

Linguistic and Cultural Diversity in the HE Classroom

Researchers

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Research focus

This project investigated how HE lecturers in one academic department experience cultural and linguistic diversity in their classrooms. The project focussed primarily on the notion of ‘participation’ within the classroom, especially how lecturers interpreted the influence of culture on students’ participation patterns in the classroom. The project also focused on the creative pedagogical strategies used to promote inclusive participation.

Methodology

This project involved a mixed methods approach, combining questionnaire data with qualitative data obtained from focus group interviews with 16 lecturers of varying seniority and nationalities.

Key findings

- Many staff report challenges in promoting student participation in lectures and seminars, but do not necessarily make their expectations clear to students in advance.
- Many staff do make pedagogical modifications to promote classroom interaction, such as providing discussion questions in advance or flipping the classroom.
- Many staff view cultural differences as a source of participation-related disputes in classroom-based group work and assessed projects.
- Within multicultural group work, perceived linguistic and cultural capital (e.g. being identified as a native speaker) has an impact on role allocation, but can be a source of resentment, particularly when students identified as ‘native speakers’ are assigned ‘language-heavy’ roles, such as writing and proofreading.

To find out more:

Murray, N. & McConachy, T. (2018). [‘Participation’ in the internationalised HE classroom: Views from academic staff](#). *Journal of International and Intercultural Communication*, 11 (3), 254-270.