Evolution of Internationalisation in the UK University – an Anglophone Perspective

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For UK universities, internationalisation has long centred on: a) the recruitment of students from outside the United Kingdom, and b) the development of international partnerships for research and education. On occasion, this has included, in addition to Memoranda of Understanding for collaborative research, the establishment of overseas campuses, trans-national education programmes, or overseas recruitment offices. These strategies focus on reputation and brand, with explicit aspirations to be a "global university". This paper explores how language centres and language programmes can influence a broadening of the concept of internationalisation, to more fully integrate education and internationalisation strategies, and in particular how they can and should have a leading role in initiatives to internationalise the university as a space of work and study.

Language centres are often perceived as support or service departments, without a clearly established strategic role in the context of internationalisation. This reflects an Anglophone world-view, in which a priority is the delivery of academic English to international students while offering 'elective' study of languages other than English – an area of considerable growth in demand. However, language centres have an opportunity to influence university internationalisation strategies in a number of important areas:

  i.   encouragement and facilitation of language learning for global citizenship
  ii.   developing language skills to support research
  iii. developing inter-cultural competence and awareness for staff and students
  iv.   internationalising the curriculum
  v.   supporting student mobility
  vi.   developing the university's global culture
  vii. supporting the development of institutional language policies

This paper explores each of these areas in order to present a challenge for language centres to play a pivotal role in emerging narratives of internationalisation in "global" universities, and 'to bring a global dimension to the entire student experience'[1] within and beyond the curriculum.

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[1] Diamond et al, *Global Graduates* (2011), p 19

Language learning for global citizenship

As stated in the recent briefing paper "*Language Policies at the LERU member institutions*"[2], internationalisation often sits alongside a marketing strategy to secure "the brightest minds" through international recruitment of students and of staff, and promoting student and staff mobility across the sector. With this comes a recognition that, as a result, universities become more multicultural sites of teaching and research. English has been assumed as a common *lingua franca*, and in the UK this makes us inevitably more relaxed. However, the multilingualism that sits alongside multiculturalism is often reduced to a simplistic formula of native language plus English. This becomes quite limiting when the native language itself is English.

Any global university will attempt to portray its students as global citizens, and its alumni as global graduates. This notion may not be widely broken down into a critical appraisal of what constitutes a global graduate, or how the university proactively seeks to develop the requisite competencies within its education strategy. Such assertions may be based around assumptions derived from the reality of a multinational student and staff base, more or less well developed outward mobility strategies and attempts to internationalise some curricula. The place of language skills and intercultural communicative competence in the global graduate profile is often secondary to other issues, if considered at all, particularly in Anglophone contexts influenced by (mis-) perceptions about English as a global *lingua franca*.

While a key driver for claims to develop global graduates is future employability, global citizenship programmes sometimes only focus on international mobility for collaboration in areas of global challenge linked directly to one or more specific academic disciplines, and therefore more on hard academic knowledge than otherwise less tangible soft skills. Take as an example the Matariki network of seven internationally leading universities[3]. A pillar of this network is its global citizenship programme, which is focussed principally on 'facing complex societal and global challenges […] to meet and address the emerging questions of the 21st century [via] a variety of multi-institutional activities in education, research and engagement'. In this sense, global citizenship is about understanding the complex global challenges and bringing together international teams to do so, rather than the ability of those global teams to function effectively in the first place.

One of the world's most successful higher education internationalisation programmes has been the ERASMUS programme. According to the 2014 ERASMUS impact study[4], the graduate qualities that are most sought after by employers are:

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[2] Kortmann (2019) "*Language Policies at the LERU member institutions*", League of European Research Universities, p7
[3] https://www.matarikinetwork.org/
[4] *ERASMUS Impact Study* (2014), p77

Curiosity	Decisiveness
Self-awareness	Problem-solving
Self-confidence	Communication skills
Tolerance	Team-working
Adaptability	Planning and organisational skills
Resilience	

These can be compared with the principal learning benefits from periods of study or work abroad as part of a degree programme. The same study identifies these as being[5]:

language skills	adaptability
inter-cultural awareness	patience
improved academic performance	world view

They also resonate closely with the top competences of a global graduate as articulated by employers in the 2011 Global Graduates report[6]:

- An ability to work collaboratively with teams of people from a range of backgrounds and countries
- Excellent communication skills: both speaking and listening
- A high degree of drive and resilience
- An ability to embrace multiple perspectives and challenge thinking
- A capacity to develop new skills and behaviours according to role requirements
- A high degree of self-awareness
- An ability to negotiate and influence clients across the globe from different cultures
- An ability to form professional, global networks
- An openness to and respect for a range of perspectives from around the world
- Multi-cultural learning agility (e.g. able to learn in any culture or environment)
- Multi-lingualism
- Knowledge of foreign economies and own industry area overseas
- An understanding of one's position and role within a global context or economy
- A willingness to play an active role in society at a local, national and international level

Addressing current and emerging global questions considered from the perspective of the academic discipline is fundamentally important. Nonetheless, being a global citizen is at least as much about inter-personal skills; the human-to-human daily interactions which will help individuals from diverse backgrounds to work in cooperation with each other. These inter-personal skills allow the development of ideas to tackle complex societal and global challenges, taking all perspectives and points of view into account and, crucially, with

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[5] ERASMUS Impact Study (2014), pp61-72
[6] *Global Graduates into Global Leaders* (2011), p 8

cultural sensitivity, as well as being excellent preparation for employability in a global economy.

This is especially important in an era of global English. English is the *lingua franca* of international academia. With a proliferation of international courses and degree programmes using English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI), and English the dominant language of academic publication, it is perhaps inevitable that Anglophone universities do not prioritise the development of language and inter-cultural skills in taking forward collaborations with international partners. However, the use of "only English" is also a limiting factor. Global challenges, as defined by UK Research & Innovation[7] are largely focused outside of the English-speaking world. And while English is a dominant *lingua franca* in international business and international relations, over reliance on "only English", without the intercultural and linguistic awareness of how English *lingua franca* communication works has also been shown (e.g. by Jenkins, 2018) to limit the communicative effectiveness of English mother tongue speakers.

The academic world is also changing, as the global university rankings diversify with the rise of global universities in Europe, China and other parts of Asia especially. These universities will also be addressing the societal and global questions of the future, driving greater international research cooperation, as well as competing to produce the most employable global graduates.

> *"[…] it must be a key interest of […] universities to form rounded student personalities and to graduate future mediators between cultures in a globalised world. For this purpose each additional language that they speak, or at least understand, will be an asset"*[8].

Language skills to support research

At the CercleS conference in Calabria, Italy in 2016, a keynote address was given by the President of the European Language Council (ELC/CEL), Manuel Célio Conceição. In his talk, entitled "*The language landscape in the European higher education area: answers for new complexities*", the President of the ELC emphasised the limiting nature of English as the lingua franca of international research. He emphasised the nature of language as a construction or expression of knowledge and of identities, and the relationship between language and professional fields of activity, between language and science, and between language and research. A failure to take into account the multi- and plurilingual nature of research teams limits the very research being undertaken, both in its construct and in its dissemination. Researchers who are not working in their native language will inevitably not be able to freely use their creativity or express their ideas with the same clarity. The use of a single language as the language of the business of research will thus fail to maintain the necessary equity amongst students and amongst staff, and could stifle creativity. With this

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[7] Global Challenges, UKRI
[8] LERU (2019), p37

in mind, research must be a multilingual and multicultural endeavour, especially when conducted on the international stage.

It is therefore important for all universities to ensure that researchers have the necessary skills to perform in a multilingual and multicultural research team. This already occurs in many instances, not least due to the relatively high proportion of international researchers now employed in the UK. Nevertheless, the ability to communicate effectively in a language other than English, and not necessarily to a full level of competency, should be a vital skill in the training of all researchers. This is at the heart of the concept of co-creation of research: working together towards shared understandings, shared approaches and shared solutions.

Language skills are also important to be able to access research sources (whether oral or textual) in languages other than English. Such sources are important across the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences in particular. They are also vital in relation to our ability to address global challenges, with policy documents likely to be written in national languages. This dimension further extends to research fieldwork at an international level, where the ability to gain trust in local communities may be necessary, and where this may only require a limited level of language expertise.

Looking also to the future, there is increased questioning of the benefits of English as the dominant language of academic publication, and its impact on research output[9]. English is currently the dominant *lingua franca* for academia – for research discussions, collaborations, publication and dissemination –. But this dominance, and the attitudes it encourages, allow for only a very specific way of looking at the world. If research from UK universities is to really tackle the global challenges of the future, this cannot only be done solely through the medium of English.

Inter-cultural competence and awareness for staff and students

A common theme of a typical internationalisation strategy from a UK university will relate to the recruitment of international students. This is considered to be a very healthy activity, not only for the financial benefits that may be accrued, but also for the benefits that come with a multinational and diverse student body. For the very reasons of curiosity, tolerance and world view that are so valued by employers, the impact of international students on the wider university environment cannot be undervalued.   It is vitally important to ensure that the needs of international students are taken into account, in terms of their integration within the institution, their welfare, their academic expectations (which will quite likely be subtly different according to the background), their ability to be able to contribute to the life of the University and their language needs. There can at times be a tendency to over-emphasise one or two of these requirements at the expense of the others, particularly in terms of their integration. This is supported through English language provision, especially towards academic writing, and to "fitting in" to the dominant Anglophone academic culture. More could then be done to understand some of the inter-cultural barriers that may exist

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[9] Huttner-Koros (2015), *The Hidden Bias of Science's Universal Language*

that ultimately may limit some students' ability to fulfil their whole potential, be it personally or academically.

It could also be argued that not enough is done to celebrate the cultural and linguistic diversity of our campuses. The benefits of having an internationally diverse student cohort should also be felt by 'home' students. Frequently, institutional internationalisation strategies are driven by recruitment and marketing needs. In contrast, institutional education strategies are driven by sectoral regulatory drivers and the broad concept of 'student experience'. However, there is a common area in the graduate skills outlined previously under the umbrella of global citizenship. By combining education and internationalisation strategies in the fostering of such global skills, institutions can maximise the benefits derived by 'home' students through learning with and from their international peers within curricula that are themselves globally relevant.

Furthermore, UK universities employ a very internationally diverse workforce. In this respect, universities demonstrate that they themselves recognise the same benefits of an international outlook as any other employer, while seeking to attract the best scholars worldwide. Expanding this global mindset and an interweaving of education and internationalisation strategy across all staff in the University is simply a sensible investment in the future.

Internationalising teaching and the curriculum

As noted above, employers value inter-cultural skills and a world view. It is not possible for all students to take advantage of international mobility schemes, and in the UK in particular take up is generally low (albeit with notable exceptions such as students undertaking degrees in languages). Nevertheless, even if students may not have the opportunity to engage with their international peers during periods of work or study abroad, they can take advantage of the presence of international students in their own home universities. Increasingly the lecture hall or seminar room in a UK university is a multinational and multicultural space. Whilst this varies according to academic discipline, a British student will on many occasions be taught by an academic from, or trained in, a different country, expressing academic discourse informed by an international experience and a different world view. The classroom in which they learn, and the project teams they work in, will inevitably include students previously raised and educated in other parts of the world in other cultural environments. This includes the increasing number of institution wide language classes that now form part of an undergraduate education at most UK universities. These are widely populated by international students who are building on generally more developed plurilingualism than their UK peers. Such courses actively facilitate multilingual and multicultural learning environments fostering cultural and linguistic exchange.

However, as already discussed, universities can do much more in terms of internationalising their curricula and embedding internationalisation into their education strategies. This can take the form of expanding and, as relevant, 'decolonising' the taught content of degree programmes (e.g. to incorporate global histories, literatures, societies, economics and

research developments) beyond the traditional canon. However, it should also encompass explicit integration of intercultural competence within teaching and addressing how teaching can be maximally inclusive, taking account of the diversity of the student body, as called for in the LERU Briefing paper[10]. Alongside these initiatives, there should be a greater emphasis on language skill acquisition within UK institutional education policies, for all the reasons highlighted above.

<u>Supporting student mobility</u>

According to the 2017 reports by Universities UK International, some 1.7%[11] of all current UK university students, or 7.2%[12] of UK graduates, undertake some form of international mobility during their degree programme. The European Higher Education Area (EHEA) target was for 20% of all graduates in the EHEA to have participated by 2020. There are limits across Europe, not only in the UK, especially linked to dimensions around 'social mobility', although most UK universities do have strategies to increase the numbers of home students participating in periods of work or study abroad. The reported benefits are outlined above. While some of the more universal barriers are economic, one key barrier to participation by British students is a lack of language competence, stemming from low participation in language learning in the primary and secondary school sector.

In order to encourage greater international mobility, some universities have attempted to make language learning more accessible to their students, through their language centres or other language programmes offered in conjunction with core disciplines, and some have expressed this through an institutional language policy (ILP). Developing multicultural understanding and communication more proactively, as mentioned above, might also assist in encouraging students to embrace international mobility opportunities. Workshops to prepare students for departure on mobility schemes may already be offered, but more could also be done to bring together international students, home students who have returned from periods abroad and first year students who may not yet have considered international mobility as an option. This would raise awareness and break down misconceptions about what is involved. In the process, this could also encourage greater take-up of language courses motivated by the future possibilities on offer. Language centres potentially have a role to play in organising such events, and in facilitating internal online discussion boards with postings from students at all stages of the mobility life cycle, providing advice to their peers.

The Global Graduates report cites an employer stating that students are now of a generation that view themselves as 'quite literally world citizens [who] see the world as boundary-less, [and] are able to move, shift, work anywhere and do anything'[13]. They will come to expect universities to offer them an environment and opportunities in which they

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[10] LERU (2019), p17
[11] Go International (2017), Widening Participation in UK Outward Student Mobility, p16
[12] Go International (2017), Gone International: mobility works, p3
[13] *Global Graduates* (2011), p8

can express this freedom, and language centres are capable of supporting such expectations.

Developing the University's global culture

A language centre has traditionally been a place where students, and staff, would come to use facilities to develop, improve and maintain their language skills. Traditionally centres with specialist equipment and resources not available elsewhere, they were 'go to' hubs which in and of themselves were multilingual and multicultural spaces within a university. Today, especially with the growth in e-learning and mobile technology, the role of a language centre has changed. There are still language "zones", spaces where students can come to meet, to immerse themselves in a chosen language, and to seek advice. However, language centres have also now become creators and facilitators, providing and facilitating language learning opportunities across campus and beyond. Instead of students having to come into the centre for all their needs, the centre now increasingly goes out to students. Whereas before they may have scheduled language courses for 50 or a 100 language learners at a time in formalised classroom settings, it is becoming increasingly common to be supporting well over a 1,000 learners at any one time, learning a wide range of languages (including English), in a variety of different ways and places and through diverse media. Language centres do still teach in classrooms, and with growing numbers of learners and courses. But they also run language cafes, support language exchange schemes where students can pair up to share their languages, provide access to independent study aids, to apps, and to a whole range of interactive online resources and audio-visual media that students use back in their halls, their flats, on the bus and train, or even in the street. Centres support 'world weeks', cultural events, and student societies (and are mutually supported by them). They can thus foster an "active student civil society"[14] organising cross-campus activities that bring international students together. They still run weekly language courses at 6pm on a Tuesday evening. Yet they also run intensive courses, conversation clubs, one-to-one sessions, coaching and advising for independent resource-based learning, and deliver on-line teaching. They now cater for increasingly diverse languages, be they the traditional English, French, German and Spanish; other world languages such as Chinese, Arabic or Portuguese, 'heritage' languages including British Sign Language, Polish and Urdu, or regional languages such as Welsh, Gaelic and Irish, in addition to supporting independent learning of any number of 'lesser taught' languages needed for research and fieldwork purposes. Language centres are now also teaching inter-cultural communication skills, getting involved in teacher training or supporting international academics in their English medium teaching, and equality, diversity and inclusion initiatives. They not only teach students, but also staff, and external learners in our local communities, including for professional purposes. In some universities, there are already approaching 6,000 learners a year being supported in a variety of ways, up to 25% of the population of a university at any one time. All of this means there are already tendrils of internationalisation activity occurring all over the university – in research, in teaching and in

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[14] *Global Graduates* (2011), p20

the cultural life of the institution. If all of this could be harnessed, the image of the global University can effectively be realised – with the language centre at its heart.

Supporting the development of institutional language policies

The LERU briefing paper identifies three major goals as to how an institutional language policy (ILP) can support and promote the concept of the university as a multicultural and multilingual site that promotes internationalisation and mobility, and supports all students. These are:

- To support proficiency in academic English
- To encourage foreign language learning for students and for academic and administrative staff, and for family members
- To strengthen the professional use of regional languages (in a European context)

Learning a language, for anyone at any time in any place is a personally enriching and enjoyable activity. In the context of a university, with such diverse individuals coming together in one place, it is an unmissable opportunity to create a true community that cuts across national and linguistic boundaries, cultures and academic disciplines. It also offers "the additional benefit of opening a new, substantial dimension of creating or solidifying a true corporate identity"[15]. Institutional language policies should encompass both language requirements for international recruitment and admissions, the national language (in the UK, both are English) and the learning of other languages, as part of the 'global graduate' package embedded in institutional education strategies, and as part of an international research strategy. Language centres therefore have a key role to play in supporting the development of ILPs as key enablers of their university's internationalisation strategy.

Conclusion

Universities in the UK are becoming increasingly global in their outlook, and increasingly diverse in terms of the multinational backgrounds of their staff and students. However, there is undoubtedly more to do in developing a truly international outlook and adequately reflecting such diversity in their policies towards language and interculturality. There is increasing scope, and increasing need, for universities to enhance their international engagement strategies to encompass internationalisation at home, embedded in education and research strategies, and in this respect language centres can and should have a leading role. To adapt institutional internationalisation strategies will require a culture change, but one for which language centres can and should provide leadership.

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[15] LERU (2019), p34

The following can then be put forward as a manifesto, or a call for action for language centres and language programmes in engaging with their own institutions:

1. A global university celebrates the international and intercultural diversity of all its staff and students in an environment that fosters mutual trust and respect.
2. Language centres will foster a multilingual and multicultural environment across the university to support this.
3. A global university will be committed to developing its students into global graduates; its education and international mobility strategies will reflect this commitment. Language centres support the development of language and intercultural skills amongst students for global citizenship, employability and mobility; and will actively support international mobility and engagement.
4. A global university's research strategy will reflect the need for language and intercultural skills to allow the global university to be a responsible international partner, collaborating as equals in the co-creation of shared understandings, shared approaches and shared solutions to global challenges. Language centres will enable the development of these skills in academics and postgraduate researchers.
5. Language centres support the development of language and intercultural skills amongst university lecturers, so that the global university can adopt a curriculum and a mode of academic discourse that is international and diverse in its content and outlook and inclusive in its delivery.
6. A global university in the UK will adopt an effective institutional language policy that prioritises English, but recognises the importance of multilingual communication and multicultural experiences, and fosters the development of second language and intercultural competence amongst all staff and students.

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Glossary:

The League of European Research Universities (LERU) is a network of 23 universities across 12 countries (https://www.leru.org/).

The Matariki Network of Universities (MNU) is an international group of seven (7) leading, like-minded universities, who support each other to create new opportunities for multilateral international collaboration in research and education by sharing ideas and best practice (https://www.matarikinetwork.org/).