Young TJ, Handford M, Schartner A. [The internationalising university: an intercultural endeavour?](#). *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* 2016

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This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published by Taylor & Francis in *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development* on 29-03-2016, available online:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/10.1080/01434632.2015.1134547>

Date deposited:

06/05/2016

Embargo release date:

29 September 2017

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**Introduction: The Internationalising University:
An Intercultural Endeavour?’**

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Introduction

There are currently more than four million people worldwide studying in higher education (HE) institutions located outside their country of origin, and numbers are growing (OECD, 2013). ‘Internationalisation’ has been framed as the institutional response to this burgeoning phenomenon. ‘International student mobility and HE ‘internationalisation’ more broadly raise many questions of an intercultural nature. What is becoming increasingly clear is that the various manifestations of internationalisation currently operationalised are not in themselves panaceas for institutions seeking to engage positively with the globalizing education ‘market’, and that greater numbers of international students or a higher global institutional ranking do not necessarily reflect a higher degree of beneficial intercultural interaction or education.

The seven papers in this Special Issue of *The JMMD* discuss from an intercultural perspective emerging issues and their effects on universities and wider societies related to the phenomenon of internationalisation in higher education around the world. The focus for the Special Issue reflects ongoing debates within the emerging field of intercultural communication research which formed the basis of symposia and colloquia at The 43rd British Association for Applied Linguistics (BAAL) Annual Conference (Aberdeen, UK, 2010), the 3rd BAAL Intercultural Communication Special Interest Group Annual Seminar (Newcastle, UK, 2013), and the International Conference on Language and Social Psychology (ICLASP) XIII (Leeuwarden, Netherlands, 2012) and ICLASP XIV (Hawai’i, USA, 2014).

For this Special Issue, contributors were asked to address the question of whether the ‘internationalising’ university was an intercultural endeavor. In response, James Jian-Min Sun and Sik Hung Ng investigate the impact of the English language’s growing influence on entry requirements and on universities’ efforts to improve rankings in the People’s Republic of China. Adrian Holliday’s focus is on the extent to which doctoral students in a British University feel that doing a PhD is a particularly ‘Western’ activity, and the impact their experience of study is having on their cultural identity, broadly defined. Helen Spencer-Oatey and Daniel Dauber highlight the importance being placed on intercultural communication and teamworking skills as graduate attributes, and explore student perceptions of the realities of international groupworking in HE in the UK. Lixian Jin and Martin Cortazzi frame the idea of ‘cultures of learning’ as an inclusive and appropriate response to an international learning environment in the UK, and highlight how students (both ‘home’ and ‘international’), staff and HE institutions in general might embrace more internationalised content and learning processes. Margaret Pitts and Catherine Brookes’ paper examines student discourse revealing cultural assumptions and tensions in international exchanges between students in the USA and Singapore, and shows how the mere opportunity for international connection does not in itself bring meaningful intercultural dialogue. Hans Ladegaard’s contribution explores the lack of integration of ‘international’ students on a campus in Hong Kong, and the reasons

that lie behind this - characterized as negative outgroup stereotypes and prejudice - which, he argues, can be alleviated through intercultural dialogue which addresses taboos and ethnocentricity. Zhu Hua, Michael Handford and Tony Young investigate how intercultural communication itself is framed by HE institutional marketing discourse in the USA and UK, and how this framing relates to neoliberal influences on 'internationalising' universities and to the presentation of the role of universities in developing professional competences for the international marketplace.

A number of cross-cutting interest areas emerge. These include:

- The increasing role of the English language in the internationalization of higher education worldwide, as entry requirement, medium of teaching and learning, and as the predominant academic publication medium (see in particular the contributions of James Jian-Min Sun and Sik Hung Ng, and by Lixian Jin and Martin Cortazzi)
- The relevance of institutional vs. national 'culture' in understanding the 'home' and 'international' student experience (a theme throughout, but explored in particular by Adrian Holliday, and by Lixian Jin and Martin Cortazzi)
- Pedagogical implications of internationalization (a focus for Margaret Pitts and Catherine Brooks, Adrian Holliday, Helen Spencer-Oatey and Daniel Dauber and for Lixian Jin and Martin Cortazzi)
- Identity work and constructions of the self, themes developed in particular by James Jian-Min Sun and Sik Hung Ng, Adrian Holliday, Margaret Pitts and Catherine Brooks, Lixian Jin and Martin Cortazzi.
- Perceptions of the 'cultural other', intergroup stereotyping and responses to othering, themes developed in particular by James Jian-Min Sun and Sik Hung Ng, Adrian Holliday, Hans Ladegaard, and by Zhu Hua, Michael Handford and Tony Young
- The gap between HE institutions' discourse advocating the promotion of intercultural communication and the realities of how it is actually promoted, or failed to be promoted (Hans Ladegaard and Zhu Hua, Michael Handford and Tony Young).
- The extent to which cultural essentialism and reification, as opposed to constructivism, is evident in the internationalising higher educational context.

The latter theme runs throughout the volume, with varying degrees of explicitness, and reflects a central current debate in intercultural studies. Essentialism tends to locate identity inside individuals, conceptualising it as a product of cognition, rooted in the process of socialisation. From an essentialist perspective, cultural identity is approached as a characteristic of a person that tends to be absolute, static and knowable (Benwell & Stokoe, 2006), with an attendant

tendency to equate nationality with cultural predispositions (Holliday *et al.*, 2004). This, it is argued, may lead to stereotyping and to othering (Said, 1978; Holliday, 2013). An alternative constructivist approach sees cultural identities as emergent, dialogically constructed and multiple, and arguably accounts for the observed reality more accurately and perhaps even ethically. However, the practical, applied implications of such an approach in HE and elsewhere are difficult to infer. At the level of policy, HE institutions tend to assume a reified ‘culture as given’ perspective, uncritically distinguishing between ‘home’ and ‘international’ students in a variety of ways including admission practices, fees, accommodation, and less explicit but potentially more discriminatory practices within their educational contexts. This raises further questions, for example those concerning notions of diversity and access, as well as issues of academic, psychological, and sociocultural adjustment of ‘international’ students both during and after their period of study, and of the reaction of ‘home’ staff and students to the phenomenon of internationalization. With economic imperatives driving higher education policy in many contexts, the development of a critical intercultural perspective as an element of internationalization in, for example, pedagogy, curriculum design and staff professional learning may be overlooked (Piller & Cho, 2013).

Our Special Issue of the *JMMD* brings into focus the opportunities presented by a critical intercultural approach to contribute to transformative re-conceptualisations of inclusive and sustainable internationalisation in higher education. While approaches to internationalisation may be different across higher education sectors and disciplines, common issues and challenges are shared internationally. By bringing together an international group of leading and emerging researchers with a range of stances from the field of intercultural communication, this special issue of The *JMMD* shines an intercultural, critical and exploratory light on the practices and issues of internationalisation in HE. It is hoped this collection will encourage further debate and research into this increasingly germane area.

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