Chapter 11
Pedagogy as Dialogic Relationship
Fostering Cosmopolitan Teacher Identities

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Introduction

The rapid rate of globalisation and the associated changes in economic, cultural and social conditions have transformed the face of international education. Initially envisaged as an humanitarian project with opportunities for countries to learn about each other and to engender good will, friendship, brotherhood and peace (see Kandel, 1956), the emphasis of international education in Australia is now underpinned by economic interests, with a shift from aid to trade (Ninnes & Hellstén, 2005). The practices of international education are produced in a context defined more by the increased global flows of capital, knowledge, images and people, than by national borders. These shifts entail changes in pedagogic relationships, curriculum design, the development and modification of programmes, and changes in modes of delivery. Given these changing contexts there is a need to examine how practices are reconfiguring patterns of privilege and marginalisation for the stakeholders involved in tertiary education. Moreover, as Ninnes and Hellstén (2005) argue, these changes necessitate an increased interest in the academic study of international education and the diverse practices entailed in its production. International pedagogy can therefore be seen as a vehicle for capturing diversity and promoting inclusivity within every learning situation, whether this be with exclusively international or domestic students or a mixture of both.

The tertiary education classroom, like any other classroom, is a meeting place of a range of discursive practices, sites of ‘heteroglossic articulations of various historical, class, and cultural interests contending for social power and capital’ (Luke, 1998, p. 52). With rapid increases in enrolment of international students in the tertiary education sector in Australia, university classrooms sit at the interface...
between the construction of social identities and the construction of the national, corporate and global social relations. Teachers need to contend with this interface. Pedagogical practices cannot be quarantined from the 'real world' and considered as a set of asocial, amoral practices; they are always shaped, produced and consumed in relation to broader social and cultural conditions and inevitably involve issues of identity. Learning is the process of appropriating the cultural resources or voices of particular communities (Wertsch, 1991); it is a semiotic apprenticeship (Gee, 1992; Wells, 1999). In this process, the individual and the social are always mutually reconstituting. Identity is thus conceived as ‘mediated action’ (Wertsch, 1998), a point of articulation and suture between discourses and practices which produce subjectivities and the agency of the individual to take up these practices.

In this research study we undertake a critical exploration of the pedagogical relationships in a classroom comprising both international and domestic students, and consider the identities that are made available and taken up by students. The university definition of ‘international’ includes those students who are resident overseas and have been granted visas to study at an Australian university. This does not necessarily imply that they have a language background other than English. Neither does the term ‘domestic’ imply that students are Australian citizens or native English speakers. The diverse nature of the tertiary classroom is not captured by these terms. However, for the purpose of this chapter we use international to describe those students classified by the university as such. The research study was conducted in order to gain insights into the efficacy of a collaborative form of learning (Collective Argumentation [CA]). The processes of collaborative learning revolve around cooperation principles which are central to a coherent explanation of cognitive change (Mercer, 2000; Miller, 1987). Using the term ‘argumentation’ to include any kind of discourse in which the principal goal is to find collective solutions to problems, Brown and Renshaw (2000) built on Miller’s (1987) work to emphasise the centrality of the social cultural dimension of cognitive functioning. In the development of Collective Argumentation, Brown and Renshaw (2000) included an understanding of the ways in which cultural tools and the consciousness of others are integral to the collective problem-solving process.

To understand the centrality of cultural tools in the development of understanding, this research study focuses on how students from diverse backgrounds, including international students, engaged with each other as they collaboratively went about solving a task and how a diversity of perspectives was brought to bear. The students are pre-service teachers enrolled in postgraduate Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) qualification. Thus, the international nature of this course is evident both in the students enrolled in the course and in the content of the course. Students will be graduating as teachers of English and intend either to stay in Australia to teach English to Language Background other than English (LBOTE) students, or to travel overseas, either back to their home country or to other parts of the world to teach English. As educators, our goal is to prepare these students for domestic and international labour markets with increased portability of their professional qualifications (Harman, 2002). This entails re-envisioning teaching as cosmopolitan work, as Luke (2004, p. 1439) argues, by preparing teachers ‘whose very stock and trade is to deal