

Institution: University of Warwick
Unit of Assessment: Education
Title of case study: Developing “Global Skills”
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>International collaborations are now core features of higher education and international business, yet their intercultural aspects are frequently overlooked. The roll-out of global initiatives is less easily matched by the development of “global people” – people who can function effectively in culturally diverse contexts. In order to address this challenge, Spencer-Oatey and colleagues have been researching the nature of this competence and applying their insights to the development of training resources. These resources have been accessed by large numbers of professionals and practitioners throughout the world, helping them grow in intercultural understanding, adapt their behaviour, and apply their insights to training others.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Spencer-Oatey started researching intercultural interaction and competence at Warwick in relation to the Sino-UK eLearning Programme (2002-2009) – a £4M programme of collaborative teacher training projects funded in the UK by HEFCE, in which British and Chinese universities worked together on e-learning projects. During the materials development phase (2002-2007), numerous intercultural issues arose and affected the progress and ‘success’ of the projects. By the end, project members expressed the need for research evidence to conceptualise and verbalise their learning achieved through the collaborations. So Spencer-Oatey (who had been the eChina-UK Programme Manager for HEFCE) persuaded HEFCE to allocate the outstanding budget (£194K) to a research project that would explore these issues and ‘capture them’ for the benefit of others engaged in international collaboration. The project was approved and undertaken between December 2007 and August 2009 by the following people: Professor Helen Spencer-Oatey (Director of the Centre for Applied Linguistics), Dr Stefanie Stadler (research assistant, Jan 2008 – Aug 2009) and Dr Stuart Reid (project manager Dec 2007 – Aug 2009; now an Associate Fellow of the Centre).</p> <p>The research has yielded the following so far:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Significant insights into the intercultural factors that can affect international collaborative partnerships and provided case study data to illustrate them; e.g. see Reference [4]. The findings demonstrate how fundamental issues such as negotiating and agreeing goals, communicating effectively, and negotiating and agreeing pedagogic viewpoints, can be particularly challenging when collaborating across cultures. The research uncovered and illustrated the complexity of these challenges. A framework for conceptualising intercultural competence; e.g. see References [1] and [2]. Through analysing a wide range of data (video recordings of meetings, emails, project reports, interviews etc.), the team found that the competencies needed for effective intercultural partnering work could be helpfully grouped into four clusters: knowledge, communication, relationships and personal qualities. Each cluster comprises a number of component competencies, and the extensive raw data allowed illustration of each of these. New insights were identified into the processes of communicating effectively across cultures, not just in terms of cultural preferences or protocols (e.g. how to handle cc-ing in email messages), but also the complexities of achieving mutual understanding; e.g. see Reference [5]) New insights were identified into the processes of managing relations effectively across

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cultures; e.g. see References [3] and [5]. Some processes superficially seem simple (e.g. initiating contact with unfamiliar people) yet emerged repeatedly as challenging. Others were deeper, such as the impact of affective factors on people’s strategies for negotiating meaning. Since 2009, the research has continued with a project on intercultural competence for ‘Global Employees’. It has entailed interviews with students who have returned from overseas work placements and with leaders from British Council offices worldwide. Our aim is to refine our understanding of the concept of intercultural competence for the workplace and to develop an empirically-based construct for assessing it. The team of researchers has expanded, drawing in people with specialist expertise (e.g. Zegarac – cognitive pragmatics).

3. References to the research

[1] Spencer-Oatey, H. and Franklin, P. (2009) *Intercultural Interaction. A Multidisciplinary Approach to Intercultural Communication*. Palgrave Macmillan. ISBN: 978-1-4039-8631-3. This book is in Palgrave’s series “Research and Practice in Applied Linguistics” and was evaluated in detail by the series editors, Prof Chris Candlin and Dr David Hall. It has been positively reviewed in the *International Journal of Cross-Cultural Management* (Dec 2011) and in *Applied Linguistics* (Sep 2010).

[2] Spencer-Oatey, H. (2010) Intercultural competence and pragmatics research: Examining the interface through studies of intercultural business discourse. In: Trosborg, A. (ed.) *Handbooks of Pragmatics (HOPs): Vol.7: Pragmatics across Language and Cultures*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter (pp.189-126) ISBN: 978-3110214437. Peer-reviewed by two reviewers, plus the editor.

[3] Spencer-Oatey, H. (2011) Conceptualising ‘the relational’ in pragmatics: Insights from metapragmatic emotion and (im)politeness comments. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43: 565-578. DOI 10.1015/j.pragma2011.08.009. Peer-reviewed journal article in SSCI-indexed journal.

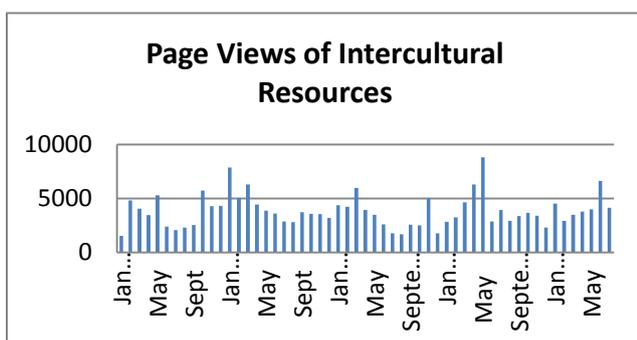
[4] Spencer-Oatey, H. (2013) Maximising the benefits of international education collaborations: managing interaction processes. *Journal of Studies in International Education*. 17(3): 244–261. DOI 10.1177/1028315312454545. Peer-reviewed journal article in SSCI-indexed journal.

[5] Zegarac, V. & Spencer-Oatey, H. (2013) Achieving mutual understanding in intercultural project partnerships: Cooperation, self-orientation, and fragility. *Intercultural Pragmatics*, 10(3): 433–458. DOI 10.1515/ip-2013-0019. Peer-reviewed journal article in SSCI-indexed journal.

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4. Details of the impact

Many people are unaware of the challenges they may face when working in culturally unfamiliar contexts, as well as of the key competencies needed to handle them. So they need help in (a) understanding the challenges, (b) understanding what competencies are needed, and (c) learning how to develop such competencies for themselves and/or in others. In order to improve intercultural communication skills, we have developed a range of online resources and training events which draw on the insights described in section 2.



Our Global People website provides explanatory pages, authentic examples of competencies in interaction, video clips, presentations, and pdfs to download. Since the launch of the website near the beginning of 2009, we have had over 211,000 page views. As illustrated in the chart, interest has been well maintained over the period. There have been over 22,290 downloads of intercultural

resources during this period, and our reach has been extensive in that every month there are

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visitors from every continent except Antarctica, and they range from 38 to 59 different countries, with a monthly average of over 50 different countries. In addition to the web resources, we have shared these insights with a range of professions through workshops and presentations at events in many parts of the world, including London (on several occasions), Warwick, Bristol, Beijing, Konstanz, Aarhus and Tokyo.

Taken together, the web resources and the training events have had an impact on a range of beneficiaries, in three main areas:

a. Impact on Organisational Strategy and Initiatives

An increasing number of organisations and commercial companies are recognising the importance of developing 'global skills' among their workforce, yet they are often unsure how to achieve this. Our research has helped a number of organisations in developing a strategy for this. Examples are as follows:

British Council Japan: Around 2010 the Japanese government launched a new growth strategy which placed a major focus on the development of 'global human capital'. Key components of this are nurturing people with cross-cultural understanding, diversity in thinking and global leadership skills. The British Council in Japan wished to respond to this initiative and in 2011 commissioned Spencer-Oatey and colleagues to develop Global TIES (Training in Intercultural Effectiveness). This online course has been very well received by university students, company employees and education administrators in Japan. [i] The British Council produced a video about Global Ties in which teachers and students comment on the high quality and usefulness of the course. [ii]

Audi Akademie and Changan Automobiles: These two automobile companies became aware (through presentations and via the website) of the team's expertise in intercultural competence, and requested help in analysing the intercultural communication challenges their staff are facing. They are now paying for three postgraduate researchers to help them identify the nature of these challenges and start implementing strategies to address them. [iii]

b. Impact on the development of university students' and professionals' intercultural skills

Many university staff worldwide have referenced the Global People resources for their students and some have reported to us the benefits their students have gained. For example, every year over 250 engineering undergraduates in Belgium (Katholieke Universiteit Leuven) take a compulsory course in intercultural communication which includes studying the Global People resources. In a recent feedback questionnaire, 63% of them reported that studying the Global People resources had helped them to understand the range of skills and personal qualities needed to handle intercultural situations effectively (i.e. impact on knowledge). [iv] A number of professionals have also reported benefits from using our training materials. For example, a team from the University of Northampton used the Global People resources when working on a Connect project with a university in Shaoguan, China, in 2009. They commented that "As a result, we were able to plan a three day workshop in Shaoguan which was tremendously successful. I really do believe that anybody involved in collaborations would benefit from this resource. Many thanks." [v] Japanese university students and professionals who have taken the Global TIES programme have similarly been positive about the impact. For example, one company employee commented "I now understand the importance of observing the behaviour and actions of others and putting them into cultural context using the various frameworks introduced in the e-learning materials." [i]

c. Impact on Training Courses

Others have used our resources in their own training/development materials. For example, parts have been included in two of the British Council's 'Connecting Classrooms' courses, with over 550 teachers in 15 different countries completing these courses between June 2012 – March 2013. [vi] Similarly, the UK Council for International Student Affairs (UKCISA) has included them in their

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online training course “New to International.” [vii] Links to the Global People resources have also been included on numerous websites, including several HE Academy subject centres [viii], and utilised by intercultural trainers and consultants worldwide [ix]. John Knagg, Senior Adviser Learning & Teaching, The British Council, commented as follows in 2009: “Warwick University’s “Global People” website and resources make a substantial contribution to thinking and practice in the area of intercultural working. As a professional in international cultural relations, I will be referring partners that we work with, both in UK and overseas, to this site.” [v]

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- [i] British Council Japan, Education section: A letter from the British Council Japan explaining why they chose Spencer-Oatey and team to develop Global TIES as their strategy for responding to the Japanese governments’ ‘Global Human Capital’ initiative, as well as the impact the course has had so far.
- [ii] Youtube video: A video made by the British Council Japan that includes testimonies from students and teachers about the high quality of Global TIES and its usefulness to them. See http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HHDXRSfaYdE&list=HL1332469895&feature=mh_lolz
- [iii] Changan Automobile Company: Letter from the company stating that they have requested help from Spencer-Oatey and colleagues in analysing the intercultural communication challenges that their staff have been facing and the recommendations that they have started to implement.
- [iv] Katholieke Universiteit Leuven: Letter from a staff member at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, explaining the value of the Global People resources for the engineering undergraduate students that he teaches.
- [v] Endorsements on the Global People website from staff at British Council, Leadership Foundation and PMI2 Connect Project team leader: http://www2.warwick.ac.uk/fac/cross_fac/globalpeople
- [vi] Email from British Council London, Connecting Classrooms team, confirming their use of our Global People resources in their *Connecting Classrooms* courseware and the numbers worldwide who have taken the courses.
- [vii] UKCISA: Letter from the Director of Services and Research at UKCISA (UK Council for International Student Affairs) confirming that Global People resources have been used in their Internationalisation Training Toolkit, and how they have valued working with Warwick staff in promoting internationalisation across the UK.
- [viii] Links to Global People resources given on a range of websites, including:
 - a. HE Academy Internationalisation section: <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/business/resources/detail/Internationalisation/GlobalPeople>;
 - b. HE Academy UK Centre for Materials Education: <http://www.materials.ac.uk/elearning/index.asp>
 - c. HE Academy Geography, Earth & Environmental Sciences (Internationalisation): <http://gees.ac.uk/pubs/bibs/Internationalisation.pdf>
 - d. University of the Arts, London: <http://my.arts.ac.uk/mycpd/resource/external/global-people-%E2%80%93-supporting-intercultural-relationships?page=2>
 - e. University of Turku, Finland, Language Centre, Self-study resources for Global Issues/Intercultural Communication: <http://users.utu.fi/jahonka/>
 - f. University of Missouri, USA, Blog by Director of International Center: <http://goglobalmizzou.blogspot.com/2009/05/global-people-competencies-for.html>
 - g. Study in Manitoba, Canada, International Education: [http://www.studyinmanitoba.ca/news-service?tag=Partnerships+\(government,+institutional\)&year=&month=&country=ZZ&story_type=International&article_type=Report](http://www.studyinmanitoba.ca/news-service?tag=Partnerships+(government,+institutional)&year=&month=&country=ZZ&story_type=International&article_type=Report)
- [ix] Selection of commendation comments from interculturalists worldwide, posted on LinkedIn.