Peer Assisted Study Sessions to Facilitate Transition for International Students

Lisa Schmidt and Julia Miller
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Abstract: Commencing university as an international student involves adjustment to multiple cultural frameworks: the host-nation culture, the multicultural student cohort, the institutional culture of the university, and the disciplinary culture of the area of study. Host-nation students may already possess much of this cultural knowledge and share learning spaces with international students but the two groups do not necessarily interact. We felt that these issues could be addressed using Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS). PASS employs established, high-achieving students to facilitate study sessions for new students. In PASS, the facilitator acts as a model student, rather than as a teacher, as the group works through the study material together. This format provides a structured, discipline-based forum for interaction in a non-threatening, non-assessed context. In this project, Australian third year bachelor students acted as PASS facilitators for new international masters students, leading study session activities focused on scientific communication skills. The results from this project provide insight into how peer interaction can facilitate transition to a new academic culture for international students.

Keywords: University, International Student, Transition, Peer Assisted Study, Student centred, Australia

Introduction

Australia is a popular destination for international students (Devos, 2003), and scientific areas such as biotechnology attract students from overseas. The transition of students to a new university and course in a new country raises a number of challenges, for both students and the host institution.

Although it is an area where opinions are strongly held and vociferously maintained, and many academic staff feel that language problems really are the root of all evil for international students, research to date has not shown any direct links between academic success and linguistic ability, since so many other factors may play an important role (Gunn-Lewis, 2000). As Rivera (1984, p. 38) notes, language proficiency is only one of many variables predicting success in an academic environment. Other important areas are adaptation to the new country’s culture, academic writing conventions in the host country and knowledge of the discourse specific to the student’s discipline. Socialisation is also important. Winter (1996) indicates that in Chinese culture, for example, there is a strong stigma attached to loneliness, and friendship and relationships with others hold great importance. In such situations, programs that address the students’ social needs are required rather than, or in addition to, language assistance programs.

The term ‘culture’ is one which has traditionally been hard to define (Gudykunst, Ting-Toomey, & Chua, 1988). The explanation given by House et al. (2004, p. 15 as cited in Joy,
is that the term ‘culture’ refers to “shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations or meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives that are transmitted across generations”. The international student in Australia is thus faced by an expanse of common knowledge and understandings that are not part of their previous experience. Interactions in everyday life, on and off campus, may present a challenge, leading sometimes to culture or “transition shock” (Bennet, 1997, as cited in Gudykunst & Kim, 1997; Hinds, 1987). Culture shock is a term that was coined by Oberg in 1960 and is defined as the “anxiety that results from losing all of our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (Oberg 1960, p. 177 as cited in Kim, 1988). This anxiety makes it hard for a student to concentrate on their studies and relax in their new setting. Nevertheless, it can also prove the catalyst for a period of self-discovery. Adler has explained the experience of learning in a cross-cultural setting as indicative of a “movement from a state of low self- and cultural awareness to a state of high self- and cultural awareness” (1972/1985, p. 15 as cited in Kim, 2003).

The international student must contend not only with the culture of the host country but of the university campus, where norms may differ largely from those at home. Respect for authority may be a feature of the student’s previous learning experience, leading sometimes to an uncritical approach to academic texts, which are received unquestioningly as the transmission of ‘expert’ knowledge. In Australia, the student will be expected to think more critically and judge for themselves the validity of an argument. Logic and critical thinking are therefore one aspect of academic literacy in Australia, where such capacity is praised and rewarded (Kim, 2003).

Established, successful host-nation students possess much of the cultural and academic knowledge advantageous within a particular university environment. However, host-nation students may not interact with their international colleagues. One reason for this is the low mobility amongst Australian university students, many of whom attend university in their home city (Planning Services Unit Flinders University, 2008). This means that Australian students generally arrive at university with established social support networks and, while they may want to make new friends, do not have to establish new social circles. Therefore, most international students make friends with co-nationals or other international students but want and expect more contact with host nationals (Rosenthal, Russell, & Thomson, 2006). Rosenthal et al. (2006) argue that students’ cultural stress can be alleviated through a sense of connectedness and that “increasing the amount of contact with Australians would bring with it many additional benefits for international students.” This paper outlines an intervention strategy that aimed to increase the contact between local Australian and international students within a biotechnology program.

The Context

There are undergraduate and postgraduate biotechnology degrees offered at Flinders University in South Australia. The undergraduate degree attracts mainly Australian students (~90% Australian) whereas the postgraduate Masters of Biotechnology Studies degree is undertaken almost entirely by international students (~95% international). The two degrees represent different educational pathways as the masters program is aimed at students from non-biotechnology backgrounds who want to move into the field; or who have some biotechnology training but wish to upgrade their skills in a more high-tech environment. Therefore, both
the undergraduate and postgraduate degrees produce graduates who compete for the same employment and research higher degree opportunities. The shared course objectives are reflected in the course delivery as postgraduate and senior undergraduate students share some lectures. Both groups of students also undertake a nine month full-time research project as part of their degree and undergraduate and Masters students may find themselves working side by side in the same research laboratory. The students also share a student association which organises industry-linked events such as a careers night. Therefore, undergraduate and postgraduate, host-nation and international students share learning and disciplinary spaces. However, little interaction appears to occur between the two groups.

This project aimed to develop interaction between host-national and international students through participation in mutually-beneficial study sessions. This required bringing the mainly international postgraduate students into a specific shared learning exercise with host-nation undergraduate students.

The Intervention: PASS

Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) employ established, high-achieving students to facilitate study sessions for new students. In PASS, the facilitator acts as a model student, rather than as a teacher, as the group works through the study material together. This format provides a structured, discipline-based forum for interaction in a non-threatening, non-assessed context. In this project, local Australian third year Bachelor students acted as PASS facilitators for newly arrived international Masters students, leading study session activities focussing on scientific communication skills. No academic staff were present during the sessions, although the sessions had been designed by academics from the biotechnology department and the University’s Student Learning Centre.

There were 6-7 study sessions per cohort. The first session focussed on cultural diversity awareness and involved watching a DVD (Schrank, 2004) and discussing the scenarios. The subsequent sessions involved exercises on scientific communication. The aims of these sessions were to improve English language skills within the context of scientific communication skills; to develop a professional identity amongst the cohort through a shared discipline-based language; and to facilitate sociability within the group through interactive, student-driven exercises. These aims applied to both the facilitators and the new students, as the purpose of PASS is for both groups to learn and develop skills together.

Evaluation

Four cohorts were examined between 2007 and 2009 with 6-12 students and two facilitators per cohort.

The students and facilitators were given the same 30 minute Scientific Communication Test before and after the series of study sessions, with questions based on exercises that the students undertook during their study sessions. The pilot test given to the first cohort was too simple and did not provide room for detection of improvement, so it was modified for subsequent cohorts. The exercises and questions focussed on the language style and conventions prevalent within science and aimed to prepare the students for thesis writing. For example, students were asked to convert a set of laboratory instructions into the third person,
past tense, passive voice style required in a Materials & Methods section. The test is provided in full in Appendix A.

The students and facilitators were given the same Cultural Diversity Awareness Questionnaire before and after the series of study sessions, with no time limit. The questionnaire was compiled from a number of sources: University of Maryland at College Park survey (University of Maryland at College Park, 2007); Nisha Dogra’s questionnaire (Dogra & Karnik, 2003); and original questions written by the authors of this paper. The questions were divided into four categories: Values, Experiences at Flinders, Comfort at Flinders, and Scenarios. (See Appendix B.) Since all international students had to obtain an overall IELTS English language test score of 6 for entrance into the course, there was no concern about them understanding the questions asked.

The students provided written comments at the end of their survey and in a ‘questions and comments’ box used throughout the series of sessions. Regular meetings with the facilitators were recorded and analysed. All evaluation exercises had the approval of the University’s Social and Behavioural Research Ethics Committee and this project was supported by a Flinders University Cultural Diversity Initiative Grant.

It may not be possible to ascribe all of the changes to PASS as the participants were also exposed to a few months of other life experiences during the same time. Consideration was given to administering the questionnaires to a control group, but such a group would have been enrolled in different courses and would not have been exposed to the same level of scientific communication and discipline-based culture. They would therefore not have represented a true control group for the PASS sessions.

Findings

Scientific Communication Skills

“Science has come to be recognized as a form of culture with its own creeds, language, material practices, perceptions, theories, and beliefs” (Wolff-Michael & Daniel, 2002, p. 369). One of the aims of the exercise was to develop the discipline-based culture of the cohort, and language was one key to this. The combined group of students and facilitators improved their scientific communication skills (mean score before: 59.5%; mean score after: 68.8%; t-test p<0.05). No student or facilitator obtained full marks for the ‘before’ or ‘after’ test, which indicated that all of the participants were challenged by the test and the PASS exercises.

Values

The questions posed in this section match Rokeach’s definition, “To say that a person ‘has a value’ is to say that he has an enduring belief that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally and socially preferable to alternative modes of conduct or end-states of existence” (1972, as cited in Hofstede, 2001, p. 5). The responses to the values questions did not show a significant shift (see Table 1). This is in accordance with Hofstede’s argument (2001, pp. 11, 34-36) that while surface behaviour may change, underlying values do not, and values lie at the centre of culture. This result was viewed as positive by the researchers as the aims of the exercise were not to change the participants’ values or culture but to facilitate social exchange within the discipline.
Table 1: Responses to Values-based Questions by Students before and after the PASS Sessions. The Results were Analysed by Wilcoxon Signed Rank test using SPSS Software. N=22-24. Results Show the Mean ± SD and are on a Scale of 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I think that foreigners should be able to fit into their new country without having to give up their own culture.</td>
<td>2.00±1.142</td>
<td>2.13±1.154</td>
<td>0.748</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand and respect that religion and other beliefs may influence how people understand and respond to people with physical or intellectual disabilities/handicaps.</td>
<td>2.50±2.110</td>
<td>2.00±.834</td>
<td>0.254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that all individuals have a responsibility to learn about how to deal with those who are different to themselves.</td>
<td>1.42±.654</td>
<td>1.50±.659</td>
<td>0.642</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that foreigners going to live in a new country should let go of the culture of the country from which they have come.</td>
<td>3.83±1.204</td>
<td>3.92±1.100</td>
<td>0.751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that cultural diversity can be taught by providing students with facts about other cultures.</td>
<td>1.71±.550</td>
<td>2.04±.955</td>
<td>0.136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that a person’s ability to speak English reflects their intelligence or knowledge.</td>
<td>4.29±.751</td>
<td>4.21±1.021</td>
<td>0.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think that foreigners going to live in a new country should adapt to their new country, but not necessarily change their own culture.</td>
<td>1.54±.658</td>
<td>1.46±.509</td>
<td>0.527</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I encourage other people to believe what I believe.</td>
<td>3.88±.900</td>
<td>3.75±1.152</td>
<td>0.533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand and respect that factors such as gender (male or female), class (caste), and age have different significance in different cultures.</td>
<td>1.63±.576</td>
<td>1.79±.658</td>
<td>0.305</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Experiences

The experience questions asked students about situations they had found themselves in since arriving. At the start, there was an initial impression of unequal class participation within the group. However, students did indicate a shift towards increased participation in response to the question, “In my experience, students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds participate equally in classroom discussion.” This may indicate either actual increased participation as the term progressed or it may indicate a perception of increased participation – participation was not measured in any way during the program. There was no detectable change in response to the other questions shown in Table 2.
Table 2: Responses to Experience-based Questions by Students before and after the PASS Sessions. The Results were Analysed by Wilcoxon Signed Rank test using SPSS Software. * Indicates Statistical Significance of \( p < 0.05 \). \( N = 24 \). Results show the mean ± SD and are on a Scale of 1 (Strongly Agree) to 5 (Strongly Disagree)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
<th>( p )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>At Flinders I feel there are expectations about my academic performance because of my race/ethnicity.</td>
<td>3.79±.884</td>
<td>3.71±1.042</td>
<td>0.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In my experience, students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds participate equally in classroom discussion.</td>
<td>2.96±1.334</td>
<td>2.25±1.327</td>
<td>0.020*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My social interactions on this campus are largely confined to students of my race/ethnicity.</td>
<td>3.00±1.142</td>
<td>2.88±1.154</td>
<td>0.522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My experiences since coming to Flinders have strengthened my own sense of racial/ethnic identity.</td>
<td>2.88±.797</td>
<td>2.83±.963</td>
<td>0.851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Flinders getting to know people with racial/ethnic backgrounds different from my own has been easy.</td>
<td>2.38±.824</td>
<td>2.46±.884</td>
<td>0.593</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At Flinders, I feel I need to minimize various characteristics of my racial/ethnic culture (e.g. language, dress) to be able to fit in.</td>
<td>3.38±1.173</td>
<td>3.75±1.032</td>
<td>0.133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Comfort**

The comfort scale questions assessed how the students were feeling at that time and therefore how they were coping with transition to a new university. As shown in Table 3, all of the responses commenced at neutral or comfortable and trended towards greater comfort, which indicated that the participants felt secure in their environment. Only one question resulted in a significant shift: students did feel more comfortable “Saying what I think about racial/ethnic issues.” This was a valuable outcome, as it improves the likelihood of future issues being addressed rather than the students remaining silent.
Table 3: Responses to Comfort Questions by Students and Facilitators before and after the PASS Sessions. The Results were Analysed by Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test Using SPSS Software. * Indicates Statistical Significance of p<0.05. N=23-24. Results Show the Mean ± SD and are on a Scale of 1 (Very Comfortable) to 5 (Very Uncomfortable)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Before</th>
<th>After</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Going to see a lecturer of my own race/ethnicity.</td>
<td>1.65±.775</td>
<td>1.82±.853</td>
<td>.366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaking with others about my racial/ethnic background.</td>
<td>2.09±.733</td>
<td>1.95±.722</td>
<td>.408</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being in situations where I am the only person of my racial/ethnic group.</td>
<td>2.55±1.143</td>
<td>2.3±.926</td>
<td>.160</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saying what I think about racial/ethnic issues.</td>
<td>3.00±.976</td>
<td>2.39±.988</td>
<td>.033*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being with people whose racial/ethnic backgrounds are different from my own.</td>
<td>1.96±.706</td>
<td>1.83±.717</td>
<td>.317</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participating in discussions in class.</td>
<td>2.00±1.000</td>
<td>1.70±.635</td>
<td>.161</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Going to see a lecturer of a different race/ethnicity than my own.</td>
<td>1.91±.900</td>
<td>1.87±.815</td>
<td>.803</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being with people whose racial/ethnic backgrounds are the same as my own.</td>
<td>1.48±.593</td>
<td>1.52±.593</td>
<td>.739</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Scenarios**

The scenario questions focussed on the institutional culture at Flinders University. Unusually, compared to other countries, Australian lecturers are commonly addressed by their first names by students, although this is not mandatory. One of the questions the students were asked was:

“You have a lecturer whose name is Professor John Smith. He asks you to call him by his first name, ‘John’. You need to ask him a question in an email. How will you start the email?”

Initially the students chose a range of answers but after PASS, they mainly responded ‘Dear John’ (significant shift of p=0.03, Kendall’s test, N=22). It is interesting that initially, students chose more formal forms of address (probably in line with their culture) even though this entailed not following the instruction given by the lecturer. The facilitators were excluded from the analysis of the answers to this question as they had spent a few years at Flinders and all answered ‘Dear John’ in the ‘before’ questionnaire.
The Facilitators

One of the aims of the University is to produce graduates who “engage positively with people and ideas beyond the limits of their own geographical, disciplinary, social, cultural or other boundaries…” (Flinders University, 2009). Sandy and Meyer (2009) argue the following requirement for educating global citizens:

Specifically, students need to critically examine their own values, attitudes and beliefs about themselves and the world in which they live. To achieve this critical awareness, faculty and staff must create assignments and educational experiences that move students beyond their comfort zone through a “pedagogy of discomfort”. For example, students must be increasingly exposed to people, places and ideas that are uniquely different from their own.

The application process to become a facilitator required that the students write a one page opinion piece on the challenges facing international students arriving at Flinders. The facilitators commented that doing this exercise had made them think about this issue and had increased their awareness of, and sympathy for, the challenges faced by international students. The facilitators may also have challenged the students’ view of an ‘Australian’, as Australia is a multicultural country. The facilitators reflected this diversity, with only a third of the facilitators having anglo-celtic surnames (although surnames would not have been used in PASS); one of the facilitators being of mixed Asian/European background; and one of the facilitators having a Middle Eastern background. We were unable to locate any research into the expectations that international students have regarding ‘Australian’ students but this could be an area of future research.

Other Observations

The international students in this project were overwhelmingly from Asia and countries with a high Power Distance Index (PDI) (Hofstede, 2001, p. 87). Hofstede (2001, p. 83) defines PDI in these terms: “The power distance between a boss B and a subordinate S in a hierarchy is the difference between the extent to which B can determine the behaviour of S and the extent to which S can determine the behaviour of B.” This definition suggests that students from a high PDI culture will be less likely to approach lecturers and ask questions. This was observed in PASS, as the students asked the facilitators about how to approach lecturers on a number of occasions: “Can we contact our lecturers outside the lecture rooms? If yes then how to know when?” Students would not ask the lecturers this! This illustrates the need to remove a hierarchical structure from the transition strategy. This concept was further reinforced as, on a couple of occasions where PhD students were used as facilitators instead of third year students, the facilitators reported that once the students realised they were PhD students, the group became more passive and waited to be ‘taught’. Furthermore, the Masters students did not mind having undergraduate third year students acting as facilitators, as the roles were made clear: the facilitators were not teachers, they were co-students in a study session.

The content of the PASS sessions was modified slightly over the four cohorts in response to feedback from the facilitators. In particular, they reported that open ended discussion questions invariably resulted in silence. This indicated a need for more structured exercises.
However, they also reported that there needed to be time for social interaction at the end of the class, as that was when extra questions about transition issues might be asked. Therefore, the exercises were planned to take 40 minutes of the scheduled 50 minute time slot and were scheduled prior to another class so that the group would stay in the vicinity and mingle rather than dash off to their next class.

The facilitators also commented on how late in semester they were being asked some questions; for example, they were asked how to use the library in week six of semester. This indicates that transition lasts longer than orientation week and transition support systems need to continue into term time. PASS can play an important role in this.

Positive comments from the students indicated that the PASS session improved English language skills: “In my opinion, this tutorials is very useful for us whose we language is not English. Sometimes we know these things but we can not explain it in English. So, these tutorials really helped me.” The students also reported increased scientific knowledge and skills: “The tutorials were very useful in improving our scientific knowledge especially, the scientific terms.” Some students also felt more culturally aware and formed connections within the class: “This tutorials was very helpful in interacting with my classmates of various religious background and culture”; “You know each other well by participating in tutorial and talking to them & knowing them better.” The students also appreciated the chance to interact with local Australian students: “They were a good way of interacting with Australian students as I do not get much of an opportunity to do so considering most people doing the course with me come from my own country or other countries. The tutorials were fun and teach me about some stuff. Thank You!”

Negative comments indicated dissatisfaction with the content and level of the sessions: “It would be better if the materials of the tutorials are upgraded to a level in which suitable and appropriate for master students. These tutorials seem to ineffective and inefficient because the materials presented were too shallow. In addition, the tutors should have been had attractive way to address the materials to students.” Concerns were also expressed about the mixed language ability of the participants: “The tutorials is very good and helpful, but in my opinion maybe longer time can give a better result. Also I think better trained teacher will make lessons more effective. In addition, students who have the tutorials together should have a similar English ability, which can help all of them to get involve it.” However, diversity of skills is inevitable in any class. Two students felt that the level of the sessions was too simple for them: “I do feel that, this tutorial will be more useful to the undergraduate students as they are completely unaware of the scientific informations. So I encourage it to be practised for them as well.” These issues could be addressed as the session content is updated.

Conclusions

Peer support systems have previously been demonstrated to assist people relocating to a new country. However, they are usually voluntary programs on the part of arrivees and host-nationals and are an additional exercise on top of the core activity. This program integrated a peer support program into the curriculum and focussed on the development of a discipline-based cultural skill (scientific language) as a common focus. Although the findings were not dramatic, it was clear from the students’ comments and questionnaire responses that overall they appreciated the PASS program. PASS did improve their scientific communication skills as shown by higher scores in the ‘after’ test. They also felt more comfortable with Australian
culture, the university culture and the cultural diversity found on an Australian university campus. This heightened cultural awareness may have helped them to cope with culture shock. For the students, the key aspects of the PASS program were the opportunities to meet Australian students and form social networks through interacting with peers from their own and other cultures. PASS programs can therefore make a valuable contribution to a positive transition experience, and illustrate how embedding transition programs into the curriculum can be beneficial.

References


Appendix A: Scientific Communication Test

1. Academic style
Can you rewrite this method in the style that would suit a journal article?

**e.g.** ‘Wash cells twice with 10ml of Ca$^{2+}$ and Mg$^{2+}$ free phosphate buffered saline’

would be rewritten ‘Cells were washed twice with 10ml of Ca$^{2+}$ and Mg$^{2+}$ free phosphate buffered saline.’

For a 75cm$^2$ flask, add 1ml of trypsin-EDTA. Make sure that the cells are coated with trypsin by rocking the flask. Incubate at 37ºC for 1-5min. Tap the flask to loosen the cells from the surface. Resuspend the cells in 10ml of normal growth medium.

2. Verb tenses
Which verb tense would be most appropriate here? Please put the verbs into the correct form.

**e.g.** you (answer) are answering the question

In the experiment, the transgenic fruits (fail) ...................... to develop the deep red color of the control fruits, owing to a 50% drop in the level of lycopene but not of β-carotene. Interestingly, phytoene levels (be also affected) .................................. We conclude from these results that the high levels of GES expression (cause) ....................... a marked depletion of the GDP pool available for lycopene and phytoene biosynthesis. Such a phenotype (be not displayed) ........................................by LIS transgenic tomatoes, in which lycopene levels (remain) ....................................... unaffected.


3. Articles
Can you insert articles where necessary in the following passage?

**e.g.** Question: The point of exercise is to know when to insert articles.

**The**

**Answer:** The point of ↑ exercise is to know when to insert articles.

Sex differences in conversational behaviour have long been topic of public and scientific interest. Stereotype of female talkativeness is deeply engrained in Western folklore and often considered scientific fact. In first printing of her book, neuropsychiatrist Brizendine reported, “Woman uses about 20,000 words per day while man uses about 7,000”.

20,000-versus-7000 word estimates appear to have achieved status of cultural myth in that comparative differences have been cited for past 15 years.

4. Paraphrasing

Please paraphrase the following text:
In reality, no study has systematically recorded the natural conversations of large groups of people for extended periods of time. Consequently, there have not been the necessary data for reliably estimating differences in daily word usage among women and men.


5. Sections of a journal article

Match the following section of a journal article with its suitable content by drawing a line between them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Abstract</td>
<td>A. A diagrammatic representation of a model that the authors propose based on their results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Introduction</td>
<td>B. A brief summary of the research presented in this paper, including specific details such as the molecular weights of proteins discovered.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Materials &amp; Methods</td>
<td>C. A summary of research previously published in the specific research area of the paper.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Results</td>
<td>D. A comparison of the results obtained relative to other papers published in this specific research area.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Discussion</td>
<td>E. The brand name and model of a machine used to collect the raw data for a figure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Logical argument

Are the following arguments valid or invalid? (n.b. we are NOT asking if the argument is true, only if it is logically valid)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Argument</th>
<th>Valid or Invalid?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Jane is a doctor; Doctors go to Medical School; Therefore, Jane went to Medical School</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. <em>Canis rufus</em> have 4 legs; My cat has 4 legs; Therefore, my cat is a <em>Canis rufus</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. All fish can talk; Whiting are fish; Therefore, whiting can talk</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Vocabulary

Complete the table below with the missing singular or plural form of the word

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Singular</th>
<th>Plural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word</td>
<td>Words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formula</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fungus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hypotheses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. Italics

Underline the words in the following paragraph that should be in italics.

c.e.g. Ooi et al. (2007)
The main proteins that interact in vivo with the product of an epitope-tagged allele of the endogenous Dnmt3L gene were identified by mass spectrometry as DNMT3A2, DNMT3B and the four core histones.


9. Suffixes and prefixes

Match the following suffixes and prefixes with their meanings by drawing a line between them

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Suffix/Prefix</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ase</td>
<td>of equal nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>auto</td>
<td>tissue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>iso</td>
<td>self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hist</td>
<td>man/human</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>logy</td>
<td>outside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>homo</td>
<td>enzyme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>extra</td>
<td>study of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Cultural Diversity Awareness Questionnaire

Background questions
1. How well do you speak English?
   - Very well
   - Well
   - Not well
   - Not at all

2. Do you ever need someone to help you communicate in English?
   - Yes, always
   - Yes, sometimes
   - No

3. How long have you lived in Australia for?
   - Less than 3 months
   - 3-9 months
   - 9 months - 2 years
   - 2-10 years
   - More than 10 years

Opinion scale questions

The answers are on a scale that measures how much you agree with each statement. The options are:
“Strongly agree” which means “yes, I agree with this a lot”
“Agree” which means “yes, I agree with this”
“Neutral” which means “I do not agree or disagree”
“Disagree” which means “no, I do not agree with this”
“Strongly disagree” which means “no, I do not agree with this at all”
Choose the response that best indicates your position on this scale.

4. For each of the following, please indicate your position.
   At Flinders I feel there are expectations about my academic performance because of my race/ethnicity.
   I think that foreigners should be able to fit into their new country without having to give up their own culture.
I understand and respect that religion and other beliefs may influence how people understand and respond to people with physical or intellectual disabilities/handicaps.

I think that all individuals have a responsibility to learn about how to deal with those who are different to themselves.

In my experience, students of different racial/ethnic backgrounds participate equally in classroom discussion.

My social interactions on this campus are largely confined to students of my race/ethnicity.

I think that foreigners going to live in a new country should let go of the culture of the country from which they have come.

My experiences since coming to Flinders have strengthened my own sense of racial/ethnic identity.

I think that cultural diversity can be taught by providing students with facts about other cultures.

I think that a person’s ability to speak English reflects their intelligence or knowledge.

I think that foreigners going to live in a new country should adapt to their new country, but not necessarily change their own culture.

I encourage other people to believe what I believe.

I understand and respect that factors such as gender (male or female), class (caste), and age have different significance in different cultures.

At Flinders getting to know people with racial/ethnic backgrounds different from my own has been easy.

At Flinders, I feel I need to minimize various characteristics of my racial/ethnic culture (e.g. language, dress) to be able to fit in.

**Comfort scale questions**

- Very comfortable
- Comfortable
- Neutral
- Uncomfortable
- Very uncomfortable
- Not applicable

5. Please indicate how comfortable you feel in the following situations at Flinders.

- Going to see a lecturer of my own race/ethnicity.
- Speaking with others about my racial/ethnic background.
- Being in situations where I am the only person of my racial/ethnic group.
- Saying what I think about racial/ethnic issues.
- Being with people whose racial/ethnic backgrounds are different from my own.
- Participating in discussions in class.
- Going to see a lecturer of a different race/ethnicity than my own.
- Being with people whose racial/ethnic backgrounds are the same as my own.
Scenario questions
These questions ask what you would do in a particular situation. Choose the answer that best reflects what you would do.

6. You arrive at a tutorial 5 minutes early. Inside the room, there is one big table with two other students sitting at it. You do not know the other students. What would you do?

   Wait outside until the tutor (teacher) arrives.
   Go into the room, sit down, and not speak to anyone.
   Go into the room, sit down and say “hello”.
   Go into the room, sit down, and introduce yourself by saying, “Hi. My name is ...”.

7. You have a lecturer whose name is Professor John Smith. He asks you to call him by his first name, ‘John’. You need to ask him a question in an email. How will you start the email?

   Dear John
   Dear Professor Smith
   Dear Professor John
   Dear Mr John
   Dear Mr Smith
   Dear Sir

8. During a lecture, the lecturer says something that you do not understand. What do you do?

   Nothing
   Put up your hand during the lecture and ask the lecturer to explain it.
   After the lecture, ask another student for help.
   After the lecture, ask the lecturer for help.
   Go to the library and do further reading.
   Look on the internet.

9. Since the last questionnaire have you received help from the Student Learning Centre?

   Yes
   No

10. Since the last questionnaire have you received help from the Equal Opportunity Unit?
11. Please make comments about the tutorials.

About the Authors

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Dr. Lisa Schmidt is a lecturer in the Biotechnology programme at Flinders University with scientific expertise in Medical Biotechnology. She is involved in the delivery of topics to undergraduate and Masters students. Part of her role is to arrange orientation activities for new international students and to assist them with their transition to studying in Australia.

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Julia’s background is in Romance languages and TESOL. Her current research interests include pedagogical lexicography and English idioms (the subject of her ongoing PhD); anglicisms in modern European Portuguese; the English article system; and the teaching of English prepositions to non-native speakers of English. She has also produced a DVD on academic oral presentation skills and recently published her first novel. She is currently employed in the Student Learning Centre at Flinders University in Australia, where she is a lecturer in academic skills and ESL.
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