



Group dynamics in the intercultural classroom: - integration or disintegration?

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Abstract

This paper reports on a study of intercultural communication patterns amongst groups of mixed nationality adult students studying a foundation course in Dublin. Comments in student evaluations combined with uncooperative classroom behaviour suggested that some of the teaching techniques were not appreciated by everybody. As a result, some teachers made significant changes in their teaching approaches to accommodate dissident voices.

The study sought to ascertain what style of teaching and learning each of the groups of students preferred and if they really did not like to interact with students from other nationalities. It tests some of the teachers' beliefs against the views of the students and discovers that the majority of students appreciate the benefits of interactive groupwork, although a significant number still need to be convinced.

It is argued that, even if they indicate otherwise, students need to be assimilated into the culture of the tertiary environment in which they intend to operate. Extra efforts may need to be made to persuade everybody, but teachers need to be reassured that intercultural learning is here to stay.

About the Author

Edward Bressan is a Senior Lecturer in the International Centre for English Language Studies at Oxford Brookes University, where his main responsibility is managing an EAP course. His teaching and research interests are in the areas of critical English for academic purposes and the use of language in the workplace.

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