

Linking the Intercultural and Anti-Racism Components in Internationalization at Home: The English Language Support Program at the Queen's University International Centre, Canada

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Introduction

This paper is inspired by the personal observations of a newcomer to the International Education profession in Canada. In my position at the Queen's University International Centre (QUIC), I am directly engaged in a process that facilitates intercultural interaction and social communication amongst students and members of the Kingston, Ontario community. Having embraced with interest the discourse of the internationalization of higher education, I am in the unique position of witnessing firsthand how a traditional practice at the International Centre meshes with the evolving dialogue surrounding Internationalization "at Home" (IaH). The following provides a theoretical overview of IaH and a shining example of its principles put into practice within the English Language Support (ELS) program. This paper is meant to be a manual of sorts for International Educators establishing or coordinating similar programs, while also providing detailed input and suggestions for those at Queen's University who will maintain the program in the future. Furthermore, it seeks to document and analyze this process by incorporating an anti-racism educational approach which has remained all but absent from the International Education and internationalization literature.

Philosophical Underpinnings

Internationalization

The notion of the "internationalization of higher education" is a relatively recent phenomenon. However, it has penetrated and permeated institutions of post-secondary education in Canada and throughout the world as interest grows surrounding the international dimension of higher education. The early definition of internationalization that surfaced in the late 1980s embodied an institutional-level conceptualization, which by the mid-1990s was supplemented by an organizational approach. The result was a "neutral" and "working" definition that is widely used today: "Internationalization at the national/sectoral/institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of post-secondary education."¹

The Market Economy and Student Mobility

Internationalization can be further described as contributing to a new paradigm for the university in which it can operate efficiently and successfully within the global knowledge

economy.² The concept of the knowledge economy has emerged with the rising tide of globalization, in which governments have increasingly linked their national economies and reform strategies to higher education. As a result, higher education has been repositioned towards economic productivity and thus as a global commodity.³ Within the global knowledge economy, the internationalization of higher education has levied its focus on student mobility. While increased student mobility has facilitated the possibility of students engaging in an intercultural experience while studying abroad, it has also prompted the raising of important questions surrounding the non-mobile majority of students.

A New Conceptualization

The notion of Internationalization at Home was first conceptualized in Europe in 1999. As a response to the perceived inadequacy of student mobility in realizing an international education dimension to a majority of students, Bengt Nilsson, the founder of IaH at Malmö University in Sweden, raised an important question: How do we give the non-mobile majority of students “a better understanding between people from different countries and cultures, to increase the knowledge of and respect for other human beings and their way of living and to create a global society?”⁴ As a result, a new approach was sought that would internationalize the educational experience of those who could not study abroad while also integrating an intercultural perspective into the student body.⁵

Internationalization “at Home”

Internationalization at Home is not an entirely new concept as much as it is a rediscovery⁶ and a concept “on the move”.⁷ Within the last 10 years the notion of IaH has reached North America and significantly more people are talking about it in Canada. However, the early definition of IaH as “any internationally related activity with the exception of outbound student and staff mobility” requires greater nuance, scope, and elaboration.⁸ More recently, IaH has been described as a “new paradigm in the discourse on strategic institutional policy development of the internationalization of higher education, with a strong emphasis on intercultural learning and teaching for all students, abroad and at home.”⁹ This innovative reconceptualization revolves around a strain of thinking that recognizes that internationalization does not necessarily happen ‘far away’ while at the same time invoking a DIY (do it yourself) ethic.¹⁰ The discourse of IaH therefore, has sought to bring back a “human touch”. We can now theoretically and pragmatically embrace a shift from internationalization to a more holistic approach involving internationalization at home, rather than solely focusing on the narrow perspective of mobility.¹¹

Internationalizing the Student with a Critical Perspective

Theory

Current international migration is unprecedented in world history. Societies are becoming increasingly diverse and as a result, the importance of cultivating a global consciousness within the university cannot be ignored. An intercultural education, embodied by a sense of pluralism, must include an understanding of our own and other cultures, and of the interdependent relationship between peoples. The internationalization of the university

should constitute educational resources and reform which educates students, staff, and faculty with a critical perspective to live in a global context.¹²

IaH embodies, as its primary components for domestic and international students, the facilitation of intercultural interaction and the attainment of intercultural competency. However, within society, the education system, and the development of new modes of conceptualizing International Education, the potential for the intersecting dynamics of power, privilege, and racism exist. Racism rears its ugly head in many forms across university campuses throughout Canada every year, whether it is the seldom overt forms of racial harassment and violence (apologetically attributed to a few “bad apples”), or the more commonplace subtle forms of racial discrimination that occur every day around us in our social interactions (e.g. language/accent discrimination, social exclusion and marginalization, stereotyping based on country of origin, etc.).

Therefore, the focus on acquiring intercultural competency throughout the university and local community cannot be devoid of a focus on anti-racism and how to educate the university body and the local community in not only confronting overt forms of racial discrimination, but recognizing the subtle forms of racism that visible minorities encounter on a daily basis, whether they be international, Canadian, or indigenous students.

In order to open the door for and maintain an avenue for critical thought and self-reflection within IaH, a field that is still in its infancy, it is important to conceptualize and articulate the intercultural, multicultural, and anti-racism educational perspectives so as to be better equipped to confront discrimination where it has the potential to exist and flourish.

Critical Perspectives of Intercultural and Multicultural Competency

Within this context, interculturalism, multiculturalism, and anti-racism are not mutually exclusive concepts. They are all intertwined and each contributes to the internationalization debate and the field of International Education. A primary objective of International Educators, practitioners and academics alike, should be to ensure that students, faculty, and staff acquire knowledge and gain competency within these three interrelated paradigms.

Interculturalism and multiculturalism are linked concepts that must be investigated further in order to make the case for the anti-racism perspective. Broadly, while multiculturalism constitutes the cohabitation of different cultures, interculturalism necessitates interaction across different cultures, where the maintenance of difference and legitimacy of each culture are respected.¹³ “Intercultural competence, as an objective of academic learning and life, describes changes of an individual’s knowledge (cognition), attitudes (emotion) and skills (behaviour) in order to enable a positive and effective interaction with members of other cultures, both abroad and at home.”¹⁴ While implying that intercultural interaction will bring about positive developments in individuals, it has also been perceived as the ability to manage cultural difference. This perception has led to the widespread notion that cultural difference holds a negative connotation and remains an insurmountable barrier to intercultural performance, as opposed to contributing to an individual’s learning and personal growth.¹⁵

Similarly, the multicultural competency approach in educational institutions assumes a necessity to help students “conquer the problems” that accompany cultural marginalization.

Although emphasis is placed on overcoming the barriers faced by international students in their transitional experience in Canada, the move from marginalization to inclusiveness involves initiating the students into the dominant cultural value system. Constructed under the auspice of building bridges, crossing over to the dominant culture (White) and language (English) commits the students to “a trajectory that leads towards incorporation and assimilation.”¹⁶ While this approach may be well-intentioned by academics and practitioners alike, it does not provide an adequate theory or solution to the issue of racial inequality in International Education.

The attainment of critical multicultural competency is contingent on a number of factors. First, the notion of cultural self-awareness, an individuals' knowledge of his/her own cultural programming which determines values, beliefs, assumptions, and perceptions of the world, must exist within individuals and institutions.¹⁷ As well, it requires an increased understanding, respectful communication, and the full inclusion of all people.¹⁸ “It is a process of learning about and becoming allies for people from other cultures, thereby broadening our own understanding and ability to participate in a multicultural process. The key element to becoming more culturally competent is respect for the ways that others live in and organize the world and an openness to learning from them.”¹⁹ This critical perspective in attaining multicultural competency is important when invoking an anti-racism analysis into existing programming in International Education.

The Antiracism Educational Approach

The anti-racism educational perspective is a fundamental component of the internationalization debate, yet up until this point has received minimal attention. While “race” is not biologically determined, racism is nonetheless real and a socially determined construct evolving out of an extended and ongoing history of colonialism. Anti-racism involves actively confronting racism in all of its manifestations while remaining committed to consistently employing an anti-racist analysis and action. Furthermore, when a clear anti-racist agenda exists, it can help prevent the watering down of multiculturalism, where the emphasis on inclusiveness can have the tendency to divert attention away from racial issues.²⁰ By levying the focus solely on a multicultural analytical framework, we risk ignoring the ongoing legacy of racism that has permeated Canadian society.²¹

Canada, as a traditional immigrant-receiving country, has a long colonial legacy and history of racism which influences and determines contemporary manifestations of racism in education and society. Scholarly findings have suggested institutions of higher education are “powerful sites through which racism is constructed, reproduced, and maintained.”²² Further evidence has shown that the educational process has tended to marginalize minority students while minimizing or excluding their experiences, history, and contributions to the Canadian nation-state.²³ Indeed, racism is “woven into the culture of academia” and exists in the daily interactions between students, faculty, and administration.²⁴

In returning to the notion of cultural competency, the anti-racism perspective holds that white racism, and its inherent hierarchy of social and economic status, ensures the perpetual devaluation of other cultures. The dominant cultural group embodies this perception in two ways. First, it is informed by focusing on the perceived weaknesses of other cultures, and second, through the appropriation of their strengths and achievements.²⁵

The anti-racism perspective contends that cultural misperceptions and exploitation must be transformed into acknowledgement of the contributions that ALL people bring to educational institutions and society in general.²⁶ This is the fundamental basis for an approach to IaH and its programming (within the realm of International Education) that places emphasis on mutual respect and an equal learning exchange for all participants involved. Only by utilizing an anti-racism perspective (that takes into account critical notions of interculturalism and multiculturalism) can we confront and attempt to reverse these processes inherent in the Canadian educational experience.

Anti-racism and intercultural ideals must form the basis in which internationalization at home evolves in the university, from the grassroots up to the higher echelons of power. Thus it becomes increasingly necessary to embrace and integrate an anti-racism perspective into the conceptual framework of International Education.

Practice

Internationalization at Home is all about the development of new ideas and activities. It advocates institutional innovation and educational change, as well as creating projects and programs with “new and daring views on bringing various people and new ideas together.”²⁷ This notion is fundamental to the internationalizing of the student. Programs must be implemented that encourage intercultural encounters between domestic and international students on the campus and in the local community. However, it is recognized that, in spite of numerous efforts, it is a very difficult challenge to facilitate social interaction and dialogue between diverse cultural groups. As a result, it is increasingly necessary to develop innovative programs to facilitate the intercultural process.²⁸

Background

The Link Program

The development and fostering of intercultural connectivity has a long history at the Queen's University International Centre. In 1985, the Link program was established and conceptualized around facilitating the transitional experience of new international students. The idea was to match internationally-minded or experienced domestic student volunteers with newly arriving students of diverse cultural backgrounds. The aim of the Link program was to promote a greater understanding of present day global realities and nurture a deeper appreciation of the diversity of cultures and their underlying assumptions among the Canadian and international students at Queen's University. The objectives of the program were to match a culturally-sensitive Canadian student with an incoming international student, to provide the “linked” students with a cross-cultural and cooperative experience, and to ease the transition of the international student into life at Queen's and Kingston. Here it is important to emphasize that the program was, and is, not meant to be a one-sided endeavour in which the international student “needs” help in order to properly integrate into the dominant cultural group. Emphasis should be placed on fostering this program as a mutually beneficial experience for both parties.

The English Language Support (ELS) Program

Within a few short years, it became increasingly apparent that the Link program revolved inherently around social communication. International students' primary motivation for participating in the program was to enhance their abilities in the English language. As a result, the Link program evolved into the English Language Support program by the mid-1990s. The rationale for doing so was to ensure that the domestic and international students maintained a high level of interest and had a clear idea of what the program was about.

The ELS program is comprised of two essential components. The Conversation Group is a weekly gathering facilitated by volunteers from the community and student body. It is intended to provide support to those who wish to improve their English grammar and pronunciation. The Conversation Group has a long tradition of bringing together people from diverse backgrounds in a welcoming and comfortable environment.

The other component is comprised of one-to-one assistance. ELS "volunteers" are matched with English language "learners"²⁹ and meet for a minimum of one hour per week. The program is meant to support international students' language acquisition and facilitate cross-cultural interaction. It is not meant to be a tutoring service. As well, there is a high degree of flexibility in this program component as the meeting place, time, and goals of the sessions are negotiated between the volunteer and learner.

Thus, a primary goal of this program, and any similar program for that matter (see Appendix 1 for suggestions on how to establish and implement a similar program), is to ensure that inherent in the intercultural experience is a relationship that transpires based on the fundamental principles of mutual exchange, respect, and understanding. The relationship must be non-hierarchical in nature as equal value must be placed on the contributions that both the "Canadian" and "International" students bring to each other and to the program.³⁰ As a result, the designation and apparent juxtaposition of "volunteers" and "learners" is problematic and has to be qualified further. By designating the international student as the learner it is assumed that the relationship is one-sided and that the volunteer is not involved in a process of learning. A term often used synonymously with volunteer and learner is "buddy", and indeed the ELS program has been referred to informally as "The Buddy Program". Perhaps all participants in the program could be referred to as volunteers so as not to discourage potential applicants and also to give credence to the contributions that international students bring to the program. For the sake of consistency and to avoid confusion, this paper will continue to use the traditional designations of "volunteer" and "learner" while flagging that they are inherently problematic and steps should be taken to adapt the terminology to reflect that a mutually beneficial exchange is transpiring in the program. Organizations and institutions must always be cognizant of the usage of terminology and seek to understand and challenge the power dynamics inherent in language.

Furthermore, the notion of easing the transition of the international student into Canadian society can become problematic if construed with the notion of integration. The emphasis on the importance of integration is often based upon, "the assumption that there is one mainstream, normal set of (white) values, practices and procedures that other people can learn and adapt to."³¹ In other words, integration is another form of racism in which it is

assumed that the foreigner will adapt or assimilate into the dominant culture. This has the tendency of creating the possibility of an unequal exchange between the Canadian and International student in the program and thus should be noted. This can be achieved through mentoring, education, and further training.

Description of the English Language Support Program

The Learners

The learners participating in the ELS program are from a variety of different cultural/ethnic backgrounds and the majority is either international students or recent immigrants to the Kingston area. The majority of learners are from East Asia and the Middle East (but also include regions throughout the globe including Latin America, Africa, and Europe). English often represents a second or third spoken language by the participants.

Composition and Motivations

Many of those seeking support are international graduate degree-seeking students, who often find it difficult to become immersed in graduate student academic life as teachers and teaching assistants facilitating classes and tutorials in English. As a result, many international graduate students often seek assistance in attaining sufficient competency in the social use of the English language so as to facilitate the transition into graduate student life in Canada.

Other Queen's University students that seek assistance with the ELS Program include undergraduate degree-seeking international students, exchange students, and those studying at the School of English. School of English students are particularly enthusiastic to engage in an intercultural experience that greatly enhances their ability and competency in the English language as they are often only enrolled at the institution for a short period of time.³²

Finally, there are also newcomers to the Kingston community and the spouses/partners (and their families) of international graduate students. While Kingston provides services for newcomers and their needs, community members and spouses/partners of students find it refreshing and beneficial that a program exists in which they can be matched with an English speaker to introduce them to Canadian culture as well as working on improving their language skills. Therefore, the ELS program within the university supplements and enhances the existing immigration services within the community.

The Volunteers

All Queen's University students and members of the community are eligible to volunteer with the ELS program at QUIC. Every year approximately 100 volunteers submit applications to become volunteers with either the one-to-one assistance program and/or the conversation group, and there have been thousands of participants since the program's inception.

Composition and Motivations

The vast majority of volunteers are undergraduate Arts and Science students who have either studied/lived abroad, and/or are anticipating doing so in the near future. Those who study abroad usually have a realization that as an international student, the transition into a new culture (and possibly new language setting) can be quite difficult. As a result, they are very appreciative of the support received on their journeys and wish to reciprocate the experience and become engaged with international students who are studying in Canada.

Often these students are introduced to the International Centre through the Education Abroad program where they undergo pre-departure orientation and preparation. It is at this time that they are introduced to the numerous volunteer opportunities at QUIC and as a result often develop a proactive interest in volunteering in the ELS program. Unfortunately, most Canadian students do not realize the importance of intercultural exchange and how it vastly benefits new international students until they themselves have an international experience in their 3rd year of study. Therefore, it is becoming increasingly clear that an important opportunity exists to reach out to students before they go on exchange – and an extension of that, to reach out to those who have never considered an exchange (and therefore have not been exposed to the offerings of the International Centre).

Other volunteers may be aspiring teachers from the Faculty of Education or those planning on teaching abroad after they have completed their degree program. These volunteers want intercultural experience as well as gaining tutorial skills. It is often beneficial for their portfolio to show a demonstrated and continued interest in engaging in cross-cultural interaction. This is also true for other occupations such as policing.

As well, there are those students and members of the community who have a tradition and ethic of volunteerism, or those whom are simply “internationally-minded”. For the most part, the majority of volunteers recognize this as a way to gain intercultural experience.

Other students who are involved in the program include first or second generation immigrants to Canada. They are drawn to the program through their own personal experience. They may come from a variety of cultural/ethnic backgrounds and may not speak English as a first language. Having moved to Canada at a very young age with their parents, some students deeply understand the importance of feeling supported, in making connections, and in gaining confidence in the English language. As a result, they are often willing to share their experiences and are eager to help those who have just arrived into Canada. However, at the same time, this presents a new challenge for the program in that international students may be expecting a “native English speaking Canadian”, which is often viewed as a white Anglophone person of European descent. Therefore, emphasis should be placed on the notion that the ELS program is not just another educational process of assimilation into the dominant culture.

Racial stereotyping has the tendency to emerge within all spheres of society, and the ELS program is certainly not immune in this regard. As part of the intercultural learning experience, it is often necessary to call into question and deconstruct the notion of what we imagine as constituting being “Canadian”. This is where it becomes increasingly apparent that all of the participants in the programs are indeed “learners” and are engaged in an

intercultural learning process, which does not exclude debunking racial stereotypes and prejudices. Here, the anti-racism perspective may be useful in educating students about colonial history and how social identity is constructed and reinforces the notion of Eurocentricism in the Canadian experience (See Appendix 2 on Questions and Actions for critically reflecting on existing and/or future programming within your department/group).

Training, Appreciation, and Accreditation

All volunteers are required to undergo general training which introduces them to the workings of the International Centre, followed by more program specific training about the requirements and expectations of their new roles as volunteers. They are also required to sign a volunteer contract adhering to the Queen's University Code of Conduct. The initial training introduces volunteers to various resources that have been developed within QUIC (such as an ELS Volunteer Training binder and an online ELS Volunteer Resources toolkit) and provides guidelines regarding their first meeting with the learner, negotiating manageable goals, meaningful activities and conversation topics, skill development, cross-cultural competency, and so on.

The International Centre has undergone various transitions in showing support and appreciation for volunteers. In the realm of further opportunity for training and professional development, QUIC has introduced a Diversity Training Series which offers a broad and simplified approach to "diversity" issues, including indigenous culture, mental health, human rights, and faith-based seminars and workshops. I believe that efforts should be made to strengthen this program to reach more of the student body, as well as integrate an anti-racism component into the training. For example, all participants in the program should have access to one anti-racism education training session per semester to be facilitated by one of the qualified anti-racism educators on campus. As well, further training opportunities should be developed for the volunteers which include intercultural modules. All of the participants should be introduced to critical perspectives towards intercultural and anti-racism issues, which will strongly contribute to their personal and professional development.

In the past there have been volunteer appreciation events (such as potlucks) and in the 2008-2009 year this has evolved into a monthly "QUIC Lunch" which is open to everyone and provides soup and a place to chat and mingle. At the end of the year there was also a volunteer appreciation event that brought together the learners and volunteers so that they could share experiences with other participants in the program. Also, letters of reference are provided upon request. Furthermore, some believe that further steps should be taken to provide appropriate accreditation for the volunteers. This would involve the process of monitoring and review which may take the form of follow-up interviews and evaluation. However, it is my belief that providing accreditation and appreciation for only the volunteer element is problematic because it creates the sense that the program is not mutually beneficial for both parties. All of the participants should be valued equally and efforts at accreditation and appreciation should wholeheartedly reflect this.

Technical component

The beauty of the English Language Support program as it is presently employed, is that it requires little budget and maintenance. It is a semi-organic process, meaning that once the matches are made, the intercultural relationship between learner and volunteer usually develops and blossoms on its own. However, a responsible program coordinator is required to carry out a variety of functions.

First, with the help of the International Centre, the program must be marketed and be able to reach both international and domestic students, as well as members of the community. Word of mouth is a primary method in reaching the student body, but there must be a more concerted effort in reaching those who can truly benefit from this program.

The program coordinator must be proactive and engaged, providing training, assistance, and counseling if necessary, and ensure that the matches have actually occurred and that both parties are satisfied. This requires the promotion of a high level of communication between the coordinator and the participants. As well, a database must be maintained outlining the details of the matches (explained below) and if those paired have indeed begun meeting and continue to meet regularly.

Finally, the coordinator should seek to integrate a critical perspective into the program while simultaneously enriching the intercultural experience of the participants. As there is a considerable degree of interaction with the volunteers and language learners, the coordinator should seek to emphasize the importance of the intercultural and anti-racism perspectives into the training and functioning of the program. Therefore, although the *raison d'être* of the program revolves primarily around a language component, the participants should seek to approach the program with a critical perspective, one that does not create a hierarchical relationship between volunteer and learner, one that is free from any form of oppression, and one in which each participant can mutually benefit from an intercultural encounter. These organic relationships should be a foundational example of anti-racism working within the institution, even if there is a lack of institutional support for such initiatives.

Experiences of the Program

The Matches and the Meetings

The volunteers and language learners are matched together based on a small variety of factors. First, people are matched according to the same gender. If this is not possible (which is often the case due to the gender composition of the volunteers and learners), consent is sought before matching someone of the opposite sex.³³ Also, matches are often arranged based on shared interests and hobbies, which applicants are asked to describe on the application form. As well, whenever possible, matches are made on the basis of an interest in mutual language exchange. For example, a volunteer may wish to be matched with somebody who speaks Mandarin as a result of personal interest or perhaps an upcoming study abroad experience. Finally, and often a great technique for creating the best matches, participants are paired up randomly.

The volunteers and learners then usually meet once a week (as required), although some may meet more frequently. The meeting location and time is entirely up to the discretion of both parties and is usually negotiated during the first meeting. This has proven to be an attractive component of the program, as portrayed in the following participants' comments:

“I like that there is a lot of flexibility in how we interact with our buddies (just as there would be in the real world)”.

“I liked the flexibility of the scheduling because otherwise it would be pretty hard to find time to get together”.

It is often suggested for the pair to meet within the International Centre which offers a comfortable and friendly environment. Some matches develop meaningful friendships and carry the meetings outside the realm of concentrated conversation and engage in social activities within the community, such as eating out together and engaging in seasonal activities as the following participant feedback shows:

“When I meet with my buddy, we are very relaxed and enjoyed. Sometimes we meet in the cafeteria, sometimes we meet up for lunch. Actually we plan to meet to do sports. We think this way we can save time and permit us to enjoy the conversation.”

“We went to the pub together, talk about everything from study to life, from shopping to travel.”

Although the purpose of the meetings is predicated around conversational support, the volunteer may even offer other assistance in other areas such as written assignments or the grammatical aspects of the English language. Although it is entirely up to the discretion of the participants to engage in these extra-conversational experiences, it is not encouraged nor required. However, it does happen.

Theoretically, and as mentioned previously, the relationship should develop in a mutually beneficial and non-hierarchical fashion, and I suspect this is the case in the vast majority of instances. There should be absolutely no power dynamic involved, and both participants should enjoy an intercultural learning experience which is based on good will and not patronizing the international student as victim. This appears to be reflected in the experiences of the participants.

“We chat about a variety of topics (often of their own choosing) and I encourage them to talk about and ask questions about English and Canadian culture. The interaction is mutually beneficial.”

“If anyone is interested in learning new cultures or is afraid to ask different questions about a culture, then this is a great way to learn.”

Revisiting IaH

The ELS program has almost 25 years of history within the QUIC. Although not a new program by any means, it is arguable that it is a staunch example of a “daring” and “innovative” approach to facilitating an intercultural experience amongst domestic and international students. In my opinion, this is one of the utmost important tenets of the Internationalization at Home discourse.

Indeed, it has been shown that intercultural interaction carries with it great benefits for those involved. The overall educational experience can be greatly enhanced by gaining knowledge and understanding of a diverse array of peoples, including their worldview and experiences.³⁴ As a result, participants are less judgmental of people who are different from themselves.

“I have definitely benefited from interacting with people from different cultures. I am less likely to prejudge others and have developed friendships with people from around the world. I believe that other students (Canadian and international) would benefit from the intercultural experience of socializing with people who are different than themselves.”

Furthermore, evidence shows that through intercultural encounters with international students, domestic students are more prone to developing positive attitudes towards other cultures while developing behavioural skills in an intercultural context.³⁵ Intercultural and anti-racism learning seeks to sensitize the student into critically reflecting on their own cultural background and values. Indeed, there is evidence that this transpires through the development of relationships based on a language component.

“Lots of Canadians could benefit from this, as we are so used to only talking with people who are similar to ourselves. We never branch out and so are ignorant to the world around us. It is also very beneficial to the language learner, as they also often find friends only among people from their part of the world. We both learned a lot about each other’s cultures, which gave us both perspectives into our own cultures. This is something I wish more people benefited from.”

Thus, the educational experience of domestic students can be greatly enhanced from developing intercultural competency through interacting with students from different cultural backgrounds.

On the international student side, aside from increasing competency in the English language, developing a relationship with “local” students helps facilitate the transitional experience and gives students a “sense of self-validation in a foreign environment”.³⁶

“I feel I have the first real Canadian friend after I met my buddy.”

“I didn’t know how to make friends of Canadian students, so this program is very useful for foreign students.”

Indeed, one international educator’s findings shows that students “had the greatest increase in [intercultural] sensitivity when they interacted with international peers”, specifically

surrounding a language component.³⁷ However, it was apparent that few students seek out cultural difference on their own and need to be encouraged (through the curriculum and programming).

“It allowed me to be more culturally educated in a first-hand way that I could not learn from a book.”

“I love this program. My volunteer helps me a lot. I want to have more chance to practice my English.”

“We talk a lot of the differences between different countries, such as the stereotypes of Canada or China. We respect all the cultures all over the world.”

IaH and QUIC

It is not surprising that the philosophical underpinnings of IaH portray a compatibility with the programming principles of QUIC which are facilitated in practice through the ELS program. Indeed, a core principle of the International Centre is premised upon the idea of mutual exchange in the enhancement of intercultural communication. As well, it is acknowledged that community-building amongst the diverse populations that comprise the university and local community facilitates the transition of the newly arriving student and it is recognized that the first 3-6 months is a crucial time period in which to make a cultural adjustment.³⁸ One international educator echoes this sentiment:

“If students do not develop close social relationships after a certain period of time, negative effects on their readiness for learning, their consciousness of relevant learning tasks and on their academic performance may occur. Foreign students often purely rely on the social network of members of their own cultural background, almost without contact with either other foreigners or host culture members. If early ties are not made, there is the danger of an irreversible isolated retreat into students' own cultural colonies.”³⁹

The ELS program may be one of the best programs to ease this adjustment, facilitating the introduction of culturally diverse students to one another with the aspiration that a mutually beneficial relationship will develop.

Institutional Implications

However, it is becoming increasingly clear that students require a certain level of support on the institutional level. For example, whereas QUIC maintains the ELS program with minimal resources and the program more or less flourishes in a semi-organic fashion, institutions of higher education must offer more support in facilitating the intercultural educational experience for all students. For example, it has been acknowledged that large scale cultural events alone do not necessarily facilitate intercultural competency and that there must be a “genuine” endorsement of cultural diversity by the institution, which necessarily includes *active* intervention at every level of the institution.⁴⁰ Therefore, in order to propel intercultural competency, the institution must take concrete steps to ensure that

intercultural and anti-racism educational perspectives are integrated into the curriculum, into staff and faculty training, and into the very social and cultural fabric of the university.

Conclusion

As societies and institutions of higher education become increasingly culturally diverse within the framework of globalization and the mass migration of peoples, the anti-racism and intercultural perspectives should be at the forefront of the debate within International Education. The assumption of competition and the phenomenon of either/or logic that dominates traditional Western modes of thinking will become increasingly outdated as the century progresses. The only way to move beyond this mode of thought is to sincerely embrace a perspective that is inherently anti-racist at its core, one that respects each person's opinion, takes each person's needs into account, and facilitates the participation of each person into the decisions that affects their life.⁴¹

Internationalization at Home is a relatively new concept within the wider discourse of the internationalization of higher education. It has arisen in scope due to the inherent inadequacies of realizing an international and intercultural education for the vast majority of students within the internationalization process. While IaH seeks to remedy this existing gap, it is understandable that IaH still has its inadequacies as it was first conceptualized only ten years ago and is a process in motion.

In this paper I have attempted to address an important inadequacy identified through engaging with IaH on a theoretical and practical level, and that is the notion of integrating an anti-racism educational perspective. It is my strong belief that the anti-racism and intercultural educational critical perspectives are the core fundamental components of the IaH philosophy. The ELS program, as a profound example of IaH praxis, has the capability of providing a vast number of students with a critical intercultural perspective as an important part of their educational experience. Ultimately, facilitating this experience should be the basis and the goal intrinsic to the internationalization of higher education in Canada.

Appendix 1

Recommendations for establishing and implementing an intercultural language/buddy program and thoughts on further research and action:

A program such as the ELS program at Queen's University is very useful and beneficial for making your International Centre/Department a hub of intercultural activity and facilitating the internationalization at home process within your educational institution.

Necessary components for implementing the program:

❖ A Program Coordinator

The program coordinator should be a staff member, student, or volunteer who is well-versed in International Education and critical perspectives and that will have enough time to devote to the program. During peak semester times the program requires daily attention. This includes receiving and assessing applications to make appropriate matches, as well as maintaining a constant level of communication with the program participants. Throughout the duration of the program, the coordinator should be proactively engaged, ensuring that the matches have indeed transpired and that both participants are satisfied.

As well, it is beneficial to have a comfortable environment in which the program participants can meet (such as your International Centre/Department). If there is a lack of space, scope out the campus and make suggestions for good meeting places.

❖ A Database

A database should be established outlining the details of the matches and the participants' contact information, their preferences (language, hobbies, gender), when they have been trained, etc.

(For suggestions and a template, email the author).

❖ Training

Training should be provided, introducing the participants to the International Centre/Department, a code of conduct, health and safety, as well as the importance of approaching the new relationship based on mutual aid and respect. They should also be directed towards appropriate educational resources in how to proceed with their match.

Furthermore, an anti-racism component should be integrated into the training by having a qualified anti-racism educator on campus facilitate at least one training session per semester. As well, further training opportunities should be developed for the volunteers which include intercultural modules.

❖ Institutional Support

It cannot be stressed enough that, although the DIY ethic is intrinsic to the IaH process, institutional support is necessary for facilitating intercultural interaction and anti-racism across campus. Does your institution have a comprehensive internationalization strategy/policy that goes beyond articulating the international market and mobility aspects of International Education? Does your institution have a comprehensive anti-racism

strategy with mechanisms in place for educating the campus body about how to confront and halt racial discrimination as well as having in place effective mechanisms for dealing with incidents of racial harassment and violence?

❖ **Effective Marketing**

Once established, efforts should be undertaken to continuously strengthen and improve the program, as well as constantly expanding it to access more of the student body. The following are suggestions for marketing a language/buddy program as provided by participants through evaluation and feedback:

- Posters and flyer handouts across campus.
- Word of mouth – “tell volunteers to tell their friends.”
- Send out email messages on listservs.
- Advertising, announcing in different classes and language departments. “Go to classrooms (in particular language classes where students have an interest in languages) and tell them about the program.” “Send representatives to classes to make announcements, focusing on faculties with a greater proportion of students likely interested in this program.”
- Information booths/tables at events and in high traffic areas.
- Advertising in the university student newspaper.
- Having a Facebook page. “Facebook event/group page is the fastest way to reach many students at once”; “A facebook group of some sorts with information would get message out to a lot of people.”
- Plan an event each semester which promotes the program.
- Campus-wide events that encourage both international and domestic students to get involved with International Education.
- “Advertise the program more, emphasizing that it is a minimal commitment, but brings great benefits.”
- Having a clear area on the front page of the department website talking about volunteer opportunities.
- Advertise at the English language school and in language departments.
- “Find people who are already involved in groups that require cross-cultural communication or are tolerance-based, because they are more likely to share the same values. These people might be interested in helping out, or collaborating on a joint project that raises awareness (like a fundraiser).”
- “I think right from the beginning (registration process) the information can be conveyed to all foreign nationals. In fact before they arrive, the info can be conveyed to the students.”
- Ads on campus radio.

- Put up signs or a table in the cafeterias.
- Outreach via posters in common rooms or even via mass email.
- “Advertise during frosh week – this is how many people find out about volunteer opportunities.”
- Advertise it in conjunction with teaching abroad programs and emphasize it as great preparatory experience for those seeking to enter such programs.
- “Library ads can be used more often because that is the only common place that lots of international students use constantly.”

❖ **Further Research**

Canada's surface reputation shines of openness and an ethic of multiculturalism. However, we cannot ignore the brutal and ongoing history of colonialism and xenophobia that determines the political, social, and economic relations inherent within the education system. It is naïve (if not arrogant and irresponsible) to believe that we have moved beyond racism in the workplace and in the school. We must confront our past experience as much as it should inform our future work.

While there has been much research and analysis conducted on the existence and perpetuation of racism in the education system, there has been less work done towards linking racism within International Education. This lack of attention, analysis, and action serves to further marginalize international students and their experiences in the host country.

Internationalization at Home is a pioneering effort and a growing subfield in which many academics and practitioners are increasingly engaging. It must not be devoid of critical analysis in reaching its full potential. While implicit in the theory and practice of the IaH discourse, further efforts must be made to integrate critical analyses and action into the field of International Education. I believe that IaH has the potential to be a primary vehicle in which to do so. Intercultural communication and understanding are fundamental components to international cooperation and peace, and international educators have much to contribute to unraveling the inequalities and injustice that permeate global social relations.

However, with the proliferation of the global knowledge economy and International Education as big business, it will become increasingly difficult to “mainstream” this type of work as the intercultural and anti-racism components risk further marginalization. We must remain prudent in working to ensure that IaH does not develop as yet another tool of the market. It is hoped that this paper will spark a debate and dialogue surrounding these issues.

Appendix 2

Questions and Actions

1. Describe the program/group you are thinking about establishing or are currently involved in terms of composition, purpose, and decision making process.
 - a. Is it multicultural? Who is involved and who is excluded?
 - b. Is it democratic? Who holds power and how are decisions made?
 - c. Is it anti-racist? Is racism talked about and dealt with effectively within the group?

2. What needs to change?
 - a. Who needs to be brought into the group?
 - b. How would the group need to change to truly be open to their participation?
 - c. How would the group be more democratic?
 - d. How would this change affect how the group operates?
 - e. What forms of racism need to be dealt with?
 - f. Who can you talk with about these challenges?
 - g. Who might be allies in changing the dynamics of the group?
 - h. What is one thing you will do to begin this process?
 - i. What fears or concerns do you have about raising these issues?
 - j. What will you and the group lose if you don't raise them?

Adapted from Paul Kivel, *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Social Justice* (Gabriola Island: B.C., New Society Publishers, 1996): 214-215.

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Notes

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⁶ Ibid.

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⁹ Teekens, "Internationalisation at Home: An Introduction," 3.

¹⁰ Ibid., 5.

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¹⁷ Ibid., 47.

¹⁸ Paul Kivel, *Uprooting Racism: How White People Can Work for Social Justice* (Gabriola Island: B.C., New Society Publishers, 1996): 210.

¹⁹ Ibid., 209.

²⁰ Ibid., 211-212.

²¹ Ibid., 211.

²² Frances Henry and Carol Tator, *The Colour of Democracy: Racism in Canada*, Third Edition (Toronto: Thomson/Nelson, 2006), 217.

²³ Ibid., 199.

²⁴ Ibid., 217.

²⁵ Kivel, *Uprooting Racism*, 209.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Teekens, "Internationalisation at Home: An Introduction," 7.

²⁸ Ibid., 9.

²⁹ The inherent problematic of this particular terminology is qualified further into the section.

³⁰ The designations "Canadian" and "International" in this context may be misleading as "volunteers" are not necessarily Canadian citizens and "learners" may be Canadian citizens seeking to improve language skills.

³¹ Kivel, *Uprooting Racism*, 216.

³² However, as a similar program already exists within the School of English, those students are only permitted to attend the Conversation Group. I believe this to be problematic due to the increasing numbers of ELS Program applicants from the School of English seeking one-to-one support. Dialogue should be opened up between QUIC and the School of English to identify overlaps and gaps within the programs in order to change policy in order to meet the needs of all international students. It is my firm belief that this program should be as inclusive as is possible given institutional constraints.

³³ As there has been a rare tendency for participants to seek out a sexual partner within the program, same-sex matching has been conducted. However, two problems exist within this equation. One, this is almost always impossible to achieve as the vast majority of volunteers are female. Second, as students are asked to indicate their gender on the application form, this may have the tendency to marginalize those who may not feel comfortable identifying as one or the other, and also inappropriately suggests a universal heterosexuality on campus, which may result in a feeling of further marginalization. To my knowledge and with my experience, this has not been a problem in either instance.

³⁴ Bengt Nilsson and Carina Sild Lönroth, "A Nightingale Sang in Malmö Square: The Story of the Nightingale Programme at Malmö University, Sweden," in *Internationalisation at Home: Ideas and Ideals*, edited by Hanneke Teekens, EAIE Occasional Paper, 20 (2007): 64.

³⁵ Otten, "Impacts of Cultural Diversity at Home."

³⁶ Lian-Hong Brebner, "Intercultural Interactions in a New Zealand University: Pakeha and Asian Perspectives," ISANA International Conference, 2-5 December 2008. See also Nancy Marie Arthur, *Counseling International Students: Clients from Around the World* (New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2004).

³⁷ Stephanie Shaheen, "The Effect of Pre-Departure Preparation on Student Intercultural Development During Study Abroad Programs" (Dissertation: Ohio State University, 2004): 152-167.

³⁸ Queen's University International Centre (QUIC) Program and Service Planning Principles, July 2008.

³⁹ Otten, "Impacts of Cultural Diversity at Home," 17.

⁴⁰ Thomas Klak and Patricia Martin, "Do University-Sponsored International Cultural Events Help Students to Appreciate "Difference"?" *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27(4) (2003): 445-465.

⁴¹ Kivel, *Uprooting Racism*, 203-205. According to Kivel, these are fundamental principles in the realization of democratic, anti-racist multiculturalism. Kivel goes on to suggest this can be accomplished by refining consensus models, systems of proportional representation and other group processes that are more inclusive than what we have relied on so far.