly drawing debate about just how objective such accounts can be, nevertheless has the legitimacy of being based on what was learned *in situ.* In any case the difficulty of "writing about one culture in terms of another" (Van Maanen 1995, p.4) is one surely faced by other research approaches.

This study meets the above criteria for ethnographic research. From the start, it was understood that gathering data about the use of English in these multinational companies would be difficult, particularly since the researcher is an outsider and a speaker of a so-called inner circle English variety, while most of those being observed are second language speakers of English. This, it was felt, could inhibit L2 speakers of English from fully expressing their feelings to the researcher. Saville-Troike (1982, p.108) warns of the 'observer's paradox', that is, the inability of the observer to know what would have happened had she/he not been present: in this sort of situation, it is always difficult to gauge whether, and to what extent, the presence of the researcher is impacting on the normal flow of interactions amongst employees. Saville-Troike (1982) also indicates that care needs to be taken with 'courtesy bias': that is, the researcher needs to be aware that sometimes those being interviewed will give the response that they think will most please the interviewer. In this regard, the advice of Le Compte and Schensul (1999, p.11) seems appropriate:

> Even the existence of long-term relationships cannot ensure that research participants will not withhold information, act out roles different from their normal behaviour, distort information, or give socially acceptable responses to questions, thus biasing the data they provide to researchers. The techniques that ethnographers have developed for overcoming these barriers are summed up in the term building rapport […], which does not end until the researcher leaves the research site.

In the case of this study, it is felt that a very good rapport was established with key representatives from both companies during worksite visits. This rapport was maintained over the duration of the project largely through the regular use of email and by keeping the companies informed of the progress of the study through sharing preliminary findings and copies of relevant academic papers developed by the researcher.

4.4 Data gathering instruments and procedures

Data gathering for this case study consisted of the following qualitative and quantitative procedures and instruments:

- Field visits to both companies and observation in company offices and work sites (eg Head Office, Kuala Lumpur and factory in New Territories, Hong Kong);
- Formal and informal discussion with the senior contact people in each company;
- Formal and informal discussion with other staff including semi-structured interviews with a number of staff in each company;
- Employee surveys from 82 employees (36 from Malaysia and 46 from HK); and
- Analysis of a number of workplace documents (faxes, emails, company reports).

Each of these instruments/procedures is described below and the analysis of data thus gathered is then presented in the next section.

4.4.1 Field visits and observation

Fieldwork, according to Van Maanen (1988, p.3), "asks the researcher to share firsthand the environment, problems, background, language, rituals and social relationships of a more-or-less bounded and specified group of people", leading eventually to a 'truthful' account of what is observed. He warns us, however, that our own account of the observed is inevitably our own interpretation, with all the limitations that this entails. The challenge in fieldwork, as Genzuk (2002, p.3) says, "is to combine participation and observation so as to become capable of understanding the experience as an insider while describing the experience for outsiders".

It was considered that a couple of visits to each workplace would allow the researcher to become familiar with both the workplace and the employees, and would also allow the employees to become acquainted with the researcher, minimising the possible effects of the researcher's presence on the behaviour of the people being studied.

Preliminary data gathering from both companies, focussing largely on company background and linguistic aspects, included the following:

- meetings with senior staff;
- observation of workplace communication practices;
- gathering documentation, such as marketing materials and company profiles with information about both companies;
- gathering of some written documents (faxes, reports and letters in English) related to the companies' everyday operations;
- informal discussion with a variety of staff members from various sectors of the companies; and
- more formal semi- structured interviews with a number of individual staff (both at senior and middle management level).

4.4.2 Semi-structured interviews

Semi-structured interviews were based on the set of questions below and were slightly modified as necessary. Semi- structured interviews provide the flexibility of allowing for further probe questions and elaboration, based on the interviewees' replies. The questions were devised on the basis of existing studies around language in business and adapted to suit the particular contexts, after a half day of observation at the Seacargo International office in KL and preliminary discussions with the CEO; they were later adapted for Hong Kong. Clearly, the first two questions aim to clarify the scope of the interviewee's role and function in the company. Questions 3, 4 and 5 aim to establish the types of communicative functions for which English is used by employees in the course of their work, while questions 6,7 and 8 address issues related to the use of English more broadly.

Semi structured interview for employees

1. What is your position in the company?
2. What does your particular job/position involve?
3. In your work, which of the following do you need to do in English?
   - speaking face to face with clients
   - e-mail
   - fax
   - letters
   - telephone communication
   - report writing
   - negotiation
   - other
4. Which of the above is most important in your particular job?
5. Would you like to improve any particular areas/skills? Which?
6. Do you find different accents/pronunciations in English difficult to understand?
7. In the course of your work have any misunderstandings occurred because of the use of English with other English as a second language speakers?
8. Would you like to make any final comments about your use of English in the workplace?

4.4.3 The employee survey instrument

The worksite visits described above proved very useful to familiarise the researcher with each work context sufficiently to be able to develop a survey that would be relevant to employees and provide further useful data on the use of English in the workplace. The survey was designed with the aim of providing detailed data on the range of communicative tasks carried out in English in each workplace. While some of this information was obtained during interviews, the survey reached a greater number of employees (82) in a variety of different roles. Background data was needed in order to establish L1 and L2 speaker of English status, and the range of languages used in each workplace. It was also considered important to gauge employees' attitudes towards the use of English in their company, and it was thought 'safer' for employees to state such attitudes in the anonymity of a survey rather than face-to-face with the interviewer. The desire for anonymity proved to be a factor, in that a number of employees in both companies did not state their name or position, which presumably they felt could have led to loss of anonymity. As well, it was thought the survey would provide a measure of quantitative data, while the interviews provided qualitative data; a combination of both was considered better able to provide a more rounded and realistic socio-linguistic picture of the two multinational workplaces.

A draft survey was developed containing the elements described below and was sent electronically to a contact person in each company with the request for it to be tried by at least three people in each company. This was done and useful feedback was received which led to a few minor modifications.

The survey instrument (see Appendix 1) consisted of four parts, as follows:

- *Part A* (questions 1 to 4) required background details about the respondent and contained an English language self-rating scale in the macro skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing;
- *Part B* (questions 5 to 7) contained three sub-sections on the use of English in the particular workplace;
- *Part C* (questions 8 to 10) asked for written comments related to the use of English in the workplace;
- *Part D* asked for personal details, which the covering letter made clear were optional.

The front page of the survey contained a letter from the researcher briefly outlining the research project and the purposes of the survey and reassuring participants of full confidentiality.

Part B (questions 5, 6 and 7) was divided into three sub-sections, as follows:

- *Question 5* contained a number of items on the use of English at work, divided into 21 'speaking and listening' and 'writing and reading' tasks. Respondents were asked to estimate how often they undertook the tasks listed on a five point Likert scale (1'never or rarely', 2 'every few weeks', 3 'every week', 4 'almost every day', 5 'several times per day').
- *Question 6* required respondents to gauge the level of English required for the same communication tasks, again on a 5 point Likert scale (1 'none or almost no English required', 2 quite low level of English required', 3 'reasonable level of English required', 4 'quite high level of English required' and 5, 'very high level of English required').
- *Question 7* asked respondents' level of agreement with 14 statements relating to workplace English language use on a five point Likert scale (1

'strongly disagree', 2, disagree', 3 'unsure', 4 'agree', and 5 'strongly agree').

Part C of the survey asked respondents to write comments on:

- the English language skills that are of most use in the course of their work;
- whether they have seen an increase or a decrease in the use of English in the company in the last 5 years; and
- any other comments they would like to make about the use of English in their workplace (with suggested possible areas for comment).

A statistical analysis of the survey results was undertaken using SPSS, generating mean responses for items 5.1 to 5.21, 6.1 to 6.21 and 7.1 to 7.14. The comments section was analysed using the usual processes of sorting and sifting qualitative data to elucidate major themes.

4.5 Gathering relevant data

This section provides a brief description of how data was gathered through each of the major instruments/procedures, namely field visits and interviews and the employee survey.

4.5.1 Field visits to Seacargo International (Malaysia)

This company was first visited in July 2002 over two days and again in September 2002. E-mail contact had been established with the General Manager (CEO) several months before and regular email contact was maintained between these two visits. Detailed e-mails to the CEO explained the purposes of the research and what would be required of his company, and gave assurances about confidentiality. He seemed keen to be involved and considered that what we might learn from the research about the use of English in his company would be valuable information for the company itself. Accommodation for the researcher was organised near the Head Office, not too far from the worksite, and she was kindly collected and driven to and from the company office by the CEO during her visits. The Head Office for Malaysia is located in a busy business area of Kuala Lumpur, not far from a main port.

On the first day the researcher was introduced to many of the staff of the Head Office and explained the research topic to them. Interactions with staff were fairly informal, with the researcher asking staff about what their work entailed and observing office functions. This initial contact was useful not only for setting the scene but also to make the researcher aware of the need to review a set of draft questions she had prepared for semi-structured interviews. The rest of the first day was spent collecting information about the company, including a company profile and samples of typical written documentation including reports and a range of correspondence. As well, the researcher became better acquainted with staff (and they with her) through some socialising over tea and lunch breaks.

The office reflected a moderate influence of written English. That is, there were some signs/posters in English but there was also written material in other languages. All safety signs as well as Certificates and Licences were bilingual in English and in either Malay or Chinese, while all posters were in English. Official government documents were in Malay with English or Chinese translation. Importantly, the company profile and other more official documents were in English. The CEO indicated that local companies which are not international affiliates would have documentation largely in Bahasa Malay or Chinese, with only minimal English.

English was used for some conversation in the office but certainly not all. The CEO and Office Administrator probably showed the greatest use of English, with the other employees speaking a number of other languages (chiefly Malay and Indian languages) within their own cultural sub-group. However, when doing business with clients (for example, on the telephone) English seemed to be used. English was also used when, for example, an Indian background surveyor spoke to a Malay technician. This supports the view that English has much more of a role as a lingua franca in Malaysia than it does in Hong Kong (Nair-Venugopal 2003; Gill 1999 & 2000).

The second day was spent interviewing office staff, 12 in all, including the General Manager, the Branch Manager, the Marketing Manager, surveyors and the Office Administrator. Some staff displayed initial reluctance, perhaps due to the fact that the interview was to be conducted in English, their second language, but they soon relaxed when it was clear the interview would be informal. Interviews, which were conducted in

a special meeting room set aside for the researcher, lasted for between 20 and 45 minutes. Recording of the interviews was considered, but was abandoned, as the researcher found clear signs that it was considered intrusive by the informants and was likely to skew the information provided. Instead, each of the interviewees was told about the purposes of the research and was asked if they minded the researcher taking notes during the interview. No one objected, so this procedure was followed. The interviews were useful for the researcher to understand, among other things, the variety of accents manifested and the difficulties that this would pose for both L1 and L2 speakers of English in the context of their work. It became evident, and interviewees confirmed, that in L1 to L2 or L2 to L2 interactions, accents and accommodation to different styles of speaking were important issues. We have seen that research in the area of ELF and EGL (Smith, in Kachru1992; Jenkins 2000; Kirkpatrick 2004a) indicates that the development of accommodation strategies, rather than approximation to native speaker norms, will be of particular use in such situations.

During interviews it was not always easy for the researcher to gauge how much any difficulty in communication was due to levels of linguistic proficiency or to different communication styles. It was evident, however, that among employees levels of fluency varied. Some felt quite comfortable speaking in English, while others found it more difficult to express their ideas and their communication was therefore more circuitous and at times hesitant. A few of the younger employees also seemed to display some shyness in talking to the researcher: their answers were brief and a greater number of probe questions were required to glean relevant information. The interviews served to provide a very good picture of what the company actually does and as a sound basis for the later development of a detailed survey to more fully explore the use of English in the workplace.

E-mail contact continued to be maintained with the General Manager and his Office Administrator until the second one-day visit, which took place in September 2002. This visit served to reacquaint the researcher with those in the KL office and, in informal conversations, to obtain more details about their work and their use of English. In the afternoon, three surveyors accompanied the researcher to the Port to view their worksites and to further explain what their work entails. This was very useful in providing a fuller picture of the operations of the company, one of about 35 companies competing for cargo inspection in this part of KL. Surveyors undertake largely quality

and quantity inspections, and need to write a report for every inspection. If there should be some problem, particularly with the quality of the cargo, then a complaint is lodged and all the necessary paperwork would be in English. Surveyors stressed that cargo inspection is a very competitive industry, although their company is considered one of the top five in Malaysia. Getting to know clients is very important as most business seems to be attracted by word of mouth rather than advertising. This visit allowed the researcher to clarify some of the earlier impressions and provided the opportunity to continue to 'build the rapport' which Le Compte and Schensul (1999) remind us is so important in ethnographic research. The chief contacts for this company for all matters related to this project were the CEO and, in his absence, his Office Administrator.

4.5.2 Field visits to Drinksoft (Hong Kong)

The Hong Kong company was first visited for one day in September 2002, after some regular e-mail contact with the Senior General Manager Personnel and the Assistant Manager, Learning and Development, during which the purposes of this research project were clarified. Both of the above were extremely helpful in providing information and in arranging a schedule for the researcher to meet various managers working on different aspects of the operation.

This is a much larger company (with some 1,100 employees) and the first visit was aimed at familiarising the researcher with the scope of its operations. The offices are located in the same area as the plant in the New Territories and for this reason there is a level of security at the entrance, with visitors having to be checked in. Visible posters/ signs in the reception area were in both English and Chinese and the receptionist spoke fluent English to the researcher. The researcher was shown over the whole plant and had the opportunity to observe the size, variety and extent of its activities. She also had the opportunity to speak informally with a number of employees, including telemarketers, who were happy to clarify their role and their use of English in the course of their work.

Apart from conversations directly with the researcher and with the English speaking CEO, little English conversation was discernible in the plant. This confirms what the researcher was told: that is, that Cantonese is the language of everyday oral interaction in the company. However, all the employees that were interviewed were reasonably fluent in communicating in English. Among those who were introduced to the

researcher during the company tour, only three or four of the older ones seemed to have any real difficulty communicating in English. However, the researcher was informed that for executive meetings, English was used exclusively. For meetings at middle management level, Cantonese would be largely used, according to the General Manager Personnel, "supplemented with English terms, like daily conversation in Hong Kong". He also indicated the same thing would happen if staff were talking to outside clients who are Cantonese. These reported patterns of use reinforce earlier studies on the use of English for business in Hong Kong (Li 1999; Chew 2000; Evans & Green 2003). The room where interviews were held had a chart with some 10 points espousing the company's vision and mission and this was in English, but apart from that there were not many other visible signs in English in the office areas, although the researcher was told that almost all written documentation is in English.

The General Manager, Personnel and the Assistant Manager, Learning and Development, spoke to the researcher at some length (for some two hours) to explain the company background and the scope of its operations. The General Manager discussed issues related to globalisation and how he viewed the role of English in the company and in the Hong Kong context. Having been with the company for some years, he is intimately acquainted with all facets of its operation and was able to provide much useful information to the researcher. He explained that because his company operated with an American franchise, English was important and all their staff recruitment material had a requirement for English as well as 'Chinese'. He considered that written English might be important at senior management levels, but at lower levels in the company, particularly for sales people and telemarketers, spoken English might be more important. He also stressed that Putonghua would now also be very important for employees. His company wanted to put a different emphasis on the American franchise because the demand for carbonated drinks was declining in HK and they were keen to produce different products.

The Assistant Manager, Learning and Development, discussed the company's desire to develop especially middle managers' skills, including English language skills, to high levels. Because the staff were young and well qualified (about 80% had university degrees) the company had to make efforts to retain them. One of the ways it was doing this was by offering ongoing staff development, with support for career planning. She

was overseeing and coordinating a range of projects aimed at skills development, career planning and performance evaluation.

Part of the morning and afternoon were spent talking with middle management staff about their role and company communication practices. Eight people at managerial level and above were consulted individually in a meeting room, in interviews lasting for between 20 and 40 minutes. Although the semi-structured interview schedule above was used, these interviews tended to be even broader, encompassing each interviewee's role in the company and the extent of their use of English to carry out their work. As with the KL company, it was decided not to record interviews but to take detailed notes instead.

The second visit took place in July 2003, after the employee survey had been administered and the analysis of findings had begun. The researcher met with the two key contacts, the Senior General Manager Personnel and the Assistant Manager, Learning and Development, and discussed the development of her research with them, particularly findings of the initial analysis of the employee survey. Both were very interested to receive more detailed results, as they felt this would be useful information for their company, which might indicate possible future areas for staff development. The researcher was also informed that a new CEO would be taking over shortly. The previous CEO had been a first language speaker of English whereas the new CEO was 'Asian' and, presumably, an English as a second language speaker. The Senior General Manager anticipated that this could signal changes for the company, perhaps in management style. The chief contacts for the company for all matters related to this project continued to be the Senior General Manager Personnel and the Assistant Manager, Learning and Development.

4.5.3 Administering the employee survey

As indicated above, initial interviews served to acquaint the researcher with the operations of the companies and the role of different employees in those operations. They also provided a background and a framework for the development of the survey instrument in Appendix 1.

The survey was sent to each contact person in early May 2003, with instructions for its administration. In the case of Drinksoft, the contact person was asked to give the survey to coordinators, assistant managers, managers and more senior positions, and also to administrative staff. In the case of Seacargo, whose Malaysian operation is a much smaller company, the survey was administered to all except clerical staff (this included managers, assistant managers, surveyors and administrative/technical staff). Both contact persons were asked to give staff strong assurances of confidentiality, since it was felt that staff might be reluctant to admit, for example, their need to improve English skills, if they thought their superiors would see the survey. For this reason, multiple copies of the survey were sent with envelopes in which respondents could seal their survey upon completion. They could then give the sealed envelope to the person coordinating the survey in their workplace. The surveys were then bulk mailed back to the researcher by the end of May 2003. Thirty-six (36) completed surveys were received from Seacargo and 46 from Drinksoft.

4.6 Data Analysis

This section presents an analysis of the data gathered in various ways described above, namely: field visits; formal and informal discussion with staff; the employee survey; and relevant communication documents. In most cases data for each company will be reported separately, since there are some differences; however, data from both companies will be brought together in a discussion of the issues.

4.6.1 Data from field visits and interviews

4.6.1.1 Seacargo International

The semi-structured interview was a first attempt at identifying which areas of English communication workers considered most important for the work of Seacargo International. Staff were asked about their use of workplace English in a variety of communication modes, including face-to-face communication, e-mail, fax, letters, telephone, report writing, negotiation, and any other areas they wished to name. While they considered both oral and written English important, oral communication was considered slightly more important. Under the ‘other’ category, carrying out investigations emerged as an important function for surveyors, involving possibly face-to-face, telephone, e-mail and fax modes and culminating often in a written report.

High levels of English were considered necessary for report writing, although this varies according to whether an inspection is straightforward (that is, there are no problems) or whether an investigation is warranted. From the samples made available to the researcher, it would appear that in most cases, standardised/pro-forma formats are used with surveyors providing the specific details of each particular case. However, after an investigation, which involves high financial stakes for clients, insurance companies and other interested parties, clients often require a very detailed report and there is much related correspondence. In such cases, the resulting reports are extremely important documents. This was emphasised by the General Manager (who is a 'native speaker' of English) who reported that he often checks reports to ensure that there are no errors in English.

Surveyors also reported that misunderstandings during the course of their work mean delays, which, in turn, cost money. Seacargo staff in the KL office, except for the General Manager, who is Scottish, are of Malay, Indian or Chinese background and all are speakers of English as a second language. Since in their line of work they have to speak to ships' crews and officers from all over the world in English (i.e. often L2 to L2 situations) this sometimes proves difficult for all involved, with the variety of accents in English adding to the difficulty. Surveyors had differing opinions on which accents in English were most difficult for them to understand. It emerged during interviews that if there are communication difficulties with crews during a cargo inspection or in some other context, usually someone else from the company being inspected is brought in to facilitate communication, but this person is rarely a professional interpreter/translator. One Surveyor reported a case of where the Captain had to be called, since he was the only one who was fluent enough in English to understand and answer the Surveyor's questions. This sort of situation would seem to involve some risk, as all sorts of goods (including chemicals) could be involved in an inspection, so understanding by both parties becomes crucial.

Several of those interviewed indicated that the other languages they speak, including Bahasa Malay, Tamil or a Chinese language, are also important for their work, and are used with clients if and as appropriate, and possibly more with local clients. This reflects the use of a number of languages in Malaysia, which are balanced in subtle ways to serve a variety of social, communicative and pragmatic purposes (Ting and

Sussex 2002; Le Vasan 1994; Nair-Venugopal 2000 & 2003; Norrish 1997; Gill 1999). However, for all intents and purposes, English is regarded by these employees as the 'language of business' and certainly the one that would be used for emails and other correspondence and for reports. The General Manager also stressed that English is an absolute requirement for the job of surveyor with his company, although this must also be balanced by the necessary technical skills.

4.6.1.2 Drinksoft (Hong Kong)

Much of the discussion in the interviews with staff focused on what each person did in the organisation and on how the company operates, and also on how and when English was used in the course of their work. A surprising number of the managers interviewed were quite young (in their mid-twenties or early thirties). The researcher was informed that it is currently a deliberate company policy to have very young and dynamic teams. Young people, especially those who have gained a degree overseas and are fluent in English, are considered better able to promote the company's image and interests. In regard to language use, it soon emerged that English is used in much written documentation, while Cantonese is used for much everyday oral interaction, both internal and external. In any case, it is company policy that all reports must be in English. As well, records of meetings and e-mails are all likely to be in English. However, the company policy is also to employ people who speak Cantonese and more recently, Putonghua. All recruitment materials have a requirement for applicants to be bilingual in 'Chinese' and English. Some forms, pro-formas and safety procedures (for internal purposes) are in Chinese, but most other writing for the company is in English and occasionally material for external clients may be printed bilingually. Several studies on the use of English in Hong Kong have found a similar emphasis on English for writing and Cantonese for speaking (Lundelius 1997; Candlin & Bhatia 1998; Chew 2000; and Nunan et al, cited in Bhatia & Candlin 2001). Lundelius (1997, p.123) in his study of graduates in the workplace found that:

> recent university graduates during the first two years of employment operate bilingually. They frequently present English language reports while speaking Cantonese and they hold meetings in Cantonese while the minutes are taken down in English.

At Drinksoft, spoken English was unlikely to be used internally unless there was a 'native' English speaker present. Apart from this, most internal oral interaction was likely to be in Cantonese, particularly for socialising and informal interaction. One of the managers (who was extremely fluent in her interaction in English with the researcher) stated that during the course of her work in a normal day she would probably speak English only with the four or five 'native speakers' who work there. Externally (e.g. for telemarketers) if the client was an English speaker, English would be used, otherwise Cantonese or, in some cases, Putonghua. This would also seem to be supported by other research (Chew 2000; Du Babcock 1999a). Du Babcock (1999a, p.552) states that the use of English in everyday spoken interactions is, in many cases, positively discouraged, except at the highest management levels, thus making it difficult for many Hong Kong employees to achieve high levels of proficiency:

> In Hong Kong, the norms prescribing language use are complex and contradictory. There are two general language environments. At higher levels, in professional and business fields, English is the preferred medium of exchange […]. In other segments of Hong Kong society, sanctions are placed on Cantonese bilinguals who use English as their medium of communication.

At Drinksoft, the use of English for speaking was not reflected even at the higher levels, except in conversations with the CEO and a small number of other 'native' speakers in the company.

However, English is required for all managerial and many other positions and is listed in recruiting advertisements, with applicants often tested to ensure their English language skills meet the company's requirements. The view that English is important for their work and for business was often expressed both by employees and superiors. Superiors also indicated that they thought the levels of English of their employees needed to improve. This is also in line with current thinking amongst business leaders in Hong Kong, who are preoccupied with what they perceive to be falling levels of English among Hong Kong school leavers and university graduates. In 1997, A.S. I. Au, Chief Executive of the Hang Seng Bank, stated in this regard:

> Unfortunately, the Hong Kong education system has failed to produce a sufficient number of the quality staff that employers are looking for. In the area of language proficiency, which is the most important tool for effective business communication, I have observed a decline in standards (Au, in Bhatia & Candlin 2001).

The Hong Kong government, too, has actively taken up the challenge of promoting English for business with injections of funding for more teachers and for English in the workplace programs (Bhatia & Candlin, 2001). Upper management at Drinksoft indicated that they encouraged personnel to attend English programs. However, there was also a more recent need seen for people to improve their skills in Putonghua, especially as the company established stronger ties with cities in mainland China.

4.6.2 Analysis of the employee survey

Eighty-two (82) completed questionnaires were returned, 46 from Drinksoft Hong Kong and 36 from Seacargo International Kuala Lumpur. For the purposes of this analysis, responses from both companies will be combined or reported separately, as appropriate, in order to compose a picture of the linguistic practices in multinational contexts. Any marked differences will be indicated, and the written comments from each company will be reported separately, as they reflect different contextual realities.

4.6.2.1 Characteristics of the cohort

4.6.2.1.1 Gender and job category

The gender and job category of the cohort are shown in Tables 4.1 and 4.2, below. Forty-six (46) respondents indicated they were male and 32 female (with four missing). However, there were three times as many males as females in the KL cohort, and slightly more females than males in the HK cohort. The job categories for each workplace also show that the sample from HK consisted largely of positions at the higher levels (manager/supervisor) with only four in the administrative/secretarial category, whereas the KL cohort showed a greater spread of levels. A number of respondents in each cohort did not state their position (five in KL and 12 in HK). Although assurances of confidentiality were given, there may have been reluctance to

state position within the company in order to avoid identification, hence the large number missing for this item.

Table 4.1: Gender and job category of KL cohort

Gender		Job category	
Male	25	Manager/Executive	6
Female	8	Senior surveyor	3
Not stated	3	Surveyor	13
		Laboratory technician	4
		Admin. /secretarial	5
		Not stated	5
Tot	36	Tot	36

Table 4.2: Gender and job category of HK cohort

Gender		Job category	
Male	21	Manager/Executive	12
Female	24	Assistant Manager	4
Not stated	1	Supervisor/Administrator	14
		Admin. /secretarial	4
		Not stated	12
Tot	46	Tot	46

4.6.2.1.2 Language background details

Respondents were asked to list any languages they knew, with the language they spoke best in the number 1 position. Respondents listed nine languages that they could speak including Cantonese, Malay, Mandarin/Putonghua, Tamil, English, French, German, Japanese and Arabic.

Table 4.3: Languages spoken KL cohort

	Language in no. 1 position	Language in no. 2 position	Language in no. 3 position
Malay	26	7	
English	7	23	1
Tamil	1		3
Mandarin			1
Arabic			1
Missing	2		
Total	**36**	**30**	**6**

The great majority of KL employees reported they were bilingual in Malay and English, with 26 listing Malay as their first language (with seven indicating English and one Tamil in this position). Twenty-three (23) listed English and seven listed Malay as their second language. Only a few listed a third language, as follows: three Tamil, one Mandarin, one English, and one Arabic.

Table 4.4: Languages spoken HK cohort

	Language in no. 1 position	Language in no. 2 position	Language in no. 3 position
Cantonese	45	1	
English	1	39	6
Mandarin/ Putonghua		6	26
Total	46	46	32

The great majority of HK employees indicated they were trilingual in Cantonese, English and Mandarin/Putonghua. Forty-five (45) placed Cantonese and only one English at the number one position. Thirty-nine (39) placed English, six Mandarin and one Cantonese at the number two position. In third place, 26 indicated Mandarin/Putonghua and six English.

In total, only eight (8) people placed English at the number one position. However, overall 62 respondents (i.e. almost 76%) placed English at the number two position (39 or 85% from HK and 23 or 64% from KL), the results illustrating Kachru's (1992) claim that English is the 'other tongue' in Asia.

4.6.2.1.3 Languages used at home/with family and in education

Responses from the KL cohort to question 2 (language used at home with family and friends) show that only six use English in this context, while the majority (24) use Malay and three use Tamil (see Table 4.5, below). Only two reported that English was a language of instruction in primary school, with one indicating Tamil and 25 Malay for this purpose. Malay was reported as the major language in secondary school by 24 respondents, with nine indicating English for this purpose. Of the 13 who responded to the tertiary education question, 11 reported the language of instruction was English and two indicated Malay.

Table 4.5: Languages used at home and in education, KL cohort

	At home	Primary education	Secondary education	Tertiary education
Malay	24	25	24	2
English	6	2	9	11
Tamil	3	1		
Total	**33**	**28**	**33**	**13**

The pattern of responses from the HK cohort was fairly similar (see Table 4.6, below) with 37 reporting they used Cantonese with family and friends, while two indicated Cantonese and English and four 'Chinese' for this purpose. Twenty-nine (29) reported that Cantonese was the language of instruction in primary school, with nine stating 'Chinese' and four English. By secondary school, there was an increase to English language instruction with 19 reporting English as the language of instruction, 16 Cantonese/'Chinese' and nine combined 'Chinese' and English. Of the 37 respondents who answered the tertiary education question, 29 indicated that the language of instruction was English and four a combination of English and 'Chinese'.

Table 4.6: Languages used at home and in education, HK cohort

	At home	**Primary education**	**Secondary education**	**Tertiary education**
Cantonese	37	29	14	2
'Chinese'	4	9	2	
English		4	19	29
English & Cantonese/ 'Chinese' together	2	2	9	4
English and other European languages				2
Total	**43**	**44**	**44**	**37**

4.6.2.1.4 English language self-rating scale

The English macro skills self-rating scale (Question 4) produced very little difference between the macro skills and indeed between the two companies on the surface (see Table 4.7, below). Some 63.4% rated themselves as 'fluent' or 'very fluent' in reading, 57.3% in listening and understanding and similarly in writing, and 51.2% in speaking. This is a little unusual, as second language speakers often find the so-called 'receptive' skills of listening and reading easier than the 'productive' skills of speaking and writing (Wylie, Ingram & Commins 1995). However, in examining the separate responses from each company, it is clear that while KL respondents have followed the more common pattern, HK respondents have rated themselves as more fluent in writing than in listening and understanding. This would seem to confirm the information that was conveyed during HK interviews (that is, that English is used more for reading and writing). This is also borne out by the studies by Li (1999) and Evans and Green (2003), who found a much greater need for reading and writing among Hong Kong professionals.

Table 4.7: Macro-skills rating on self-rating scale

Macro-skill	% Rating as fluent or very fluent					
	Seacargo KL		Drinksoft HK		Combined results	
	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%
Listening & understanding	21	58.3%	26	56.5%	47	57.3%
Speaking	15	41.7%	27	58.7%	42	51.2%
Reading	19	52.8%	33	71.7%	52	63.4%
Writing	16	44.4%	31	67.4%	47	57.3%

The picture is slightly different for KL respondents, who indicated they were least fluent in speaking and writing (S 41.7%, W 44.4%). This might reflect everyday language use in the KL company, with employees using Malay, Tamil or a Chinese language for much office interaction, and only surveyors needing to write much English. The speaking skill had the greatest combined number who rated themselves as 'basic' (8.5%), with 'basic' ratings for listening and understanding at 7.3%, for reading at 6.1% and for writing at 7.3%. The lower scores for speaking in both companies also reflect the feelings conveyed during interviews: that is, a number of workers in both companies expressed a desire to become more fluent in interpersonal oral communication.

As for the overall difference between the two companies, it is clear that HK respondents rated themselves higher overall (M 63.6%) compared to the KL respondents (M 49.3%). It is difficult to attribute this to any real differences in levels of fluency. From the face-to-face interactions with the researcher, it was clear that there were fluent and less fluent speakers in both cohorts, with greater levels of fluency generally (but not always) related to higher level positions. It might be that for HK respondents, who are working for a famous American soft drink brand, fluency in English is emphasised more within the company. In any case, self-rating scales have their limitations in that they can, of course, be interpreted differently by different respondents (Wylie & Ingram 1996). Nevertheless, they have served, in this case, to highlight the different emphases placed on the macro-skills by the two different cohorts of respondents.

4.6.2.2 Use of English in the workplace for different tasks

In the first part of Section B (i.e. questions 5.1 to 5.21) respondents had to indicate on a five point Likert scale how often they used English for the listed tasks, choosing between 1'never or rarely', 2 'sometimes (every few weeks)', 3 'frequently (every

week)', 4 'almost every day' and 5 'several times per day'. The mean scores for the combined cohort for this section are shown in Table 4.8, below.

In response to which tasks were carried out most frequently in English the one that emerged as the highest overall was 'reading emails/faxes' (M 4.11), followed by 'writing emails/faxes' (M 3.90), 'reading letters/memos' (M 3.73), 'reading reports' (M 3.46), 'writing letters/memos' (M 3.11), 'writing brief informal reports' (M 2.85) and 'speaking on the telephone' (M 2.84). In percentage terms, their responses to carrying out the above tasks in English 'frequently', 'almost every day' or 'several times per day' were as follows: 91.3% for reading emails/faxes; 88.9% for writing emails/ faxes; 88.9% for reading letters and memos; 77.8% for reading reports; 67.9% for writing letters/memos; 63.8% for writing brief informal reports; and 51.9% for speaking on the telephone (see Table 4.9, below).

Table 4.8: Degree of English use at work for different tasks

	Task	Valid	Missing	Mean	Std. Dev.
Q 5.1	Speaking face to face with workers in same company	81	1	2.46	1.351
Q 5.2	Speaking face to face with clients	80	2	2.24	1.139
Q 5.3	Speaking on the telephone	81	1	2.84	1.219
Q 5.4	Oral presentation to people in the company	80	2	1.96	1.096
Q 5.5	Oral presentation to outside clients	80	2	1.70	.933
Q 5.6	Participate in discussions in meetings	81	1	1.96	.980
Q 5.7	Having business discussions with clients	80	2	1.83	.978
Q 5.8	Other speaking/listening tasks	28	54*	1.89	1.370
Q 5.9	Writing letters/memos	81	1	3.11	1.140
Q 5.10	Writing emails/faxes	81	1	3.90	1.136
Q 5.11	Writing brief informal reports	80	2	2.85	1.274
Q 5.12	Writing formal reports	79	3	2.57	1.206
Q 5.13	Writing minutes of meetings	80	2	1.89	.981
Q 5.14	Preparing advertising material	77	5	1.62	.889
Q 5.15	Writing project proposals	80	2	1.80	.947
Q 5.16	Writing recruitment material	77	5	1.39	.728
Q 5.17	Reading letters/memos	81	1	3.73	1.084
Q 5.18	Reading emails/faxes	81	1	4.11	1.000
Q 5.19	Reading proposals	79	3	2.62	1.233
Q 5.20	Reading reports	81	1	3.46	1.235
Q 5.21	Other writing/reading tasks	24	58*	2.54	1.615

Note: **1. Likert scale – 1 never or rarely; 2 sometimes (every few weeks); 3 frequently (every week); 4 almost every day; 5 several times per day.**

2. *Large number simply indicates that many chose not to write anything for this question

Table 4.9: Tasks carried out most frequently in English

Ranking	Task	No *	%
1.	Reading emails/faxes	74	91.3
2.	Writing emails/faxes	72	88.9
3.	Reading letters/memos	72	88.9
4.	Reading reports	63	77.8
5.	Writing letters/memos	55	67.9
6.	Writing brief informal reports	51	63.8
7.	Speaking on the telephone	42	51.9
8.	Writing formal reports	41	51.2

Note: * Number who indicated they did this frequently, every day or several times per day.

The tasks which *least* required English included 'writing recruitment material' (M 1.39), 'preparing advertising material' (M 1.62), 'oral presentation to outside clients' (M 1.70), 'writing project proposals' (M 1.80), 'having business discussions with clients' (M 1.83), 'writing minutes of meetings' (M 1.89) and 'oral presentation to people within the company' (M 1.96). The responses to the above items from both cohorts were similar, although the means were even lower for HK respondents. Some differences between the two cohorts did emerge, however, as shown in Table 4.10, below.

Table 4.10:

Tasks carried out most frequently in English – comparison between KL and HK cohorts

Question	Task	* KL Cohort %	* HK Cohort %
Q 5.1	Speaking face-to-face with workers in same company	65.7	19.5
Q 5.2	Speaking face-to-face with clients	61.8	15.2
Q 5.3	Speaking on the telephone	77.1	32.6
Q 5.4	Oral presentation to people in the company	35.3	8.7
Q 5.5	Oral presentation to outside clients	26.4	4.3
Q 5.6	Participate in discussions in meetings	25.7	13.1
Q 5.7	Having business discussions with clients	47.1	6.5
Q 5.8	Other speaking/listening tasks	38.5	20
Q 5.9	Writing letters/memos	65.7	69.6
Q 5.10	Writing emails/faxes	80	95.6
Q 5.11	Writing brief informal reports	61.7	65.2
Q 5.12	Writing formal reports	66.7	41.3
Q 5.13	Writing minutes of meetings	14.6	23.9
Q 5.14	Preparing advertising material	15.2	18.1
Q 5.15	Writing project proposals	8.8	28.2
Q 5.16	Writing recruitment material	12.5	6.6
Q 5.17	Reading letters/memos	82.8	93.5
Q 5.18	Reading emails/faxes	82.9	97.9
Q 5.19	Reading proposals	42.4	50
Q 5.20	Reading reports	88.5	69.6
Q 5.21	Other writing/reading tasks	50.1	41.7

Note: * Percentage who indicated they did this frequently, every day or several times per day.

A quick glance at this table suffices to show that on all speaking and personal interaction tasks, the KL respondents scored higher than did the HK respondents. The

case is almost completely reversed for all the reading and writing tasks, where HK respondents scored higher, except on three items. One is writing recruitment materials, which is fairly specialised, so can be discounted. The other two, however, are interesting because they highlight the different work contexts of the two multinational companies. On questions 5.12 and 5.20 (writing formal reports and reading reports) respondents at Seacargo International scored higher (66.7% and 88.5% respectively) than did those at Drinksoft HK (41.3% and 69.6%). This would reflect the work of surveyors in KL, who need to write and read reports as a result of inspections in the course of their work. The results illustrated in the above table reinforce information obtained during interviews and field visit observations of both worksites.

Oral presentation, which normally receives a lot of attention in business courses, attracted quite a low response rate with only 20.1% of respondents indicating they used English for 'oral presentation to people in the company 'frequently', 'almost every day' or 'several times per day' and only 13.9% indicating they used English similarly for 'oral presentation to outside clients'. There was, however, some difference between the responses of the two cohorts, which again might reflect the realities of the two workplaces. The higher response rate from KL respondents about oral presentation to people within the company (KL 35.3% , HK 9.7%) might reflect the fact that since the KL operation is smaller and the CEO is English speaking, this might lead to more use of English in meetings, for example. However, the higher response rate for presentations to outside clients (KL 26.4%, HK 4.3%) might possibly also reflect greater use of English for business in Malaysia than in Hong Kong. Or it could simply be the case that presentation to outside clients is not relevant for many employees in a much larger company.

Items 5.8 and 5.21 asked respondents to list any other tasks. Only five people listed any other tasks, and some of these would seem to be unrelated to work. The 'other' tasks listed included: speaking with family and friends; reading a newspaper, dealing with a child's school lesson/homework, talking to the boss; and carrying out selling over the telephone.

4.6.2.3 Level of English needed for different tasks

The questions in this section were aimed at gauging respondents' perception of the level of English needed to complete the tasks listed. Respondents had to choose on a 5 point

Likert scale between 1'none or almost no English required', 2 'quite low level of English required', 3 'reasonable level of English required', 4 quite high level of English required' and 5 'very high level of English required'. Table 4.11 shows the mean responses for this question. Not surprisingly, perhaps, the tasks that respondents indicated required the highest levels of English tended to overlap with those that they indicated they carried out most frequently in questions 5.1 to 5.21. Their highest responses to the tasks that they considered required a 'reasonable level of English', 'quite high level of English' and 'very high level of English' were as follows: reading emails/faxes 85.1%; reading letters/memos 85%; writing emails/faxes 83.8%; reading reports 81.3%; reading proposals 80.1%; writing letters/memos 78.9%; speaking on the telephone 77.3%; and writing formal reports 70.1%. Although there were high levels of agreement expressed about the level of skills required for the above tasks from both cohorts, levels of agreement were higher from the HK cohort, indicating perhaps that the latter see themselves as less fluent than the KL cohort.

Table 4.11: Levels of English required for different tasks

	Task	Valid	Missing	Mean	Std. Dev.
Q 6.1	Speaking face to face with workers in same company	81	1	2.36	1.004
Q 6.2	Speaking face to face with clients	81	1	2.85	1.014
Q 6.3	Speaking on the telephone	79	3	3.09	.865
Q 6.4	Oral presentation to people in the company	79	3	2.49	1.073
Q 6.5	Oral presentation to outside clients	80	2	2.66	1.201
Q 6.6	Participate in discussions in meetings	80	2	2.50	1.043
Q 6.7	Having business discussions with clients	80	2	2.63	1.151
Q 6.8	Other speaking/listening tasks	27	55	2.22	1.086
Q 6.9	Writing letters/memos	80	2	3.18	.925
Q 6.10	Writing emails/faxes	80	2	3.29	.930
Q 6.11	Writing brief informal reports	80	2	2.79	1.040
Q 6.12	Writing formal reports	80	2	3.18	1.199
Q 6.13	Writing minutes of meetings	80	2	2.68	1.123
Q 6.14	Preparing advertising material	77	5	2.64	1.347
Q 6.15	Writing project proposals	79	3	2.76	1.201
Q 6.16	Writing recruitment material	75	7	2.40	1.219
Q 6.17	Reading letters/memos	80	2	3.26	.775
Q 6.18	Reading emails/faxes	80	2	3.29	.783
Q 6.19	Reading proposals	80	2	3.14	1.052
Q 6.20	Reading reports	80	2	3.23	.954
Q 6.21	Other writing/reading tasks	30	52	2.47	1.167

Note: Likert scale - 1 none or almost no English required; 2 quite low level of English; 3 reasonable level of English; 4 quite high level of English; 5 very high level pf English

As can be seen in Table 4.11, above, the mean for most responses is not quite as low as for questions 5.1 to 5.21, presumably because even if some tasks are not carried out often, they would still be perceived to require quite high levels of English proficiency.

One of the responses which had the lowest mean and was thought by 48% of respondents (59% from HK) to require 'almost no English' or only a 'low level of English' was question 6.1, 'speaking face to face with workers in the same company'. This is not surprising, since almost all respondents in this survey are second language speakers of English and presumably are much more able and comfortable communicating in their first language/s with colleagues in the workplace.

4.6.2.4 Perceptions of the importance of English and attitudes to English

Questions 7.1 to 7.14 aimed to gauge the perceptions and attitudes of company employees to their use of English both at work and, more broadly, in a business context. The combined results are reported first and then separate responses from the two cohorts to establish any differences. Respondents were asked to show their agreement on a five point Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). All questions in this section drew a high level of agreement except for question 7.8 with which only 17% of respondents agreed and which stated: 'I can do my job very well without much use of English' (KL 25%, HK 11%). Table 4.12, below, illustrates mean responses for this section.

Table 4.12: Perceptions about English in a multinational work environment

Statement	Valid	Missing	Mean	Std Dev.
Q 7.1 I need to use English at work almost every day	81	1	4.32	.668
Q 7.2 I use English at work with almost everyone	80	2	3.29	1.265
Q 7.3 I use English at work only with colleagues who speak only English	80	2	3.38	1.296
Q 7.4 I use English with many of our clients	81	1	3.68	1.127
Q 7.5 I need to improve my spoken English skills	82	0	4.16	.761
Q 7.6 I need to improve my written English skills	82	0	4.15	.788
Q 7.7 English is necessary for me to do my job	82	0	4.44	.668
Q 7.8 I can do my job very well without much use of English	82	0	2.38	1.214
Q 7.9 If I improve my English skills I will have better chance of promotion within my company	82	0	3.78	1.207
Q 7.10 English is a very important language for business	82	0	4.61	.583
Q 7.11 English is considered a very important language in my country	81	1	4.42	.649
Q 7.12 In my job other languages are just as important as English	82	0	3.51	.906
Q 7.13 Sometimes misunderstandings occur when people from different cultures use English	82	0	3.62	.855
Q 7.14 Sometimes I feel I cannot be as fluent in English as in my first language	81	1	3.69	.983

Note: Likert scale, 1 strongly disagree; 2 disagree; 3 unsure; 4 agree; 5 strongly agree.

The percentage of respondents for the combined cohort who agreed or strongly agreed with the statements is illustrated in Table 4.13, below, in descending order. Results of the combined cohort show that the statement 'English is a very important language for business' drew the highest level of agreement, with 97.5% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing. The other statements showing agreement (agree or strongly agree) in descending order are as follows: 93.8% for 'English is considered a very important language in my country'; 92.6% for 'English is necessary for me to do my job; 91.4% for 'I need to use English as work almost every day'; 86.6% for both 'I need to improve my spoken English skills' and 'I need to improve my written English skills'; 70.7% for 'If I improve my English I will have a better chance of promotion within my company'; 69.2% for 'I feel I cannot be as fluent in English as in my first language'; 60.5% for 'I use English with many of our clients'; 59.8% for 'In my job, other languages are just as important as English'; 59.7% for 'Misunderstandings occur when people from different cultures use English'; 58.8% for 'I use English at work only with colleagues who speak only English'; and 50.1% for 'I use English at work with almost everyone'. Finally, only 17% thought that they could do their job very well without much use of English.

Table 4.13: Agreement with statements about multinational work environments

Rank order	Statement	% Agree or strongly agree
1	English is a very important language for business	97.5
2	English is considered a very important language in my country	93.8
3	English is necessary for me to do my job	92.6
4	I need to use English at work almost every day	91.4
5	I need to improve my spoken English skills	86.6
6	I need to improve my written English skills	86.6
7	If I improve my English skills I will have better chance of promotion within my company	70.7
8	Sometimes I feel I cannot be as fluent in English as in my first language	69.2
9	I use English with many of our clients	60.5
10	In my job other languages are just as important as English	59.8
11	Sometimes misunderstandings occur when people from different cultures use English	59.7
12	I use English at work only with colleagues who speak only English	58.8
13	I use English at work with almost all the people I work with	50.1
14	I can do my job very well without much use of English	17

An examination of the separate responses of both cohorts (see Table 4.14, below) shows some differences, again probably reflecting the reality of the two different workplaces. There is almost identical agreement on the importance of English for business (Question 7.10, KL 97.3%, HK 97.8%) and on Question 7.11 ('English is considered a very

important language in my country', KL 91.6%, HK 95.5%). However, responses to Question 7.12 indicate that the HK cohort attaches more importance to other languages than does the KL cohort (HK 67.4%, KL 50%). Levels of agreement are similar on question 7.7 ('English is necessary for me to do my job', KL 91.6%, HK 93.5%). Both cohorts agree that improved English language skills will improve chances of promotion in their company (Question 7.9, KL 69.4%, HK 71.7%) and both indicate high agreement with the statement that they need to use English at work almost every day (Question 7.1, KL 88.9%, HK 93.3%). However, responses to other questions illustrate the differences. For example, there is a much stronger level of agreement from the KL cohort with questions 7.2 and 7.4, indicating a greater use of spoken English both within the office and with clients. The higher scores of the HK cohort to Question 7.14 also reflect, perhaps, a desire to be more fluent in spoken English. The responses from the HK cohort to questions 7.2 and 7.3 are somewhat puzzling, on the surface seeming to contradict the finding that much office interaction in HK is in Cantonese. However, this can perhaps be understood if respondents interpreted the question to include written communication, since all meetings in the company are recorded in English (although the oral interaction may be completely in Cantonese if no English speakers are present) and internal email communication is almost exclusively in English. The higher level of agreement from the KL cohort to questions 7.2 and 7.3 reflects observations made during field visits, that is that Malay and Tamil are used quite a lot among Malay and Indian background sub-groups in the office and English is used in interactions across groups.

Table 4.14: Perceptions about English - comparison between KL and HK cohorts

Statement	KL % agree or strongly agree	HK % agree or strongly agree
Q 7.1 I need to use English at work almost every day	88.9	93.3
Q 7.2 I use English at work with almost everyone	60	42.2
Q 7.3 I use English at work only with colleagues who speak only English	77.2	44.4
Q 7.4 I use English with many of our clients	80.6	44.5
Q 7.5 I need to improve my spoken English skills	91.7	82.6
Q 7.6 I need to improve my written English skills	91.7	82.6
Q 7.7 English is necessary for me to do my job	91.6	93.5
Q 7.8 I can do my job very well without much use of English	25	10.9
Q 7.9 If I improve my English skills I will have better chance of promotion within my company	69.4	71.7
Q 7.10 English is a very important language for business	97.3	97.8
Q 7.11 English is considered a very important language in my country	91.6	95.5
Q 7.12 In my job other languages are just as important as English	50	67.4
Q 7.13 Sometimes misunderstandings occur when people from different cultures use English	80.6	43.4
Q 7.14 Sometimes I feel I cannot be as fluent in English as in my first language	54.3	80.4

The KL cohort also showed a marked difference in responses to question 7.13, 'Misunderstandings can occur when people from different cultures use English' with an 80.6% agreement rate compared with 43.4% from the HK cohort. This is perhaps explained by the two different work contexts, where KL employees (particularly surveyors) need to interact with crews from all over the world almost daily, whereas employees from HK would not necessarily have the same level of interpersonal interactions in English and might therefore be less aware of the possibilities for misunderstandings in intercultural contexts.

Overall, however, the opinions expressed in this section reflect a sense of the importance of English for these particular companies and for their employees. Responses to Question 7.8 show that workers in both cohorts feel they need English to carry out their work (this is even more strongly supported by the HK cohort). Respondents indicated awareness that English is an inextricable part of their work life and a desire to improve their proficiency in both spoken and written English (questions 7.5 and 7.6 had a high agreement rate from both cohorts), although we have seen that in the analysis of the tasks carried out most frequently in English (see Table 4.9, above) there is a much greater need for written than spoken English. This is also borne out by the analysis of the comments section of the survey, which is presented below.

4.6.2.5 Analysis of comments section of the survey

The last part of the questionnaire asked respondents to provide any other comments and guided their responses through three major questions asking: which English skills were of most use in their work (Question 8); whether the use of English in the company had increased or decreased in recent years (Question 9); and any other comments about the use of English and other languages in their workplace (Question 10). Responses to these questions from the two companies show some similarities but differ in some important aspects, which reflect the different demands of the two workplaces. The response rate was higher for the HK cohort, who also provided more detailed comments (96%, 78% and 52% response rate for questions 8, 9 and 10, respectively). For the KL cohort, the response rate was 64%, 58% and 58% for each of the three questions. The two sets of responses are reported separately first and then some comparisons are made. Some comments about the levels of linguistic proficiency displayed in this section of the survey are also provided.

4.6.2.5.1 Seacargo International

The responses of the KL cohort to questions 8, 9 and 10 were fairly brief, particularly in comparison to the responses of the Hong Kong cohort. Responses to Question 8 show equal emphasis on aspects of oral English (also referred to as international/ interpersonal communication) and report writing. This largely reflects the work of the largest group of employees, i.e. the surveyors, who need to interview boat crews from other countries and write reports on their inspections:

> *I need [English] to communicate with ship's personnel of different nationality and to make reports on completion of my job.*

Only one person said English would be useful for discussion at meetings. Comments referring to the level of English required in the course of their work were weighted slightly to medium and high levels (indicated by six respondents) with five saying they required low levels of English.

Responses to Question 9 showed that some people (eight) thought there had been an increase in workplace use of English, whereas ten people thought there was not much change. One employee described the situation as follows:

While I am around I try to use as much in English with my colleagues, even though all of them are Malays whereas I am Hindu. I found that most of the time they prefer to use the mother tongue but some of them try and improve English at the same time. I think with them we should try to speak in English all the time. I found that there is increase in usage of English in my workplace.

Responses to question 10 reveal that a number of employees (9) see English as useful and important. The same number also indicated they wanted to improve their English and suggested that the company should provide English language training for staff. The following statement was written identically by some eight respondents, showing that the matter had been discussed by workers:

The company should provide training to staff or send their staff for [an] English course.

Finally, one person made the very salient comment that:

We are dealing with international companies. English is the only language we can communicate.

4.6.2.5.2 Drinksoft Hong Kong

Responses from this group provided much more detail and almost all respondents provided some comments. In response to Question 8, by far the greatest number of respondents (39 or 89%) named writing as the area where they most used English, with emails often mentioned as the medium. Eleven (25%) also named reading (where again the reading of emails was stressed) and around 11 named oral communication, with three naming listening. The following comment is typical:

Writing and reading are frequently used in my work. Speaking and listening will only be used with English [speaking] colleagues.

The heavy emphasis on writing is not surprising, as English is used for much written communication in the company, whereas most oral communication takes place in Cantonese. As indicated in Chapter 3, this situation very much reflects the trend of

many business contexts in Hong Kong. This point was made by a number of respondents, with the following comments typical of how English is viewed vis a vis Cantonese:

> *I normally use English to communicate with client. Rarely use to talk with colleagues.*

> *Written English is regarded as important in my communication with almost all colleagues. But I would speak English only with expatriates (both internal and external party) and speak Cantonese with Chinese.*

> *Most of the time we speak in Cantonese but we needed to use English when we issue contracts, agreements, internal memos etc.*

In reply to Question 9, a larger number of employees (18 or 50% of those who answered this question) thought there had been an increase in English communication in the workplace, with 11 saying they thought there had been no change, seven indicating they thought there had been a decrease and five indicating they had 'no opinion'. Those who reported an increase tended to tie this in closely with computers and the increased use of email:

> *From my observation, most of us have increased the use of English, such as for email communication and for internal memos or bulletins.*

One person reported a decrease in the use of English as a result of most of the department heads, formerly foreigners, being replaced by local Chinese. Another comment seems to support this opinion of the decreasing use of *spoken* English, but emphasises the fact that much written communication is still in English:

> *I will say the use of English is more or less the same. Nearly all the proposals, reports and memos are written in English. However, regarding the use of English speaking is declining as the number of English colleagues are decreasing.*

Another respondent stresses that although there may be increased use of 'Chinese' in Hong Kong workplaces, this does not necessarily mean that the use of English is declining:

> *For internal staff communication we always use Chinese as our main language for communication. However, for daily office documents, we are using English as our business language. Although we use more Chinese in Hong Kong, however doesn't mean we reduce the use of English.*

Question 10 showed some 14 thought that English is very important or useful, with six reporting they wanted to improve their levels of English. Only five thought they did not have much need of English, while two also mentioned that Putonghua is now also important for their work. The following comments reflect Hong Kong's multilingual situation well:

> *English is a very important language in my job as my company is a US company. All the time I have to deal with my native English boss or even overseas colleagues. Mandarin is also quite important in my job as most of our sister companies are in China and Taiwan. It is a common language to communicate with them.*

> *I think it is good to use English more as English is important in the world. Since more and more clients is coming from the mainland, I think Mandarin is also important in future.*

Finally, the words of one respondent seem to sum up very well the very complex linguistic situation in Hong Kong workplaces, particularly in the case of multinational companies operating there:

> *The company is headed by a native English speaker. If we have the chance to communicate with the General Manager, we need to present our ideas and proposals in English clearly and precisely. Good English is necessary to make this happen. Regarding daily operation, we should have good command of spoken Cantonese and written Chinese, otherwise we cannot issue instructions to workers effectively. It means that we need to translate English to Chinese and vice versa.*

Bilingual is very important in Hong Kong. Furthermore we need to talk to colleagues in Taiwan and China frequently. If we have good command of Mandarin we can perform better.

4.6.2.5.3 Linguistic features of comments section of the survey

The quotations above, and other written comments not quoted, display some common English as a second language features, although they express, in most cases very clearly and appropriately, the meaning and intent of the writer. Such features as omission of definite and indefinite articles, some inappropriate use of verb tenses, occasional syntax errors and lapses in the use of idioms are evident, but do not obscure meaning. Of more interest is the indirect approach in argument (often considered to be more 'Asian', see Kirkpatrick, 1995) evident in the last two quotations above, where the reasons for the need to improve fluency in Mandarin are presented before a statement to that effect is made. A more 'natural' approach in English would perhaps be to state that "Mandarin/Putonghua will be more important in future because ……". Overall, though, the comments demonstrate insightful observations and an awareness of the different ways language is used for different purposes that is perhaps more highly developed in bilingual speakers. Although some of the comments might lack the fluency of first language speakers, they certainly achieve their 'purpose'.

The responses to these questions in the two workplaces would seem to reinforce field visit findings and reflect very much the work patterns in the two workplaces. The need to use written English in Drinksoft Hong Kong had already been clearly indicated, thus the comments confirm earlier impressions and the responses in Section B of the survey. Similarly, the fact that the Kuala Lumpur company stressed oral communication and report writing also reflects the nature of the work undertaken by the largest group of employees there, the company surveyors.

4.6.3 Company correspondence and other communication documents

A number of documents dealing with both internal and external communication were supplied to the researcher. Seacargo International, in particular, supplied quite a number of items of external correspondence (faxes, emails, reports). Drinksoft supplied a number of external and internal emails.

4.6.3.1 Seacargo International

These documents tend to show that the majority of everyday cargo inspection work requires high levels of technical knowledge, expressed in pro-formas which are for the most part already structured in set ways, and therefore do not require much writing, as such, but rather the relevant information to be supplied by the surveyors. There is extensive use of short forms, acronyms and specialised terms and set formulas that are evidently understood in the industry but largely unintelligible to an outsider. These are used in written correspondence, faxes and emails. A small number of sample emails and one letter are quoted verbatim, below.

The following is a covering email accompanying an inspection report sent to the client and copied to others in the office:

Email 1 - KL

Dear all,
Pls find attached the preliminary report of above vessel for your kind attention.

If u require info or any assistance pls do not hesitate to contact us.

Regards

XXXX (first name)

Acceptances of orders for cargo inspection also show a fairly standard format. The following is an example of a standard email acceptance of an order for inspection:

Email 2 – KL

Dear Ms (surname)

Referring to your email on the above vessel, we hereby confirm acceptance of the order. Costs are to be 100% for your account.

Please be advised that all our activities are carried out under our general terms and conditions and in accordance with our code of practice.

The inspection will be carry out by Seacargo International, Port XXXX.

We thank you for appointing Seacargo International

Best regards
XXXX (first name)

Whereas formerly, much of this sort of communication would have been by mail or fax, now it is generally via email. Examples of more 'general' correspondence (internal to Malaysia) show a more polite style, particularly in the opening and closing 'formulas' of letters, than would be the norm possibly in business correspondence in Australia. The following is an example:

Letter 1 - KL

The Plant Protection Department
Faculti Agriculture
Universiti XXXX
Address

Attention: Professor XXXX

Dear Sir.

RE: IDENTIFICATION ON COUNTRY OF ORIGIN OF ATTACKING MITES

We refer to our morning pleasant conversation and have the pleasure to send you the sealed sample of said attacking mites for analysis and expert identification on special/type of (illegible) insects is indigenous to North America or Malaysia origin.
These mites were discovered inside the bags of whey powder being shipped in a container from XXXX (place), USA on XXXX (date).

During our survey of said container at consignee's warehouse on XXXX(date) we found hundreds of these mites were chewing/nibbling on the foodstuff ie whey powder.

We appreciate that if you can kindly forward your analysis report and bills to us upon completion.

Thanking you in advance for your assistance on the matter

Yours faithfully
XXXXX (full name)
Manager

From the samples viewed, it can be concluded that although surveyors, in particular, require written skills, they do not have to write extensive detailed reports, but they in fact do need to compile extensive detailed reports, supplying the required information in pro-formas that are already prepared. Letters of acceptance and reports are standardised and only the particular details need to be supplied. It could be argued, therefore, that for

surveyors, in particular, interpersonal communication skills might be more important than writing skills in English.

4.6.3.2 Drinksoft Hong Kong

The examples of email correspondence (both internal and external) supplied by Drinksoft have a number of characteristics. Firstly, one has the impression that time is of the essence in this company. All emails are brief, direct and full of short forms (including an internal monthly report, which is less than half a page). They contain some standard formulaic expressions ('as per your request', 'kindly to inform you that', FYI) and otherwise are very much to the point. The following is an example of an external email:

Email 3 - HK

Dear XXXX (first name)

Trying to reach you via phone but failed this morning. Would like to have a meeting with you on coming Friday 25 April. Are you comfortable to come to our office anytime on Friday afternoon say 3.30 pm? Please revert so that we can reserve a meeting room.

FYI, feedback from XXXX Secondary School (the one you visited yesterday) this morning. They are planning to go for summer time very soon. Will update you details after receipt of more information.

Tks

XXXX (first name)

The impression is that these email messages are used to convey very precise information quickly and even the socialising formulas are very minimal. This brevity could reflect the fast pace of Hong Kong, which is visible everywhere in the world of work and business. However, there is also research evidence that email language is developing "minimalism as the preferred style" and that many prefer its "simpler, more informal, more abbreviated and more direct language" (Waldvogel 2001, p.8). Counter to this are initiatives by some companies to teach their staff how to write, so that according to Waldvogel (2001, p.8) "the need that still exists in the electronic age for effective communication may lead to the emergence of an email genre that has usage conventions more akin to formal writing than conversation".

It is hard to see this happening at Drinksoft, where, as indicated above, email communication reflects very much the fast-paced style of life and business in Hong Kong. Much work in this company is carried out through email: receiving of orders, regular contact with customers, monitoring of sales and so on. These emails are brief and fairly direct. The following email informs a potential client of a discount available if orders are placed quickly.

Email 4 - HK

XXXX (name erased for confidentiality reasons)

Kindly to inform that the promotional pack of XXXX 345 ml & 1.5L is available for the below outlets & the discount has been effective this afternoon. If you place the order before 2.00 pm, pls save the invoice again. If these is any problem, pls contact us

Regards

XXXX (full name)

Another email to a client whose sales volume has dropped is also very much to the point.

Email 5 - HK

Dear XXXX (first name)

Just a final reminder that if sales volume of XXXX (brand of mineral water) does not pick up to a XXXX cases per month level, please expect the special discount for XXXX to be terminated immediately effective XXXX.

Thks & Rgds

XXXX (first name)

The sort of writing skills required for the above tasks needs perhaps to be more flexible than those for compilation of reports in Seacargo International. However, here, too, there is an element of formulaic language for certain types of communication with customers. Nevertheless, there may be the need for more sensitive and precise communication in some cases, which the direct and clipped nature of emails would not convey. Much research remains to be done on the use of email in the workplace and, as Gimenez (2000, p.249) states, in future "on-line composition of email messages may become a crucial issue in teaching written business communication".

4.6.3.2.1 Linguistic features of above correspondence

The email correspondence quoted above demonstrates features that are considered common to email correspondence in general (Gimenez 2000; Waldvogel 2001; Gao 2001). Cultural conventions in regard to salutations and greetings at the beginning of letters, such as in the one from Seacargo International (Letter1), are largely omitted from emails, and this is the case with the examples quoted above. Waldvogel (2001, p.3) indicates that this is fairly normal in computer-mediated communication (CMC): "the cultural conventions that normally guide social interactions are frequently missing in CMC".

Email tends to blur the lines between spoken and written communication (Gimenez 2000). As a result people become impatient with the fact that it actually takes a little longer than speaking and the result, according to Gao (2001, p.18) is the use of many short forms to speed up the process, as well as the omission of subject pronouns and auxiliaries, decapiatlising of initial letters in sentences or proper nouns. Most of these features are evident in the above examples. For example, the following abbreviated forms are used:

Pls for *please* (Email 1, Email 4)
Tks and *thks* for *thanks* (Email 3, Email 5)
Rgds for *regards* (Email 5)
U for *you* (Email 1)
FYI for *for your information* (Email 3)

Omission of subject pronouns is evident in the first paragraph of Email 3. On the other hand there is not much evidence of decapitalisation.

Gimenez (2000), who analysed a number of emails from a UK import-export company, notes the preference for use of short sentences and simple straightforward syntactic structures. This is evident in the KL emails, but even more so in the HK samples, particularly Email 3:

Trying to reach you via phone but failed this morning. Would like to have a meeting with you on coming Friday 25 April.

Other features indicated by Gimenez (2000) include: signing off with first name; use of informal lexical items; and a range of salutations ranging form more formal to informal. First names are used in emails 1, 2, 3 and 5. Use of the more casual term 'info' in Email 1 and the 'Regards' for closure sit alongside the more formal "please do not hesitate to contact us". A study by Gains (1999) of business emails found, on the other hand, that they contained the standard conventions adopted for more formal business communication. This usually relates to when the communication may have legal implications, and would explain the more formal tone in Email 2, which is an acceptance of an order for inspection. Despite the more formal tone of Email 2, however, the formal 'Dear Ms X' sits alongside the less formal 'best regards'. This asymmetry in salutations is more likely to be the result of a mixture of cultural conventions.

None of the emails listed above shows any signs of code-switching and code mixing which Gao (2001) found with Chinese students in America, for example, and which we have seen are a feature of the way English is spoken in both Malaysia and Hong Kong. The sample of emails viewed by the researcher may be too limited for this purpose. Or it may be that the 'official' nature of the above emails (that is strictly for business purposes) and the fact that both companies are multinational companies whose business is largely recorded in English, may have something to do with this.

Thus it can be seen that, on the whole, the email samples above contain features that are common to email more generally. The letter sample, on the other hand, contains features that are more common to formal business communication. Gimenez (2000, p.248) found that the business letters he analysed contained "more than twice as many elaborate syntactic structures […] than the commercial email messages". The letter displays formality through, among other things: the layout; formal salutations and closure; longer, more complex sentences; a high level of politeness; and full name and title in the sign-off. Its level of politeness may be stronger than would be expected in an American or Australian business letter, but possibly not more than a Dutch letter (van Mulken & van de Meer 2005). Of more interest, perhaps, is the fact that this letter seems to follow the Chinese schema described by Kirkpatrick (2005) (salutation, facework, reason for request, request and sign off), which he maintains is the arrangement used with high status recipients.

4.7 Discussion

These two multinational companies present some fairly similar issues in regard to the use of English in the workplace, although there are some telling differences as well.

In the case of Seacargo International in Malaysia, both spoken and written English would seem to be important, with face-to-face communication regarded as highly important, particularly to enable surveyors to do their work efficiently. However, there are high stakes contexts where written communication must also be of a high level, particularly in the context of investigations. We have also seen that in Malaysia English has a greater role as a *lingua franca* (Nair-Venugopal 2003) than in Hong Kong. And precisely because it has this role, different spoken varieties of English are perhaps more prevalent in Malaysia (Nair-Venugopal 2001; Gill 1999). According to these researchers and others (Ngeow et al. 2003) the attitudes of Malaysians towards the different varieties are ambivalent. While the demands of business would seem to push workers to want to master higher, more 'standardised' varieties of English, the exigencies of workplace interaction and identity seem to lead them to use what Gill (1999) calls 'sub-varieties' and Nair-Venugopal (2000)'localised varieties' of Malaysian English. So while, according to Crismore et al. (1996, p.319):

> Malaysian speakers of English accept the functionality of Malaysian English, they are nevertheless determined to learn Standard English because they regard Malaysian English as "wrong" English […], as mistakes that have to be eradicated.

Moreover, according to Ngeow et a. (2003, p.248), who surveyed some 600 workers:

> Malaysian workers strongly believe that those who do not speak or write standard English should attend classes to learn it [and] they were genuine in their resolution to improve standard English use for their own generation as well as for the younger generation.

Le Vasan (1994, p.35), too, states that "many Malaysians are now feeling the pressure of being forced to communicate affectively in their second language in the business sector". This might explain why KL workers in this case study rated their English in the macro skills of speaking, reading and writing as less fluent than their HK counterparts (see Table 4.7). It might also explain the common comment in the written responses of the KL cohort that their employer should provide English courses for staff. In any case the issue would seem to be of some importance for this company since there are high stakes situations (eg inspections of different cargoes) where misunderstandings could be costly both in financial and safety terms. In this context, both interpersonal and written skills would seem to be important and both were rated as such by employees.

Amongst other issues that seemed to be of importance at Seacargo International was that of understanding English spoken with different accents. Surveyors had to deal with ships' crews from all over the world and often the different accents proved difficult for all concerned, whether L1 or L2 speakers of English. Whereas 60% of respondents to this survey agreed that misunderstandings can occur when people from different cultural backgrounds speak English, this item scored a much higher rate of agreement from employees in Malaysia (80%) than those in Hong Kong (44%). This is understandable, given particularly the work of surveyors at Seacargo International. We have also seen in Chapter 2 that according to research carried out by Jenkins (2000), pronunciation is by far the most common cause of intelligibility problems in EGL. As varieties of English become more established and the number of varieties increases, the issues of intelligibility and levels of fluency will become more crucial for the use of English as a global lingua franca. Following some research in this area, Smith (1992, p.88) concludes that:

> Being a native speaker does not seem to be as important as being fluent in English and familiar with several different national varieties […]. The increasing number of varieties of English need not increase the problem of understanding across cultures, if users of English develop some familiarity with them.

The question, of course, is whether people will make the effort to become familiar with all but the varieties of English related to their immediate context. Certainly, it is argued in this thesis that interpretability, as well as intelligibility, skills in regard to EGL should

form part of business students' undergraduate preparation in the 21st century (see in particular Chapter 7).

Drinksoft Hong Kong displays all the characteristics of the use of English more generally for business in Hong Kong, with linguistic practices showing the use of English for written communication and Cantonese for oral communication to carry out company business. Although there is a feeling that this form of 'diglossia' has become somewhat the norm in Hong Kong, more recent analyses (Pennington 1998; Bolton 2000; Bolton & Lim 2000) indicate that the situation is not always so clear-cut. Nevertheless, the findings of this research are well supported by others (Lundelius 1997; Li 1999; Bhatia & Candlin 2001; Evans and Green 2003). These studies have also found the use of English to be more prevalent in higher management levels. This was not able to be determined through the survey but was confirmed in an email from the Director Personnel at Drinksoft HK.

Evans and Green (2003), who carried out a large-scale multi-method study including a survey of some 1475 professionals in the HK public and private sectors (arguably the largest recent survey of language use in the workplace in HK) found that English is used for much written communication, particularly for emails, but also for internal minutes and reports. They also found that this applies even more to the private than the public sector, probably because the private sector has an international orientation which, they claim, "demands frequent written communication in English with overseas contacts" (Evans and Green 2003, p.402). This would certainly apply to both Seacargo International and Drinksoft Hong Kong. Other findings about Drinksoft HK are also supported by Evans and Green's research: both studies placed reading and writing of emails, memos/letters and reports among the tasks that HK workers had to carry out most often in English. Evans and Green (2003, p.394) conclude that: "the employment domain in Hong Kong places greater demands on professionals' written communication skills than on their spoken communication skills." This study also supports Evans and Green's assertion that "Cantonese is the usual medium of spoken workplace communication" (2003, p.395). However, although Drinksoft HK employees displayed much less use of English for oral communication internally than Seacargo employees, they expressed a strong interest in improving their spoken as well as written English language skills, both in interviews and in the survey.

It is interesting to note that although very few employees (eight) from both companies placed English at the number one position as the language they spoke best, 76% placed it at the number two position (85% from HK and 64% from KL). This would very much seem to support Kachru's (1992) claims that English is "the other tongue" in Asia. With increasing numbers of the younger generations undertaking studies in English at tertiary level (either at home or abroad) and with government promotion of English in Hong Kong and Malaysia, this number would seem destined to grow, as has been predicted by Graddol (1999), Crystal (1997) and others.

In both sites, workers expressed the belief that English was important for their work. A very strong desire was expressed by almost 87% of employees in both companies to improve their written and spoken skills, with 70% believing improved English skills would give them a better chance of promotion within their company. In both cases workers are perhaps reflecting the pressure coming from government and business generally, in both Hong Kong and, more recently, Malaysia, for highly skilled bilingual/multilingual workers, with English as one of the languages in which one is expected to be fluent. Certainly interviews with top management in both companies indicate that competent bilinguals are required and highly sought after and recruitment material from both companies makes linguistic requirements explicit. Among the linguistic requirements now desirable for Hong Kong employees (particularly post 1997) is competence in Putonghua as well as Cantonese and English. Comments from Hong Kong employees indicate that they are very much aware of this fact, and realise that a tri-lingual expertise is most advantageous, and in some cases necessary, for them to do their work in a multinational company such as Drinksoft HK. However, as Bacon-Shone and Bolton (2004) and others (Li 1999) have indicated, the increased importance of Putonghua has not meant a diminishing role for English, particularly in the business sphere. Rather,

> there is general consensus among Hongkongers that good communication skills in English – and Chinese – constitute one important key to sustaining Hong Kong's economic prosperity and development (Li 1999, p.81).

We have seen that the data gathered for this study strongly supports this conclusion.

A difference between the two companies emerged with oral presentation, which was not ranked as one of the areas requiring major attention, either for internal company purposes or for external reasons. Overall, only 20% of the combined cohort indicated they used English for internal oral presentation 'frequently, almost every day or several times per day' and 13% similarly for external purposes. The differences between the two companies in this area are quite marked, however, with 35% of Malaysian employees indicating they used oral presentation internally and 26% externally. In the Hong Kong Company, however, only 10% of employees indicated the use of English for internal presentations and 5% for external purposes. This again reinforces the possible use of Cantonese and/or other languages for much spoken communication. However, oral presentation seems to occupy a major place in business courses. This might be justifiable for educational reasons, but would not seem to be one of the major skills required in multinational workplaces. This echoes the findings of Crosling and Ward (2001) who examined Australian workplaces and found that presentation skills are not as important as less formal oral communication skills for informal social and work-related communication, participation in discussion in meetings, and team work. They argue that such communication skills are not developed through formal presentation. Moreover, Nair-Venugopal (2001) indicates that business courses in 'standard English' that are taught at universities would do little to prepare graduates for real Malaysian workplaces, where Malaysian English seems to be more acceptable and favoured by situational norms.

Perhaps the most important findings of this case study concern the identification of communicative tasks that have not received due recognition (see Table 4.9), such as the use of email communication. Around 90% of employees reported the tasks they carried out most frequently in English were reading and writing emails/faxes (although from field observation, this relates increasingly to emails and not to faxes). This confirms earlier studies such as that carried out by Le Vasan (1994) in a large multinational manufacturing company in Malaysia and Evans and Green (2003) in Hong Kong. This is an area of communication that presents problems of its own, among other reasons because it has characteristics of both spoken and written language, as well as short forms and abbreviations that can lead to misunderstandings. As Waldvogel (2001, p.9) states: "because email lacks many of the cues present in other communicative forms it is open to wide interpretation." In the context of multinational companies, where intercultural communication is the norm rather than the exception, this can become a

major problem. Email communication is an area that is beginning to attract more research and one which will challenge business communication educators, who in the past have perhaps not dedicated enough attention to it. Nor have we perhaps dedicated enough attention to telephone conversations and the writing of informal reports, both of which were ranked as quite important by respondents. These areas were also ranked as quite important in the Evans and Green (2003) study and by Li (1999).

Also of interest are the findings shown in Table 4.13, which illustrate that employees in both locations are very much aware of the importance of English language skills internationally, for company purposes and for their own advancement. Almost 98% in both cohorts agreed that English is a very important language for business. Close to 92% of all respondents reported they use English for work purposes almost every day (KL 88.9%, HK 93.3%) while some 94% (KL 91.6%, HK 93.5%) consider that English is necessary for them to do their job, so this is an issue that affects and will continue to be of importance to both companies.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the linguistic practices in regard to English as a global language in two multinational companies and has identified some pertinent issues. The findings raise a number of questions in regard to education for business communication in English. For instance, are business educators targeting the sorts of skills that tertiary students will need in real multinational workplaces? And how can we prepare students for email communication when this is an extremely dynamic medium reflecting elements of both written and spoken language? Finally, what can be done to prepare tertiary students, whether L1 or L2 speakers of English, for greater tolerance and accommodation of the different accents and varieties of English which they will inevitably meet in the global marketplace? These are issues which Business Schools around the world should be addressing, for these are the linguistics skills with which employees in multinational workplaces will need to be equipped in the 21st century. Such skills will be required not only by companies who want to be successful, but also by employees themselves, who see such linguistic skills as pre-requisites for advancement and promotion in the global workplace. These issues are examined and discussed in some depth in Chapter 7. The next chapter will examine what undergraduate business students know about workplaces such as those described in this

chapter and related language and culture issues. Chapter 6 will then examine the effects of a deliberate structured intervention designed to develop the skills needed to operate successfully in global workplaces in the 21st century.

CHAPTER 5

BUSINESS STUDENTS' KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF LINGUISTIC AND CULTURAL ISSUES RELEVANT TO THE GLOBAL WORKPLACE

5.1 Introduction

After analysis of the data gathered from the two multinational companies described in the previous chapter, the researcher was able to identify the sort of linguistic and intercultural skills deemed necessary/important for interactions in English as a global language in multinational contexts. The next step was to establish to what extent the identified skills were being developed in undergraduate business courses. In order to do this, a case study was implemented at Curtin University of Technology in Western Australia with a class of undergraduate business students undertaking a third year unit. The case study was implemented in two stages. The first stage involved ascertaining what students already know about cultural and linguistic issues relevant to the global workplace. This data was collected through a pre-questionnaire designed for this purpose. The second stage involved implementing a structured intervention with student multinational groups with the aim of developing intercultural communication skills and establishing whether the intervention was, in fact, successful. This chapter describes the characteristics of the class that was selected and the findings of the pre-questionnaire. The results of interviews with a small number of staff from the same Business School are also provided in order to provide an educational context for the case study. The next chapter will describe the structured intervention designed to develop students' skills for operating successfully in multinational contexts.

5.2 The multinational teams case study

For this case study, it was decided to gather data on an undergraduate group project, a common assessment task in business education courses in Western Australia. A group project or assignment often involves students working in groups (both in and out of class time) and often has an oral and/or a written component for assessment. This was particularly desirable because it would mean both oral and written skills would be

involved and the nature of the group task would perforce have students interacting in teams, which in this case would be deliberately structured to be 'multinational'. The aim was to have students in an educational context using 'English as a global language' for intercultural communication. Previous research (Hawthorne 1997; Nesdale & Todd 1997; Briguglio 1998; Volet & Ang 1998) indicates that if students are left to their own devices, they will often team up with others from similar nationalities/cultural backgrounds. In this case, it was desirable to have students working in multinational teams, in order to mirror, as much as possible, the sorts of situations they are likely to meet in the world of work in future multinational companies/contexts. A lecturer for a unit in International Management, which matched the area of interest of this research, was approached. He was keen to be involved and was confident that there would be sufficient mixture of nationalities in his class to allow for the establishment of 'multinational' teams/groups. Also his unit already contained a requirement for a group assessment task involving both oral and written components, so that students in the project would not have their workload increased in any way.

The unit International Management 375 was considered suitable for this case study because the syllabus deals with content that relates to international workplaces and intercultural issues. The rationale for the unit indicates that it has been designed "to acquaint students with current international management theory and practice, and to encourage interest and enthusiasm for an international business career". The syllabus provides "an introduction to methodologies for studying management from a comparative perspective", and highlights "the emerging issues for an international manager [as well as] the practical issues of adaptation needed in cross-cultural or cross-national managerial interfaces" (Curtin University of Technology 2004a). Assessment for the unit includes two group/team tasks, which involve the team researching a topic relevant to international management and presenting their findings orally in a 20 minute presentation (worth 10% of total mark) and in writing in a 3,000 word formal research paper (worth 20% of total mark). This was the group task used for the Multinational Teams Case Study. The case study was implemented in Semester 1, 2004, which extends from the beginning of March to the end of June, with student interviews taking place in July 2004, after the completion of their unit.

The Multinational Teams Case Study had the following aims:

1. To explore the knowledge and attitudes of a group of undergraduate business students about language and culture issues in international business contexts (prior to their undertaking this unit);
2. To identify the attitudes of such students towards working in multinational student groups;
3. To examine group interactions and identify communication issues in multinational student groups/teams;
4. To establish whether a workshop providing students with insights and techniques for better intercultural communication and interaction in multinational teams actually has a positive effect on the nature of the group experience and the attitudes of students towards such teams.

This chapter deals largely with work undertaken to address the first two aims, above, while the next chapter (Chapter 6) will deal with aims 3 and 4. In regard to the first two aims, it was considered necessary to ascertain, amongst other things:

- what students know about English as a global language;
- what students know about other languages and bilingualism;
- whether students are aware of the sorts of communication issues that can arise in intercultural contexts;
- whether students find interactions in multinational teams easy or difficult;
- how students deal with different accents in English and whether they are developing 'interpretability' and 'accommodation' skills (Candlin, 1982);
- whether L1 and L2 speakers of English find it easy to interact and understand each other;
- whether students believe their business courses are developing the communication skills they will need for international workplaces; and
- whether lecturers believe they are helping students to develop these same skills through the units they teach.

5.3 Literature on multinational/multi-ethnic teams

A literature survey of multi-national groups/teams was undertaken, including studies carried out in both business contexts and with student teams at tertiary level. Issues identified from the literature consulted were taken into account when designing all aspects of the study, including the pre-questionnaires.

Major studies consulted in relation to workplace multinational/multicultural teams include the study by Cox, Lobel and McLeod (1991), the study by Watson, Kumar and Michaelson (1993) and the study by Earley and Mosakowski (2000). Cox et al. (1991) found, not surprisingly, that teams composed of people from collectivist cultures displayed more co-operative behaviour than teams composed of people from individualistic cultural traditions. Watson, Kumar and Michaelson (1993) compared homogenous and heterogenous groups over a 17-week period and discovered that, although initially culturally homogenous teams seem better at achieving group objectives, over time culturally diverse groups perform well (that is, after an initial phase of under-performance) and are possibly more creative. The study by Earley and Mosakowski (2000) found that in international contexts, homogenous and highly heterogenous teams outperformed moderately heterogenous teams and that those teams which performed best had been successful in creating a new 'hybrid' culture.

Other researchers warn that perceptions of the concepts of 'team' and 'teamwork' are themselves influenced by different cultural perspectives (Gibson & Zellmer-Bruhn 2001; Camiah & Hollinshead 2003) as are the approaches to coping with cultural barriers (Chevrier, 2003). Ely and Thomas (2001) examined the conditions under which cultural diversity enhances or detracts from group functioning in organisations. They found that the way people viewed diversity influenced whether they used it successfully in achieving work objectives. Those groups which integrated diversity and used it to learn (the 'integration-and-learning perspective') were the most successful. Distefano and Maznevski (2000) warn us that although much business literature stresses the importance of utilising the expected creativity of culturally diverse teams, the research indicates that there are probably as many failures as successes; the synergy of successful teams does not happen automatically but has to be developed. They also stress that with

increasing globalisation, culturally diverse teams will be a growing feature of organisations:

> With today's workforce demographics, the existence of culturally diverse teams is inevitable; and with today's competitive environment, firms cannot afford to forego their value (Distefano & Maznevski 2000, p.45).

In regard to group work in tertiary settings, a project on 'Managing Student Teams' undertaken at The University of Western Australia (Caspersz, Skene & Wu 2002a, 2004 & 2005; Caspersz, Wu & Skene 2002b) was of particular relevance, since it examined student teams in a Western Australian tertiary context. This project, which is still ongoing, has examined such issues as student willingness to participate in team projects and issues of intra-group trust, as well as gender and country-of-origin effects on team performance. Preliminary findings indicate that individual team member performance can be affected by gender and country-of-origin factors. Studies in the UK by De Vita (2002a & 2002b) show that students had similar concerns to those found by Caspersz et al (2002a): for example a belief that multicultural teams might negatively impact on assessment results.

Volet and Ang (1998) examined similar issues in an Australian setting with particular emphasis on culturally mixed groups. They were keen to probe the reasons why there is a lack of mixing between Australian and international students in Australian universities (see also Hawthorne 1997; Nesdale and Todd 1997; Briguglio 1998) and to explore the experiences of students in culturally mixed groups for the completion of assignments. Volet and Ang found a variety of reasons why students initially preferred to work in culturally/nationally homogenous groups, not least the sense of belonging, bonding and familiarity provided by a peer group comprising the same or a similar culture. Importantly, they found that where students had been forced by circumstances to form culturally diverse groups, both Australian and international students had found the experience to be reasonably positive. Unfortunately such an experience was not enough to encourage students to seek further involvement in culturally diverse teams, leading the authors to conclude that "unless cultural contact is engineered as part of formal study, social cohesion will not happen and all students will miss out on critical learning opportunities" (Volet & Ang 1998, p.9). In the US, Schullery and Gibson (2001) found a reluctance on the part of students towards working in assignment groups. Various

studies have therefore concluded that student group work, particularly in multicultural/multinational teams, needs to be well-structured (Smart, Volet & Ang 2002; Cheney 2001) and well-managed (Schullery & Gibson 2001; Casperz et al. 2004 & 2005) and that students need to be given the necessary skills (Crosling and Martin 2005) in order to achieve good learning outcomes.

As well as the above studies, a number of other publications consulted provided concrete suggestions for team development activities and were thus useful in designing the student workshops described in the next chapter (for example, Smith & Berg 1997; Kumar 1999; and Hurn & Jenkins 2000).

5.4 Method - initial data gathering from staff and students

Initial data gathering involved having students complete a pre-questionnaire to ascertain their existing knowledge and understanding about English as a global language and related linguistic and cultural issues. Interviews with a number of staff about similar issues were also undertaken in order to place the case study in a Divisional context and provide a Divisional teaching and learning perspective. A study undertaken in the same Division a few years previously (Curtin Business School 1999) and for which staff had been interviewed on similar issues, was also consulted.

5.4.1 Staff interviews

The views expressed by staff members who were interviewed are by no means representative of all staff, but they serve to situate this case study and to provide a fuller picture of the way language and culture issues are regarded within the Division. A request for interview was sent to 20 staff, and eight staff responded positively, although eventually only seven were interviewed. All interviews took place in the office of the staff member being interviewed. The interview (see below) was semi-structured and contained two sections, with the first asking for staff views of English as a global language in business, and the second related more specifically to their discipline and the units they teach.

Semi Structured Staff Interview

1. How do you see the role of English in international business?
2. What are the English language communication skills that you think are needed for an international business context?
3. Do you think the Division's courses, in general, develop the necessary English communication skills in students?
4. Do you think it is important for students to have intercultural communication skills? Does the Division develop such skills in its courses?
5. What else could the Division do to develop better communication skills for international business in its students?
6. Are there any English communication skills that you particularly try to develop in your units?
7. How successful do you think you are in doing this?
8. How do you 'measure' your success?
9. Are there any other communication skills that your unit(s) develop(s)?
10. Do you have any other comments?

5.4.2 Student briefing and pre-questionnaire

During the first lecture of semester the researcher informed the class of the scope of her research in English as a global language for a business context. She explained the various data gathering instruments that they would be asked to complete (pre-questionnaire, progress report, post-questionnaire) and that apart from these, no extra demands would be made of them as a result of taking part in this project (although some could volunteer to be interviewed after completion of the unit). Their normal group assignment for this unit would be the 'team' activity to be used for this project.

A pre-questionnaire was developed to gauge students' knowledge of language and culture issues related to international business and their attitudes to working in teams, particularly multinational teams (see Appendix 2). The pre-questionnaire was divided into five sections, as described below, with room for written comments at the end of each section:

- *Part A, student information*: this included gender, whether local/Australian or international student, nationality/cultural background, and information on languages known, including a self-rating scale for English proficiency in the four macro-skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. Students were also asked to provide name and/or student number, since it would otherwise be impossible to track whether there had been any change in attitudes over the semester. (Students were informed that they could withhold this information if they really objected, but since they knew the findings of the project would not affect their unit results, none did so).

Parts B, C, D and E each consisted of a 5 point Likert scale with 1, 'strongly disagree', 2, 'disagree', 3 'unsure', 4 'agree' and 5, 'strongly agree', which aimed to ascertain students' attitudes in each of the following areas:

- **Part B, English language and other languages and cultures in Australia.**
- *Part C, English as a global language in business.*
- *Part D, Previous experience with group work.*
- *Part E, forthcoming group task for this unit.*

Twenty-eight (28) pre-questionnaires were completed during class time by those students present, although there were 35 students, in total, in the class. A statistical analysis of the questionnaire results was undertaken using SPSS, generating mean responses. The comments were analysed using the usual processes of sorting and sifting qualitative data to elucidate major themes.

5.5 Findings and analysis

This section presents an analysis of staff interviews and student pre-questionnaires.

5.5.1 Interviews with Divisional (Faculty) staff

Seven staff from across the Division were interviewed including three males and four females, as shown in Table 5.1, below.

Table 5.1: Schedule of staff interviewed

School in the Division	Gender	Nationality/ Cultural background
Business Law	Female lecturer	Australian
Business Law	Male lecturer	Australian
Management	Female lecturer	Russian
Management	Male lecturer	Australian
Marketing	Female lecturer	Australian
Marketing	Male lecturer	Australian
Information Systems	Female lecturer	Aramean
7	**4 female, 3 male**	

All staff agreed that English was most important as a language for business. However, all of them also thought that other languages, particularly Chinese (Mandarin), Spanish and other Asian languages were also important. There was also agreement that English

was likely to remain very important in the 21st century, although it was felt by four of the lecturers that the importance of Mandarin was likely to grow internationally.

In response to which particular English communication skills were likely to be more important in future, there were those who thought that writing might be more important in some areas (e.g. marketing) but speaking and listening (oral communication) were likely to be needed for negotiation and interaction in multinational settings. Most staff concluded that all four macro-skills areas needed to be developed, since all were likely to be needed to some extent, and it was difficult to predict exactly the areas in which students would be operating in future.

There was strong agreement that all students (and some lecturers said staff as well) needed to further develop intercultural communication skills. All those interviewed agreed that this was an important area requiring development, and almost all felt that not enough was being done in the Division to develop such important skills. Some units did try to develop skills such as teamwork, writing skills, and skills for intra-personal and interpersonal communication, but staff generally felt more needed to be done. As one lecturer put it:

> In the Division we don't do enough in a systematic way to cater to cultural differences […]. We have a tremendous resource [in our students] that we don't make enough of. We Westerners don't understand enough about communication styles.

Lecturers all indicated that they were indeed doing something in the units they taught to develop communication skills to high levels. They concentrated on developing different skills - writing reports, presentation, writing press releases, encouraging analytical thinking, communication for teamwork, essay writing, interpersonal communication - depending on the unit. They all admitted to some measure of success in doing this, both with local and international students, but almost all also complained of having to teach some students who they felt did not have the minimum English language proficiency to enable them to develop high level communication skills. This echoes findings of a previous study in the Division (Curtin Business School 1999). One lecturer made the point that we have to be clear and honest with our "clients" about whether we are just teaching business units or also developing their English skills. She felt that, at least as

far as international students are concerned, they come to this Business School (and indeed other business schools in Australia) to do both. And since it was agreed that many international students come to Australia particularly because they want an English language degree, she felt that the Division needed to do more to assist students in developing high level English language skills. This echoes recommendations made in a previous review in the Division (Curtin Business School 1999).

5.5.2 Analysis of pre-questionnaire

Each section of the questionnaire will be analysed separately and since the questionnaire allowed for comments, some of these will be quoted after the statistical analysis, as appropriate.

5.5.2.1 Characteristics of the cohort

The major characteristics of the cohort are shown in Table 5.2, below. The cohort consisted of 28 students, of whom 15 were male and 13 female. Thirteen students described themselves as 'local/Australian' and 13 as 'international students'. There were 12 different nationalities/cultural backgrounds represented in the sample group, almost one third of whom were Australians. Students were almost equally divided between those in the 17-21 year old age bracket and those in the 22-33 year old age bracket.

Table 5.2: Summary of group characteristics

Country of origin	**No.**	**Gender**	**No**	**Student status**	**No.**	**Age group**	**No**
Australia	9	Female	13	Domestic	13	17-21 yrs	13
China	4	Male	15	International	13	22-32 yrs	14
Croatia	1					33+ yrs	0
Germany	1						
Indonesia	3						
Kenya	1						
Malaysia	2						
Norway	2						
Taiwan	1						
Thailand	2						
Turkey	1						
USA	1			Missing	2	Missing	1
Total	**28**		**28**		**28**		**28**

In regard to languages, for the purposes of this exercise, students are categorised as first language (L1) speakers of English if they answered 'yes' to Question 5 and if English

was their language of instruction in primary school. According to this classification, there were 15 L1 speakers of English and 13 speakers of other first languages.

Responses to the self-rating scale for the macro skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing (see Table 5.3) show that most students (23 or 82.2%) rate themselves as very fluent or fluent in listening, 23 (out of 27) or 85.1% similarly in reading, 22 or 78.5% in speaking and 18 or 64.3% in writing. This reflects an earlier pattern of student self-rating in the macro-skills at the same Western Australian university (Briguglio 2000). It also reflects the fact that people tend to rate the so-called 'receptive' (listening and reading) skills as more fluent than the 'productive' skills (speaking and writing) (Wylie & Ingram 1995).

Table 5.3: Student self- rating scale in English language macro skills

Macro skills	**Basic**	**Intermediate**		**Fluent**		**Very fluent**	
	No. %	**No**	**%**	**No.**	**%**	**No.**	**%**
Listening	0	5	17.9	8	28.6	15	53.6
Speaking	0	6	21.4	9	32.1	13	46.4
Reading*	0	4	14.8	10	37	13	48.1
Writing	0	10	35.7	6	21.4	12	42.9

*NB *Reading 27, 1 missing*

5.5.2.2 Perceptions regarding English language and other languages/cultures in Australia

This section of the pre-questionnaire offered clusters of statements which sought to determine students' attitudes and beliefs about: the use of English and other languages in Australia; their own fluency in English macro-skills, particularly in regard to their studies; and how much they felt their studies were developing their oral and written skills in English. Students were asked to indicate their agreement on a five point Likert scale (1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 unsure, 4 agree, 5 strongly agree). The results, shown in Table 5.4, below, indicate that students consider English is very important in Australia and for their studies. There was a high level of agreement with the statement "I need to use English every day"(M 4.79), although responses to questions 2, 3, and 14 indicate that among these students there is also a fairly high use of other languages. This would be expected, since, as was indicated above, there were 12 nationalities represented in the cohort. Responses to Question12 also indicate that there is some code switching.

Questions 5, 6, 8,9 and 11 relating to perceptions about students' ability with written and spoken English showed reasonably high levels of agreement. The responses here also echo the self-rating that students completed in Part A of the questionnaire (see Table 5.3, above). However, responses to Question 7 (M 3.25) indicate that students have some difficulty in understanding people with accents, while responses to Questions 9 and 10 reflect some small difficulty with understanding international students in class, keeping in mind that one third of the cohort were Australians.

Table 5.4: Pre-questionnaire - Group statistics Part B

English language and other languages and cultures in Australia	No	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I need to use English every day	28	4.79	.499
2. I use English with everyone I meet	28	3.86	1.268
3. I don't need to use any other language but English in Australia	28	2.96	1.232
4. I feel I am developing my English language skills to high levels while studying at Curtin	28	4.18	1.020
5. I find it easy to express myself in written English	28	3.96	.838
6. I find using English for academic purposes very difficult	28	1.89	.832
7. People with an accent are really difficult to understand	28	3.25	1.005
8. I find it easy to understand Australian lecturers and tutors	28	4.11	.832
9. I find it easy to understand Australian students in class	28	4.07	.900
10. I find it easy to understand international students in class	28	3.11	.994
11. Sometimes when I speak English I feel I cannot be as fluent as I would like to be.	28	3.11	1.571
12. I often switch between languages in my everyday interactions in Australia	28	3.00	1.678
13. I think many people in Australia speak languages other than English in everyday life	28	3.82	.945
14. It is normal for me to speak other languages as well as English in Australia	28	3.18	1.389
15. My studies have really developed my interpersonal skills	28	4.18	.819
16. In my studies we practise a lot of class and group discussion	28	4.00	.943
17. In my studies we have the opportunity to send and receive lots of emails	28	3.89	.916
18. In my studies we learn a lot about intercultural communication	28	4.00	.720
19. In the course of my studies I have learned a lot about other cultures through mixing with students from all over the world	28	4.00	.981
20. In my studies I have learned a lot about other cultures from the material I have had to study	28	3.82	.772
21. In my studies I have learned about writing reports	28	3.96	.881
22. In my studies I have learned something about formal and informal writing styles necessary for business	28	3.75	.887

Questions 15 to 22 and Question 4 attempted to ascertain to what extent students felt that their linguistic and intercultural communication skills were being developed through their tertiary studies. Responses reflect a fairly strong level of agreement and indicate that students do believe they are developing these skills.

A few comments at the end of Part B reflect some concerns about language and culture issues in Australia and related to tertiary studies. In some cases comments at the end of this section echo what the statistical analysis has indicated. The following comments

indicate students' understanding of the importance of English as a global language and for their studies:

> *English is very important because it's a global language and without knowing English [I will] hardly achieve success in my future career (Indonesian student).*

> *Even though English is my second language I find it easier to use with academic work (Turkish student).*

The following comment illustrates that students are aware of Australia's multicultural society, but do not feel that this is without its problems:

> *I think that we have an extremely multicultural society but with all the different languages, it's sometimes hard to communicate with others or understand them when they're not fluent in English* (Australian student).

> *Ethnic groups seem to 'stick to their own', if possible. Some groups have less developed English skills than others* (Norwegian student).

Concerns are also expressed about understanding different accents in English:

> *It is difficult sometimes to understand people with an accent* (Indonesian student).

Other comments reflect both positive and problematic aspects of language and culture issues at tertiary level:

> *The various cultural backgrounds at Curtin are great; when you look at the percentage of international students to local students, however, it's very hard to understand and to learn to the best of your ability when you have a non-first language English speaking lecturer or tutor* (Australian student).

One comment illustrates very well the fact that students do not necessarily learn from each other simply because they are thrown together in multinational groups:

> *When working in multicultural groups students aren't getting to know each other in a personal way; we get together to do group work etc but we are not really learning about their culture, beliefs, values much at all. We learn a little, but not much* (Australian student).

And finally one comment reflected a very sophisticated understanding of language and culture issues related to tertiary curriculum:

> *I think that even though there are attempts to include cultural diversity as an issue into unit curriculums, it is still included rather ethnocentrically, ie always presenting Australia/America as the 'norm' and other countries/cultures only with reference to how they relate to Australia and the US* (Australian student, self-declared "Dutch and Italian parents").

5.5.2.3 Perceptions regarding English as a global language and intercultural communication issues in business

Part C of the questionnaire sought to probe students' understanding of issues surrounding intercultural communication, particularly in a business context. The results are shown in Table 5.5, below. Questions 3 and 5 asked students whether they felt their studies at Curtin were preparing them for intercultural/international business contexts. Responses to these two questions show a reasonably high level of agreement (M 4.07 and M 3.89 respectively) indicating that students feel they are being well prepared for the world of business through their tertiary studies.

Responses to other questions show that, on the whole, students already possess quite a sophisticated understanding of issues related to language and culture. There was a strong level of agreement that English will be an advantage in international business (questions 1 and 2) but at the same time, very high levels of agreement in Question 6 (M 4.54), indicating that students are aware of the value of bilingualism and other languages in business. The lower levels of agreement to questions 13,15,16,17 and 18 also reflect some understanding that English is spoken differently in different parts of the world, and that such differences involve more than just different accents. These responses also indicate that students are well aware that other languages besides English are used extensively in other parts of the world: note, for example, the very low level of

agreement to Question 16, "English is the only language you need to do business in Asia" (M 1.79).

In regard to intercultural communication, responses to questions 7, 10, 12, 14, and particularly question 9, indicate that students are aware of the importance of cultural as well as linguistic issues for international business. Responses to Question 12 (M 4.64) and Question 14 (M 4.61) showed the strongest level of agreement of all the questions in this section.

Table 5.5: Pre-questionnaire - Group statistics, Part C

	English as a global language in business	No	Mean	Std. Deviation
1.	Speakers of English as a first language will be those with the greatest advantage in international business	28	3.39	1.133
2.	In order to communicate in international business contexts you have to speak English	28	3.82	.945
3.	My studies at Curtin are giving me an awareness of issues in intercultural communication	28	4.07	.539
4.	It's up to people who are not native speakers of English to make the effort to communicate effectively	28	3.36	.911
5.	My studies at Curtin are preparing me very well to communicate in future international business contexts	28	3.89	.832
6.	Bilingual speakers (those who speak two or more languages) will be those who are most advantaged in international business contexts	28	4.54	.637
7.	There can be misunderstandings when people from different cultural backgrounds speak English	28	4.00	.609
8.	I think business people in most countries speak English nowadays	28	3.46	.881
9.	In international business, it doesn't really matter if you don't know much about other cultures, so long as you speak English	28	1.68	.772
10.	In order to communicate effectively with people from other countries you just have to be nice to everyone	28	2.68	1.124
11.	Because English is becoming a global language, in the future that's all people in business will need to speak	28	2.96	1.170
12.	It's important to know something about other languages and cultures in order to be a good communicator in international business	28	4.64	.488
13.	English is the same the world over	28	2.25	.799
14.	It's important to know something about intercultural communication in order to be a good international manager	28	4.61	.497
15.	Most people in Asian countries speak English	28	2.64	1.026
16.	English is the only language you need to do business in Asia	28	1.79	.738
17.	Students from Asian countries speak English just like Australians	28	1.86	.891
18.	The only difference between Australian English and English spoken in Asia is the accent	28	2.14	1.008

A number of written comments in this section provide greater insight into students' thinking in the area of English as a global language and other languages in business. Students were generally not drawn into the easy assumption that English would suffice for international business, as their comments show:

Although English is becoming a global language, as an international businessperson, you still need to have an understanding of different cultures and customs to help trade (Australian student).

I think people in other countries speak English for business purposes, but I don't think that English is the only language that should be used in business (Croatian student).

English is now a must overseas, but I believe speaking at least two more languages would be necessary (Turkish student).

Students were able to give other reasons why other languages are also important in business:

English is not spoken globally and it depends on where you want to do business whether English is relevant or not (Norwegian student).

I guess learning another language besides English would be useful. Your business partner will give you more respect if you can speak their language (Indonesian student).

Another comment reflects awareness of different varieties of English:

I have found that English language changes across different countries, eg Australia versus America (Australian student).

5.5.2.4 Previous experience with group work

Section D attempted to gauge students' feelings about previous experiences with team/group assignments. Since this class was undertaking a third year unit, and group assignments are a common assessment task in undergraduate business courses, all students had had previous experience in this area. The questions in this section attempted to assess students' feelings about such aspects as working in teams, gender issues and culture and language issues. It was considered important to obtain information relating to other issues besides language and culture in order to establish, after the structured intervention activity, whether any changes could reasonably be

attributed to the intervention and were not a result of other factors, such as gender, self efficacy, intra group trust and so on, which research tells us impact on student teams (see for example, Volet & Ang 1998; Caspersz, Wu and Skene 2002a & 2002 b). The results of analysis for this section are shown in Table 5.6, below.

Table 5.6: Pre-questionnaire - Group statistics, part D

Previous experience with group work	No	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I have found the experience of working in groups before to be very positive	28	3.54	.922
2. In group assignments I find that I do more work than everyone else	28	3.14	.803
3. I have found that group work just takes too much time	28	3.21	1.067
4. I have not experienced any problems with previous group work	28	2.26	1.059
5. I have found it easy to express my opinion in previous group work	28	3.68	.819
6. I have found that even though the group process is not easy, you learn a lot from it	28	4.00	.861
7. I found people in previous groups did not listen to what I had to say	28	2.29	.713
8. Based on past experience, I would much rather work on my own than in a group.	28	2.75	1.041
9. I think mixed nationality groups are more creative and produce better assignments	28	3.32	1.090
10. I think students who do not speak English like Australians have problems in groups	28	3.18	.983
11. In mixed nationality groups there are different beliefs about how the group should function	28	3.54	.744
12. The relationship between group members is more difficult in mixed nationality	28	3.30	.993
13. I have learned a lot from students from cultural backgrounds other than my own through group work	28	3.54	1.036
14. I have found that people with a different nationality from mine are just as hard-working as I am on group projects	28	3.46	1.036
15. I have found it easier to work with females on group assignments	28	3.18	.863
16. I have found it easier to work with males on group assignments	28	2.71	.854
17. I have found it easier to work with mixed gender groups on group assignments	28	3.71	.810

Questions 1 to 8 relate to overall feelings about working in teams. The level of agreement for these questions shows that there are some concerns about the forthcoming team task. For example it seems students have some concern about having to do more work than other group members (Question 2, M 3.14) and that group work takes too much time (Question 3, M 3.21). The responses to Question 4 indicate that students have experienced some problems with working in teams before, but that, nevertheless, they consider there is a lot to be learned from group processes, with Question 6 showing the highest mean response for this section (M 4.00). Moreover, they do not necessarily prefer working alone (Question 8, M 2.75).

Questions 9 to 14 were aimed at gauging students' attitudes towards 'mixed nationality' teams. The responses indicate some willingness to acknowledge the benefits of this, but also some caution about possible problems, since levels of agreement were only moderately high. The highest means were for Question 13 (M 3.54), indicating that

students thought they would learn a lot about culture through this process and Question 11 (M 3.54), forestalling possible problems about how the group should function. There was also moderate agreement with the idea that relationships in mixed nationality teams could be difficult (Q12, M 3.30). Nevertheless students did not seem to have any particular bias that students from different nationalities would be any less hard-working than themselves (Question 14, M 3.46). In regard to gender issues (questions 15,16 and 17), both female and male students seem to prefer working with females slightly more than with males, but prefer mixed gender groups overall (Question 17, M 3.71). Written comments for this section are combined with those for section E and are reported at the end of that section.

5.2.5 Perceptions about forthcoming group task

This last section of the pre-questionnaire, Part E, which focussed on similar issues to those in Part D, tried to isolate students' feelings about the forthcoming group task (ie working in multinational student teams) for this unit. Parts D and E of the pre-questionnaire, in particular, draw on the research about multinational student teams undertaken by Volet and Ang (1998) and Caspersz, Wu & Skene (2002b). Table 5.7, below, presents the results obtained in this section of the questionnaire.

Questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 show that students are reasonably confident that this experience will be positive (Question 1, M 3.79, Question 4, M 3.89). However, there is some concern about the time the assignment will take and the possible effect on the overall group mark (Question 2, M 3.21 and Question 3 M 3.29).

Responses to questions 5, 7,11, 15 and 17 which address personal and self-efficacy issues, seem to reflect the findings of Caspersz, Wu & Skene (2002). There was a reasonably high level of agreement with statements about wanting control over quality of the assignment (Question 5, M 3.82), wanting to be liked by group members (Question 7, M 4.11) and confidence in being able to work effectively in a team (Question 11, M 4.11). High levels of agreement with statements about being a sensitive person (Question 15, M 4.00) and about treating all people the same (Question 17, M 4.25) confirm that students believe they can work in multinational teams.

Table 5.7: Pre-questionnaire - Group statistics, part E

Forthcoming group task for this unit	No	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. I think I will learn a lot about group processes during this assignment	28	3.79	.787
2. I am worried that this assignment will require too much time	28	3.21	.738
3. I am worried I may not get a good mark for this assignment	28	3.29	.937
4. I am really looking forward to working with my group on this assignment	28	3.89	.641
5. I would like to have control over the quality of the assignment we produce	28	3.82	.772
6. I think Australian students do not work as hard as international students	28	2.50	1.036
7. I want to be liked by members of my group	28	4.11	.629
8. I believe mixed nationality teams can be more creative	28	3.75	.844
9. I have trouble understanding people who speak with an accent in English	28	3.04	.962
10. I think international students do not work as hard as Australian students	28	2.36	.780
11. I am confident I can work effectively in a group	28	4.11	.629
12. I think a mixed nationality team will help me to get better marks for this assignment	28	3.21	.686
13. I expect to have some difficulties because we are a mixed nationality group	28	3.22	1.121
14. I don't expect to have to change my behaviour because I'm working in a mixed nationality team	28	3.18	.983
15. I think I'm a sensitive person and that I listen well to other people.	28	4.00	.720
16. I think I have a lot to learn about working with people from other cultures	28	4.25	.585
17. I treat all people the same, irrespective of where they come from.	28	4.25	.701
18. I expect to have learned a lot more about multi-national or mixed nationality teams by the end of this assignment.	28	4.18	.723

Questions 8, 9 and 12, 13 and 14 reflect aspects of working in multinational teams. The levels of agreement with statements in these questions are not overly high, as indicated in Table 5.7, above (with the exception of Question 8, M 3.75) which perhaps reflects some concern. In the responses to Question 16, the high level of agreement indicates that students are aware they may still have a lot to learn (M 4.25) and the high level of agreement again in Question 18 (M 4.18) reflects an overall positive attitude and a belief that they will learn a lot from the group task. Finally responses to questions 6 and 10 both show a low level of agreement, indicating that students do not have biases about either international or 'Australian' students being more hard-working.

Written comments in sections D and E reflect earlier good and bad experiences students have had with group assignments as well as some concerns about the forthcoming group task. The following comments reflect the haphazard nature of experiences in students groups:

> *Some groups work well, some are really dysfunctional. Luck of the draw, really* (Australian student).

> *I love work in groups – can make new friends and lead to better results if we trust each other and help each other* (Indonesian student).

I don't know yet. Some students just want to pass; internationals are very ambitious. It's all very individual (German student).

Other comments reflect some concerns about the forthcoming group task:

In the past, group work has been a great experience for me, I tend to have group members who are from Australia or who speak English as a first language. [With the forthcoming group assignment] *I'm a little unsure about how well we will function and how well the group will complete the assignment. I'm also worried about the workload that I'm going to have as the only Australian* (Australian student).

For me apprehension is normal! But I still look forward to the process *(Australian student).*

Some students were very specific about their concerns:

"Social loafing" is the worst thing in a group - people who slack off and put in less effort. The best group depends on the people - if all are high achievers, ambitious *[then]* the project will be right on track *(Chinese student).*

Several students indicated that gender was not a real issue, although one male student said he did not like working with all male groups as they lacked ambition:

Gender has often been irrelevant in the group experience (Australian student).

Not much difference in doing group work with males, females or mixed gender (Australian student).

My experiences with groups have been mixed and my involvement in all male member groups has not been successful, because their goal for achievement has never been as high as mine (Australian student).

Finally, two comments reflect the complex group dynamics that result in multinational teams and the misunderstandings that can arise, with Australian students thinking that

international students are "under-performing", while international students feel that they are not listened to:

> I find it difficult to communicate with and understand people from different cultures and have felt that I carried more of the workload and did not complete the assignment as well as I could have if I was working on my own *(Australian student).*

> *I find on many occasions while working on assignments or presentations, that Australians tend to be more dominant in discussion and therefore international students do not participate and tend to allow others to talk* (Malaysian student).

5.6 Discussion

The pre-questionnaire was designed particularly to ascertain business students' knowledge and understanding of international business and of working in multinational students teams, with the emphasis on intercultural communication. It was important to establish students' attitudes to linguistic and cultural issues prior to a structured intervention to assist students to develop improved skills for intercultural communication. The results of the pre-questionnaire indicate that students are, on the whole, reasonably knowledgeable of and well disposed to other languages and cultures, and that they are also aware that intercultural communication and working with people from different cultural backgrounds is not always easy.

On the whole, student responses to questions in Part B of the questionnaire seem to indicate that they feel their university course is preparing them reasonably well for the global world of business, with relevant questions drawing moderately high levels of agreement. This includes developing both their English language skills as well as their knowledge of other cultures and intercultural communication. For example:

- 75% agreed that through their studies they 'learn a lot about intercultural communication';
- 75% agreed that they learn a lot about other cultures from their study materials;
- 82.2% agreed that their studies have developed their interpersonal skills; and

- 82.1% agree that they have learned a lot about other cultures through mixing with a multinational student population.

Importantly for this study, 82.1% agreed that their studies have taught them how to write reports (Q 21), but only 75 % that their studies have given them the opportunity to use email extensively (Q 17) or taught them differences between formal and informal writing styles. We have seen in the previous chapter that email language is extremely important for multinational business contexts, and as a consequence, so is also the need for sensitivity to variations in writing style, since there is more possibility for misinterpretation in electronic communication (Gimenez 2000; Waldvogel 2001).

In Part C, student responses reflect a quite sophisticated understanding of linguistic and cultural matters. Students indicated that they are aware of the importance of English as a global language for business, but not unaware of the importance of other languages and bilingualism. The rates of agreement for the first two statements in Part C are not very high. Fifty per cent (50%) of students agreed or strongly agreed with the statement that 'speakers of English as a first language will be those with the greatest advantage in international business' and 61.4% that 'in order to communicate in international business contexts you have to speak English'. Rates of agreement were similar for the statement, 'I think business people in most countries speak English nowadays' (Q 8, 60.7%). And students' response to the statement 'because English is becoming a global language, in the future that's all people in business will need to speak' (Q 11, 35.7% agree or strongly agree, 42.8% disagree or strongly disagree) shows they are not too naïve. Nor are they naïve about the fact that intercultural communication is more than 'being nice to people from other countries' (Q 10, only 28.5% agreement). A high level of disagreement (Q 16, 82.2%) with the statement 'English is the only business language in Asia' shows students understand that other languages are used in the region besides English; and only 17.9% agreed with the statement 'most people in Asian countries speak English' (Q15).

Student responses to other questions in Part C indicated that they value and are aware of the importance of other languages and cultures. Statements which drew the highest rate of agreement in this section included the following: 'bilingual speakers will be those who are most advantaged in international business contexts' (Q 6, with 92.8% agreement); 'it is important to know something about other languages and cultures in

order to be a good communicator in international business' (Q 12, with 100% agreement); and 'it is important to know something about intercultural communication in order to be a good international manager'(Q 14, with 100% agreement).

There is some awareness that English is not the same all over the world, and some students indicated they are aware of varieties of English. The response to the statement 'English is the same the world over' (Q13) drew a 60.8% disagreement rate, with 35.7% indicating they were unsure. Similarly, there was a fairly high level of disagreement expressed with the statement 'Asian students speak English just like Australian' (Q17, 75% disagreement) and the statement 'the only difference between Australian English and English spoken in Asia is the accent' (Q18, 64.2% disagree and 25 % are unsure). Students also showed they understand that intercultural communication is not straightforward. The statement 'there can be misunderstandings when people from different cultural backgrounds speak English' (Q7) drew an 82.2% rate of agreement, while only 57.2% agreed with the statement 'it's up to people who are not native speakers of English to make the effort to communicate effectively', showing some understanding that responsibility for intercultural communication is two-way, that is for interpretability as well as intelligibility (Candlin 1982; Garcia & Otheguy 1989; Kim 1991 & 2001; Smith 1992; Jenkins 2000).

Responses to parts D of the questionnaire reflected the sorts of concerns that have previously been raised about undergraduate team assessment projects in Australian contexts (Volet and Ang 1998; Briguglio 2000; Caspersz, Skene and Wu 2002a & 2002b) as well as in the UK (De Vita 2002) and US (Schullery & Gibson 2001). They tended to indicate that, based on previous experience, students had some reservations about group work in multinational student teams. For example, only 60.7% (Q 1) had found previous group experiences to be positive while 70.3% indicated that they had experienced problems with previous group work (Q 4). In fact, most responses in this section had a low level of agreement and a fairly high response of 'unsure' indicating students' concerns that:

- they may have to 'carry' others (social loafing) (Q 2, 32.2% agree, 46.4% unsure);
- group work will take too much time (Q 3, 42.8% agree, 28.6% unsure);

- relationships with other students are more difficult in multinational teams (Q 12, 44.4% agree, 29.6% unsure); and
- multinational teams do not necessarily produce better assignments (Q 9, only 46.4% agree that multinational teams produce better assignments, 28.6% unsure).

De Vita (2002) found similar concerns among UK students, as did Caspersz et al. (2002a) among Australian students.

Nevertheless, students are still convinced that they can learn from multinational groups, with 60.7% indicating that they learned a lot about other cultures through group work (Q 13, 21.4% unsure) and 53.6% believing people from other nationalities work just as hard as they do (Q 14, 28.6% unsure). And only 32.1% agreed that they would prefer to work alone rather than in a group (Q 8, 46.4% disagree). There was also a clear preference for working in mixed gender teams on group assignments (Q 17, 64.3% agree) as opposed to all male teams (Q 16, 14.3%) and all female teams (Q 15, 39.3%). These findings about student multinational teams are very similar to those of Caspersz, Skene and Wu (2002a and 2002b) at the University of Western Australia.

Similarly, in part E of the pre-questionnaire students indicated that although they have some concerns about the forthcoming group task, they feel they can learn from it and they are confident they can work effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds. Their responses to Question 11 (85.5% agree) and Question 15 (82% agree) reflect confidence in self-efficacy. The much lower agreement on questions relating to assignment results (Q 3, 39.3% agree, 39.3% unsure; Q 12, 35.7% agree, 50% unsure) indicates students' insecurity about the forthcoming task and reflects De Vita's (2002a & 2002b) findings with UK students. Students are quite clear that they still have a lot to learn about working in multinational teams (Q 16, 92.8% agree), but they still feel fairly confident that they will learn a lot (Q 18, 82.1% agree) and more than half (64.3%) believe that multinational teams could be more creative. Although 44.4% indicated they expected some difficulties because of the multicultural group (Q 13), there did not seem to be a bias either way towards international or domestic students not working hard (Q 6 and Q 10 both had only 10.7 % agreement). Finally, in relation to findings reported in Chapter 4 about the importance of accent in intelligibility and interpretability issues (Candlin 1982), responses to Question 9 showed

27.1% of students reporting difficulty with understanding 'people who speak English with an accent', while 35.7% disagreed and 32.1% were unsure.

5.7 Conclusion

The results of this pre-questionnaire provide a picture of the understanding and attitudes of a 'typical' group of business students in an Australian tertiary institution towards language and culture issues in business. We have seen that students are equipped with some knowledge about cultural and linguistic matters and that they are well disposed towards other cultures and understand that they still have a lot to learn. There was agreement by *all* students that they will require linguistic and cultural knowledge in order to be good communicators in international business. At the same time, in a 'multinational' situation closer to home, that is, multinational student teams, we have seen that students have concerns about how effective the intercultural experience will be, whether there might be conflict and misunderstandings in the group, and whether the result of the group task will come up to their expectations. We have also seen that staff from this Division felt that not enough was being done to develop students' English language skills and to prepare students for intercultural communication in the global workplace. These sentiments are supported by the literature reviewed in Section 3 of this chapter, particularly that which refers to university contexts (Hawthorne 1997; Nesdale & Todd 1997; Volet & Ang 1998; Smart Volet & Ang 2000; Briguglio 2000; Liddicoat, Eisenchelas & Trevaskes 2003). The next chapter will describe the implementation and results of a structured intervention to assist student development in the area of intercultural communication.

CHAPTER 6

STUDENTS WORKING IN MULTINATIONAL TEAMS

6.1 Introduction

Chapter 5 described the characteristics of a third year undergraduate business class in an 'International Management' unit at Curtin University of Technology and the results of a pre-questionnaire administered to this class in order to establish their knowledge and understanding of cultural and linguistic issues relating to international business. We saw that students had a reasonable level of knowledge and understanding about matters cultural and linguistic relating to the world of business. We also saw, however, that students reported a certain amount of apprehension about working in multinational student teams based on past experience; and that they had some concerns about the forthcoming group task to be carried out in pre-selected multinational student teams in the formation of which they would have little or no choice.

The second stage of the case study involved preparing students for group work through a structured intervention. A workshop dealing with language and culture issues in multinational teams would be administered to one half of the class (the sample group) in order to ascertain whether it positively influenced student attitudes and relationships within the group: in other words, whether it improved students' intercultural communication skills. The other half of the class (the control group) would participate in a workshop dealing with 'working in groups' issues, but not specifically with language and culture issues. It was hypothesised that if the sample group reported better team interactions, then the structured intervention could be deemed to have been effective. This chapter describes the procedure used for the establishment of student teams, the two workshops implemented with the two halves of the cohort, and other instruments used (including a progress report, a post-questionnaire and student interviews) in the second stage of the case study. The data gathered through the above instruments is then analysed and discussed, in order to ascertain the effectiveness of the structured intervention in improving intercultural communication in multinational student teams. The implications of this case study for business education are outlined and then discussed in greater detail in Chapter 7.

6.2 Method - Instruments and techniques used in the second stage of the multinational teams case study

The specific aims of this part of the case study were:

5. To examine group interactions and identify communication issues in multinational student groups/teams;
6. To establish whether a workshop providing students with insights and techniques for better intercultural communication and interaction in multinational teams actually has a positive effect on the nature of the group experience and the attitudes of students towards such teams.

Data gathering for this part of the case study included the following techniques and instruments:

- Student workshops (2 different workshops with each half of the class, see - Power Point program for each workshop attached in Appendix's 3 and 4 and Workshop Evaluation sheet, Appendix 5);
- Student progress reports;
- Student post- questionnaire (See Appendix 6); and
- Semi-structured face-to-face interviews with around one third of the students.

6.2.1 Process for determining composition of groups

Students would normally have been asked to form groups of their choice, which often means that they team up with other students from similar nationalities/ cultural backgrounds. In this case, the requirement was that students had to form 'mixed' teams. The class originally had 32 students, so it was anticipated that students would be working in eight teams of four. Three late arrivals, in fact, resulted in five teams of four and three teams with five students. Students were simply allocated a letter from A to H by their lecturer and then asked to join those with a similar letter to form a team. This resulted in a very good mixture of nationalities in all teams except for one, which had three 'Australian' students and an unequal gender balance. Two men from this group were asked to move (which they did without reluctance) and the resulting team compositions were as described in Table 6.1, below.

Table 6.1: Composition of Groups (national/cultural background & gender)

Sub Group	Nationality/cultural background *	Gender	Sub Group	Nationality/cultural background *	Gender
	Sample group			**Control group**	
A	Australian (Arabic)	Male	**E**	Thai	Female
A	Chinese	Female	**E**	Malaysian-Chinese	Male
A	Australian (Anglo)	Male	**E**	Norwegian	Male
A	Australian (Italian)	Female	**E**	Australian (Anglo)	Female
			E	Australian (Croatian)	Female
B	Turkish	Male	**F**	Indonesian	Male
B	Chinese	Male	**F**	Australian (Anglo)	Female
B	Australian (Anglo)	Male	**F**	Taiwanese	Female
B	Chinese (HK)	Female	**F**	American (USA)	Male
			F	English	Female
C	Croatian	Female	**G**	Indonesian	Female
C	Indonesian	Male	**G**	German	Male
C	Australian (Anglo)	Female	**G**	Chinese	Male
C	Kenyan	Male	**G**	Australian (Dutch/Italian)	Female
			G	Australian (Anglo)	Female
D	Thai	Female	**H**	Australian (Anglo)	Female
D	Norwegian	Male	**H**	Malaysian	Female
D	Malaysian	Female	**H**	Indonesian	Male
D	American (USA)	Male	**H**	Australian (Anglo)	Male

* As indicated by students in questionnaire responses.

6.2.2 The post-questionnaire

The post-questionnaire used the same 5 point Likert scale as the pre-questionnaire and contained the following sections:

- *Part A, Personal information*, this time requiring only name, student number and contact details;
- *Part B, English language and other languages and cultures in Australia;*
- *Part C, English as a global language in business* (both parts B and C were identical to the pre-questionnaire, in order to ascertain whether there had been any change in attitudes since undertaking the unit and the group assessment task in multinational teams);
- *Experience with group work in this unit*, to ascertain the nature of the experience in groups formed for this project.

As with the pre-questionnaire, there was room for written comments at the end of each section.

6.2.3 Preparatory workshops

All students had been told that they would take part in a brief workshop about working in teams. This would be held during normal class time, with one half of the class one week and the other half the following week. In fact, it had been agreed with the lecturer that the sample group (groups A, B, C and D) would receive a more structured workshop with significant emphasis on cultural and linguistic issues, as well as issues related to working in teams, whereas the control group (groups E, F, G and H) would receive a workshop that dealt only with 'working in teams' issues. Students were not informed about these differences, as it was considered that this would bias the results of the project. Program outlines for the two different workshops implemented with the two different halves of the class are shown at Appendices 3 and 4.

During the second lecture of semester, the researcher took the first half of the class (groups A, B, C and D) to a separate room. Here they first completed the pre-questionnaire about working in cross-cultural groups and then took part in a two and a half hour workshop to raise awareness of linguistic and cultural issues and to provide students with techniques for dealing with issues that might arise in cross-cultural teams. In the third week of semester the researcher took the other half of the class (groups E, F, G and H) and had them also complete the pre-questionnaire. This half of the class engaged in a workshop that addressed issues about working in teams, but did not receive any instruction on the use of strategies or techniques for dealing with issues that might arise in cross-cultural teams. Both workshops were evaluated by students, using the evaluation instrument already in use in the Curtin Business School's Communication Skills Centre (see Appendix 5). The results of the evaluation are presented in Table 6.2, below.

6.2.4 Progress report

All students were asked to complete a progress report about halfway through semester and to return it to the researcher. It was felt that the progress report would provide early indication of how group interaction was progressing and that is might foreshadow any problems related to intercultural communication. The Progress Report asked students to comment on the following seven questions, with space for comment under each one:

Progress report

1. Do you feel you are making good progress on your group project? Please explain.
2. Do you feel everyone is pulling their weight (ie doing their share of work)?
3. Have there been any problems in the group due to the behaviour of certain group members? If yes, how has conflict been handled?
4. Do you feel any issues have arisen due to cultural background of group members?
5. Have you learned something about working in multinational teams/groups? What?
6. What are the positive learning experiences you feel you are gaining from this project?
7. Have there been any communication problems? Please explain.

2.5 Student interviews

At the start of the project, students had been told that a number of them (at least one from each sub-group) would be contacted for interviews at the end of the project. It was thought that individual interviews would provide much richer data than was possible through the post-questionnaire or the progress reports; this in fact proved to be the case. Some 20 students were contacted by telephone and email after the examination period and during the inter-semester break. In all, 12 students agreed to be interviewed. The semi-structured, face-to-face interviews took place in the office of the researcher, and involved discussion around the following questions:

Student interview questions

1. How did you find the experience of working in multinational teams for the unit International Management 375?
2. Did you experience any problems that you think were due to different cultures/backgrounds in the group?
3. Did you experience any problems that you think were due to different language backgrounds in the group?
4. What did you learn about working with people from different cultural backgrounds?
5. Did you find this a positive experience? Why? Why not?
6. What do you think are the skills you require to work successfully in multi-national teams?
7. Do you think the experience you had is fairly close to what would happen in a real world work context?
8. Are you satisfied with the group mark you got for your project? If not, why not?
9. If you had to advise someone about working in multinational teams, what would you say to them?
10. Any other comments?

A statistical analysis of the questionnaire data was undertaken using SPSS to generate mean responses. The comments section of the questionnaire, data from the progress reports and data from face-to-face interviews was analysed using the usual processes of sorting and sifting qualitative data to draw major themes.

6.3 Implementing the case study

The project was implemented over a semester in the stages described below.

6.3.1 Implementing the workshop with the sample group

The workshop with groups A, B, C and D (the sample group) entitled *'Working in multinational teams'* was facilitated by the researcher in the second week of lectures in Semester 1, 2004 (see Power Point slides in Appendix 3). Students were informed that the aims of this workshop were to prepare them for working in multinational teams and to develop intercultural skills. They introduced themselves and their cultural background and then completed the pre-questionnaire. From the start, the emphasis of the workshop was on cultural issues and intercultural communication (indeed a warm up activity had students match a list of statements in 12 languages with the right language). Since students were going to be engaged largely in group activities, they were asked to sit with their pre-assigned team members in groups A, B, C and D. However, there was also open discussion during which all class members joined in.

The first activity assigned to students in their groups was to come up with a one or two sentence definition of 'culture' (What is culture? What culture is not). Each group's definition of culture was then discussed by the whole class. This discussion was very useful and allowed students to think beyond stereotypical and surface elements of culture. Because the group itself was so culturally mixed, students were encouraged to provide examples from their own culture and this allowed for the emergence of different perspectives.

The next stage involved presenting to students some information and statistics about English as a global language (indeed the focus of this thesis) and emphasising the fact that the future world in which they would be working and interacting with others would, more likely than not, involve many interactions between L1 and L2 speakers and L2 and L2 speakers of English. Well-established varieties of English were discussed (with some of the students present giving examples of the use of such varieties) as well as the need for all students to have intercultural communication skills in this sort of future scenario. It was stressed that because people from different cultures were communicating in the same language (English), this did not mean that misunderstandings would not occur. The responsibility of all interactants to develop

interpretability as well as *intelligibility* skills (Candlin 1982) was also stressed, as was the complex nature of intercultural communication.

To assist students in unravelling some of these difficulties, they were asked to write for themselves the three things that are considered most important in their culture. The responses were then written on a whiteboard and students discussed similarities and differences. A related activity asked students to first write for themselves, and then to share with their team members and the class, three things that are considered very polite and three that are considered very rude in their culture. This again led to rich discussion around linguistic and cultural issues.

The next step involved students thinking about the 'multinational' team task they were about to undertake. Firstly, to make students aware that everyone brings different knowledge and skills to the team task, students were asked to discuss important developments in their own country/region. This makes everyone an 'expert' about their own region. Then students were asked to consider the unwritten 'rules' about working in teams/groups in their culture. This again illustrated some very interesting differences. It was emphasised that all team members needed to be absolutely clear about expectations and that they all needed to ensure their own understanding of requirements; for example in regard to meeting times (real time or flexible time?), in regard to their own contribution to the group task, and so on. The researcher then presented what we know about working in teams and concluded with what research has told us about successful multinational teams.

Examples that student gave throughout the workshop to illustrate their opinions did much to shed light on differences and different cultural perspectives. The point was made to students that these different cultural perspectives needed to be kept in mind and respected, and that their group interaction would be influenced by such perspectives. Student evaluations completed at the end of the workshop indicate that they found this workshop to be very useful and enjoyable (see analysis of evaluations in Table 6.2). Comments in response to the first open-ended question on the evaluation sheet indicate that students appreciated and found most useful the discussion of cultural aspects. The comments below reflect the general tenor of responses:

What was the best/most useful aspect of this workshop for you?

- *Learning about other cultures.*
- *Get to know members of my group more closely. It was an opportunity for me to see the diverseness* (sic) *within the class and hear interesting facts of the other students' backgrounds and customs.*
- *Discussing cultural characteristics of other students and other cultures/nationalities.*
- *More knowledge of multinational teams, multicultures etc.*
- *Learning about other customs and cultures and getting to share your opinions and ideas.*
- *Different values and opinions between students.*
- *Discussing the differences between cultures and people's perceptions of them.*

One student's comment reflects the fact that cultural and diversity issues are not often discussed in class and that students might appreciate the opportunity to do so:

> *I would personally recommend this workshop to be compulsory for all CBS students and something similar to this should be conducted in the first year of study.*

6.3.2 Implementing the workshop with the control group

A workshop was also carried out with the other half of the class or the 'control group', that is groups E, F, G and H, entitled *'Working on group assignments'* (see Power Point slides at Appendix 4). This workshop was run in week 3 of Semester 1, 2004. Students in this group were also reminded of the aims of the project and the particular aims of the workshop, on this occasion to examine issues related to working in groups/teams. Students filled out the pre-questionnaire and then took part in the workshop, working largely with their assignment group but also taking part in whole of class discussion. On this occasion, however, cultural differences and issues were not discussed (except incidentally) and the emphasis was on group roles and group responsibilities.

Students were first asked to discuss previous experiences of working in groups and to name three things which help groups and three things which hinder them. Groups then reported back and the whole class discussed things which help and hinder group work.

Some possible roles for team members were discussed as a way of sharing the load in team assignments. The researcher also presented a summary of issues that are known to assist and those that are known to hinder group work.

Students were then asked in their allotted teams to develop a plan for a simulated group assignment where they would work out the requirements of the assignment, the steps they would need to take and allocation of tasks to various team members. The topic given for the workshop was: "*What does it take to be a successful international manager? Has the ideal profile changed over time*?" Students had about 40 minutes to work on this and to place their plan on an Overhead Transparency, which one person from each team presented to the whole class. Students seemed to particularly enjoy this aspect of the workshop, which provided them with the opportunity to become better acquainted with their team members. However, as can be seen, there was no discussion around language and culture issues and about how these elements might influence the future group task, as there was with the sample group.

Again, the evaluation of this workshop indicates that students found the workshop to be very useful (see summary of evaluations in Table 6.2) but the responses to the open-ended question reflect the narrower emphasis. Below is a sample of typical responses.

What was the best/most useful aspect of this workshop for you?

- *Tips on how to work more effectively and productive (sic) in groups.*
- *Preparing our group assignment and purpose/plan – knowing where we are heading.*
- *Know more about project and group members.*
- *Discussing the pros and cons of groups.*
- *Establishing group goals and roles.*
- *Being able to plan assignment with group members was beneficial.*

Again one student recommended this workshop more widely:

Great! A must for every student.

6.3.3 Student evaluation of both workshops

Twenty-eight (28) evaluations were returned anonymously, 15 from the sample group and 13 from the control group. The evaluation instrument is attached at Appendix 5, and shows a four point Likert scale with 1 for 'strongly disagree', 2 for 'disagree', 3 for 'agree' and 4 for 'strongly agree'. Table 6.2, below, shows the mean for each of the six items listed for both groups, 'multinational teams' indicating the sample group and 'working in groups', the control group.

Table 6.2: Evaluation of 2 workshops (multinational teams and working in groups)

Multinational teams (sample group), Number of responses (15) Working in groups (control group), Number of responses (13)	**Group**	**Mean**	**N**	**Number who agree or strongly agree**
1. I found this workshop very useful	Multinational teams	3.13	15	15
	Working in groups	3.23	13	12
2. I think what I learned from this workshop will improve my communication/study skills	Multinational teams	3.07	15	13
	Working in groups	3.23	13	12
3. The workshop was well-presented	Multinational teams	3.53	15	15
	Working in groups	3.31	13	13
4. The materials/handouts used were useful	Multinational teams	3.00	15	15
	Working in groups	3.08	13	11
5. The activities we did helped us to apply what we learned	Multinational teams	3.27	15	14
	Working in groups	3.23	13	13
6. I would recommend this seminar to other CBS students	Multinational teams	3.27	15	15
	Working in groups	3.00	13	13

NB: Four point Lickert scale, 1 strongly disagree, 2 disagree, 3 agree, 4 strongly agree.

Thus, the evaluation for both workshops was very positive, with the rates of agreement for each of the items as indicated above. Students were not informed that the workshops for the two halves of the class were different, and because many of them do not interact very much outside the classroom, there has been no indication that they were at any stage aware of this fact. Since both workshops dealt with team issues, it is thought that students assumed they received the same workshop.

After this initial contact through the workshops, the researcher had no further contact with students during semester, except for a short class visit to distribute the progress report and ask for its completion in mid April. The interviews with students were held in July/August, when examinations were over and marks for the unit had been finalised.

6.4 Analysis and findings

This section presents the findings and analysis of student progress reports, post-questionnaires and interviews.

6.4.1 Analysis of progress reports

Progress reports were received from 14 students, that is 40% of the class. At least one report was received from each of the eight sub groups except for Group G. One report was received anonymously and its group of origin could not be traced. A summary of returns is provided in Table 6.3, below, which also shows the number of students interviewed from each sub-group.

Table 6.3: Summary of progress report returns and interviews

Sub Group	Student progress report	Student interview
A	Australian female Australian male	Australian male Australian female
B	Chinese female Chinese male	Australian male
C	Kenyan male Croatian female	Croatian female
D	Norwegian male Thai female Australian male	Norwegian male Chinese female
E	Thai female	
F	Australian female English female	Australian female Taiwanese female
G		Australian female Indonesian female
H	Australian female	Malaysian female Australian male
Anonymous returns	**1**	
TOTAL	**14***	**12**

Note: Nationality as declared in pre-questionnaires

Double the number of progress reports were received from the sample group (nine) as were received from the control group (four). Comments seem to indicate that there are no serious issues at this stage, except that some groups are having trouble managing to gather all group members for meetings. However, the comments from the sample group seem, even at this early stage, to reflect more positive attitudes, while some comments from the control group seem to indicate the possibility of some group tension building up. For example, in reply to Question 1 about whether the group is making good progress, most of those who responded in the sample group seemed quite happy, and the following comment is typical:

Reasonable progress, have worked well to get a broad range of ideas for presentation but nothing concrete yet for written material (Group A).

A response to the same question from the control group indicates some tension is already present in the group:

No, there is a small conflict of interest as to when the group project should be started. Plus members have not come to agreed meeting times with work completed (Group H).

Responses to Question 2 about whether everyone is "pulling their weight" seem to be all positive, again except for a response from the control group (Group H) which indicates the possibility of some concerns:

Too early to say. Because all have different courses of study all have different priorities. Strong feeling of a lack of leadership (Group H).

In reply to Question 3 about any problems or conflict, responses from the sample group indicate a concern from two groups about arranging meetings to suit everyone. However, the tone of the comment does not indicate a high level of tension:

Yes, hard to get together to have a discussion (Group B).

Only a problem about when to meet (Group D).

A similar comment from Group H reflects a level of annoyance:

Members have not been coming to meetings; therefore conflict has not been handled (Group H).

In response to Questions 4 and 7 about whether any issues have arisen due to cultural backgrounds or communication problems, comments from the sample group are much more positive. Most sub-groups said "no" or, for example:

No, even though members from different countries, communicate well (Group B).

Not at all, language not really a problem as long as we understand the actual things that we're doing (Group B).

Yes, only in sense of explaining Australianisms to X who is from China (Group A).

A couple of comments from the control group, however, already indicate there could be problems:

Yes, different points of view and different attitudes to the project are different (Group E).

Largely no. Only issue is that it is hard to understand one member because English is their second language (Group H).

In response to Questions 5 and 6, asking students whether they have learned anything from working in multinational teams and whether the experience has been positive, again differences from the two halves of the class are evident. These two sets of responses, in particular, show a much more positive attitude from the sample group than from the control group, especially in regard to issues of language and culture:

[I have learned] *leadership, communication skills, building trust relationships* (Group B).

I have learned that people think differently because of their cultural background, which is good, because I learn from them and to think and feel from their point of view (Group C).

I think my English language has improved because I have a chance to talk with those people and I have new friends. I also understand the way people do the work in their styles (Group D).

Learning about how others grew up and what they believe. Have gained appreciation of cultural and gender differences (Group D).

Although there are a couple of positive responses from the control group, on the whole, the response is more mixed. In reply to whether students feel they have learned something from working in multinational teams (Question 5) the following responses show some negativity:

> *No, not yet. I don't like group projects, because it is always hard to get everyone together* (Group F).

> *They take effort but also need to put in a lot of effort into any group. Communication is biggest problem* (Group H).

On the whole, then, the Progress Report responses already indicate some possible problems emerging in the control group, which do not at this stage, seem to be evident in the sample group. These differences were later confirmed through individual student interviews, which took place at the end of semester, and show that the group experiences of groups A, B, C and D (the sample group) were much more positive, than those of groups E, F, G and H (the control group).

6.4.2 Analysis of post-questionnaire

The post-questionnaire, administered in the last class of semester, was reduced to three major sections, combining sections D and E from the pre-questionnaire ('Previous experience with group work' and 'Forthcoming group task for this unit'). Apart from Section A, which requested name, student number and multinational team, it thus contained three major sections as follows:

- Part B - English language and other languages and cultures in Australia;
- Part C - English as a global language in business;
- Part D - Experience with group work in *this* unit.

Questions in parts B and C were identical to those in the pre-questionnaire and questions in Part D were a combination of those in the pre-questionnaire parts D and E. This allowed for some comparison to ascertain whether students had changed their feelings/perceptions after this group experience and to what extent. It should be

remembered that the results of the pre-questionnaire demonstrated very positive attitudes, on the whole.

Each part of the questionnaire will first be examined separately for the sample group and the control group, using paired sample statistics. For this aspect, the sample group consisted of 14 and the control group of 8 paired responses. This smaller number for the control group was due to absences on the day the post-questionnaire was administered, that is in the last week of semester. Results will be compared with the same pre-questionnaire items in each case, to ascertain the extent of any changes. Some comparisons will then be made between the two groups.

The responses to Part B of the questionnaire, illustrated in Tables 6.4 and 6.5, show the greatest difference between the two groups; that is, this is the area in which the sample group seems to have made most gains and the control group to have reinforced some negative aspects (from a multinational teams point of view). This is perhaps not surprising, since language and culture were the very aspects emphasised in the preparatory workshop for the sample group. On the other hand, the differences in parts C and D do not seem to be as marked.

6.4.2.1 Post-questionnaire results: Perceptions regarding English language and other languages and cultures in Australia

6.4.2.1.1 Sample group

An examination of pre- and post- responses from the sample group (Table 6.4) shows some decrease in levels of agreement to the first three statements about the use of English. This could reflect better understanding of the number and range of other languages used in Australia, or perhaps even more admission by bilingual students that they do, in fact use other languages and that this is regarded as acceptable. This is reflected also by the slight increase in agreement with Question 13 ('I think many people in Australia speak languages other than English in everyday life'). The more positive atmosphere in the sample group to language and culture issues may also account for the improvement in confidence with written English (questions 5 and 6) and with spoken English (Question 11) and for the slightly greater tolerance to accents in English reflected by responses to questions 7 and 8. However, responses to questions 9

and 10 would seem to contradict this, with a decrease reflected in ease of understanding both Australian and particularly international students in class (the latter showing a significant difference, $p < .05$). This seeming contradiction might be explained by the fact that perhaps students found people in their own group reasonably easy to understand after getting to know them better, but may not have found all students in the class easy to understand (all 35 students in this class, representing 12 nationalities, presented in eight teams during the semester). Responses to questions 16 to 22, dealing with aspects of intercultural communication, reflect positive increases in all cases, except questions 18 and 21, which remained the same (but already expressed a high level of agreement). The only item in this group which shows a decrease is Question15, which indicates that students do not feel their studies have improved their interpersonal communication skills, whereas they feel they have made improvements in written communication.

Table 6.4:

Paired sample statistics, sample group ABCD Comparison pre- and post- questionnaire, Part B

	English language & other languages & cultures in Australia	*N*	Mean	Std deviation
1.	I need to use English every day **PRE Q**	14	4.71	.611
	POST Q	14	4.29	1.069
2.	I use English with everyone I meet	14	3.71	1.204
		14	3.21	1.477
3.	I don't need to use any other language but English in Australia	14	3.14	1.351
		14	2.79	1.424
4.	I feel I am developing my English language skills to high levels while studying at Curtin	14	4.21	1.122
		14	3.93	.997
5.	I find it easy to express myself in written English	14	3.79	.893
		14	3.86	1.099
6.	I find using English for academic purposes very difficult	14	2.07	.917
		14	2.00	.784
7.	People with an accent are really difficult to understand	14	3.43	.852
		14	3.36	.745
8.	I find it easy to understand Australian lecturers and tutors	14	4.07	.829
		14	4.29	.726
9.	I find it easy to understand Australian students in class	14	4.07	.829
		14	3.86	.864
10.	I find it easy to understand international students in class	14	3.64	.842
		14	3.14	.949
11.	Sometimes when I speak English I feel I cannot be as fluent as I would like to be	14	3.36	1.598
		14	3.21	1.578
12.	I often switch between languages in my everyday interactions in Australia	14	3.43	1.651
		14	3.29	1.590
13.	I think many people in Australia speak languages other than English in everyday life	14	3.71	.825
		14	3.86	.949
14.	It is normal for me to speak other languages as well as English in Australia	14	3.50	1.225
		14	3.29	1.590
15.	My studies have really developed my interpersonal skills (speaking and listening)	14	4.57	.514
		14	4.36	.633
16.	In my studies we practise a lot of class and group discussion	14	4.36	.745
		14	4.50	.650
17.	In my studies we have the opportunity to send and receive lots of emails	14	4.07	.829
		14	4.36	.633
18.	In my studies we learn a lot about intercultural communication	14	4.14	.770
		14	4.14	.535
19.	In the course of my studies I have learned a lot about other cultures through mixing with students from all over the world	14	4.21	.802
		14	4.36	.633
20.	In my studies I have learned a lot about other culture s from the material I have had to study	14	3.79	.802
		14	4.00	.679
21.	In my studies I have learned about writing reports	14	4.00	1.038
		14	4.00	.961
22.	In my studies I have learned something about formal and informal writing styles necessary for business	14	4.00	.679
		14	4.14	.864

Note: Question 10, significance .013.

6.4.2.1.2 Control group

Results for the control group in this section are somewhat different to those of the sample group (see Table 6.5). In the first three questions regarding attitude to use of English, Question 3 shows an increased level of agreement, that is, an increase in the

perception that English only must be used. This is also reinforced by the decreased level of agreement with Question 13.

Questions 4, 5 and 6 relating to the development of English skills all show decreasing levels of confidence with Question 6 showing a significant increase in the perception that English for academic purposes is very hard ($p<.05$). There is also a significant decrease in the perception that students are developing higher levels of English skills during their studies at Curtin (Question 4, $p< .05$). Although there was also a decrease in level of agreement with Question 4 by the sample group, the difference was not significant. Question 11 also shows decreased confidence in speaking abilities.

Questions 7 to 14, which relate to students' language use and skills, reveal some contradictory findings, as with the sample group. While there is increased agreement that people with accents are difficult to understand (Question 7), ease of understanding lecturers and Australian students in class and students' own use of code switching remains the same (questions 8, 9 and 12), while there is an increase in ease of understanding international students.

Questions 15 to 22 were directed at the sorts of things students felt they had learned through this team task. Most means in this part show a slight increase, with a significant increase in Question 18 ($p< .05$), showing that students felt they had indeed learned a lot about intercultural communication. How can this be explained given information that was conveyed during interviews, which would seem to contradict this? One explanation might be that the statement 'In my studies we learn a lot about intercultural communication' was understood to mean in the unit (a unit in international management, which includes intercultural information) or in the course, rather than through the group task. Another might be that students' perception about what constitutes 'intercultural communication' has more to do with acquiring cultural knowledge and does not include understanding of the complex interplay of sociolinguistic and sociocultural factors involved when people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds communicate in a common language, in this case English. However, there was no increase in Question 21 about skills for report writing, and a significant negative result for Question 22 ($p< .05$) with students again indicating they have not improved writing skills.

Table 6.5:

Paired sample statistics, control group EFGH Comparison pre- and post- questionnaire, Part B

	English language & other languages & cultures in Australia		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I need to use English every day	**PRE Q**	8	4.88	.354
		POST Q	8	4.63	.518
2	I use English with everyone I meet		8	3.88	1.553
			8	3.63	1.188
3	I don't need to use any other language but English in Australia		8	2.63	1.061
			8	3.13	.991
4	I feel I am developing my English language skills to high levels while studying at Curtin		8	4.25	.707
			8	3.75	.463
5	I find it easy to express myself in written English		8	4.13	.641
			8	3.88	.835
6	I find using English for academic purposes very difficult		8	1.50	.535
			8	2.25	1.035
7	People with an accent are really difficult to understand		8	3.38	1.061
			8	3.63	1.061
8	I find it easy to understand Australian lecturers and tutors		8	4.25	.886
			8	4.25	.463
9	I find it easy to understand Australian students in class		8	4.13	1.126
			8	4.13	.835
10	I find it easy to understand international students in class		8	2.13	.641
			8	2.50	.926
11	Sometimes when I speak English I feel I cannot be as fluent as I would like to be		8	2.88	1.553
			8	3.00	1.512
12	I often switch between languages in my everyday interactions in Australia		8	2.63	1.768
			8	2.63	1.598
13	I think many people in Australia speak languages other than English in everyday life		8	4.13	.991
			8	3.50	1.069
14	It is normal for me to speak other languages as well as English in Australia		8	2.88	1.808
			8	3.00	1.690
15	My studies have really developed my interpersonal skills (speaking and listening)		8	3.63	.916
			8	3.75	.463
16	In my studies we practise a lot of class and group discussion		8	3.38	.916
			8	3.63	.916
17	In my studies we have the opportunity to send and receive lots of emails		8	3.75	.886
			8	3.63	1.188
18	In my studies we learn a lot about intercultural communication		8	3.63	.518
			8	4.13	.354
19	In the course of my studies I have learned a lot about other cultures through mixing with students from all over the world		8	3.75	1.165
			8	4.25	.707
20	In my studies I have learned a lot about other culture s from the material I have had to study		8	3.63	.744
			8	3.88	.354
21	In my studies I have learned about writing reports		8	3.63	.744
			8	3.63	.744
22	In my studies I have learned something about formal and informal writing styles necessary for business		8	3.38	.916
			8	2.88	.835

Note: Question 4, significance .033; Question 5, significance .020; question 18, significance .033; Question 22, significance .033.

These findings would seem to echo issues that emerged during student interviews, which will be discussed in the next section. That is, the tension that developed in at least three of the 'control group' sub-groups meant that several people just took over the assignment task and did not accept contribution from others, largely because they felt such contribution would lessen their chances of getting a good mark for the assignment.

It is possible that this would result in some students feeling they had not contributed, therefore had not learned much or developed their writing skills, in particular.

6.4.2.2 Perceptions regarding English as a global language and intercultural communication issues in business

6.4.2.2.1 Sample group

This section of the post-questionnaire dealing with English as a global language in business produced no statistically significant differences for the sample group except for Question 10, which stated one had to be nice to people in order to communicate effectively (see Table 6.6). This would probably reflect the positive atmosphere which, according to student interviews, emerged in subgroups in the sample. In fact, this statement was originally intended to discriminate between 'being nice to people' and actually having the skills to communicate effectively in intercultural situations, or the deeper level knowledge referred to by Ronowicz and Yallop (1999). It is thought, however, that most students took the statement at face value.

Students did, however, make small gains (as reflected by changes in mean scores) in the following areas. They felt their studies had given them an awareness of issues in intercultural communication (Question3); there was less belief in English as being the only language in international business (questions 2 and 11) although its importance is recognised (slight increase in mean in responses to Question 1). Surprisingly, there were also increases in the last two questions, minimising differences in the ways English is used by Asian speakers, which might reflect simply that local and international students felt closer after a positive group experience. It seems disappointing that there was actually a decrease in the mean for Question 14 (reflected also in the results for the control group), which diminishes the importance that students placed on intercultural communication for international managers.

Table 6.6:

Paired sample statistics, sample group ABCD Comparison pre- and post- questionnaire, part C

	English as a global language in business		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Speakers of English as a first language will be those with the greatest advantage in international business	**PRE Q**	14	3.43	1.222
		POST Q	14	3.50	1.160
2	In order to communicate in international business contexts you have to speak English		14	4.07	.616
			14	3.79	.975
3	My studies at Curtin are giving me an awareness of issues in intercultural communication		14	4.21	.579
			14	4.29	.469
4	It's up to people who are not native speakers of English to make the effort to communicate effectively		14	3.50	.941
			14	3.14	.770
5	My studies at Curtin are preparing me very well to communicate in future international business contexts		14	4.00	.961
			14	3.50	.941
6	Bilingual speakers (those who speak two or more languages) will be those who are most advantaged in international business contexts		14	4.64	.497
			14	4.43	.756
7	There can be misunderstandings when people from different cultural backgrounds speak English		14	4.29	.611
			14	4.21	.802
8	I think business people in most countries speak English nowadays		14	3.43	1.089
			14	3.50	.941
9	In international business, it doesn't really matter if you don't know much about other cultures, so long as you speak English		14	1.79	.975
			14	2.50	1.160
10	In order to communicate effectively with people from other countries you just have to be nice to everyone		14	2.64	1.151
			14	3.29	1.267
11	Because English is becoming a global language, in the future that's all people in business will need to speak		14	3.21	1.188
			14	2.93	1.328
12	It's important to know something about other languages and cultures in order to be a good communicator in international business		14	4.69	.480
			14	4.54	.519
13	English is the same the world over		14	2.43	.852
			14	2.50	1.092
14	It's important to know something about intercultural communication in order to be a good international manager		14	4.83	.389
			14	4.67	.492
15	Most people in Asian countries speak English		14	2.43	1.016
			14	2.50	1.019
16	English is the only language you need to do business in Asia		14	1.93	.730
			14	2.00	1.038
17	Students from Asian countries speak English just like Australians		14	1.86	.770
			14	2.07	1.072
18	The only difference between Australian English and English spoken in Asia is the accent		14	2.21	1.122
			14	2.57	1.222

6.4.2.2.2 Control group

Again there were no significant differences in this section with the control group, as can be seen in Table 6.7, below. However, there were changes in a couple of areas which could be a reflection of group conflict. Although the sample group mean response for Question 7 was only minimally lower, in the case of the control group there is a marked (though not significant) increase, which could, again, be a reflection of tensions that had developed within the sub groups E, F, G and H. And while there was a significant increase in the mean responses to Question 10 in the sample group, in the case of the control group there is a decrease in the mean. Similarly to the sample group, the control

group also showed a decrease in the mean in response to Question 14 and increases in the mean response to questions 17 and 18.

Table 6.7:

Paired sample statistics, control group EFGH Comparison pre- and post- questionnaire, part C

English as a global language in business		N	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Speakers of English as a first language will be those with the greatest advantage in international business **PRE Q**	7	3.14	1.215
	POST Q	7	3.14	1.215
2	In order to communicate in international business contexts you have to speak English	7	3.57	.787
		7	3.71	1.254
3	My studies at Curtin are giving me an awareness of issues in intercultural communication	7	3.86	.378
		7	4.29	.488
4	It's up to people who are not native speakers of English to make the effort to communicate effectively	7	3.43	.787
		7	3.29	.756
5	My studies at Curtin are preparing me very well to communicate in future international business contexts	7	3.86	.900
		7	3.86	.690
6	Bilingual speakers (those who speak two or more languages) will be those who are most advantaged in international business contexts	7	4.57	.787
		7	4.57	.535
7	There can be misunderstandings when people from different cultural backgrounds speak English	7	3.71	.488
		7	4.14	.378
8	I think business people in most countries speak English nowadays	7	3.14	.690
		7	3.71	.756
9	In international business, it doesn't really matter if you don't know much about other cultures, so long as you speak English	7	1.57	.535
		7	1.71	.756
10	In order to communicate effectively with people from other countries you just have to be nice to everyone	7	2.57	1.134
		7	2.29	.951
11	Because English is becoming a global language, in the future that's all people in business will need to speak	7	2.86	1.215
		7	3.00	1.155
12	It's important to know something about other languages and cultures in order to be a good communicator in international business	7	4.86	.378
		7	4.57	.535
13	English is the same the world over	7	2.14	.690
		7	2.00	.577
14	It's important to know something about intercultural communication in order to be a good international manager	7	4.71	.488
		7	4.29	.488
15	Most people in Asian countries speak English	7	2.71	1.254
		7	2.71	1.113
16	English is the only language you need to do business in Asia	7	1.71	.951
		7	1.57	.787
17	Students from Asian countries speak English just like Australians	7	1.43	.787
		7	1.71	1.113
18	The only difference between Australian English and English spoken in Asia is the accent	7	1.86	.900
		7	2.29	.951

6.4.2.3 Working in multinational student teams

6.4.2.3.1 Sample group

The results in this section (see Table 6.8, below) show that although students in the sample group did not necessarily think working in multinational teams was easy, they did find the experience worthwhile on the whole. This is borne out also by comments

they made during interviews. The response to Question 1 demonstrates that students found working in the multinational teams to be a positive experience. The sample group showed at least minor improvements in all items except Question 3, which states that mixed nationality teams produce better results, and a drop in both items referring to gender (questions 7 and 8). Lower means on Questions 5 and 6 demonstrate a lack of tension within the sub-groups; and there was only a minor drop in the mean response to Question12 about international students not working as hard as Australian students. Importantly, 2 items showed a significant difference ($p < .05$): these were Question 13, which showed a higher level of agreement with having learned something about other cultures and Question 15, which, however, shows a drop in the level of agreement with having learned something about multinational teams through completion of the assignment task. There was also a slight drop in the mean response to Question 10, indicating more ease with understanding English spoken with an accent.

Table 6.8:

Paired sample statistics, sample group ABCD Comparison pre- and post- questionnaire, part D

Experience with group work in this unit		*N*	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
1	I found the experience of working in this group to be very positive **PRE Q**	14	3.64	1.082
	POST Q	14	4.00	.877
2	I found people in this group did not listen to what I had to say	14	2.21	.802
		14	2.21	1.122
3	I think mixed nationality groups are more creative and produce better assignments	14	3.43	1.089
		14	3.07	.730
4	I think students who do not speak English like Australians had problems in my group	14	3.21	1.051
		14	3.21	1.051
5	In my group there were different beliefs about how the group should function	14	3.57	.646
		14	3.00	.877
6	Personal relationships in my group were difficult because we were a multinational team	14	3.21	1.051
		14	2.71	1.326
7	I found it easier to work with the females on this assignment	14	3.29	.726
		14	2.79	1.424
8	I found it easier to work with the males on this assignment	14	2.86	.864
		14	2.71	1.069
9	I thought Australian students did not work as hard as international students on this assignment	14	2.57	1.016
		14	2.14	1.292
10	I had trouble understanding people who spoke with an accent in English	14	3.00	1.038
		14	2.93	1.072
11	I found that I modified my behaviour to fit in with this group	14	3.29	.994
		14	2.71	1.590
12	I thought international students did not work as hard as Australian students in my group	14	2.43	.756
		14	2.50	1.286
13	I think I learned something about other cultures through doing this assignment	14	3.29	.994
		14	4.00	.877
14	I think I still have a lot to learn about working with people from other cultures	14	4.43	.514
		14	4.07	.616
15	I learned something about multinational teams through completing this assignment.	14	4.36	.633
		14	3.86	.949

Note: **Question 13, significance .045; Question 15, significance .013.**

6.4.2.3.2 Control group

There are some important differences in this section of the questionnaire, which illustrate some negative responses compared to the sample group (see Table 6.9). The response to question 1 shows a drop in the mean, indicating that this was not a positive experience for at least some of the students. Reponses to Question 3 demonstrate that this group does not believe that multinational teams produce better assignments and there is also a marked increase in the belief that international students do not work as hard as Australian students (Question 12). There is a marked difference however in the response to Question 9, showing a strong belief that Australian students were working hard (also echoed in the interviews). This group also believes, however, that they learned something about other cultures (Question 13).

Table 6.9:

Paired sample statistics, control group EFGH Comparison pre- and post- questionnaire, part D

Experience with group work in this unit		*N*	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
1	I found the experience of working in this group to be very positive **PRE Q**	8	3.63	.744
	POST Q	8	3.13	1.126
2	I found people in this group did not listen to what I had to say	8	2.25	.707
		8	2.25	.707
3	I think mixed nationality groups are more creative and produce better assignments	8	3.13	1.126
		8	2.75	1.035
4	I think students who do not speak English like Australians had problems in my group	8	3.13	.991
		8	3.38	1.188
5	In my group there were different beliefs about how the group should function	8	3.63	.518
		8	3.38	.744
6	Personal relationships in my group were difficult because we were a multinational team	8	3.75	.886
		8	2.63	.916
7	I found it easier to work with the females on this assignment	8	3.50	1.069
		8	2.63	1.061
8	I found it easier to work with the males on this assignment	8	2.38	.518
		8	2.88	.641
9	I thought Australian students did not work as hard as international students on this assignment	8	2.25	.886
		8	1.63	.518
10	I had trouble understanding people who spoke with an accent in English	8	3.25	1.035
		8	3.13	.835
11	I found that I modified my behaviour to fit in with this group	8	3.13	1.126
		8	3.13	1.126
12	I thought international students did not work as hard as Australian students in my group	8	2.00	.535
		8	3.00	1.195
13	I think I learned something about other cultures through doing this assignment	8	3.25	1.488
		8	3.75	.463
14	I think I still have a lot to learn about working with people from other cultures	8	4.25	.463
		8	3.88	.835
15	I learned something about multinational teams through completing this assignment.	8	4.00	.756
		8	4.00	.535

Interestingly, the response to Question 6 shows that students do not consider team relationships to be more difficult because of multinational teams. This in fact echoes

what some students said during interviews: that is, where there was tension, it was attributed to a range of other causes, but not to cultural differences. With this group, also, there was a slight drop in the mean response to Question 10, indicating more ease with understanding English spoken with an accent. There was no increase in what students felt they had learned about working in multinational teams (Question 15) although the mean response was already **reasonably high.**

6.4.2.4 Comparison of sample and control group results in the post-questionnaire

A comparison of the results of the two groups shows that, as was indicated earlier, most change occurred in attitudes to language and culture issues, as reflected in Part B of the post-questionnaire. Since the two hour workshop for the sample group dealt with language and culture issues, it can therefore be said to have had some positive impact on students' attitudes. Another difference that emerged is that of better group interactions in the sample group. One further area in which there was a positive impact in the sample group was in students' perceptions of having improved their writing skills. These trends were confirmed in the face-to-face interviews, and analysis of interviews in the next section will shed more light on these issues.

As with the pre-questionnaire, there was room for written comments, but few students actually volunteered comments, probably because of lack of time, as the questionnaire was administered in the last class of semester. The following comments indicate the trends in the sample group:

> *I feel quite happy with my group. My group members were more creative than me and I think I should learn from them and try to improve to a high level* (Female international student, Group A).

> *Being the only Australian student in my group and the only one who understood English extremely well, it often took extra time to make group members understand concepts* (Male Australian student, Group B).

One student was not happy with her experience and said so quite clearly (although she was the *only* one in her group who felt this way):

I had a reasonably bad experience. I found it quite hard to work with the group that I had, largely due to cultural differences more so than language (Female Australian student, Group C).

Students in group D seem to have had a particularly good experience, as two of them commented:

After finishing the assignment, I feel happy with everyone because we worked hard to produce a good job (Female international student, Group D).

Multicultural teamwork has been a great experience! (Male Australian student, Group D)

In the control group, students in Group E seem to have had a good experience, but there were tensions evident in the other three sub-groups. One student from Group E commented:

I am now far more responsive to working in multinational teams. I relaxed and enjoyed the group work (first time for a unit). I noticed that by relaxing other people in the group shared their abilities and interests far more (Female Australian student, Group E).

In Group F there seemed to be a less positive atmosphere. One student commented:

Three out of four students just did NOT pull their weight, so I had to do twice as much work and hence get them a good mark for the assignment. They did NOT attend meetings and did NOT know how to reference. […] This is not good enough in my book […] I was not happy (Female Australian student, Group F).

A student from Group H seems to echo the same sentiments:

> *Unfortunately I have found that constantly, the workload falls on the Australian student, as was the case in my group* (Female Australian student, Group H).

Finally, one student who indicated she did not find the group experience positive commented:

> *I think that mixed nationality aside, positive experience within a group also has much to do with individual personalities* (Female Australian student, Group G).

6.4.3 Analysis of student interviews

Twelve face-to-face interviews were undertaken with students, six from each half of the class. Students were contacted by telephone and by email. The interviews were semi-structured around the questions indicated under Section 2.5. No student displayed any reluctance to speak; in fact a couple spoke rather forcefully about how negative they felt the group experience had been.

An analysis of the interviews shows quite clearly that those students in the sample group enjoyed their group experience much more. Their comments often relate to culture and language benefits, whereas comments from those in the control group are on the whole, less positive about the whole experience. The feelings reported may not be even across each sub-group. However, the analysis shows that groups A, B and C were very positive about their experience, while students in group D were quite satisfied. However, students in group F and G expressed strong feelings of dissatisfaction and annoyance about their experience during the interview. Those in group H were not as critical, but again the feeling was not positive. So feelings of dissatisfaction were much more strongly expressed by those in the control group during the interviews than during the progress reports. This is probably understandable, because the progress report, coming halfway through the process, still left room for the possibility of improvement, whereas the interview was at the end of the experience. Since the whole class had the same in-class experience of the unit International Management, this difference can probably be attributed to the 'Working in multinational groups' workshop held at the start of the unit.

Comments about how they had found the group experience of working in multinational teams for this task show some strong contrast between the two halves of the class. The following are some examples of the responses from those in the sample group:

> It was a good experience […] compared to other groups in the past, this one went smoothly and everyone did their share. Everyone in the group really got on together *(Group A).*

It was an interesting experience because half of the group were from China […] overall it was a positive experience (Group B).

> *It was good group experience […] the group got on really well […] everyone felt comfortable to express ideas and everyone was included* (Group C).

> *The experience of being in this group was average […]. The group was quite OK […]. It was not a very social group because everyone was so busy. It was a task-oriented group (Group D).*

These comments contrast fairly sharply with those of the control group:

> *The experience in this group was awful. It was a very negative experience (Group F).*

> *This was not a good group experience […] there was tension in the group. It's one of the worst experiences I have had, because nobody really cared* (Group G).

> *This was a good experience […] however, in this case we did not bond too much* (Group H).

> *This group had the usual problems […] it was worse than normal […]. In the end the experience wasn't too bad and the presentation was quite good* (Group H).

In response to questions about cultural and linguistic issues, it was interesting that those in the sample group on the whole made very positive comments, which show they had

indeed learned something positive from this experience and that they had also acquired some cultural sensitivity.

> *The Chinese girl couldn't speak up […] she had some good ideas but didn't say them immediately. She had to be encouraged to speak all the time* (Group A).

> *Working with people from different cultural backgrounds I learnt that you have to be patient […]. I used to dislike it when people spoke other languages in front of me, but I understood that for the Chinese girl it was much easier for her to explain to the other Chinese student in their first language […]. I felt I learned a lot, including about China* (Group B).

> *I learned that people from other cultures might be a bit shy, so you have to keep asking them and trying to involve them […] you have to make them feel comfortable* (Group C).

> *On the whole I found this to be a positive experience because I met new people and learnt about their cultural backgrounds* (Group D).

Those in the control group also displayed some sensitivity to culture and language issues, but this seems to be accompanied by less tolerance and more impatience:

> *The problem was not one of culture, but because of English language and report writing […]. One good thing about the multinational team was there was a broader amount of information about what was happening in other countries, because of the different nationalities in the group, but that's about it* (Group F).

> *Sometimes there were cultural differences, for example the Indonesians and Chinese do not express their thoughts straight away […]. The German and Aussies were more confident in speaking […]. There are differences in the way they treat people; they sometimes get frustrated at the way Asians do things* (Group G).

The two Asians were very quiet […] it was hard to drag anything out of them. I learned that you can't assume people *[from other cultures]* mean the same things as you. Their intonation and the way they spoke just wasn't understandable to others *(Group G).*

There was not really any language problem because they all could speak English fluently […]. There may have been some cultural problems – they wanted different things, how to schedule meetings, or how to handle the assignment […] For example, the Indonesian guy wanted a simpler assignment with less research (Group H).

The problems with international students were really language problems […]. One international student in particular had his own expectations of what to do (Group H).

When asked about what they thought were the skills needed to work in multinational teams, the answers of the two halves again reflected some differences, although almost everyone seemed to agree that the greatest need was for 'patience'. Among the comments from the sample group were the following:

For success in multinational teams you have to be more tolerant of cultural differences and not alienate them, for example by talking about football. You also have to understand that others might have language difficulties […]. You have to accept that their understanding of English may not be as good (Group A).

The skills you need are language skills […] you probably need to be aware of differences. You need to be patient with others and tap into people's sense of humour, even if it's a bit different, so that you get along when doing your work (Group B).

You need to have listening skills (that 's most important) and patience and understanding. The skills we learned here are really useful. This [experience] *is like a small portion of the real world. This is like a small introduction* (Group C).

The skills you need for multinational teams are listening and understanding. And you need to question to see if they [international students] understand what you are talking about (Group D).

For the best outcome you need to communicate well […] it's an efficiency advantage as well. You need to find out something about the other person's culture in order to communicate well, cooperate and get the best outcome (Group D).

The control group's responses to the same questions seemed to lack this sort of empathy and understanding, and again some impatience was evident:

The qualities you need to work in multinational teams are patience, time management and communication skills - that is interpersonal skills and standards of English [of team members]. *You also need leadership abilities. You need to have systems set up that you can follow: practices, policies and procedures like a group contract… and consequences should be in place if people don't deliver* (Group F).

You need people skills, communication skills […] flexibility and no stereotyping (Group G).

In multinational teams you need patience and don't assume that everything is as straightforward as you think (Group G).

You need patience – this is needed because some people work more flexibly and some faster and they want the job done. You need a positive state of mind […] you need to be open-minded (Group H).

If I had to advise someone *[about working in multinational teams]* I would say that you need to be sensitive to different expectations, to be tolerant […] be willing to come to some sort of compromise and be patient in achieving that *(Group H).*

Finally, all students interviewed, except the student from group C (the group with the lowest overall mark) and group F, indicated that they were either satisfied or quite satisfied with their final mark for the group assignment.

6.4.4 Results achieved for the group task

It should be noted that the group process in this case did *not* represent part of the assessment task: that is, there was no mark allocated to it. However, the results achieved by each group are worth reporting because they do not always, and particularly in this case, reflect the success or otherwise of group interactions. If lecturers simply look at results achieved for the group task, they may be unaware of how well or how badly groups are functioning (in terms of the cooperation between team members and learning), and also of resentments that build up, defeating the purpose of placing students in teams in order to prepare them for future work contexts (a rationale often offered for group assignments).

In this particular case, ironically, more positive interaction and group experience did not necessarily result in better marks. This task required students to undertake a research project, whose results they would present orally before submitting the written assignment. A separate mark (out of 100%) was allocated to each of these tasks. The marks for each task allocated to each group are as illustrated in Table 6.10. The average for the two tasks shows that the highest mark was allocated to one of the control sub-groups (Group G). Moreover, if the combined total marks for groups E, F, G and H are averaged, the mean is 78%, whereas the same average for the sample group is 72%. How can this be explained? Fortunately, the interviews shed some light on this phenomenon. It seems that where groups were not functioning very well (particularly groups F & G and possibly also Group H) self-described ‘high achievers’ in the group took over the task of co-ordinating and pulling the assignment together in order to ensure a good mark. Two students, one from group F and one from group G, in particular, complained of having to do all the work themselves and of having had very little input from other group members (or little input that they felt was of a good enough standard to incorporate). In Group H, it seems the group leader also made a very significant contribution.

Students in the sample group, on the other hand, may have sacrificed a higher mark for the sake of group coherence. Another explanation could be that in their efforts to be more culturally sensitive (which the initial workshop trained them to be) they were not as 'pushy'. By contrast, students from the control group who were worried about the lack of progress seemed to have no qualms about 'taking over' and ensuring that a high quality assignment was produced, even if they had to do most of the work themselves, as they reported. Interestingly, they were all female. This would seem to confirm the findings of Caspersz et al (2002a) that females are perceived as being better organised and better project managers in group tasks.

However, in educational terms, it is important to note that the higher marks achieved by the control group would not necessarily reflect better learning by all team members, but rather the efforts of one person in the group. The assignment is therefore not really the product of group or team contributions and students are unlikely to have acquired good team working skills. Moreover, the 'successful' high achiever feels angry that other team members are 'loafing' on her efforts, thus building up resentment towards other students which could, in the long term, reinforce cultural stereotypes. Other students in the group might feel offended or left out when their contributions are not wanted or ignored. In terms of preparation for multinational workplaces, therefore, placing students in multinational teams without due preparation and supervision would seem to be counter-productive. Research in the workplace also indicates that multinational teams need to be trained to make the most of their diversity (Distefano & Maznevski 2000). According to these researchers, diverse teams which are managed well perform best, compared to homogenous teams (next best) and diverse teams which are managed poorly (which perform worst). Caspersz et al. (2004, p.6) also point out that "the challenge of managing cultural diversity is complex indeed. However the benefits of effectively doing so are many and varied." Among the benefits that Caspersz et al. found for student teams were enhanced creativity, critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

Table 6.10: Results for Group Tasks

Group	Oral presentation (100%)	Research paper (100%)	Averaged mark for group task (100%)	
A	76	75	**75.5**	**Sample group average 72%**
B	74	66	**70**	
C	75	61	**68**	
D	77	71	**74**	
E	83	68	**75.5**	**Control group average 78%**
F	74	70	**72**	
G	85	80	**82.5**	
H	82	79	**80.5**	

6.5 Discussion

This case study was undertaken to ascertain whether a deliberate intervention to help students acquire cultural understanding and intercultural communication skills would have a positive effect on their interaction in multinational teams. The cohort consisted of a business class for a unit in International Management with a specific team task – the completion of a group research project for assessment purposes. The class of 35 students (17 males and 18 females) was divided into two halves, with one half (the sample group) receiving a workshop on language and culture issues in multinational teams, and the other (the control group) on working in teams, but with no emphasis on language and culture issues. The cohort of 35 students had 12 nationalities and each sub-group of four or five students had a mixture of three or four nationalities/cultural backgrounds.

The data gathered through the pre-questionnaire (see Chapter 5) showed that students are well disposed to learning about other cultures and other countries. However, by half way through the semester when a progress report was completed by over a third of the participants in the case study, it was becoming evident that the deliberate workshop intervention to assist students to operate in multinational teams was having some positive effect on the sample group, whereas the control group was showing signs of tension. And it might be a sign of this underlying tension that nine completed progress reports were received from the sample group and only four from the control group.

More follow-up was also required for student interview volunteers from the control group than the sample group and no student agreed to be interviewed from group E. This trend became firmer by the end of semester so that three of the four sub-groups in the control group did not function very well in terms of interpersonal relationships, collaboration and intercultural communication. The sub-groups in the sample group, on the other hand, displayed more positive team interaction and greater intercultural sensitivity. For example, one student in the sample group reported now understanding "the way people do the work in their styles". Another student in the sample group reported having gained "appreciation of cultural and gender differences." These more positive attitudes are likely to be attributable to the effects of the sample group workshop on multinational teams, which sought to make students aware of cultural and linguistic differences and how these might affect the group task, for as Distefano and Maznevski (2000, p.46) state:

> Team members from different cultures come to the group settings with very different predefined notions about how a group should proceed. Furthermore cultural values and norms are deeply held, and almost always implicit and taken for granted […]. Cultural differences [can] hinder smooth interaction.

Research evidence also indicates that if culturally diverse teams are well managed, positive achievements are likely to be the result in both work and study contexts (Adler 1997; Cox & Blake 1999; Caspersz et al. 2004 & 2005; Crosling & Martin 2005). In the instance of this case study, it could be argued that one half of the cohort, the sample group, was reasonably well prepared for the group task in multinational teams, whereas the other (the control group) was not.

The earlier results obtained from the progress report were confirmed through end of semester interviews with a number of students and the results of the post-questionnaire. Analysis of these data shows that students in the sample group improved in a number of areas, particularly in acquiring cultural sensitivity and operating successfully with others in multinational teams, whereas tensions in the control group intensified. The sample group demonstrated (small) gains through the post-questionnaire in areas such as confidence with written English, understanding people with accents, and learning more about other cultures through mixing with students from all over the world. This is important, for we have seen that these are among the skills needed to operate

successfully in multinational business settings. Learning about intercultural communication remained the same, although the mean was already quite high. While the above gains were not statistically significant, it is interesting to note that results for the control group reflect a drop in confidence with written English and formal and informal writing styles, and a reduced belief that English language skills are being developed during university studies (in this case all with statistically significant decreases).

Reinforcing the tension that developed in the control sub-groups, students in the control group indicated that they did not find the experience of working in culturally diverse groups very positive whereas those in the sample group did. Both groups showed reluctance to attribute any difficulties to different nationalities in the team and both groups indicated they learned something about other cultures through undertaking the joint assessment task. Also both groups displayed slight gains in understanding people with different accents, a point which we know is important in intercultural communication (Jenkins 2000). Both groups indicated they learned something about working in multinational teams, although it would seem the expectations of the sample group had been higher than what actually transpired, or it could be that the lower scores mean they still felt they had a lot more to learn.

The interviews (six from each of the control group and sample group) were very revealing since they allowed the researcher to probe deeper than could be done through the questionnaires. The interviews left no doubt that interaction in the sample group had been much more successful than in the control group. As one student in sub-group F said: “The experience in this group was awful. It was a negative experience”. Another said: “It’s one of the worst experiences I have had, because nobody really cared”. While students from the sample group did not say that working in multinational teams was easy (“you have to have listening skills and patience and understanding”) their comments revealed an attitude that was more understanding and open to other cultures: “I learned that people from other cultures might be a bit shy, so you have to make them feel comfortable”.

On the other hand, some students in the control group, which it could be said were not well-prepared and ‘managed’, expressed disappointment and indeed some anger about the group process. This was not always evident to all members of ‘unhappy’ groups. For

example, one control group interviewee thought everything had gone well, whereas another from the same group thought the process had not worked well (Group H). Caspersz et al. (2002a) found that some of the major obstacles facing student teams have more to do with interpersonal skills such as communication, negotiation and conflict resolution and not with students' pre-disposition to working in team projects. We have seen through the pre-questionnaire that students were, indeed, well disposed (although a little anxious) towards working in multinational teams.

Students in the sample group could be said to have received better preparation in interpersonal skills for this exercise. They were given the opportunity to explore cultural and linguistic differences and different expectations and interpretations of group work, to examine how these might influence their team interactions, and to explore misunderstandings that could arise. As Crosling and Martin (2005, p.6) state:

> The role of culture and how it influences learning styles and interaction needs to be emphasised to the students, so that they more fully appreciate the advantages of collaborative activities […]. At the same time, students also need to be made aware of some of the problems inherent to interactions with people of different backgrounds.

Students from the sample group, then, were in a better position to have a successful group experience, and this, in fact, proved to be the case. Those interviewed from the sample group gave a very different picture from control group students, and although one was disappointed with the lower than expected group mark, all seemed very happy with the group experience. As one student said: "this [experience] is like a small portion of the real world […] like a small introduction".

In summary, then, it appears that the deliberate intervention to raise student awareness of language and cultural issues assisted a group of students to interact more successfully in multinational teams than another group of students who did not receive the same support. It would seem that when we combine students in multinational teams in order for them to learn from each other, we need to structure the learning experience so that they derive the greatest benefit possible from it. We know from previous research (Hawthorne 1997; Nesdale & Todd 1997; Volet & Ang 1998; Smart Volet & Ang 2000;

Briguglio 2000; Caspersz et al. 2005) that just being 'thrown together' is not enough and can, indeed, be counter-productive.

It would also seem that students require greater understanding of and more training in intercultural communication. Several students in the successful sample group stressed honing listening skills "and patience and understanding". These are skills that are not often taught deliberately in class. Students are often taught about oral presentation and sometimes about academic writing. They are not, however, taught about inductive skills for informal social and work-related communication which, according to Crosling and Ward (2001), are essential for the workplace. These authors argue that where students are *taught the skills* to work in culturally mixed team projects, these offer an ideal forum to develop a critical approach to informal communication. They also advise that assisting students to acquire such skills should be undertaken developmentally, over the duration of a course.

Since the major intervention in this case study was a single two and a half hour workshop focussing on language and culture issues in multinational teams, it is felt that much more could be achieved if the intervention were more sustained and over a longer period of time. A more sustained effort could be in the form of a semester unit with a similar focus and/or activities involving intercultural interaction in the course of a business degree. In particular, it should be emphasised that the process of sensitising students involves more than just imparting cultural knowledge, which of itself may have very little effect, since all students displayed a reasonable level of cultural awareness at the beginning of the unit. However, as Edwards et al. (2003) point out, 'international awareness' is the first step in a three-tiered typology that would gradually lead to 'international competence' and eventually to 'international expertise'. For this to occur, it is the *process* of leading students to question, probe, discuss and analyse language and cultural issues (which is what the workshop aimed to do) that is likely to be more beneficial and effective. If this is so, then such an approach could be incorporated much more into the teaching and learning curriculum in business education to develop students who will have greater cultural and linguistic sensitivity. There is much support in the literature (Volet & Ang 1998; Smart, Volet & Ang 2000; De Vita 2001; Caspersz et al. 2005; Crosling & Martin 2005) for the use of culturally diverse student teams to achieve student development in these areas, although it is recognised that there are challenges in managing such teams. However, as Smart et al. (2000, p.9) state:

> If our central mission is to prepare international students for a global workforce, then it is crucial that they better understand each other's culture, learn to communicate, socialise and work together and to network.

6.7 Conclusion

The first part of this case study demonstrated the attitudes of a 'typical' group of business students in an Australian tertiary institution to language and cultural issues in business. We saw that students are equipped with some knowledge about cultural and linguistic matters and that they are well disposed towards other cultures. The second part of the case study, described in this chapter, has highlighted issues related to students working in multinational teams and the tensions and difficulties that can develop if such teams are not well-prepared and managed. The case study has also shown that, as Distefano and Maznevski (2000) suggest, issues in intercultural communication may be more important than other factors operating in team dynamics, such as gender, intra-group trust and perceptions of self- efficacy. In particular, the case study showed that deliberate intervention to raise awareness of cultural and linguistic issues in intercultural communication can succeed through a process of leading students to question, probe and understand cultural differences. We have also seen that where this sort of intervention does not occur, simply having students in culturally mixed teams does not maximise cultural learning and can, in fact, lead to negative attitudes to working in multinational teams and towards team members. The next chapter will explore in more depth the implications of this case study and the multinational companies case study for business education. A number of possible approaches will be examined and discussed in some detail and recommendations made.

CHAPTER 7

PREPARING THE BUSINESS GRADUATE OF THE 21ST CENTURY: TOWARDS A GLOBALISED WORLD

7.1 Introduction

This chapter examines current business education at tertiary level, particularly in an Australian context (which includes large numbers of international, as well as Australian students) and, based on the findings of the two case studies described in chapters 4, 5 and 6, and other current research, offers suggestions for future directions. This research is situated at the intersection of business communication, intercultural communication and internationalisation of tertiary education and draws on research from all three fields. While the links are made to internationalisation, it should be made clear that the focus will be on internationalisation of curriculum, and not on other broader issues related to internationalisation, which would be beyond the scope of this thesis. The chapter will briefly examine the effects of globalisation and internationalisation, and discuss how they might impact on future business education at the tertiary level. It will then touch on the role that applied linguistics can play in shaping language policies and content related to internationalisation of curriculum. More particularly, it will indicate directions for intercultural business communication, which, coupled with other abilities and attributes, will enable business graduates to operate successfully in a globalised world.

7.2 Globalisation and internationalisation of tertiary education

Maidstone (1995, in Whalley et al. 1997, p.5) identifies the trends of internationalisation and globalisation impacting on Canada as follows:

- the emergence of a global political economy and a new international division of labour;
- the greater global interdependency with regard to political, environmental and social issues and problems;
- the reconfiguring of international relations and new definitions of global security that have developed with the end of the cold war; and

- the substantial demographic changes in Canada and other Western industrialised societies resulting from changing patterns of immigration.

Maidstone makes it clear that these trends are universal and therefore their influence is inescapable.

In the context of higher education, Altbach (2004, p.3) defines globalisation as "the broad economic, technological and scientific trends that directly affect higher education and are largely inevitable. Politics and culture are also part of the new global realities". Altbach reminds us that globalisation in regard to universities is not something new. Indeed the earliest universities (Bologna, Paris and others) were very much 'global institutions' serving an international clientele and functioning with a common language, Latin, and with professors from many countries (Altbach 2004, p.2). Altbach points out that globalisation cannot be completely avoided if universities are to remain relevant. Internationalisation, in the context of higher education, includes "the specific policies and programs undertaken [by universities] to cope with or exploit globalisation" (Altbach 2004, p.3). Knight (1999, p.27) indicates there is some slippage in the way the two terms are used to refer to higher education. She distinguishes between them by stating that 'global' refers to "education which involves the whole world and relates to world issues", whereas 'international' refers to "education which involves/relates to the people, cultures and systems of different nations". Knight argues that internationalisation implies respect for, and understanding of, differences and similarities between and among nations, whereas globalisation probably does not. In higher education, as in trade, globalisation can bring access but, as Altbach (2004, 2005) warns, it can also reinforce existing inequalities. Both Altbach (2004) and Knight (1999) point out that the providers of international education are largely Western developed countries which deliver education, most commonly in the English language, and from a 'Western' perspective:

> Now, multinational corporations, media conglomerates, and even a few leading universities can be seen as the new neocolonists – seeking to dominate not for ideological or political reasons, but rather for commercial gain (Altbach, 2004 p.6).

Altbach (2004, 2005) reminds us that historically, academe has always been international in scope (and characterised by inequalities) and the strong globalisation

thrust merely makes it impossible to resist internationalisation. What we need to do, he suggests, is to recognise inequalities and then try to overcome them "in order to ensure that globalisation does not turn into the neo-colonialism of the 21st century" (Altbach 2004, p.18). His cautions are strongly supported by others (Van Damme 2001; Jackson 2003; Haigh 2003).

'Internationalisation' is conceived and defined in various ways. Trevaskes, Eisenchelas and Liddicoat (2003, p.11) differentiate between 'weak' and 'strong' perceptions of internationalisation, with the first showing a superficial engagement with the concept (and perhaps more concern for the marketing of education to international students) and the latter a much deeper understanding and exploration of the concept, with the emphasis on internationalisation of curriculum. Stier (2004) also informs us that internationalisation is perceived by some as 'a *state* of things', by others as a '*process*' and by others still as a '*doctrine*'[author's italics], these approaches reflecting very different motivations. Although many Australian universities have incorporated internationalisation policies which would reflect 'strong' perceptions of internationalisation as a transforming policy for all those engaged in teaching and learning, the truth, say Trevaskes et al. (2003), is that in many cases the rhetoric far outweighs reality. They feel that Australian universities have merely acknowledged the presence of large numbers of international students on local campuses but have not utilised this phenomenon to develop "a culturally literate, interculturally capable society in Australia. [Moreover] as the imperative to produce graduates who can operate successfully in the global market environment strengthens, such holding back becomes increasingly unsustainable and self-defeating" (Trevaskes et al. 2003, p.10).

7.2.1 Internationalisation of curriculum

Internationalised *curricula* have been defined as:

> Curricula 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, p.7).

The typology suggested by the OECD (1994, p.7) covers formal and informal curriculum and includes the following categories:

- Curricula with an international subject;
- Curricula in which the traditional area is broadened by a comparative approach;
- Curricula which prepare students for defined international professions;
- Curricula in foreign language or linguistics which address cross-communication issues and provide training in intercultural skills;
- Interdisciplinary programs covering more than one country;
- Curricula leading to internationally recognised professional qualifications;
- Curricula leading to joint double degrees;
- Curricula in which compulsory parts are offered abroad; and
- Curricula in which the content is specifically designed for foreign students.

Although this definition and typology are now more than ten years old, some would claim that very little progress has been made in that time. The disappointment with the failure of universities to truly internationalise curriculum is fairly common not only in Australia (Smart, Volet & Ang 2000; Nesdale & Todd 1997; Trevaskes et al. 2003; Liddicoat 2003; Eisenchelas et al. 2003), but also in the USA (Hayward 2000) and elsewhere (Stier 2004). And yet if we compare present university curricula to those of ten years ago we might find that, at least on the surface, some things have changed. For example, more units carry 'international' in their title (such as 'International Management', the unit used for the student teams case study for this research); and this usually reflects some change in content to include international perspectives (Briguglio, 1999). However, deep level changes that would equip graduates with intercultural communication competencies would require awareness of language issues across the curriculum. Such changes would be tackled more effectively at the broader university level through the development of language policies integrated with internationalisation policies, thus providing a more coherent framework for developments across the curriculum.

A number of universities both in Australia and elsewhere already have language polices. For example the policies of Stellenbosch University (2004) and Cardiff University (2005) relate to the rights of minorities; others, such as those at Lingnan University Hong Kong (2000) and the university policies of the European Union (2001) are tied more closely to political and strategic, as well as identity, issues; others, such as Curtin's (2004c) 'Language of Instruction Policy' aim to clarify language of instruction

issues, particularly for offshore campuses; and still others, such as those of Monash University (2002) and Wollongong University (2005), are more broadly related to curriculum. The Monash University 'Language Policy', in particular, seems very far-sighted, promoting the sort of student development that is advocated in this chapter, and offering a good example for other universities:

> In adopting a University Language Policy, Monash University recognises the centrality of language in academic, professional and social life, the rich linguistic resources available within the institution, and the language needs generated by globalisation.

Of course the development of clear and far-sighted policies is only a first step, with implementation often proving more challenging.

7.2.2 Internationalisation and graduate attributes

Recent moves in articulating and developing graduate attributes may be another way to foster internationalisation, since the graduate attributes that are indicated for the future often overlap with those that will/can be developed through internationalisation of the curriculum. As Barrie (2004 p.263) states, "graduate attributes sit at a vital intersection of many of the forces shaping higher education today."

Discussion around internationalisation and graduate attributes is inextricably bound up with issues surrounding the role of the university and particularly its role in the twenty-first century. Graduate attributes (also variously called graduate qualities, generic skills, generic attributes, core skills and core capabilities) are those skills and qualities that we expect students to have developed through undertaking their degree. This topic has attracted much attention in the last twenty years or so, with many universities all over the world, including Australian universities, formulating statements of graduate attributes they aim to develop in their students, and even attempts internationally to develop international standards (Knight 1999). These developments have led to discussion about the sort of knowledge, skills and abilities that students will require to function professionally and socially in future scenarios, among them, of course, the world of business. The debate seems to move between two major orientations: an instrumental/economic one, which argues that university education should prepare

graduates for the workforce; and a more liberal one, which posits that undergraduates need to be prepared to contribute more broadly to cultural and social development, including their own personal development. Candy (1994), in his study of lifelong learning, takes the view that not only are these orientations not mutually exclusive, but indeed both are necessary for continuing learning throughout life. Reid (1996) supports Candy's view, arguing that while we cannot ignore the economic rationalist agenda altogether, we cannot let it alone shape the content and thrust of university courses. In his aptly titled 'Higher education or education for hire?' Reid (1996, p.142) states that the duty of universities is "to be responsive, but not subordinate, to current socio-economic needs". The thrust towards graduate attributes, therefore, is influenced as much by political, as by educational, motivations.

Barrie & Prosser (2004) and Barnett (2004) state that we are educating students for an extremely uncertain future. One could argue that the future is always uncertain, but, as Barnett (2004, p.248) states, the current unprecedented *pace* of change, "its character, its intensity [and] its felt impact" make the situation at the beginning of the 21st century somewhat different. Barnett thus posits the need for a curriculum which will prepare students for 'supercomplexity'. Barrie (2004) describes a recent process adopted at the University of Sydney to establish and implement a set of graduate attributes. The three 'holistic' overarching attributes which staff identified were: scholarship, *global citizenship* and lifelong learning. And although the number and variety of graduate attributes developed by universities may differ, the theme of preparing students for operating in global scenarios is seen repeatedly in higher education literature, with competencies in intercultural communication a priority. Whalley et al. (1997) refer to a new set of skills that graduates of the future will require which are variously referred to as 'international literacy', 'international consciousness', 'global awareness' or 'a global perspective'. Sadiki (2001, p.5) states that we should aim for a curriculum that will develop a form of "global citizenship" and will prepare its recipients everywhere "for global community". Knight (1999, p.13) who undertook several studies in Canada, found that respondents from education, government and the private sector all agreed that the number one rationale of importance for higher education was "to prepare students and scholars who are internationally knowledgeable and interculturally competent".

In short, the impact of globalisation and internationalisation have placed global citizenship capabilities at the forefront of graduate attributes. Nowhere is this more evident than in relation to business graduates. Knight (1999, p.5), for example, states:

> The globalised marketplace and economy have resulted in increased interest and opportunities for graduates to be employed by multinational companies. This requires that the higher education sector be prepared to provide relevant training and education to ensure that graduates are well prepared to work in a more globalised economy even if the majority of them may never leave their home country to work.

In this sort of context, intercultural skills, and particularly intercultural communication skills (which we saw in Chapter 2, and through the case studies undertaken for this research, are essential for business graduates), are at the core of a university education for the twenty-first century:

> The preparation of graduates who have a strong knowledge and skill base in intercultural relations and communications is considered by many academics as one of the strongest rationales for internationalising the teaching/learning experience of students in undergraduate and graduate programs (Knight 1999, p.17).

Altbach (2004 & 2005) reminds us, however, that the (fairly young) field of business and management studies is particularly dominated by American perspectives and, as indicated in Chapter 2, even the literature in intercultural business studies has tended to be presented largely through American/Western eyes. If we really want to prepare graduates for work in multinational settings, we would do well to eschew many of the ready-made materials and simplistic courses for intercultural development and concentrate on more carefully considered processes which shall be discussed in the latter part of this chapter. As Stier (2004, p.87) indicates:

> Intercultural competence is not something that is easily accessible or achievable by using a manual […], but requires that hand of time and a vast personal investment.

7.3 Current preparation of business students

Does our current preparation of business graduates in Australian universities develop in them the skills and competencies they require for the global workplace? There are certainly instances of excellent internationalisation of curriculum initiatives in Australian universities, but research in the area (Volet & Ang 1998; Committee of Associate Deans Teaching 1999; Smart et al. 2000; Liddicoat et al. 2003) would seem to indicate a lack of 'whole of university', 'embedded' or 'deep learning' approaches.

7.3.1 Internationalisation of curriculum in Australian universities

The 'Internationalisation of the curriculum' report (1999, pp.4-6) of the Committee of Associate Deans of Teaching traces four phases of internationalisation of curriculum in Australian universities (using Monash University as a model). These phases are:

1. *international students on an Australian university campus* (this phase focuses mainly on introducing a number of measures to cater for the needs of large numbers of international students on an Australian campus);
2. *systematic curriculum development for internationalisation* (this phase ushers in a more systematic approach to revision of the curriculum to include international perspectives for all students);
3. *transnational operations and internationalisation of the curriculum* (this phase is concerned with curriculum for operations in overseas campuses and overseas programs); and
4. *integrating and normalising internationalisation of the curriculum* (this phase would see internationalisation of *all* aspects of a university's curriculum, and would require that "both students and staff become more self-reflexive about what and how they learn and teach").

Currently, most Australian universities are dealing with phase 1 and some are addressing issues in phase 2 and 3, but it is unlikely that any could claim to be at phase 4. Smart et al. (2000, p.37) state that "in most cases [the process of internationalising of curriculum] has been largely restricted to altering the subject matter content to make it less exclusively Australian and more relevant to the global environment to which all our students are being exposed". And yet we have seen that if we want to develop in business students the competencies and attributes to enable them to operate confidently

at an international level, we need to engage them at a deep level of learning that will lead to their becoming more reflexive. Some would even challenge that we have progressed as far as is indicated above. For example Eisenchlas et al. (2003, p.5) see that true internationalisation is only possible if we view "literacy, language and interculturalitly as integral constituents of the internationalisation process".

However, it should be pointed out that in this area, Australian universities are probably not behind other world institutions. A 2003 internationalisation survey by the International Association of Universities (a UNESCO backed body) found, among other things, that "while two thirds of the institutions appear to have an internationalisation policy/strategy in place, only about half of these institutions have budgets and a monitoring framework to support the implementation" (Knight 2004, p.4). The survey also found that internationalisation is largely driven by faculty, that is, those academic staff members who are committed to making a difference, rather than initiatives coming centrally from university leaders. We have seen that Eisenchlas et al. (2003) have said similar things about Australian universities. However, while internationalisation of curriculum may not be 'systematic' or 'integrated' in Australian universities, there are instances of good practice (particularly in relation to graduate attributes) in individual units, courses and Schools, with the impetus coming from academics.

7.3.2 Internationalisation at Curtin University of Technology

Curtin was one of the first Australian universities to internationalise, in the sense of drawing international students to Australian campuses and teaching offshore courses. It currently ranks among the top four Australian providers of tertiary education to international students, with numbers having shown a steady growth in recent years. Curtin University statistics for August 1999 showed that it had 3531 onshore and 3297 offshore students, making a total of 6,828 international students. By 2002 this number had almost doubled to 11,313 (DEST, 2002). Curtin's international enrolments for 2003 numbered 13,935 and had increased to 15,223 by the end of 2004 (Curtin University Planning Office, 2004).

Curtin has an Internationalisation Plan (2002-2005) and it was the first University in Australia to develop a Cross-Cultural Education Policy in 1994, which aimed to promote cross-cultural understanding across the University. The Internationalisation

Plan (2002-2005) is backed by a number of policies and internal committees and its progress is monitored (most recently by a Working Party in 2003). While development in internationalisation of curriculum initiatives is not even across the University, there are some very good examples at Curtin, reported in Butorac (1997), which developed from the impetus received by special funding for internationalisation projects in the mid 1990s. For example, the School of Design at Curtin has implemented an excellent project to develop intercultural communication in its undergraduates, which has won national recognition and has also acted as a catalyst for internationalisation of the School's total undergraduate curriculum (Smart et al. 2000, p.38). The School provides an example of what the authors describe as successful 'interventionist strategies'. And Curtin's list of graduate attributes (Curtin University of Technology 2004b) includes the following: communicating effectively; recognising and applying international perspectives; and demonstrating cultural awareness and understanding. However, the explanation of these attributes indicates that what is being aimed for is 'awareness', 'understanding' and 'valuing' of other perspectives and cultural differences. While this is praiseworthy, we have seen that we need to push these abilities further in order to develop student competencies for intercultural interaction. Moreover, the attributes that have been defined for Curtin business students actually lack an explicit intercultural component altogether. The CBS graduate attributes are: communication (written, verbal interaction and presentation); critical and creative thinking (decision-making and problem solving); teamwork; information technology; and information literacy (CBS 2004). While the communication component certainly allows for the inclusion of intercultural perspectives, this is nowhere explicitly stated.

An analysis of the assessment component of the 30 undergraduate units with the largest enrolments in CBS shows that only an average of 12% is allocated to oral language, with around 28% allocated to written assignments and 60% to written examinations. And even the comparatively small emphasis placed on oral language includes a significant proportion for oral presentation, which we have seen is not the only sort of oral language skills students require (Crosling & Ward 2001). This pattern is unlikely to encourage in students the development of the sorts of interpersonal, intercultural skills needed for interaction in global business contexts. Although it can be argued that assessments do not reflect the totality of classroom activity and learning, nevertheless it is likely that both staff and students will place most emphasis on those aspects that are seen to be important for assessment purposes – in this case 'content' tested in written

formats. We have seen through the student groups case study, on the other hand, that students can be helped to learn much more about language and culture in the course of their studies through deliberate intervention aimed at developing their intercultural competence.

7.4 Implications of data obtained from the case studies

The multinational companies case study and the multinational student groups case study have highlighted some considerations for future business education, particularly in regard to the use of English as a global language and to intercultural communication.

The multinational companies case study indicated that it would be advantageous in the Southeast Asia region, and Hong Kong and Malaysia in particular, to be a bilingual speaker, with possibly Malay, Cantonese, Putonghua (and /or other Chinese languages), Tamil and English. All respondents reported they used one of these (almost always first) languages as well as English in the workplace. The case study showed that it is difficult to predict which macro skills in English will be most needed in the workplace, since we saw that in Malaysia, interpersonal skills were extremely important, as were in some cases written skills, whereas in Hong Kong, written skills were most needed (although written skills were needed especially for email communication, which we have seen has qualities of both written and spoken language). This confirms the findings of earlier research on the use of English in Hong Kong (Pennington, 1998; Li, 2000 & 2002; Pan, 2000; Bahtia & Candlin, 2001; Bolton, 2000 & 2002b; Evans & Green, 2003) and the use of Malaysian English (both spoken and written) in Malaysian business contexts (Asmah, 1988; Le Vasan, 1994; David, 2000; Gill, 1999, 2000 & 2002; Nair-Venugopal, 2000, 2001 & 2003). The case study also indicated that the emphasis on oral presentation in business courses might be too narrow. Instead, students require higher levels of competence in interpersonal communication in intercultural, bilingual/multilingual contexts. This supports the findings of Crosling and Ward (2001) who, while acknowledging the importance of formal presentation skills, argue that these skills alone are an inadequate preparation for the workplace, where most oral communication requires inductive skills for informal social and work-related communication, participation in discussion in meetings, and team work.

The multinational student groups case study showed that in a typical Australian business class with a mixture of Australian and international undergraduates, students

are well disposed to learning about other languages and cultures and that they already possess quite good levels of knowledge in these areas. Students also showed that they are aware of the extensive use of English in the world of business while at the same time they are not ignorant of the advantages of bilingualism. Students seem to understand that English is used differently all over the world and that they will need to develop intercultural communication skills; however, they do not perhaps fully appreciate what this involves, nor the complexity of intercultural communication. In particular, the findings indicate that graduates need to develop skills and attributes that will assist them to work in multinational/multicultural teams. This also supports the findings of Volet and Ang (1998), Smart et al. (2000) and Caspersz et al. (2002a, 2002b, 2004). If students lack such skills, often tensions can develop which reinforce prejudices and lead to a lack of team cohesion.

More specifically, competence in intercultural communication needs to include the following capabilities highlighted by both case studies, indicating the need for *all* business graduates (be they Australian or international students) to:

- expect and be able to deal with different varieties of English;
- have a tolerance for and acceptance of different accents in English as a lingua franca;
- develop accommodation strategies to deal with different accents and different ways of speaking in English (where differences are perhaps more marked than in writing);
- have reasonably high levels of fluency in both spoken and written English;
- be able to read and respond appropriately in English to different types of emails/faxes in a business context;
- be fluent in telephone conversation in English; and
- be able to write internal (largely informal) reports in English.

This, in turn, means that business courses should:

- provide deliberate, structured intervention to help students to acquire interpersonal communication skills for multicultural/multinational settings and for working in multicultural/multinational teams;

- have a greater focus on teaching and learning *processes* that will develop student attributes, skills and competencies in the above areas, rather than simply on content; and
- aim to develop *interpretability* skills as well as *intelligibility* skills in intercultural communication, thus placing the responsibility for understanding of English as a global language on *all* students, be they first or second language speakers of English.

For we have seen that it is not enough for students to have 'knowledge' and 'awareness' of cultural and linguistic issues (useful though these may be). Students need to be involved in teaching and learning processes which engage them and develop them. As Barnett (2004, pp.257-259) states:

> Learning for an unknown future cannot be accomplished by the acquisition of either knowledge or skills [but rather] certain kinds of human qualities. They are qualities such as carefulness, thoughtfulness, humility, criticality, receptiveness, resilience, courage and stillness. The pedagogical journey [for engaging students as persons and not merely as 'knowers'] will be one of encountering strangeness, of wrestling with it, and forming one's own responses to it.

Barnett could well be describing the journey to acquiring intercultural competence, for Scollon and Scollon (1995, p.252) give us very similar advice:

> We conclude with what might seem a paradoxical concept, that is, that the professional [intercultural] communicator is the one who has come to realise his or her lack of expertise […]. Intercultural professional communication requires outgroup communication in which one is never likely to take on full group membership and expertise […]. A person who understands the outlines of the pattern of differences and commonalities, but fully recognises his or her own lack of membership and state of non-expertise, is likely to be the most successful and effective communicator.

The implications of this research, then, would seem to reach beyond the preparation of business students for the world of work. We have seen that the competencies related to intercultural communication for global contexts, elaborated above, are required by all

students. It would seem appropriate, therefore, for universities, and not just for business schools, to develop policies and curriculum which will prepare all students for the complexities they will face in the 21st century. We have also seen that although universities have, in many cases, already elaborated such policies, their implementation has been somewhat at a surface level. The next part of this chapter discusses, particularly from an applied linguistics perspective, some of the areas that should be addressed at a more concrete level.

7.5 Future directions for business education

It would be apparent from the above discussion that we are not doing enough in Australian universities to equip our business graduates to operate confidently in a global context. As was indicated in Chapter 2, and confirmed through the case studies for this research, future business communication will need to ensure that, above all else, students acquire:

- high levels of competence in English at the linguistic level;
- knowledge of and familiarity with other Englishes; and
- cultural understanding and competence in intercultural communication, including improved interpretability as well as intelligibility skills.

More broadly, however, business education will need to take students on a journey which will make them more self-reflexive about their own learning and develop their capacities. This will mean, above all else, that staff need to focus on teaching and learning processes which will promote this sort of student development (Leask 1999; Liddicoat 2003). According to Edwards, Crosling, Petrovic-Lazarovic and O'Neill (2003, p.184) we need to focus on changing students' attitudes, knowledge and capacities in order to lead them through three stages from 'international awareness' to 'international competence' and finally to 'international expertise'. Their typology of curriculum internationalisation is illustrated in Figure 7.1, below.

Table 7.1: A typology of curriculum internationalisation

		Teaching Strategy	Teaching Method	Outcome Learning
Level 1	International Awareness	Infusion of international perspectives in general curriculum	Supplement existing curriculum with international examples; recognise origins of knowledge	Students expect and respect differences, have an international attitude
Level 2	International Competence	Engagement with the specialist international dimension of the discipline	Add international study options, have students engage with international students, in depth study of international subjects	Students are capable of performing their profession for international clients
Level 3	International Expertise	Immersion of students in international study	Study (possibly in a foreign language), live and work in international settings	Students become global professionals, at home and in many locations.

Source: Edwards et al. 2003, p. 189

This typology provides a helpful scaffolding of student learning and engagement. It would, however, require the commitment of all those involved in teaching a course and a willingness on the part of academic staff to change and grow in their teaching. It would be fair to say, however, that, as the authors state, "while universities have incorporated international skills and knowledge as core graduate attributes […] little work has been done to translate this new priority into everyday classroom practice" (Edwards et al. 2003, p.191). The following suggestions, then, are made particularly with the classroom and teaching and learning in mind, and with the emphasis on intercultural communication skills. They refer less to content changes and additions, which may need to be made to some units/courses, and more to teaching and learning processes that can be incorporated into aspects of a business course. They can be introduced simultaneously or gradually, depending on the receptiveness, enthusiasm and energy of teaching staff and the resources that academic leaders are prepared to infuse into such developments.

Curriculum internationalisation initiatives for business students, with the particular aim of developing intercultural competence, could include one-off, carefully structured components, such as teaching a special unit in, say, 'Intercultural communication for global business'. In an ongoing way, however, tertiary business courses should include: 'structured intervention' processes (Volet & Ang 1998; Smart et al. 2000) across the curriculum to raise student awareness of intercultural and linguistic issues; and teaching and learning processes which can enhance student capacity to communicate interculturally, particularly in multinational groups/teams (Roberts et al. 2001).

Such initiatives would assist students to acquire the outcomes indicated in Figure 7.1 at levels 1 and 2. Outcomes at level 3 would require undertaking study of a second/foreign language and/or an overseas component, which should happen more frequently than it currently does for Australian students, and where the overseas component is well designed so that students gain maximum benefit from it (see, for example, Roberts et al. 2001). More importantly, however, such strategies should help to provide students with the sorts of 'engagement' with other cultures which will truly lead to intercultural learning, for as Liddicoat (2003, p.19) says:

> Intercultural learning means moving well beyond a static approach to learning isolated facts about an individual culture and involves the learner in a process of transformation of the self, his/her ability to communicate and to understand communication and his/her skills for ongoing learning. As such internationalisation is a transformative experience.

Moves to enable this to happen will need to come at the administrative/structural level and at the pedagogical level. That is, universities will need to see the importance of such initiatives, otherwise there will be no progress beyond the individual dedicated or inspired academic who makes things happen in his/her classroom. If support, resources and policies are available 'from the top', then the acquisition of intercultural competencies can be generalised to a greater proportion of business graduates, and indeed all graduates. Planning at these levels would need to be made for, among other things:

- incorporation of internationalisation strategies into normal planning and review processes of Departments, Schools and Faculties/Divisions ;
- implementation of staff development;
- greater promotion of activities that further the educational goals expounded above (including student exchanges; well-designed study abroad programs; study of languages other than English; staff exchanges; extra-curricular activities that promote mixing between local and international students; and establishment of stronger links with multinational companies willing to accept temporary student, and perhaps even staff, placements).

However, since the focus of this chapter is very much on internationalisation of *curriculum* at the classroom level, there follows an examination of teaching and learning strategies needed to prepare business graduates for the 21st century, rather than the broader (though important) issues indicated above.

7.6 Teaching and learning strategies for internationalisation of business education

Many initiatives at this level can be implemented even without too much financial support, although, as we know, even raising staff awareness of issues involves some sort of development activity, and therefore carries a cost. However, if universities are to operate in more competitive environments, as we are constantly told, then anything that gives graduates an 'edge' surely represents a good investment.

At the teaching and learning level, then, initiatives such as the following would do much to promote the learning goals espoused above:

- a unit in 'Intercultural communication for global business' or similar;
- carefully structured and managed student group work;
- development and careful use of international business case studies (with greater input into the curriculum from students themselves);
- facilitation of electronic communication between students in Australia and those in offshore programs and/or campuses; and
- a classroom pedagogy which allows students to develop interpersonal/ intercultural communication competencies.

Initiatives such as the above, implemented systematically across a business Faculty, School or course, would do much to promote the sorts of graduate attributes discussed in the first part of this chapter. These initiatives are explained more fully below.

7.6.1 A unit in 'Intercultural communication for global business'

Teaching a compulsory foundation unit to all students would be a reasonably easy option, in that a single unit is far easier to implement than some of the other strategies suggested. However, a unit by itself has its limitations, nor is it a simple matter to determine the sort of content and processes that such a unit might embrace. Nevertheless, such a unit might cover at least some of the following areas:

- Expectations for oral and written communication in Australian tertiary contexts;
- A 'grammar of discourse' for Australian English;
- Aspects of university discourse;
- Aspects of business discourse;
- Varieties of English or world Englishes;
- The rise of English as a global language;
- The concept of culture;
- Aspects of cultural, organisational, gender, professional, generational and other discourses;
- Issues in cross-cultural communication; and
- Business negotiation in cross-cultural contexts.

Most importantly, the teaching/learning *processes* used in such a unit would be just as important as the content. Such a unit would make extensive use of seminars, class and small group discussion, group work in mixed cultural groups, case studies based on cross-cultural issues and tasks which would require students to probe each other's cultural perspectives (indeed the sorts of activities that were used in the multinational student groups case study). This sort of approach seems to be reflected, for example, in a 'B.A. in English for International Business (Global)' offered by the University of Central Lancashire (2003), which lists typical classroom activities for a unit in 'English for International Communication' as follows:

- structured discussions, simulations and case studies;
- problem-solving and decision-making tasks;
- text and video-based analysis of international and regional varieties of English and their use in international communication;
- guided project work leading to portfolio tasks;
- presentations and seminars based on individual research; and

- input, practice and feedback focussed on language and communication skills.

In such a unit, too, care would need to be taken to ensure that all cultural perspectives are valued, so that international students' cultural knowledge is seen as valid and expert and not merely acknowledged in a superficial way. For example, students could be asked to research some aspect of 'world Englishes' where the many Singaporean, Hong Kong and Malaysian students on Australian campuses would be more expert than local Australian students.

This sort of unit also opens up the possibility of making students more aware of the qualities of business discourse in multicultural/multinational settings. By encouraging students to *engage in*, and *reflect on*, intercultural interactions in the classroom (and out of the classroom, as appropriate), students can gradually develop intercultural communicative competence. Numerous structured activities are proposed by Roberts et al. (2001) in their '*Language learners as ethnographers'*, some of which can be applied in the classroom and others in study abroad situations. Roberts et al. emphasise, in particular, the development in students of the following skills: the ability to keep an open and questioning attitude; sensitivity to language use in its social and cultural contexts; a reflexive attitude towards difference; and an understanding that 'culture' is not fixed but constructed in an ongoing way and is "constituted in the everyday practices of groups and individuals" (2001, p.30). Curtin has not only study abroad opportunities with other universities, but an offshore campus in Malaysia, where one or two semester scholarships allow students to learn in a different cultural setting. A program of 'structured observation' relating to linguistic and cultural aspects could be developed for local students to gain the most from their study abroad experience. Such a program would need to be credit-bearing or contribute in some way to a student's assessment of the offshore study component, in order to be taken seriously.

Reflection about intercultural matters can, however, be acquired even without a study abroad experience. As Crosling and Martin (2005) point out, students need to be clearly informed of the purposes of various activities in order to maximise their learning. For example, it is too easy from an Australian students' perspective, to perceive that international students "have an accent". However, if students are made to realise that everybody has an accent of one sort or another, and that in multinational contexts, they will have to deal with a number of accents in English, then all students might make

more effort to acquire greater *interpretability* skills. In other words, the classroom opportunity to engage in intercultural communication, with all its difficulties and complexity, should be welcomed as valuable experience that will enhance one's intercultural communication skills, for as one student put it when interviewed about the multinational student teams experience: "this is like a small portion of the real world; this is like a small introduction". And real or realistic exemplars of varieties of English for analysis, including the language of business scenarios, could be obtained either through the media or recorded interviews from the countries of origin of our international students, as well as in Australia. Such 'texts' would provide a rich source of authentic material that could be analysed and would no doubt have much more impact than information in books, which, well intentioned as they might be, tend to have their limitations, as discussed in Chapter 2.

All aspects of the unit, including assessment, would need to value cultural and linguistic knowledge and capabilities. The 'B.A. in English for International Business (Global)' offered by the University of Central Lancashire (2003) reported above has recognised that intercultural abilities cannot be assessed solely by traditional methods which place emphasis largely on writing and knowledge of content. Thus, assessment for the unit 'English for International Communication', indicates that 50% will be allocated to portfolio tasks and annotated materials, with 25% for presentation and 25% for participation in an assessed simulation. This is quite a different allocation of marks to that which was found for CBS units reported under Section 7.3. So, for example, if groups were structured to enable students to operate in multicultural teams, then some of the assessment would need to measure the interactions and learning in such teams. Suggestions for ways to assess group processes have already been developed and are easy to use and adapt (see for example, Macbeth and McCallum 1996). We saw also that oral interaction skills are very important in multinational contexts. Teaching and learning activities and assessment in the unit would therefore need to target the development of such skills and ways to assess them.

In implementing such a unit, issues to be addressed would include: whether the unit should be a 'core' or 'elective' unit; devising teaching and learning activities to enhance the development of interpersonal/intercultural communication skills by both Australian and international students; assessing such skills, which are not normally assessed, nor are they easy to assess; and determining who should teach such a unit - staff with

business qualifications or those with linguistic expertise, or (in an ideal world) both? Certainly many of the strategies described above would seem to require at least some knowledge and understanding of applied linguistics, with which those teaching business communication in Europe would seem to be better equipped than those in similar teaching situations in America and Australia, for example, for, as Bargiela-Chiappini (2004 p. 33) indicates, intercultural business communication in Europe represents a more "language-centred approach to interculturality".

7.6.2 Carefully structured student group work

Many group or team projects and assignments are undertaken in business studies in Australia. However, instead of providing an excellent opportunity for deep learning, many group experiences can, in some cases, and as we saw in the multinational teams project, build resentment and unhappiness among students (Volet & Ang 1998; Caspersz et al. 2002a; De Vita 2001). We know that there is very little mixing between local and international students on Australian campuses. This 'separation' seems to continue to a large extent within university classrooms. Smart et al. (2000) and Volet and Ang (1998) found that, if students were left to their own devices, very little would change. They advocate, as do Crosling and Martin (2005), a deliberate interventionist approach to encourage both local and international students to learn from each other. However, too often students are asked to form their own teams and are not given much preparation for working in groups. This tends to result in:

- students forming groups predominantly with other students from their own or similar cultural/national background;
- 'accidental' mixed teams (where students end up in culturally mixed teams due to other factors, such as late arrival to the class, after other teams have already been formed); and
- unhappy mixed teams, where the lecturer has asked students to form culturally mixed teams without due preparation (Volet & Ang 1998; Smart et al. 2000).

De Vita (2001), too, reports that when group work is used as a quick and easy solution to assessment without adequate preparation of students, the results can be bad group experiences.

This is unfortunate, because student multinational teams present the greatest opportunity for students to acquire significant cultural learning from each other (Caspersz 2004; Crosling & Martin, 2005). As we saw in Chapter 5, students are very well disposed to learning about other cultures and acquiring deeper cultural understanding. Our Australian classrooms, certainly in the business faculties, which provide around 46% of international students on Australian campuses (DEST 2004), have enough cultural diversity to provide the ideal 'laboratories' for authentic cultural and linguistic learning. We have seen, too, that all future graduates need to be able to deal with different varieties of English and different accents. Indeed Alptekin (2002, p.57) proposes that "a new notion of communicative competence is needed, one which recognises English as a world language [encompassing] local and international contexts as settings of language use". Well-structured group work offers students the possibility to become more familiar with world Englishes and competent in dealing with different accents. Offshore campuses and programs also offer the possibility for virtual multinational teams, for which electronic chat sites provide students with the possibility to also improve their intercultural email skills.

Caspersz et al. (2005) stress that student teams need to be well-managed for the best results. Although the use of student teams is often based on the premise that work teams are very much a part of the reality of today's workplaces, Caspersz et al. indicate there are more than a few differences between student teams and workplace teams - not the least of which is the fact that student teams are short-lived and do not involve students in daily face to face contact. Caspersz et al. (2005) propose a holistic approach encompassing six principles that academic staff should follow in order to obtain the best results from student teams. These principles include: integrating the team project into unit curricula; preparing students for team work; generating team members' commitment; monitoring team progress; managing fairness in teams; and managing cultural and linguistic diversity.

However, care will need to be taken to convince students that the extra effort required to work in multinational teams is worth it, because students have also indicated their natural tendency to form groups with those with whom they feel more comfortable, usually people from similar cultural backgrounds. Volet and Ang (1998) found that even when students had a positive experience in a culturally mixed group they expressed a preference for returning to homogenous groups which they felt required less

effort. So staff need to be very explicit with students about the reasons for promoting culturally mixed groups and the sort of learning they promote. Students might then be more prepared to make the extra effort required if the benefits are made explicit (Crosling & Martin 2005). Indeed students have expressed to the author (Briguglio 1998) that, left to their own devices, they will often go for the soft option, which is to culturally homogenous teams. They do however, want to gain the benefits of culturally mixed teams and want staff to "force" them into such teams (Briguglio 1998; Smart et al. 2000). And some (particularly postgraduate) students are aware that working in 'mixed' teams on projects is also beneficial academically, allowing students to learn from different perspectives and different (cultural) points of view:

> *I like the teamwork as well. We sometimes have an assignment as a team, four or five people. I think it's one of the best points. Because to be understood and to understand at all, you have to speak, just to convince others. You have to express your opinions, you can't be shy and not say anything. And when you meet people from another culture, overseas people - I mean from Indonesia or even France - they have a very different way of thinking. It's a good way to learn about another culture. They feel, they react in a different way* (international postgraduate student, in Briguglio 1998).

Thus teams need to be structured so that they are culturally/linguistically mixed and carefully managed by teaching staff to ensure the best learning results. Some of the management steps and strategies could then involve:

- explicitly informing the students of the learning objectives and reasons for culturally mixed teams, pointing out the learning advantages and also some of the difficulties that may be encountered;
- implementing an initial workshop, such as the one described in Chapter 6, which raises awareness of language and cultural issues early in the piece;
- having each student develop an assessable 'journal', which records the group's progress and interactions, as well as cultural and linguistic observations (to encourage reflection);
- monitoring the progress of groups, in terms of group member contributions to the set group project; and

- having students develop a portfolio containing written and/or audio and/or visual media 'texts' illustrating particular cultural and linguistic aspects relevant to intercultural/business discourse.

With staff intervention to form structured groups, careful selection of team members, preparation of students to work in multinational teams and the development of challenging tasks and processes that allow students to learn from each other's cultural perspectives, group work can produce wonderful results and prepare students for working in real multicultural settings. As Crosling and Martin (2005, p.11) remind us:

> Collaborative learning activities have the potential to foster both students' and teaching staff members' intercultural and international literacy [and to] promote intercultural communicative competency and critical thinking abilities for the global workplace.

7.6.3 Development and use of international business case studies

In business studies, the 'case study' is a very common teaching and learning tool and presents a good opportunity for designing appropriate teaching and learning tasks. Many commercially produced materials already exist (see, for example, Samovar, Porter & Stefani 1998; Mendenhall & Oddou 2000), but, as indicated above, there is the problem that many such materials are developed from a 'Western', often American, perspective. Such texts recognise difference, but only in relation to the assumed 'centrality' of dominant cultures. They tend to want to train the Western 'we' to learn about the cultural values and business practices of other countries relevant to them (the 'they') in a bid to gain a business advantage (Munshi & McKie 2001). We have seen, on the other hand, that true competence in intercultural communication will allow people to view things from diverse perspectives, all equally valid once a single dominant cultural position is removed. Munshi and McKie (2001) avoided the pitfalls in their business communication course by employing a critical pedagogy: this included using both mainstream and alternative readings (from literature, as well as business) that allowed students to develop a critical perspective, and analysis and discussion of students' own experience of crossing cultural borders.

Alternatively, case studies can be developed by students themselves. Commercially produced case studies could serve as a starting point, and then students could be asked to adapt the case study from their own cultural perspective. Or students could be asked to work in their 'national group' to develop case studies that reflect their cultural perspectives. Case studies could then be pooled so that students in the class address the issues from different cultural perspectives. Students could also work in multinational teams to produce original case studies based on cultural dilemmas and problems that they themselves have experienced (perhaps not in a business context) and be asked to adapt them to a business context. Because the student population in business courses in Australian universities is highly culturally diverse (DEST 2002 & 2004) the complexity that students are likely to meet in the real world is already existent in the classroom, which forms a microcosm of the real world. Unfortunately, in most cases, such diversity is ignored and even resented by some staff as an impediment to learning, when in reality, it could, and should be, the very opposite – a font of real intercultural discovery.

In any case, in the use of case studies, care should be taken to avoid merely tinkering with exotic names and overseas locations. Effective cross-cultural case studies should throw up real cultural dilemmas and require serious interrogation. They should be carefully developed to ensure they raise student awareness of more than just superficial cultural aspects and that they avoid the all too easy trap of national/cultural stereotypes.

The UK *Interculture Project* co-ordinated by Lancaster University (1997 - 2000) (http://www.lancs.ac.uk/users/interculture/) developed a number of case studies for university students illustrating intercultural encounters that lend themselves to analysis and discussion. The Interculture case studies place emphasis on socio-linguistic issues in intercultural encounters and aim to develop students' intercultural competence. Many could be adapted for workplace or business contexts and could be used for classroom discussion.

A case study based on the research with multinational companies undertaken for this study might be designed as follows:

> You are a middle level manager who heads up a small team that is part of a multinational drink company with subsidiaries in Asia. The head office of the multinational company is in the USA, and your company is based in Hong Kong. Some of the top representatives from the American head office (as well as others from subsidiaries in Germany and Spain) will be visiting your HK company for a week to discuss progress over the last two years and to develop a strategic plan for the future. Your section has the responsibility of organising the meetings as well as social functions that are required for the planning week. What factors will you need to take into consideration in order to organise a successful week for all concerned?

This sort of case study does not have a neat 'solution', as many commercially produced case studies do; there is no one correct answer that will solve all the inherent 'problems'. The open-ended scenario it proposes is useful because if students are placed in culturally mixed groups to discuss this case study, they will be forced to address, amongst other things: the cultural dilemmas that might arise in the above scenario; the misunderstandings that might arise due to the use of English as a *lingua franca*; the expectations that different groups may have for the meeting; different meeting procedures that might be expected; how different groups might view 'work' and 'socialising'; what would be considered polite and appropriate behaviour by different participants; what language issues might arise; and what 'face' considerations may need to be taken into account. Feedback from groups after addressing this sort of case study would also throw up a rich array of issues that can be pooled and discussed with the whole class, in order to build on students' cultural knowledge and understanding.

7.6.4 Facilitation of electronic communication between students

We saw in the multinational companies case study that English was used most in email communication. As well, email is likely to become, according to some, the dominant interpersonal communication medium in the new millennium (Waldvogel 2001), "approaching if not overshadowing voice" (Negroponte 1995, p.191). Moreover, many firms, now aware of the importance of email to their business, are investing money in teaching their employees how to write (Waldvogel 2001). It would be advisable, therefore, to develop students' email skills to high levels.

Apart from formal teaching about email communication in business communication courses, other strategies can be used to develop students' skills. Email communication could be built into units, for example as part of teamwork projects or for class chat sites, with the lecturer, with outside clients, and so on, so that students come to understand levels of formality and informality required for different types of email communication and acquire necessary email protocols.

As well, a project being undertaken at Curtin with handheld computers (Oliver & Barrett 2004), and which aims to enhance the communication skills of students by encouraging communication between local students and those in Curtin's offshore campus in Miri (Sarawak), could do much to improve students' email and intercultural communication skills.

However, email communication needs to be taught and assessed in order for students to take it seriously. The belief that 'anyone can do it' simply because it is easy technically ignores the fact that email communication requires quite sophisticated understanding and writing skills in order for people to communicate effectively and sensitively. As Waldvogel (2001, p.9) states: "because email communication lacks many of the cues present in other communicative forms it is open to wide interpretation. Where it is used indiscriminately and without the discipline and thought that goes into other forms of written messages, it can generate bad feeling and result in ineffective communication". Moreover, because the need for cultural adjustments may be less obvious in long-distance communication, email can increase the potential for intercultural misunderstandings (Gundling 1999).

For all these reasons, then, it is important for email communication to be encouraged, but also to be taught and assessed, as an integral part of business courses.

7.6.5 A classroom pedagogy which promotes development of interpersonal/ intercultural competencies

Thus far, what has been interpreted as internationalisation of curriculum in many Australian universities has been the inclusion of content relating to other countries/cultures. However, as Smart, Volet and Ang (2000, p.37) state:

> While such content reform at program level is beneficial […] it is likely to be in the area of instructional methods and classroom intercultural interaction that the most promising innovations will emerge.

We have seen also that inclusion of 'international' content is only at Level 1 of the typology proposed above in Figure 7.1. It is clear that in this area change needs to be driven by academic staff. As Leask (1999, p.9) states:

> Internationalisation of the curriculum […] requires staff to focus on teaching and learning processes, as well as content, if they are to provide relevant educational experience for all students, in an environment that is supportive and inclusive of all students. It requires them to be simultaneously more reflective and more outward looking, for they must be reflective as they review and interrogate their teaching practice, but outward looking and internationally and cross-culturally aware if they are to develop international perspectives in their students.

Several authors (Volet & Ang 1998; Smart et al. 2000; Cheney 2001; Eisenchelas & Trevaskes 2003) recommend an emphasis on 'structured intervention' processes in teaching and learning as well as the provision of experiential learning for students. As Eisenchelas and Trevaskes (2003, p.87) state, "internationalisation is a process that impacts on the whole individual, and thus we need to look at cognitive and affective factors". Since it has been argued in this chapter that intercultural communication, in particular, is the aspect of internationalisation that should be most strongly promoted for business students, it follows that processes which enhance interaction amongst the already existent diverse student populations in our classrooms are those that should be strongly promoted.

Bell (2001) suggests a number of processes involving pair work that can involve students from different cultural backgrounds over an extended period (at least for the duration of a unit of study) to acquire deep cultural learning. Bell mentions, for example, a 'live case study' where two students over a semester are asked to research each other's cultural backgrounds and relate what they learn to cultural theories they have studied; or field trips into the wider (multicultural) community where one student interacts with different members of the public (say shop assistants) while the other

observes differences in behaviour, particularly linguistic behaviour; or involving students in paired activities which enable both parties to examine their own cultural biases, beliefs and values. Students could also record and analyse each other's 'ways of speaking' for a linguistic analysis of different ways of 'making meaning'.

Crosling and Martin (2005) suggest utilising student diversity fully for collaborative learning in which students become active participants in the teaching and learning process rather than just passive recipients. They advocate, among other things: creating mandatory culturally mixed groups and informing students of the reasons for this; activities that will allow students to reflect on different learning styles and how culture affects the way we process and use information; making students aware of the problems inherent in multicultural interactions; encouraging students to reflect on the group processes in which they engage; and making clear to students the purpose and function of group tasks.

The Curtin School of Design has used some of these techniques in a pair work project, and the results have been truly impressive (Smart et al. 2000). In one assignment, for example, students from different cultural backgrounds work in pairs and each in turn acts as 'client' and 'designer'. Over a semester students must probe each other's cultural background to design a poster for a particular event that will please the other client and be in tune with their cultural expectations. Apart from the poster, the assessment also includes diary entries describing what each student has learned about the other's culture. What is particularly valuable about this sort of task is the fact that it: carries over a whole semester; involves students exploring each other's cultural values and tastes; has students reflecting on what they have learned; allows students to adapt their design product to please the other 'client'; and channels them into developing a design that is a blend of their own ideas and the cultural perspective of the 'other'. Another example in the CBS School of Information Systems has students plan all aspects of a wedding, as it would be carried out in their country of origin. This throws up alls sorts of cultural dilemmas and differences and students learn much more than abstract theory from this project. Similar tasks could be developed and adapted for other business courses.

A broader cross-cultural input into the curriculum can come from students themselves. International students have sometimes complained that in Australian classrooms they are not presented with opportunities to discuss previous experiences and knowledge that

relate to their own country. Swiss students, for example, were surprised that in a finance unit, their opinions were not sought on the banking system in their country (Briguglio 2001). Eisenchelas and Trevaskes (2003, p.89) argue that an ethos of internationalisation and interculturalitly should pervade our classrooms "as a process through which individual students or groups learn better to communicate their aspirations, values and attitudes in intergroup situations. This process of communication can occur at the level of less formal one-on-one interactions, or more formal classroom interactions."

The above processes imply extensive dialogue in (and outside) the classroom: between students and between teachers and students. Such processes require classrooms that are living laboratories, where students question issues from a number of perspectives, exchange opinions freely, negotiate meaning, confront and deal with difference, are aware that they are sometimes interacting in English as a global language, and where cultural differences are discussed and analysed. We saw in the multinational student teams case study that students are interested in discussing such issues: the classroom atmosphere simply needs to be conducive to allow this to happen. One common complaint from teaching staff is that 'international students', at least undergraduates, are reluctant to speak out in class. While some may find speaking out in class a daunting prospect (Briguglio 2000), the multinational student groups case study showed that students are more than willing to discuss such issues in pairs or in small groups. If the classroom atmosphere is conducive to such practices, then students will surely acquire more confidence over time. Moreover, this is the sort of language (the informal language of everyday interaction) that they will require for future operation in multinational/ multicultural business teams and contexts.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined the current preparation of business graduates in Australian universities. Undergraduate business education has been discussed in the context of globalisation forces in tertiary education and, more specifically, in regard to the trend of internationalisation of curriculum, which has become more pronounced in the last fifteen years or so. The other major impact on undergraduate business education has come from a growing emphasis on learning outcomes or 'graduate attributes' that university courses are expected to develop in students. Both internationalisation of

curriculum and the move to graduate attributes highlight the fact that intercultural competencies will be crucial, not only for business graduates, but for all graduates in future. Applied linguistics can make a major contribution in this area, particularly in regard to business communication. The multinational companies case study that forms part of this research has indicated that in the business sphere, intercultural communication skills will be increasingly necessary for success. Although the importance of knowing other languages is by no means diminished, the ability to communicate interculturally in English would seem to be a requirement for success in the future world of business. This chapter has discussed some ways in which more carefully considered teaching and learning processes, in particular those informed by applied linguistics, can assist the development of business graduates who will be more culturally sensitive and able to operate in international/ intercultural contexts.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

This research set out to examine developments around English as a global language, particularly in regard to business contexts. We saw that although not everyone is pleased with the undisputed role of English as a global lingua franca, there is little disagreement as to the singular place that it occupies (Phillipson 1992; Crystal 1997; Pennycook 1994 & 1998; Graddol & Meinhof 1999; Altbach 2004). At the same time this apparent hegemony of English is being counterbalanced by the increasing development of a number of varieties of English (such as Singapore English and Malaysian English), which are growing in importance and being claimed as Englishes in their own right by their speakers. And while it is felt by some that this development may help to stem the march of 'monolithic' English, there are those who fear that English, according to Altbach (2004) "the Latin of the 21st century", represents a new form of imperialism and colonialism. We saw, also, that the continuing spread and growth of English as a global language highlights intercultural communication issues, particularly (but not only) in the context of business, and hence in multinational companies.

More specifically this study set out to find answers to the following questions:

5. What English communication skills for business settings do workers require in order to operate effectively in multinational companies?
6. Is there a match between the communication skills required in multinational workplaces and those Australian universities aim to develop in business graduates?
7. Does undertaking an awareness-raising activity in the context of an undergraduate business unit develop valuable intercultural communication skills?
8. What can be done to further assist business students to develop the sort of communication skills they will require to operate effectively in international/ intercultural work environments?

The role of English (alongside other languages) in multinational companies was examined through a case study involving two companies, one in Malaysia and one in Hong Kong. These two locations present a very dynamic interplay of local languages and English, and their speakers display the sorts of language phenomena (such as code mixing, code switching and diglossia) that develop when different languages are in daily contact. The findings of this research confirmed earlier research on the use of languages in business in Hong Kong and Malaysia, reinforcing, among other things, the predominance of written English for business in Hong Kong (Pennington 1998; Li 2000 & 2002; Pan 2000; Bahtia & Candlin 2001; Bolton 2000 & 2002b; Evans & Green 2003) and the use of Malaysian English (both spoken and written) in Malaysian business contexts (Asmah 1988; Le Vasan 1994; David 2000; Gill 1999, 2000 & 2002; Nair-Venugopal 2000, 2001 & 2003). Among the skills that were found to be important in multinational workplaces were: English for email communication; greater tolerance for and accommodation of the different accents and varieties of English; the ability to write informal (largely internal) reports in English; development of both oral and written communication skills in English, since it is difficult to predict with any degree of certainty which macro skills workers will require in future work contexts; and the ability to work collaboratively with people from different national, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. We also saw that such skills will be required not only by successful multinational companies, but also by employees themselves, who see such linguistic skills as pre-requisites for advancement and promotion in the global workplace. There is obviously scope for future research on similar themes with other multinational companies in the same or different locations.

In order to establish whether there is a match between the identified communication skills required in multinational companies, above, and the preparation of business graduates for the global workplace, a case study involving multinational student teams was undertaken with a group of undergraduates. Firstly, a questionnaire was used to establish what undergraduate business students know about language and cultural issues in general, and then about workplaces such as those described in the multinational companies case study. The results of the questionnaire showed that students are equipped with quite sound knowledge of cultural and linguistic matters and that they are well disposed towards other cultures. Students understand that they will require both linguistic and cultural knowledge in order to be good communicators in international business. At the same time, in ‘multinational’ situations closer to home, that is,

multinational student teams, students have concerns about how effectively such groups can function. We also saw that staff interviewed from the same Faculty felt that not enough was being done to develop students' English language skills to high levels and to prepare them for intercultural communication in the global workplace. The second phase of the student multinational teams case study highlighted issues related to students working in multinational teams and the tensions and difficulties that can develop if such teams are not well prepared and managed. In general terms, therefore, it can be said that although business courses are developing in graduates some knowledge and understanding of cultural and linguistic issues, they are not equipping them with the intercultural communication skills they will require to operate confidently and effectively in multinational environments.

At the same time, the second phase of the multinational student teams case study showed that a deliberate intervention, in the context of an undergraduate unit, to raise awareness of cultural and linguistic issues can be effective in developing students' intercultural communication skills and in ensuring a more positive interaction in multinational student teams. We also saw that where this sort of intervention does not occur, simply having students in culturally mixed teams does not maximise cultural and linguistic learning and can, in fact, lead to negative attitudes towards working in multinational teams and towards team members.

The implications of both the multinational companies and the student teams case studies for the preparation of business graduates were then analysed and discussed and further strategies were elaborated in Chapter 7. A number of possible approaches were examined in the context of globalisation of tertiary education and, more specifically, in regard to the trend of internationalisation of curriculum and the development of graduate attributes, both of which have received more emphasis in recent years. Both internationalisation of curriculum and the move to graduate attributes highlight the fact that intercultural competencies will be crucial, not only for business graduates, but for all graduates in future. The multinational companies case study that forms part of this research has indicated that in the business sphere, intercultural communication skills will be increasingly necessary for success. Although the importance of knowing other languages is by no means diminished, the ability to communicate interculturally in English would seem to be a requirement for success in the future world of business. However, it was stressed that this means more than just L2 speakers of English

becoming more proficient. In the sorts of multilingual, multicultural contexts that future business graduates will face, the responsibility for successful communication and interaction falls on all speakers, be they L1 or L2 speakers of English. It was stressed that this means developing *interpretability* as well as *intelligibility* skills (Candlin 1982) in all students. More carefully considered teaching and learning approaches and processes, which fully utilise the rich cultural diversity already existing in Australian universities, can assist the development of business graduates who will be more culturally sensitive and able to operate in international/ intercultural contexts (Volet & Ang 1998; Smart et al. 2000; Liddicoat et al. 2003; Eisenchelas & Trevaskes 2003;Caspersz et al. 2004; Crosling & Martin 2005).

Since the structured intervention utilised in the student case study for this research represented a two and half hour workshop with students, it is thought that much more could be achieved if a deliberate approach were adopted across a unit or indeed a whole undergraduate course. Further studies could be undertaken with a larger sample of students with a similar task; or indeed, different language and culture awareness raising activities could be implemented in order to establish their potential to develop students' intercultural communication skills. A longitudinal study over a whole year or longer would be particularly interesting. There is room, too, for academic staff to develop approaches that integrate well-managed multinational student group processes into course content - in other words much more scope for internationalisation of curriculum. Such internationalisation, if it is to truly prepare future graduates for the global workplace, needs to move beyond linguistic and cultural awareness to the development of graduates' intercultural communication skills, that is, to competence in intercultural communication. We have some distance to travel before we can say that our university courses prepare graduates effectively in this sense, for, as Eisenchelas, Trevaskes and Liddicoat (2003, p.141) state:

> providing students and staff with the tools for acquiring competencies in managing their academic and future work life in a globalised world [does not mean] simply expanding the existing repertoire of university teaching practices. [Rather it means] reconceptualizing their purposes and how these can be achieved creatively and judiciously in a swiftly changing global environment that demands intercultural knowledge and awareness.

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Appendix 1

English as a global language in a business context

SURVEY FOR EMPLOYEES IN KUALA LUMPUR AND HONG KONG

Dear Participant

I am investigating the use of English as a global language in the workplace in two multinational companies, one in Kuala Lumpur and one in Hong Kong. In particular, I would like to examine the aspects of 'English for global competence' that are required in an international workplace. I then hope to apply the findings of this research to university teaching, so that we can better prepare graduates for working in a global context.

This survey is designed to gather **your opinions and impressions** about the way you and others use English as a global language in your company. I have visited both companies completing this survey. Some of you I have already had the pleasure of meeting, others I hope to meet during my next visit to your workplace.

Please be assured that all information gathered will be used for my PhD studies and will be **strictly confidential**. Neither you nor your company will be identified in my writing and reports. However, it would be useful for me to have your name and contact details so that I can arrange a follow-up interview with you, if necessary. The interview is another important source of information for this project. In order to ensure confidentiality and so that you feel relaxed about answering all questions, I ask that you place the completed survey in an envelope that will be supplied to you and seal it before handing it to the person administering the survey in your workplace.

The survey should take you no more than 15 to 20 minutes to complete. Please note that there are no right or wrong answers. I simply want your opinions and impressions. If you have any questions and would like to contact me about the survey or about my research, please see contact details below. I will be delighted to hear from you.

Thank you for providing me with valuable information and I hope to inform you at a later date of the results of this survey.

Carmela Briguglio

Contact details
Curtin Business School
Curtin University of Technology
GPO Box U 1987
Perth
Western Australia 6845

Tel: +61 (08) 9266 3079
Fax : +61 (08) 9266 3096
Email: briguglc@cbs.curtin.edu.au

PART A – LANGUAGE BACKGROUND DETAILS

1 Please list the language/s you know, with number 1 as the language you know best (in this context, 'know' refers to the one you **speak** best).

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

2 Which language/s do you mostly use at home **with family and friends**?

_____

3 Which was the major language of your

primary schooling?	**secondary schooling?**	**higher or university study?**

4 Please provide an opinion of your skills in each of the following aspects of **ENGLISH** by placing a tick (✓) in the appropriate box. You can also write comments in the appropriate box, if you wish.

English skill	**Very fluent** (Very confident and can communicate very successfully in a range of contexts, both work and social).	**Fluent** (Reasonably confident and generally communicate quite successfully in English in both work and social contexts)	**Intermediate** (Lack confidence sometimes but can generally get by in English in both work and social contexts).	**Basic** (Can perform basic everyday tasks in English in social and work contexts).
Listening & understanding				
Speaking				
Reading				
Writing				

PART B – USE OF ENGLISH AT WORK

5 Please indicate how often you need to do any of the following **in English** during the course of your work, **by circling the appropriate number**. **Please respond to <u>every</u> task**.

SPEAKING/ LISTENING TASKS	**Never or rarely**	**Sometimes (every few weeks)**	**Frequently (every week)**	**Almost every day**	**Several times per day**
5.1 Speaking face to face with workers in the same company	1	2	3	4	5
5,.2 Speaking face to face with customers/clients	1	2	3	4	5
5.3 Speaking on the telephone	1	2	3	4	5
5.4 Oral presentation to people in your company	1	2	3	4	5
5.5 Oral presentation to outside clients/customers	1	2	3	4	5
5.6 Participating in discussion in meetings (internal)	1	2	3	4	5
5.7 Having business discussions with customers/clients	1	2	3	4	5
5.8 Other (please specify)	1	2	3	4	5
WRITING/ READING TASKS					
5.9 Writing letters/ memos	1	2	3	4	5
5.10 Writing e-mails/faxes	1	2	3	4	5
5.11 Writing brief informal reports	1	2	3	4	5
5.12 Writing formal reports	1	2	3	4	5
5.13 Writing minutes of meetings	1	2	3	4	5
5.14 Preparing advertising material	1	2	3	4	5
5.15 Writing project proposals	1	2	3	4	5
5.16 Writing recruitment material	1	2	3	4	5
5.17 Reading letters/memos	1	2	3	4	5
5.18 Reading faxes/emails	1	2	3	4	5
5.19 Reading proposals	1	2	3	4	5
5.20 Reading reports	1	2	3	4	5
5.21 Other (please specify)	1	2	3	4	5

6 **When you use English at work**, what is the highest level of English required for each of the tasks listed below? Please indicate by circling the appropriate number from 1 to 5.

SPEAKING/ LISTENING TASKS	**None or almost no English required**	**Quite low level of English required**	**Reasonable level of English required**	**Quite high level of English required**	**Very high level of English required**
6.1 Speaking face to face with workers in the same company	1	2	3	4	5
6.2 Speaking face to face with customers/clients	1	2	3	4	5
6.3 Speaking on the telephone	1	2	3	4	5
6.4 Oral presentation to people in your company	1	2	3	4	5
6.5 Oral presentation to outside clients/customers	1	2	3	4	5
6.6 Participating in discussion in meetings	1	2	3	4	5
6.7 Having business discussions with customers/clients	1	2	3	4	5
6.8 Other (please specify)	1	2	3	4	5
WRITING/ READING TASKS					
6.9 Writing letters/ memos	1	2	3	4	5
6.10 Writing e-mails/faxes	1	2	3	4	5
6.11 Writing brief informal reports	1	2	3	4	5
6.12 Writing formal reports	1	2	3	4	5
6.13 Writing minutes of meetings	1	2	3	4	5
6.14 Preparing advertising material	1	2	3	4	5
6.15 Writing project proposals	1	2	3	4	5
6.16 Writing recruitment material	1	2	3	4	5
6.17 Reading letters/memos	1	2	3	4	5
6.18 Reading faxes/emails	1	2	3	4	5
6.19 Reading proposals	1	2	3	4	5
6.20 Reading reports	1	2	3	4	5
6.21 Other (please specify)	1	2	3	4	5

7 Please indicate **your level of agreement** with each of the following statements by circling the appropriate number to show your level of agreement or disagreement

	Strongly disagree	**Disagree**	**Unsure**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
7.1 I need to use English at work almost every day	1	2	3	4	5
7.2 I use English at work with almost all the people I work with	1	2	3	4	5
7.3 I use English at work only with colleagues who speak only English	1	2	3	4	5
7.4 I use English with many of our customers/clients	1	2	3	4	5
7.5 I need to improve my spoken English skills	1	2	3	4	5
7.6 I need to improve my written English skills	1	2	3	4	5
7.7 English is necessary for me to do my job	1	2	3	4	5
7.8 I can do my job very well without much use of English	1	2	3	4	5
7.9 If I improve my English I will have better chances of promotion within my company	1	2	3	4	5
7.10 English is a very important language for business	1	2	3	4	5
7.11 English is considered a very important language in my country	1	2	3	4	5
7.12 In my job other languages are just as important as English	1	2	3	4	5
7.13 Sometimes misunderstandings occur in my job because people are using English but are from different cultural backgrounds	1	2	3	4	5
7.14 Sometimes when I speak English I feel that I cannot be as fluent as I am in my first language	1	2	3	4	5

PART C - ANY OTHER COMMENTS

8 What skills in the **English language** are of most use to you in your work?

9 If you have worked with this company for 5 years or more, can you comment on whether you have seen the **use of English** increase or decrease in your place of work in the time you have been with your company?

10 Would you like to make any other comments about your **use of English** (and other languages) in your workplace?
(For example, do you only use English for certain tasks? Do you use English more with some people than others? Are you expected to use English all the time at work? Is the use of English regarded as necessary or useful? What is the importance of other languages in your workplace?)

PART D- PERSONAL DETAILS

Please tick the right box or write the information required.

Your Company: ☐Hong Kong company OR ☐Kuala Lumpur company

Are you ☐Male OR ☐Female

Name (optional): _____

Email address: _____

Work Telephone _____

Work Fax _____

Your position/title within the company: _____

Thank you for completing this questionnaire. Your participation is very much appreciated.

Carmela Briguglio

GROUP WORK PROJECT **Appendix 2**
PRE-QUESTIONNAIRE

Part A - Student information

Please tick the correct box or insert the required information

1 □ Male □ Female

2 □ Local student □ International student

3 What is your age group?

□ 17 – 21years □ 22-32 years □ 33 plus years

4 Nationality or cultural background _____

5 Is English your first language (ie the one you speak and write with most confidence?)
□ Yes □ No

6 If you answered "no" to question 5, what is your first language? _____

7 Was English the major language of your
primary schooling □ Yes □ No
secondary schooling □ Yes □ No
other tertiary or university education □ Yes □ No □ Not applicable

8 Please provide an opinion of your skills in each of the following aspects of **ENGLISH** by placing a tick (✓) in the appropriate box. You can also write a brief comment in the appropriate box, if you wish.

English skill	**Very fluent** (Very confident and can communicate very successfully in a range of contexts, both academic and social).	**Fluent** (Reasonably confident and generally communicate quite successfully in English in both academic and social contexts)	**Intermediate** (Lack confidence sometimes but can generally get by in English in both academic and social contexts).	**Basic** (Can perform basic tasks in English in social and academic contexts).
Listening & understanding				
Speaking				
Reading				
Writing				

Personal information
Name: _____ Student Number: _____
Email: _____ Telephone: _____

Part B – English language & other languages & cultures in Australia

Referring to **your current life in Australia and your studies at Curtin**, please show your level of agreement with the statements below from 1, "strongly disagree" to 5, "strongly agree"

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I need to use English every day	1	2	3	4	5
2	I use English with everyone I meet	1	2	3	4	5
3	I don't need to use any other language but English in Australia	1	2	3	4	5
4	I feel I am developing my English language skills to high levels while studying at Curtin	1	2	3	4	5
5	I find it easy to express myself in written English	1	2	3	4	5
6	I find using English for academic purposes very difficult	1	2	3	4	5
7	People with an accent are really difficult to understand	1	2	3	4	5
8	I find it easy to understand Australian lecturers and tutors	1	2	3	4	5
9	I find it easy to understand Australian students in class	1	2	3	4	5
10	I find it easy to understand international students in class	1	2	3	4	5
11	Sometimes when I speak English I feel I cannot be as fluent as I would like to be	1	2	3	4	5
12	I often switch between languages in my everyday interactions in Australia	1	2	3	4	5
13	I think many people in Australia speak languages other than English in everyday life	1	2	3	4	5
14	It is normal for me to speak other languages as well as English in Australia	1	2	3	4	5
15	My studies have really developed my interpersonal skills (speaking and listening)	1	2	3	4	5
16	In my studies we practise a lot of class and group discussion	1	2	3	4	5
17	In my studies we have the opportunity to send and receive lots of emails	1	2	3	4	5
18	In my studies we learn a lot about intercultural communication	1	2	3	4	5
19	In the course of my studies I have learned a lot about other cultures through mixing with students from all over the world	1	2	3	4	5
20	In my studies I have learned a lot about other culture s from the material I have had to study	1	2	3	4	5
21	In my studies I have learned about writing reports	1	2	3	4	5
22	In my studies I have learned something about formal and informal writing styles necessary for business	1	2	3	4	5

Comments

Please add any other comments you wish to make about English language and other languages and cultures in Australia

_____

_____

_____

Part C - English as a global language in business

Referring to how you view **English as a global language in business,** please show your level of agreement with the statements below from 1, "strongly disagree" to 5, "strongly agree"

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Speakers of English as a first language will be those with the greatest advantage in international business	1	2	3	4	5
2	In order to communicate in international business contexts you have to speak English	1	2	3	4	5
3	My studies at Curtin are giving me an awareness of issues in intercultural communication	1	2	3	4	5
4	It's up to people who are not native speakers of English to make the effort to communicate effectively	1	2	3	4	5
5	My studies at Curtin are preparing me very well to communicate in future international business contexts	1	2	3	4	5
6	Bilingual speakers (those who speak two or more languages) will be those who are most advantaged in international business contexts	1	2	3	4	5
7	There can be misunderstandings when people from different cultural backgrounds speak English	1	2	3	4	5
8	I think business people in most countries speak English nowadays	1	2	3	4	5
9	In international business, it doesn't really matter if you don't know much about other cultures, so long as you speak English	1	2	3	4	5
10	In order to communicate effectively with people from other countries you just have to be nice to everyone	1	2	3	4	5
11	Because English is becoming a global language, in the future that's all people in business will need to speak	1	2	3	4	5
12	It's important to know something about other languages and cultures in order to be a good communicator in international business	1	2	3	4	5
13	English is the same the world over	1	2	3	4	5
14	It's important to know something about intercultural communication in order to be a good international manager	1	2	3	4	5
15	Most people in Asian countries speak English	1	2	3	4	5
16	English is the only language you need to do business in Asia	1	2	3	4	5
17	Students from Asian countries speak English just like Australians	1	2	3	4	5
18	The only difference between Australian English and English spoken in Asia is the accent	1	2	3	4	5

Comments

Please add any other comments you wish to make about English as a global language in business

_____

Part D – Previous experience with group work

If you have never been involved in a group assignment or project as part of your degree studies please go to Part E. Please circle 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 to show your level of agreement with the statements below from 1 indicating 'strongly disagree' to 5, indicating 'strongly agree'.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
1 I have found the experience of working in groups before to be very positive	1	2	3	4	5
18. In group assignments I find that I do more work than everyone else	1	2	3	4	5
19. I have found that group work just takes too much time	1	2	3	4	5
20. I have not experienced any problems with previous group work	1	2	3	4	5
21. I have found it easy to express my opinion in previous group work	1	2	3	4	5
22. I have found that even though the group process is not easy, you learn a lot from it	1	2	3	4	5
23. I found people in previous groups did not listen to what I had to say	1	2	3	4	5
24. Based on past experience, I would much rather work on my own than in a group.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I think mixed nationality groups are more creative and produce better assignments	1	2	3	4	5
26. I think students who do not speak English like Australians have problems in groups	1	2	3	4	5
27. In mixed nationality groups there are different beliefs about how the group should function	1	2	3	4	5
28. The relationship between group members is more difficult in mixed nationality teams	1	2	3	4	5
29. I have learned a lot from students from cultural backgrounds other than my own through group work	1	2	3	4	5
30. I have found that people with a different nationality from mine are just as hard-working as I am on group projects	1	2	3	4	5
31. I have found it easier to work with females on group assignments	1	2	3	4	5
32. I have found it easier to work with males on group assignments	1	2	3	4	5
33. I have found it easier to work with mixed gender groups on group assignments	1	2	3	4	5

Comments

Please add any other comments you wish to make about past experiences with a group assignment/project.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Part E – Forthcoming group task for this unit

Please circle 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 to show your level of agreement with the statements below from 1 indicating 'strongly disagree' to 5, indicating 'strongly agree'.

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I think I will learn a lot about group processes during this assignment	1	2	3	4	5
2	I am worried that this assignment will require too much time	1	2	3	4	5
3	I am worried I may not get a good mark for this assignment	1	2	3	4	5
4	I am really looking forward to working with my group on this assignment	1	2	3	4	5
5	I would like to have control over the quality of the assignment we produce	1	2	3	4	5
6	I think Australian students do not work as hard as international students	1	2	3	4	5
7	I want to be liked by members of my group	1	2	3	4	5
8	I believe mixed nationality teams can be more creative	1	2	3	4	5
9	I have trouble understanding people who speak with an accent in English	1	2	3	4	5
10	I think international students do not work as hard as Australian students	1	2	3	4	5
11	I am confident I can work effectively in a group	1	2	3	4	5
12	I think a mixed nationality team will help me to get better marks for this assignment	1	2	3	4	5
13	I expect to have some difficulties because we are a mixed nationality group	1	2	3	4	5
14	I don't expect to have to change my behaviour because I'm working in a mixed nationality team	1	2	3	4	5
15	I think I'm a sensitive person and that I listen well to other people.	1	2	3	4	5
16	I think I have a lot to learn about working with people from other cultures	1	2	3	4	5
17	I treat all people the same, irrespective of where they come from.	1	2	3	4	5
18	I expect to have learned a lot more about multi-national or mixed nationality teams by the end of this assignment.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments

Please add any other comments you wish to make about the group work you will undertake for this unit

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you so much for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. If you would like further information please contact:

Carmela Briguglio , Tel: 9266 3079
briguglc@cbs.curtin.edu.au

Appendix 3

Slide 1

Working in multinational teams

Carmela Briguglio
CBS Communication Skills Centre

1

Slide 2

Program

- **8.40 – 8.50** — **Introduction and welcome**
- **8.50 – 9.10** — **Completion of questionnaire**
- **9.10 – 9.50** — **Exploring the concept of culture**
  - Activity 1
  - Activity 2
  - Activity 3
- **9.40 – 10.10** — **Different concepts of 'working in teams'**
  - Contributions of different team members
  - Different rules about teams in different cultures
- **10.10 – 10.40** — **What works well with multinational teams?**
- **10.40 – 11.00** — **Discussion, evaluation and close**

2

Slide 3

Exploring the concept of cultural and linguistic diversity

- What is culture? What culture is not
- Introductory activity

"Doesn't everybody speak English?"

3

Slide 4

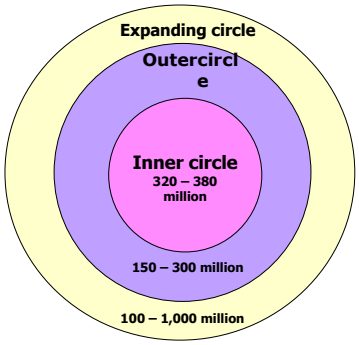
English as a global language – some statistics

- L1 speakers of English in some 56 countries, **around 337 million**
- L2 competent or fluent speakers **1.2 – 1.5 billion**
- Also 'official language' in a number of countries (eg Ghana, Nigeria, Singapore)
- Priority foreign language in other countries (eg China, Greece, Poland)
- In future most interactions in English will be **between L2 speakers or L1 and L2** speakers (Crystal,1997)

4

Slide 5

Kachru the spread of English



5

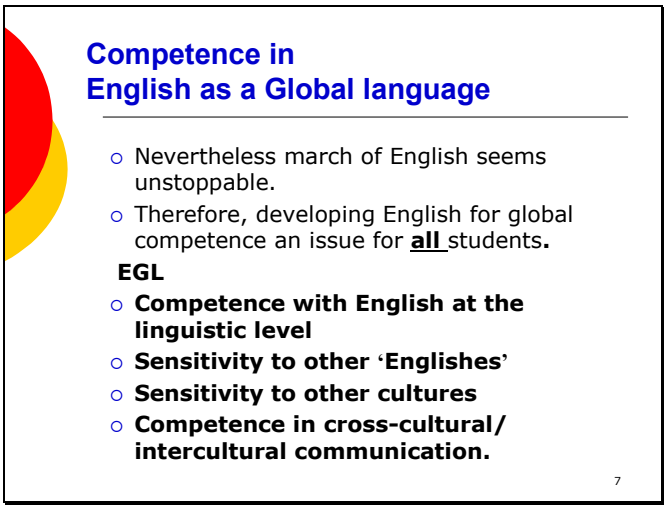
Slide 6

Other forces contributing to spread of English

- Economic developments on a global scale
- New communication technologies
- Explosion in international marketing and advertising
- Mass entertainment
- But
  - Some concerns about American imperialism ('McDonaldisation' of culture)
  - Phillipson, Pennycook, Skutnabb-Kangas and others decry and warn of domination of English.

6

Slide 7



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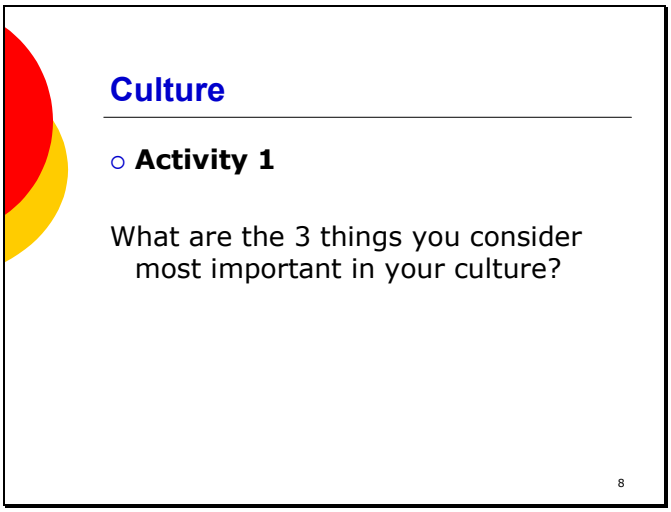

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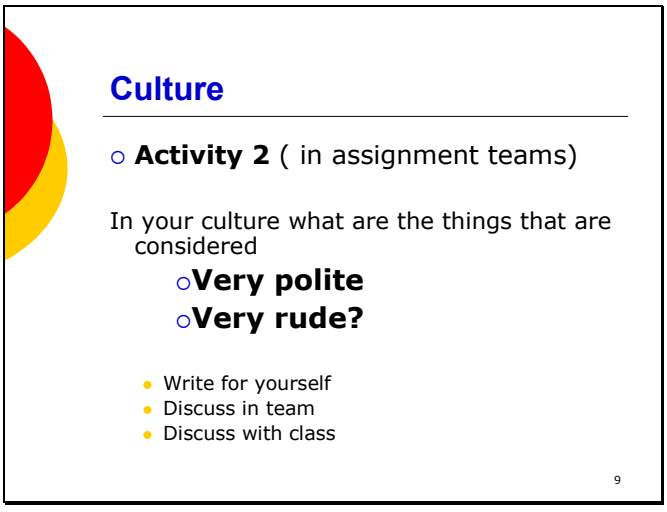

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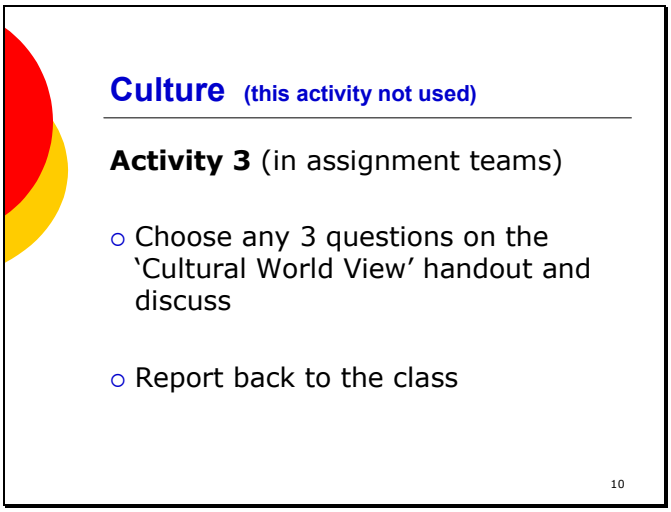
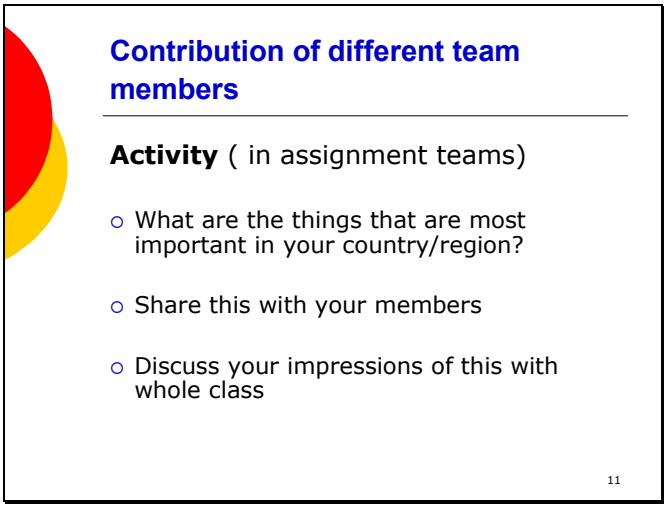
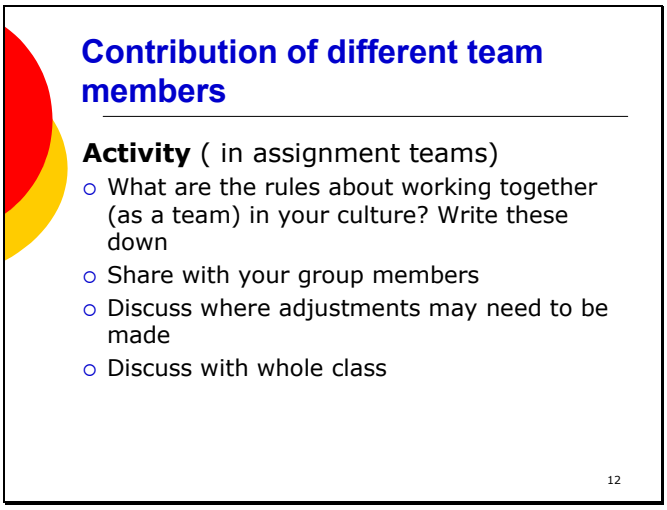


Slide 11



Slide 12



Slide 13

Self-directed teams

- This means roles not given
- Roles need to be negotiated
- One model could be
  - Leader
  - Secretary/note taker
  - Time keeper
  - Task-master/progress chaser

13

Slide 14

What hinders group work?

- All team members **not** joining in
- Meetings aimless
- One individual dominates
- Members don't express feelings
- Tasks and goals are not set
- No interest of group members in each other
- Criticize each other rather than problems/tasks
- Don't listen to each other
- Keep meetings formal/neutral

14

Slide 15

What helps group work?

- Get to know members of the team
- Set ground rules about what is/is not acceptable
- Analyse strengths of each group member
- Clarify team's goals and tasks
- Devise clear schedule of meetings and task deadlines
- Appoint one person as the communicator/task master
- Establish rules about how you will deal with problems
- Be honest in your evaluation of members' contribution (criticise the work, not the person)

15

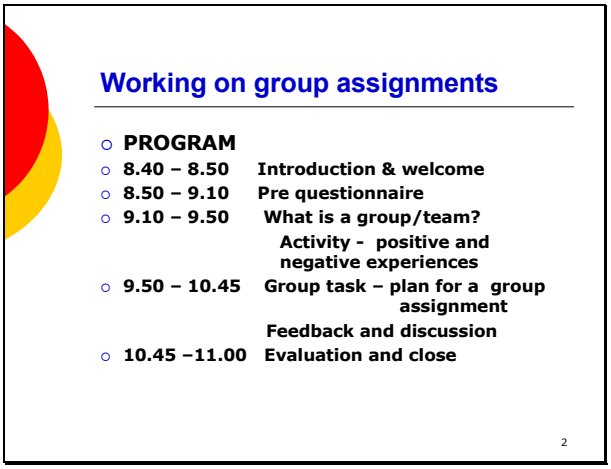
Slide 16


What works best with multinational teams?
Successful multinational (heterogenous) teams
Create a new hybrid culture over time
Develop a simplified set of rules
Spell out expectations clearly
Clearly define roles
The best teams
Create new rules for themselves
Communicate well
Manage conflict well (some conflict always expected)
(Earley & Mosakowski, 2000, Cox , Lobel & McCloud, 1991)
16

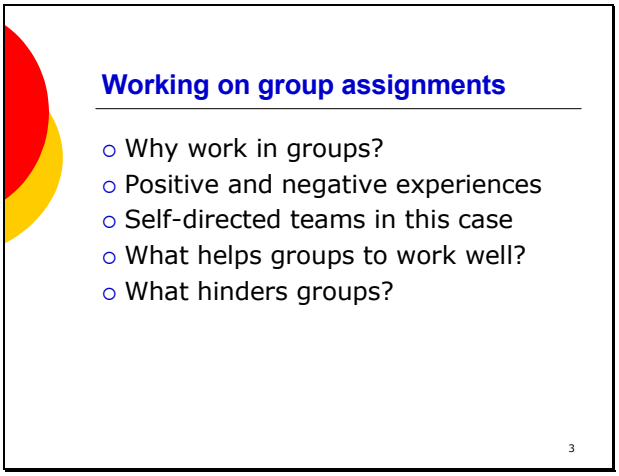
Appendix 4

Slide 1

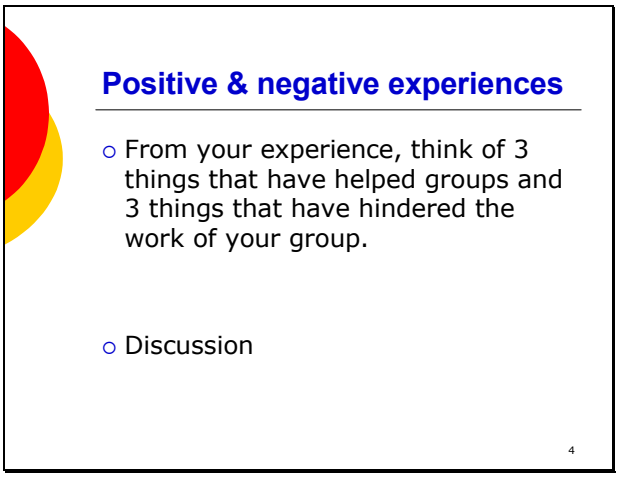
Slide 2



Slide 3



Slide 4



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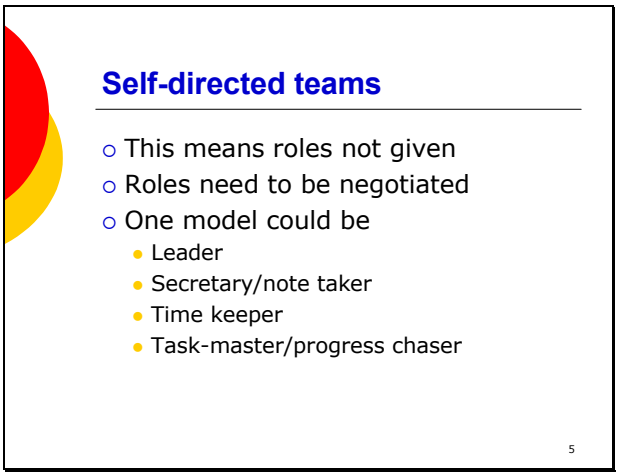
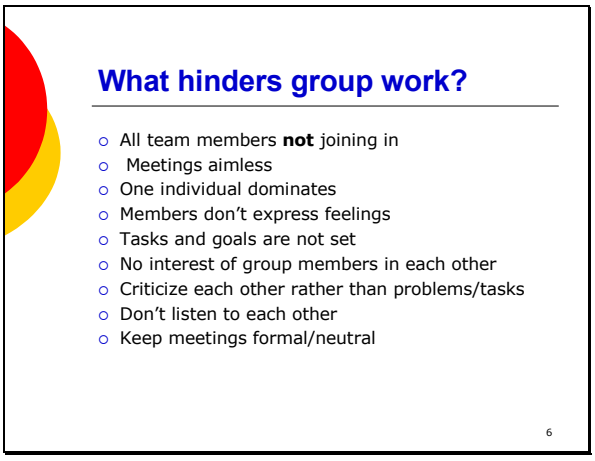


Slide 6



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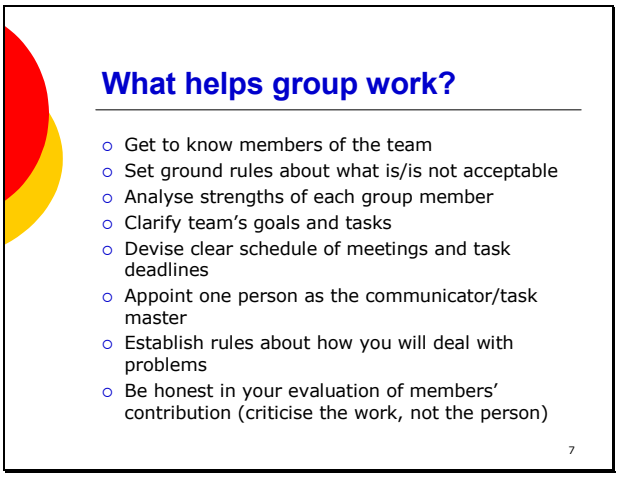
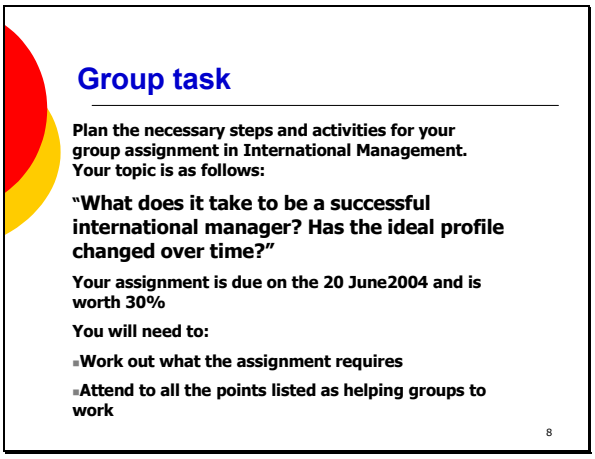


Slide 8



Appendix 5

EVALUATION FORM

STUDENT WORKSHOPS

Workshop Title:
_____

Date: _____

Undergraduate student ☐
Postgraduate student ☐

Please rank the following comments from 1 to 4, placing a tick in the appropriate box, with 1 indicating 'I strongly disagree' to 4 indicating 'I strongly agree'.

	1 **Strongly disagree**	**2** **disagree**	**3** Agree	**4** **Strongly agree**
	☹	☹	☺	☺
1. I found this workshop very useful				
2. I think what I learned from this workshop will improve my communication/study skills				
3. The workshop was well-presented				
4. The materials/handouts used were useful				
5. The activities we did helped us to apply what we learned				
6. I would recommend this seminar to other CBS students				

What was the best/ most useful aspect of this workshop for you?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Other Comments: We are happy to receive any other feedback about this workshop.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Thank you for completing this evaluation!

Appendix 6

GROUP WORK PROJECT

POST-QUESTIONNAIRE

Instructions

This is a follow up to the questionnaire you filled in at the beginning of the unit. Some of the questions are similar to earlier questions – this is because we want to gauge whether you have changed your opinion on any matters since undertaking this unit. Please complete according to instructions in each section, and again, thank you for your help with this project.

If you would like further information please contact:

Carmela Briguglio
Tel: 9266 3079
briguglc@cbs.curtin.edu.au
Communication Skills Centre
Curtin Business School
Building 407, Room 202

Part A - Personal information

Name: _____ Student Number: _____

Group - please circle one only: A B C D E F G H

Email: _____ Telephone: _____

Part B – English language & other languages & cultures in Australia

Referring to **your current life in Australia and your studies at Curtin**, please show your level of agreement with the statements below from 1, "strongly disagree" to 5, "strongly agree"

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
1. I need to use English every day	1	2	3	4	5
2. I use English with everyone I meet	1	2	3	4	5
3. I don't need to use any other language but English in Australia	1	2	3	4	5
4. I feel I am developing my English language skills to high levels while studying at Curtin	1	2	3	4	5
5. I find it easy to express myself in written English	1	2	3	4	5
6. I find using English for academic purposes very difficult	1	2	3	4	5
7. People with an accent are really difficult to understand	1	2	3	4	5
8. I find it easy to understand Australian lecturers and tutors	1	2	3	4	5
9. I find it easy to understand Australian students in class	1	2	3	4	5
10. I find it easy to understand international students in class	1	2	3	4	5
11. Sometimes when I speak English I feel I cannot be as fluent as I would like to be	1	2	3	4	5
12. I often switch between languages in my everyday interactions in Australia	1	2	3	4	5
13. I think many people in Australia speak languages other than English in everyday life	1	2	3	4	5
14. It is normal for me to speak other languages as well as English in Australia	1	2	3	4	5
15. My studies have really developed my interpersonal skills (speaking and listening)	1	2	3	4	5
16. In my studies we practise a lot of class and group discussion	1	2	3	4	5
17. In my studies we have the opportunity to send and receive lots of emails	1	2	3	4	5
18. In my studies we learn a lot about intercultural communication	1	2	3	4	5
19. In the course of my studies I have learned a lot about other cultures through mixing with students from all over the world	1	2	3	4	5
20. In my studies I have learned a lot about other culture s from the material I have had to study	1	2	3	4	5
21. In my studies I have learned about writing reports	1	2	3	4	5
22. In my studies I have learned something about formal and informal writing styles necessary for business	1	2	3	4	5

Comments

Please add any other comments you wish to make about English language and other languages and cultures in Australia

_____

_____

_____

Part C - English as a global language in business

Referring to how you view **English as a global language in business,** please show your level of agreement with the statements below from 1, "strongly disagree" to 5, "strongly agree"

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
1	Speakers of English as a first language will be those with the greatest advantage in international business	1	2	3	4	5
2	In order to communicate in international business contexts you have to speak English	1	2	3	4	5
3	My studies at Curtin are giving me an awareness of issues in intercultural communication	1	2	3	4	5
4	It's up to people who are not native speakers of English to make the effort to communicate effectively	1	2	3	4	5
5	My studies at Curtin are preparing me very well to communicate in future international business contexts	1	2	3	4	5
6	Bilingual speakers (those who speak two or more languages) will be those who are most advantaged in international business contexts	1	2	3	4	5
7	There can be misunderstandings when people from different cultural backgrounds speak English	1	2	3	4	5
8	I think business people in most countries speak English nowadays	1	2	3	4	5
9	In international business, it doesn't really matter if you don't know much about other cultures, so long as you speak English	1	2	3	4	5
10	In order to communicate effectively with people from other countries you just have to be nice to everyone	1	2	3	4	5
11	Because English is becoming a global language, in the future that's all people in business will need to speak	1	2	3	4	5
12	It's important to know something about other languages and cultures in order to be a good communicator in international business	1	2	3	4	5
13	English is the same the world over	1	2	3	4	5
14	It's important to know something about intercultural communication in order to be a good international manager	1	2	3	4	5
15	Most people in Asian countries speak English	1	2	3	4	5
16	English is the only language you need to do business in Asia	1	2	3	4	5
17	Students from Asian countries speak English just like Australians	1	2	3	4	5
18	The only difference between Australian English and English spoken in Asia is the accent	1	2	3	4	5

Comments

Please add any other comments you wish to make about English as a global language in business

_____

Part D –Experience with group work in this unit

Please circle 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 to show your level of agreement with the statements below from 1 indicating 'strongly disagree' to 5, indicating 'strongly agree'.

		Strongly disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree
1	I found the experience of working in this group to be very positive	1	2	3	4	5
2	I found people in this group did not listen to what I had to say	1	2	3	4	5
3	I think mixed nationality groups are more creative and produce better assignments	1	2	3	4	5
4	I think students who do not speak English like Australians had problems in my group	1	2	3	4	5
5	In my group there were different beliefs about how the group should function	1	2	3	4	5
6	Personal relationships in my group were difficult because we were a multinational team	1	2	3	4	5
7	I found it easier to work with the females on this assignment	1	2	3	4	5
8	I found it easier to work with the males on this assignment	1	2	3	4	5
9	I thought Australian students did not work as hard as international students on this assignment	1	2	3	4	5
10	I had trouble understanding people who spoke with an accent in English	1	2	3	4	5
11	I found that I modified my behaviour to fit in with this group **(* if yes, please explain below)**	1	2	3	4	5
12	I thought international students did not work as hard as Australian students in my group	1	2	3	4	5
13	I think I learned something about other languages through doing this assignment	1	2	3	4	5
14	I think I learned something about other cultures through doing this assignment	1	2	3	4	5
15	I think I still have a lot to learn about working with people from other cultures	1	2	3	4	5
16	I learned something about multinational teams through completing this assignment.	1	2	3	4	5
17	I learned something about international business through completing this assignment	1	2	3	4	5

Concluding Comments

Please add any other comments you wish to make about your experience of working on this group project for the unit International Management 375. ***In particular, could you indicate whether you have changed your mind about working in multinational teams and what new things you have learned. If you want to write more, please use the back of this sheet.***