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Citation for final published version:

Slater, Stephanie and Inagawa, Mayuko 2019. Bridging cultural divides: role reversal as pedagogy. *Journal of Teaching in International Business* 30 (3) , pp. 269-308. 10.1080/08975930.2019.1698395

Publishers page: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/08975930.2019.1698395>

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Bridging cultural divides: Role reversal as pedagogy

Abstract

Research on the education of international students sheds light on the difficulties of studying in a foreign language, but often underplays the opportunities provided by cultural diversity in the classroom. This study, prompted initially by the authors' experiences of the contrasts between East/West learning styles, explores how education systems, language and cultural orientations inform students' approaches to learning. It explains how role reversal in the classroom can be implemented in higher (university) education settings, to generate deeper perspectives of meaning and understanding when teaching internationally diverse cohorts to show how imaginative postgraduate student engagement can not only bridge cultural differences, but also capitalize upon them. Whilst the apparent polarization between East and West educational system stereotypes served as the catalyst for the search for effective pedagogies of engagement, the proposed methods were found to have universal application, clearly resonating with culturally diverse cohorts studying in the UK. The approach benefits international business teaching as cultural, national and institutional perspectives become explicitly incorporated into course material, using the students' own background, knowledge and experience as resources to add value.

Keywords: Role reversal, pedagogies of engagement, higher education, diverse cohorts

Introduction

Since the 1970's the postgraduate higher educational environment in the UK has undergone considerable change, in terms of both international student mobility and the tools used to communicate information to students through the internet. Lecturers now commonly face audiences comprising a large number of international students for whom English is a second language. This is particularly the case in postgraduate management subjects and even more so in International Business, the subject area of this research. The student cohorts are diverse, but with the majority from the Asia Pacific area. This produces both challenges and opportunities for educators given the different educational backgrounds of these students. The goal of the paper was to explore how student-centred learning approaches might be used to address these challenges. Role reversal is one strategy that the authors have deployed in the classroom for some years as a means of stimulating student engagement whilst simultaneously opening up international business issues by examining them explicitly through different cultural lenses. The purpose of this research is to explore the effectiveness of using this method, essentially a student-centred approach, which engages students by capitalizing their own cultures and experiences as learning resources. In the following section we explain the classroom event that led to this research and we then explain how role reversal was used as pedagogy to address these challenges.

The story of the antelope

The starting point for this exploration was one of the authors' reflections on a situation that occurred in a particular class: she had held up a wooden carving of an antelope to a group of Masters students and asked them to identify it. This exercise was part of a session in which

students were introduced to the role of culture in the decision-making processes of companies planning their international marketing strategies across culturally distant and culturally similar settings. Figure I shows, pictorially, students' attempts to name the animal and summarizes their verbal responses.

Insert Figure I Here

Reflecting on the cohort's answers, the author realized how much diversity different cultural backgrounds could inject into even the simplest task within the learning process. The experience also highlighted the importance of understanding context and setting in education management practice. As part of the author's reflection she wondered how to address this discrepancy in teaching practice so as to maximize the opportunity for learning in L1 and L2 situations (L1 English as first language, L2 English as a second language). The author(s) also explored how curriculum content might be designed to capture divergence of interpretation so as to improve teaching practice in cosmopolitan classes. We address two research questions: How does role reversal address the sources of difference brought about by educational system, language and learning style? How can our understanding of cross-cultural teaching and learning be enhanced by better integration of the effect of students' previous experience? Thus, whilst we were searching to improve the general classroom experience – with a view to heightening students' engagement – we were also looking for ways to better incorporate a central theme of international business teaching, namely to capture the diversity of students' own cultures and background so as to develop their cultural sensitivity and broaden their world view. Role reversal uses the students as a resource and records their contributions in the course material. Further, understanding particular students' learning preferences through their own

self-evaluation enables the lecturer to tailor classroom activities so as to optimize the learning experience.

Building on the author(s) reflections, the manuscript focuses on three core themes: educational systems (Chan, 1999; Hofstede, 1986), language (Hamada and Koda, 2008; 2010; Kachru's, 1992), and learning style (Hefferman, Troy, Morrison, Parikshit, and Sweeney, 2010; Biggs, 1987; 1994; 1999a,b; Aggarwal and Goodell, 2015) using East/West comparisons. In business and administrative Masters programmes in the UK it is not uncommon for student cohorts to comprise a large proportion of international students with many from South Asia and Asia Pacific. We use the terms "Eastern" and "Western" in this paper simply as shorthand to differentiate between these students and those from Western European and Anglophone countries. The research is relevant because these three elements of a student's experience (educational systems, language and learning style) can give rise to different interpretations of materials which has implications for how students engage with and understand information (Stowe and Clinebell, 2015).

The importance of the research is amplified by the increasing numbers of international students widening their educational experience by registering on courses outside their country-of-origin. The UK experienced a 79% increase in international student numbers between 2003 and 2018, reaching 458,490 in 2018 (Universities UK, 2019). The total is exceeded only by the US, but growth rates in recent years have been much higher in Australia, Canada, Germany. The largest group by far in 2017-18 was China, followed by India. In our experience, the proportions of international students on taught postgraduate business programs can be as high as 80-90%. Higher education institutions have experienced a transition from relative homogeneity in the classroom towards considerable heterogeneity. This has presented two key challenges. The first considers public policy and the organization of universities in the rapidly

developing economies of Asia (e.g., Altbach and Umakoshi, 2004) and does not deal with classroom pedagogies. Whilst the literature acknowledges East/West differences in general, the factors influencing or deriving from different educational systems, culture and language and their effects on classroom pedagogies tend to be reported as separate themes, even though all, in combination, will affect actual staff and student expectations and behavior in the classroom. These sources of difference create challenges for educators when they try to implement strategies for achieving learning outcomes because higher education programmes assume a degree of generalizability. The second challenge relates to the practicality and problems that educators face in developing educational toolkits to address the first challenge, in order to optimize the opportunity for learning. The manuscript addresses these two challenges: first, by capturing the cohort's previous learning experience at the beginning of a module; second, by using blended approaches to teaching and using role reversal as a mechanism for facilitating learning outcomes.

We add to extant research in three ways. First, we explore, because of the obvious differences which are manifest in many students, the implications of East/West culture, language and educational background for teacher-student and student-student interactions. Second, we address why understanding the role of the three factors above can help educators deal with the differentiation brought about by cultural norms, language and educational traditions. Third, we argue how role reversal can create "pedagogies for engagement" (Edgerton, 2001) which may in turn overcome some of the learning obstacles presented when teaching students from a range of backgrounds and countries.

The structure of the paper is as follows: we explain the changing face of educational institutions within the UK, contrasted against Bloom's (1956) hierarchical taxonomic model; continuing, we explore the literatures on educational system, language and learning style; then we outline the technique of role reversal as a pedagogical method for integrating the best of

these two systems using our reflections on teaching international postgraduate students in the UK. Finally, we discuss the findings and the implications for education management, teachers and learners.

Literature

In order to focus on the factors that educators need to consider when creating learning objectives, Bloom (1956) developed a hierarchical taxonomic model which sought to explain learning objectives around three different levels of cognition (“learning”, “thinking” and “understanding”). It then ranks six levels of learning: “knowledge”, “comprehension”, “application”, “analysis”, “synthesis”, and “evaluation” (Bloom, 1956). The model suggests that cognitive skills develop across these six levels. The first level focuses on remembering and recognising information. The expectation is that as cognitive skills are developed, students will learn to think critically as part of their enquiry. Whilst the model has been influential in identifying cognitive dimensions, the vision of learning it portrays is that it focuses on learning from the perspective of the individual and what they do and it therefore does not capture how education system, learning style, language and culture may inform the way students learn, the methods deployed and how these inform the way students respond in the classroom. With the increasing demographic and economic significance of international students (e.g. Universities UK, 2019) higher education institutions in countries such as the UK are having to reflect not only on the courses they deliver and evolving educational needs, but also on how they respond to the increasing challenges brought about by the changing demographic landscape and technology. In the 1970s, 80s and even 90s “chalk and talk” and acetates were seen to be appropriate tools for transferring knowledge, but since the creation of the internet we have seen a huge shift in the way societies, students, consumers and business engage with technology and

their environment. These different dynamics have implications for lecturers when they design module content, activities and assessments around themes of reflection and analysis. On the plus side teachers and students are able to rapidly engage with up-to-date information, learn from the world around them and to engage with individuals and societies from a range of countries in a way that is enriching. However, the typical contemporary Higher Education (University) classroom presents new challenges to traditional teaching methods: the obsession with electronic devices; students who may lack common cultural reference points (with each other and with the educator); diverse educational system backgrounds (e.g. Anglo-Saxon versus Confucian); and a combination of English as first language (L1) and second language (L2) in the audience. All these have made engaging with students more difficult.

Student engagement is a multi-dimensional concept defined in various ways. In a useful review of the literature Trowler (2010) cites Fredricks, Blumenfeld and Paris (2004, 62-63) as identifying three dimensions deriving from Bloom's (1956) work. The positive aspects of each dimension are high levels of attendance and participation (behavioural dimension); interest and enjoyment in learning (emotional); meeting or exceeding assessment requirements (cognitive). Our argument would be that positivity in each dimension can be enhanced by a student-centred approach in the sense of student involvement in the design and execution of their learning processes (not curriculum content). In the East/West stereotypes as we have described them, engagement is more likely to be present in Western education systems.

The changing educational landscape has highlighted the growing need for flexible approaches towards learning in the classroom. Figure II, outlines the three sources of difference that impact on classroom expectation when, for example, combining students from East/West settings.

Insert Figure II Here

Educational institutions have responded by exploring how different delivery methods might be deployed so as to address some of the shortcomings of Bloom's work arising from the changing dynamics of the Higher Education classroom. Flipped approaches to learning have received widespread attention with the growth of the internet and the recognition that students learn in different ways, and that there can be added value in using student-centred learning (Hallinger and Lu, 2011; Bergmann and Sams, 2012; Aggarwal and Goodell, 2014; Aggarwal and Wu, 2019; Koponen, 2019). The flipped classroom seeks to practice but reverse Bloom's taxonomy (1956) through the use of student-centred approaches and in-class activities around problems providing a learning environment that focuses on higher orders of cognitive work such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Bloom, 1956). The lower order of cognitive work such as remembering and understanding are done pre-class. Students engage with subject content pre-class by watching videos, and reading set materials so that class time can be used for creating deeper learning. The advantage of the flipped approach being that students learn to apply their knowledge in ways that also provide knowledge reinforcement (Prawart, 1989). This develops students by equipping them with skills and information that will help them in the workplace given the strong focus on knowledge application. However, given the high levels of foreign students choosing to study abroad, thought needs also to be given to the educational systems that these students have been exposed to previously, and how language and cultural issues can make the process of learning more difficult outside of one's home country.

The literature suggests that education systems are very different in the way they are delivered in the classroom, the student/teacher relationship and educational policy. The western system is informed by capitalism (McGregor 2009) and democratic values, and therefore fosters an environment of information challenge and participation. Opinion and voice are considered important antecedents for informing debate (Pike, 2019). Consequently, the relationship between teacher and student is more equal and opinions are more freely shared

(Zhang 2013). In the classroom there is, therefore, an expectation that students will engage with the topic and the teacher so that the communication process tends to be more interactive and equal. Instructionist strategies are used to encourage students to show what they know and be independent in their learning. In a western context students are free to ask questions and engage in debate. In contrast, the Asian education system is heavily informed by the strong relationship between culture, society, family, Confucian values, religion, authority and politics (Hofstede, 1986; Shaw, 1999, Jose, Huntsinger, Huntsinger, and Liaw, 2000; Wang, 2004; Fung, 2014; Lu and Jover, 2019). This affects the student-teacher relationship and the students' attitudes towards teachers (Chan, 1999), the learning method (Gu, 2006), and the (authoritarian) role of parents in their attitudes towards them (Jose et al 2000; Thakkar 2011). In the Asian context students engage less with debate and only limited questioning characterizes Chinese classroom discussion between teachers and students (Chan, 1999). For the student, the role is passive within the teacher-student relationship. The "silent language" observed and adhered to within the group reflects the hierarchical relationships and collective characteristics of the region in general (Chan, 1999). In contrast, the western education system is both learner-centred and learner-active and has a stronger focus on the development of the individual (Entwistle, 1988; Ramsden, 1992; Biggs, 1999a; Houghton, 2004). These differences in approach create different student/teacher expectations and need to be considered when managing diverse cohorts. A number of works support this. For example, Hofstede proposed four core ways in which cross-cultural learning situations may differ (Hofstede, 1986). He argues that four fundamental institutions, namely, "family", "school", "job" and "community" exert influences differently, depending upon society and culture and discusses how this transfers into interpersonal roles (eg, teacher/student, parent/child). The research found that different societal influencers create inequalities which come about largely as a consequence of cultural distance. Hofstede examined these factors, not only in the context

of the 4D model that was proposed as part of his earlier work, (Hofstede, 1980; 1983), but also in the context of teacher/student and student/student interaction (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 1986).

Extant research shows that the social standing of a teacher varies from one country to another (Coughlan, 2013). In China, Confucian values put teachers on a par with medical doctors, whereas, studies reveal that in the UK the status is more linked to that of nurses and social workers (Coughlan, 2013). A study by the Varkey GEMS Foundation confirmed the high degree of public respect given to Chinese teachers. China was ranked as 1st in the top 10 teacher status rankings, compared with the UK which was ranked 10th in a 21 country study (Varkey GEMS Foundation, 2013). The study explored dimensions of teachers' status across countries and how they influence the different educational systems, examining the role that political, economical, social and cultural factors play in the allocation of resources devoted to education. The 21 countries surveyed were: "Brazil; China; Czech Republic; Egypt; Finland; France; Germany; Greece; Israel; Italy; Japan; the Netherlands; New Zealand; Portugal; Turkey; Singapore; South Korea; Spain; Switzerland; United Kingdom; and the United States". The results were summarized in the context of "teacher status", "perceptions of teacher reward", "teacher agency and control" (Varkey GEMS Foundation, 2013, pp6).

Pratt (1991) contrasts the different social perspectives between US and Chinese educators. American teachers, he argues, are perceived as facilitators of the learning process who promote autonomy. In contrast, Chinese teachers are perceived as more authoritarian figures and so students tend to accept information more and question less (Bista, 2015). Variations in cognitive ability have also been shown to be informed by culture both in the context of pattern recognition and memory development (Redding, 1990; Wagnor, 1981; Mitsis and Foley, 2009). The majority of students from East Asia studying in the UK are Chinese or from the Chinese diaspora and their educational system serves to transmit a cultural

heritage orientated towards Confucian values (Hofstede, 1986; Hofstede and Bond, 1988; Yum, 1988; Chen and Chen, 1990). In addition, there is a strong focus on visual/spatial learning because of the time spent on learning Chinese characters which need to be known – and memorized (Redding, 1990; Bond, 1992). Accordingly, the Chinese student will be required to master thousands of Chinese kanji, most of which are made up of two components, the stem and the radicals (the meaning of the character) (Wu, 2016). This is one reason the East Asian system involves significant amounts of rote learning (Yee, 1989; Ballard and Clancy, 1991; Watkins and Biggs, 1996; Chan, 1999). The Confucian ethic encourages this further because of the respect due to the four institutions (Hofstede, 1986). Biggs (1999a) endorses how these different backgrounds foster deep and surface learning. In deep versus surface learning research Biggs asserts the characteristics of the East Asian education system are more attuned with his definition of surface learning, whereas as the western system falls under the category of deep learning (Biggs, 1999a). Table I: Outlines the sources of difference between East/West educations systems.

Insert Table I Here

The literature details the different learning characteristics that may explain why students differ in their learning preferences (Kolbs, 1984; Honey and Mumford, 1986). Honey and Mumford's (1986) work describes four types of learner: (activist, reflector, theorist and pragmatist), categorized by their preferences, highlighting why flexibility in delivery method may lead to better student experiences when managing diverse cohorts. They suggested that “activists” learn by doing, “reflectors” spend more time watching, “theorists” engage by understanding theory, and “pragmatists” use practical tips/approaches when engaging with content. Sarabdeen (2013) also explores why customized approaches may lead to better outcomes, highlighting the benefits that might be created when classroom activity seeks to capture mixed cohort learning

styles. The pedagogical literature classifies learning styles and examines how different approaches can be used for achieving learning outcomes (Lewin, 1943; Piaget, 1972; Gregorc, 1982; Shuell, 1986; Dewey, 1997; Kolb, 1971, 1984, 2005; Aggarwal and Goodell, 2012). For example, enquiry based learning adopts an active and instructional approach to learning, utilising students' curiosity around questions, problems and scenarios so as to create an environment which focuses on a sustained level of enquiry initiated by the student. Banchi and Bell (2008) outline four levels of enquiry (confirmatory, structured, guided and open) for facilitating higher order questions when working with students so as to foster deep learning. Hattie (2009) suggests that enquiry based teaching leads to improved performance in the classroom. Biggs (1999b) reports on the surface approach (low cognitive level activities) and contrasts this against what he describes as the deep approach to learning which he refers to as: "activities that are appropriate to handling the task so that an appropriate outcome is achieved" (Biggs, 1999b, pp60). Surface learning, as the name implies, requires merely students to accept the information that they have been given. This type of learning is characterized by activities such as rote learning, which by its very nature does not require the student to think critically (Houghton, 2004; Biggs, 1999a; Ramsden, 1992; Entwistle, 1988). In contrast, deep learning encourages students to not only to engage with the facts but also to think and critically reflect on the wider purpose of what is being taught, drawing together the different threads of information so as to link ideas around a central argument (Houghton, 2004; Biggs, 1999a; Ramsden, 1992; Entwistle, 1988).

Biggs (1999a) discusses these two phenomena (i.e surface and deep) in the context of "what is good teaching". The study outlines three levels of teaching and three types of teacher/learning activity (TLA) (teacher controlled, peer controlled and self controlled) (Biggs, 1999a). For higher order learning to occur there needs to be constructive alignment between the student and the teacher in the context of the meaning the student will construe from the

activities set and the learning environment created by the teacher (Biggs, 2003). The general theme in Biggs' work is that students construct their learning through the learning activities and the teaching methods deployed and the opportunities for learning that come into play when tasks are created around deep learning (Biggs, 1999a,b).

Alternative theories have explored the way context informs behavioral outcomes. For example, social learning theory (Bandura, 1977) offers a slightly different, but equally important, view. The social learning perspective posits that individuals learn by observing others and the world around them: new behaviors can be acquired by watching those of others and people learn from one another, via observation, imitation, and modelling. The theory has often been called a bridge between behaviorist and cognitive learning theories because it encompasses attention, memory, and motivation (Bandura, 1977). Table II: Outlines the sources of difference in East/West learning styles

Insert Table II Here

One question that emerges is the extent to which first language and second language vocabulary acquisition can create obstacles to learning when students move from their home country to another. Kachru (1992) categorizes the extent to which English language has diffused into different languages and cultures. This is represented by three circles: the model reveals differences in word meaning, inference and association across cultures as well as linguistic ability. Because L1 and L2 speakers differ in their information processing their engagement with learning will also differ. For example, Hamada and Koda (2010 and 2008) Wang and Koda (2005) found that, when working in English as a second language, learners with an alphabetic first language background performed better in decoding and meaning inference than those from a logographic language background. Table III: Outlines the sources of difference between East/West language backgrounds.

Insert Table III Here

For the international student adapting to the alphabetic orthographic background is difficult, not only because, for many, English is a second language, but also because to engage effectively with education systems outside of their country-of-origin requires a way of thinking which is different from that to which they are accustomed (Pries, 2001). In this sense the challenge is cultural as well as environmental, and the success of transnational students in their new educational space will depend upon how effectively they adapt to the UK education system and model and the cultural adjustments they make towards accepting difference. Understanding these diverse learning styles is important for comprehending how these students attach meaning in Eastern and Western settings. This raises interesting questions about what educational institutes can do to address these challenges.

Role reversal: Addressing the challenges of international cohorts

Role reversal was used as the technique for addressing some of the challenges identified from the literature in the research. The technique was deemed suitable since it offered the opportunity for creating an imaginative space for students to share their knowledge and experiences irrespective of educational background as the technique sought to foster confidence, reflection and information sharing through conversation. Role reversal is defined by the Cambridge dictionary as: “a situation in which two people exchange their usual duties or positions” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). In our sessions students did this by creating and presenting their own learning slides as part of the module based on their conversations. Role reversal frees students (relatively) from a lecturer’s pre-planned learning agenda and the opportunity to work together in groups that combine people from different cultures can make visible to teachers and learners the impacts that differences in educational system, language and learning style can have on perception and learning. Continuous exposure to the works of

other groups reinforces the sensitization process, and, as a side benefit, minimizes issues relating to group formation (Kelly, 2009). Having been sensitised to these differences, students are better able to appreciate the implications of crossing international boundaries (in relation to education and business), and teachers are better able to tailor learning activities to be engaging and inclusive. Sensitization (Frank, 2017; Aggarwal and Goodell, 2016) is a prerequisite for understanding, in turn a prerequisite for managing (Aggarwal and Zhan, 2017) cultural differences. Thus, cultural sensitization is an automatic and intimate part of the process, resulting in explicit inclusion of different cultural perspectives in the tangible course material which is ultimately produced, clearly achieving a primary aim of international business education.

The need for innovation in teaching, stimulated by globalisation and technological developments, is especially relevant in international business subjects (Akdeniz, Zhang, and Cavusgi, 2009). Experiential learning and the flipped classroom have gained considerable support in recent years (Aggarwal and Goodell, 2014; Aggarwal and Wu, 2019; Koponen, 2019). Role reversal goes further than the flipped classroom approach, with the teacher learning from the students which approaches will lead to the best opportunities for learning in the classroom. University faculty are adept in their fields and are likely to have forgotten or not to have experienced difficulties in mastering their disciplines. Setting tasks in class which, in the flipped classroom, would have been set as exercises prior to class, enables the teacher to become intimately involved with students' learning processes. Thus, for example, setting a seminal article to be read and expounded in class by groups will flag up to the teacher the problems which students might have in comprehending its language, logic or context. Further, it can expose implicit cultural bias in the international business base reading material which the instructor may not otherwise have noted. The role of the teacher becomes focused on listening and tutoring students around their queries, providing guidance when it is needed and

amplifying key points in the literature. In this context, role reversal does not mean students setting their own curriculum. Rather, it means educators learning from their students where to concentrate the teaching effort, away from traditional education models around how information is taught and transferred. It fosters student interaction, with students creating learning content around curriculum themes and showing their learning by delivering in the class to the lecturer and their peers. Role reversal uses problems, theories, objects and stories as starting points for informing learning. The scenarios generated are related to problems that students might encounter in the real world. The scenarios are linked around curriculum themes and syllabus content and supported by cases, text, journal and press reports. Through student contributions, interpretation and analysis of these base materials are enhanced not only by different cultural perspectives, but also by their background knowledge of national institutional factors. This enhancement is explicit, being recorded in the course material which results, enriching the international dimensions of the base material. Additionally, most students are more than willing to express pride in their origins through informing others and this contributes significantly to motivation and engagement. The student-centred nature of the approach encourages students to take ownership for their learning. Most of the learning takes place in class, albeit with students free to read around topics and themes. In this sense the classroom environment is viewed as a learning space for engaging with curriculum content and context through quality talk and problem evaluation. However, in contrast to the flipped approach where students tend to watch videos or engage with reading prior to the lesson taking place, there was no formal requirement for the student to spend time preparing as all activities were class based and the duration of classes was three hours. However, supporting materials were available in the Virtual Learning Environment and recommended reading lists were given in advance in case students wanted to pre-read around the topic or to catch up on curriculum themes if they had been absent. Role reversal builds on Edgerton's (2001) work on what

constitutes effective learning, putting students at the heart of it and fostering ways for maximising student engagement and motivation by building on the cohort's previous experience.

Role reversal in our classes had eight characteristics.

1. The creation of tasks was, where possible, matched to the positive previous learning experiences of the cohort so as to capture learning preferences in diverse cohorts.
2. The learning focus when creating in-class activities was to blend and mix theory with real-life problems using talk as the basis for problem “analysis”, “synthesis” and “evaluation” (Bloom (1956) taxonomy reversed).
3. Class activities were varied to capture cohort diversity, and curriculum themes were linked to problems that companies faced and how the international environment might change in the future.
4. Activities were student-led encouraging students to take ownership of their learning.
5. The learning took place in the form of student groups preparing their own ideas and materials rather than the more traditional style of lecture.
6. Students present their findings in slide sets which are sent to the lecturer at the end of the class.
7. Students receive 360 degree feedback from their peers that the lecturer adds to. After the sessions the lecturer checks and adds feedback. The slides are formatted for consistency.
8. In the following class the lecturer and students revisit the slides, give verbal feedback, and the slides become the learning resource for the session with a pdf file created for future reference.

Figure III shows role reversal in action

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Role reversal enabled three types of teacher/learning and peer-to-peer activity (“teacher controlled”, “peer controlled” and “self controlled”) to be introduced across the different lectures and therefore addressed Biggs (1999b; 2003) work on the TLA activities that inform good learning. As practiced during the lessons, role reversal provided simultaneously a research methodology and a research tool for evaluation. Cohort thoughts, actions and decisions were captured by students leading the session. As part of the discussion, text, artefacts and objects (design products) were used to develop independent questions which provoke critical thinking, thereby offering an opportunity to build a broad approach to engage students in culturally diverse settings. For example, in one of the role reversal lessons students are challenged with the task of repositioning the toy company, Mattel, and are given a scenario based upon a press article which reports that Lego has, for the first time, outperformed Mattel. The lesson is conducted in two stages. In stage one the students are introduced to three traditional toys: Barbie which was launched in 1959 (The Mattel Group); Tiny Tears, 1950’s (USA), (Victoria and Albert Museum) and Lego, 1958 (the traditional brick in its present form), (The LEGO Group). Here students are introduced to the idea that all three toys have been on the market for decades and we discuss how play has changed over time (from, paper dolls, wooden toys etc). In stage two, students are tasked with creating a product that will capture a child’s imagination in the future. As part of the process students are asked to evaluate, in the context of Mattel, the future of Barbie both in terms of any new opportunities that the company might create and in the context of product innovation. The competitive environment, as reported in the article, is one in which Mattel and Lego are running head-to-head in competition

and that Lego is just about to overtake Mattel. Students respond by discussing, in class and in their individual groups before sharing their information with the complete cohort. Their initial musings on the Barbie Doll tend to be factual and regurgitative, but also expose cultural stereotypes and preconceptions. Our moderation of these contributions leads into the case, facilitating and highlighting the importance of and requirement for analysis; in this instance primarily of segmentation, change and product, marketing and strategic innovation. We then go on to explore the idea of culture and the way environment and culture inform our self-reference criteria (SRC) and purchasing consumption patterns. Using talk and images the students show how the threads of different subject matter can be applied in practice to transfer knowledge across cultures, markets and the workplace. Using a range of pictures, cases, radio broadcasts and role reversal activities we then discuss the ideas of innovation, product attributes, standardization/adaptation, product lifecycle, technology and globalization. Building on this framework, the students take home a message about product imitation, extension and innovation and the challenges that businesses face when confronted with these choices.

In this way role reversal encourages good pedagogy by enabling class time to be used differently, reversing Bloom's (1956) taxonomy and enabling the application of learning. It encourages students to be more innovative and engaged in their thinking by requiring them to think about the purposes of curriculum material, to draw connections behind ideas, to critique information and to consider directions of future research. This approaches Bloom's model from the top down to create higher order thinking from the outset by using student-centred approaches. Role reversal has implications for traditional pedagogy because it inverts the hierarchy, fostering deeper understanding of the topics through incorporating evaluation into the initial learning process. In the following section we explain the methodological stages

followed for creating pedagogies for engagement during the module dedicated to international business teaching.

Research Methodology

The research methodology was case study informed by autoethnographics around professional practices and reflections in teaching and student evaluation to address the research questions. Ethnography enables the research to examine a group or a culture, which for the purpose of this research is postgraduate students who have English as a first (L1) or second (L2) language. Autoethnography extends ethnography to encompass personal experience. It merges autobiography with ethnography as a research tool and enables researchers to use their own reflexivity and reflections as relevant data sources in a study (Sparkes, 2000; Barone and Strout-Dapaz, 2001; Barone, 2008, 2001; Ellis, 2004; Hickey & Austin, 2007; Jones, 2008; Cahnmann-Taylor, 2008). Customs and beliefs inform students' attitudes to curriculum theme and learning tasks practiced by their groups. Autoethnography is primarily interested in excavating the formation of identity, enabling reflection, action and application for professional practice; which, in the case of this manuscript, relates to education and learning in order to create deeper perspectives of meaning and understanding when teaching internationally diverse cohort groups. Hickey and Austin (2007) suggest the research method is particularly insightful for this type of study since:

“What autoethnography opens is an opportunity for dialogue between the subject and the social practices that they’ve engaged throughout their existence. This translates into an interrogation of the lived experiences via memory work and a sense-making of these understandings of Self ... Autoethnography, as a way of mobilizing the theoretical intent of

critical pedagogy, holds real significance as a method interested in interrogating constructions of Self and enabling emancipatory pedagogical practices. (Hickey and Austin, 2007, p. 27).

The approach identifies an initial ‘problem’ for investigation. The first research question asked how might a student’s educational experience confirm, challenge, extend what we already know about cross-cultural teaching skills and knowledge. Critical engagement with the problem opened opportunities and solutions that could be addressed through our second research question which was: How does role reversal address the consequences of difference brought about by educational system, language and learning style?

Case overview

The sample comprised students from Masters Programmes in business and management. The sample was selected because of the large number of Chinese students with English as a second language. A significant number were from East Asian countries with similar educational systems, the characteristics of which provided a contrast to the British system.

The staff involved in the project were from two different Schools: The Business School and the School of Modern Languages. Members of the research team had spent time in East Asia and were familiar with the eastern and western education systems. One of the researchers had an interdisciplinary background and so had been involved in wider curriculum activities. The research team hoped to foster a collective approach to learning through cross-school collaboration and knowledge transfer. The different backgrounds and experience of the team provided opportunities for discussion of the way different elements of teaching and cross linguistic effects informed attitudes towards curriculum content. Based on the findings from the antelope experience (Figure I), the author(s) were mindful that not all groups saw the world

in the same way and so, when explaining tasks, much time was spent on devising questions that sought to minimize ambiguity. The antelope example prompted us to explore the reasons for differences and to construct or adapt teaching methods to address and build upon different interpretations of the same evidence. In this respect the antelope served as the prompt to encourage us as educators to look at our own teaching approaches so as to try to provide a better learning environment for knowledge exchange when dealing with international cohorts. The themes around education system, culture and language were explored as potential causes of difference and role reversal was the technique used to enable students to take ownership of their learning and to customise their approach to it.

The first stage of the research involved capturing cohorts' previous learning experiences at the beginning of the module. The aim was to expose the extremes of different learning systems within countries-of-origin (COO). This was addressed by asking students to write down their best and worst previous educational experiences and the reasons they had enjoyed or not enjoyed those experiences. The responses were analysed so as to gain an appreciation of the dynamics of the groups and the type of activities that were most likely to capture wider student engagement. Subsequently, classroom activities were designed around the core curriculum themes and sought to draw on the students' previous positive learning experiences.

Understanding a student's previous learning experience enabled the researchers to gain an appreciation of the learning preferences of individuals within the group and the types of activities whereby they felt they had engaged successfully with the process and when they did not. Integrating students' previous experience can help us enhance our understanding of cross-cultural teaching: moving from general to particular student backgrounds and exposing the

students' learning preferences by the information provided. It also provides information about the educational strategies used in their home countries.

When designing their lessons the researchers took into account the experiences that students had disliked. Thought was also given as to how activities in class might capture the broader cohort experiences. The activities centred on industry cases, scenarios and problem evaluation tasks which the students discussed as part of the thematic content for each lecture. Table IV: Shows the type of activities created to capture cohort diversity based on role reversal as pedagogy.

Insert table IV Here:

At the beginning of the module students were informed that the structure of the lecture might take a different form from what they might have experienced previously and were instructed on how each session would be run and why. They were shown how the structure of the sessions linked to curriculum content and were given the opportunity to ask questions. As part of the brief the lecturer informed the students that the process would require them to create, within the lessons, slide packs, created through conversation, of the different curriculum themes. Students were also instructed that if they had any concerns it was perfectly acceptable to raise them with lecturing staff.

The method of delivery adopts a creative or imaginative approach, such as using fables, folk tales and children's literature as anchors for building student engagement. The actual curriculum delivery process was "tapered". For example, as ice-breaker and to break down reticence, students are initially given themes from non-business related sources (such as myths and folk tales) which have morals for humanity in general and can be transferred to the business context. Students generally have pride in their own culture and history and are more than

willing to share their own versions of moral tales. The universality of the themes from these stories, despite their different cultural origins, are then applied to curriculum content as a vehicle for motivating students to use their imagination, to contextualize these themes in settings where there are both L1 and L2 learners and to create 'toolkits' that provoke engagement, reflection and analysis. The cohort's thoughts, actions and decisions are captured by them leading the session. Reflection, synthesis and analysis around the various tasks were captured as part of the class discussion, slide creation and presentation. By the end of the course they will be examining academic literature and business cases through a multiplicity of cultural lenses and with a critical perspective. During the lessons the teacher integrated herself into the team discussions, listening to the different ideas across groups and joining in with the discussion as an additional team member. Short pieces of text are written, based on imaginative conversation in the classroom and lecture slides and resources are produced by the students to showcase their findings and their thinking with related themes from their own countries.

Role reversal is different from flipped teaching where routinely students are given activities to do pre-class as the process is linked to in class engagement through conversations around problems and how they might be solved through group actions. As part of the process students acquire knowledge as part of the class time applying concepts and theories with their peers and teachers through in class activity and interaction. As they become aware of other points of view from their classmates, they should also become aware that there are different approaches to business problems, different interpretations of information and that they may need to choose, or recognise that there are choices, among different theories and methods. These are, of course, general objectives, but, in addition, they will learn from direct contact with their peers (reinforcing cases, textbooks and articles) that different cultural preferences and attitudes, financial and political systems, government policies and languages shape market conditions and, thereby, inform marketing, investment and staffing decisions.

The final stage sought to determine the effectiveness of role reversal as pedagogy: how it met the objectives of the course. This was done by continuous questioning of students in the classes to their perceived progress. In addition, the authors teaching the sessions reflected on their own experiences to explore what worked particularly well or did not work well and adjusted resources and actions accordingly. Throughout the module the teachers carefully monitored group engagement and used teacher-student reflection as a tool for evaluating whether learning outcomes had been met. Finally, at the end of the module students were given a version of the original questionnaire that had asked them about their best and worst previous learning experiences. This asked the same questions, but relating only to the experimental module. Students were also invited to participate in post-module focus group discussions to discuss their experiences. Comments made by students in emails sent to the lecturer were also analysed as part of the overall evaluation of the student experience. The research aimed to be iterative. That is, teaching practice reflections were interrogated leading to further improvements in classroom practice based on better understanding of the influence of learning styles, educational systems and language on identity formation.

Findings

The results confirmed insights from the literature in relation to East/West comparisons, albeit with a somewhat stereotyped view of the respective systems. Cohort experiences also endorsed many of the points highlighted in the literature with Asian students endorsing the strong focus in particular on rote learning and the difference in teacher-student relationship between these two systems.

Comparison data on worst previous learning experiences from the two groups suggests a strong difference in focus. The Asian students' answers centered on teaching style and

process. As a worst experience students mentioned in their responses that they did not like classes where the teacher read merely from a textbook or Powerpoint slides. The traditional Asian educational approach to learning was also perceived as negative. The findings endorse previous literature on teaching style in Asia (such as rote learning and uncritical use of textbooks), but also suggest that students from East Asia did not enjoy their educational experience, especially as they moved up through the different education layers. At high school they mainly found the process “boring”, “stressful” “unimaginative” and “isolating”. College entrance examinations preparation and the cramming method were perceived as negative and stressful. Students also spoke about the stress of preparing for the IELTS (English language proficiency) examinations which many had found particularly difficult. Responses to the question included statements like: my worse experience was: “*High School – High school. Because it is less freedom and full of rules*”. (Chinese student).

Western students’ primary concerns were assessment methods and grades. Their worst experiences related to group work, particularly if it was related to summative assessment because of the impact on grades. UK students also made reference to subject selection at A level (pre-university specialisation). They implied they had not always chosen A level subjects for the right reasons and had then become disappointed. Broader life issues, such as money management and independence were also mentioned by this group as factors that made their transition into higher education difficult. Table V: Common responses for worst experiences in home countries

Insert Table V Here

Asian students’ best experiences related to events where they had been allowed to be creative and where there were opportunities for them to make friends. They spoke of how they had enjoyed the learning experience during their time at junior high and kindergarten, citing lack

of pressure to do well. The type of task was also mentioned. For example, students spoke of their experiences of learning using animal pictures in their childhood and why they enjoyed it. Some students enjoyed case studies, live projects, work experience and internships. They liked these because of the freedom of the task and making of friends, and also the need to think creatively. For example, one Chinese student spoke of how they had been involved in an event to raise funds for a Chinese charity and this had enabled them to be involved in an advertising campaign. Interestingly, western students did not differ much in their answers, citing work experience, and learning to work with others as good learning experiences. However, their responses also spoke of specific modules they had taken and gave their opinions of why they were good and enjoyable. There was mention of how information was articulated. Responses included: “Lectures with interaction”. One student wrote about an accounting class saying their best learning experience was: “*accounts module: the difference between stock was differentiated hilariously between vegetables and meatballs. It remained in my memory always*” (UK Student). Table VI: Common responses for best experiences in home countries.

Insert table VI here

Student experiences UK module

The post module questionnaire sought to explore the personal experiences of students when they engaged with the different activities and the teaching method deployed during the module. As mentioned earlier the activities were created to blend different components of learning to capture learning preferences based on what the students had said they had enjoyed the most/least with regard to their previous learning experiences prior to joining the course. Tables VII & VIII: summaries the most common best and worse experiences of the of UK module.

Insert Table VII & VIII Here

The findings suggest that, overall, students enjoyed the module, but there were some differences in what they enjoyed most and in their attitudes towards assessment. Students reported that they liked the group work, the opportunities to learn from peers and to be creative. Asian students engaged with pictures that expressed ideas as visual talking points, commenting on the good learning environment for being creative and innovative. They had enjoyed being given the opportunity to be creative and to share their ideas through slide co-creation, various degrees of conversation and role reversal.

Western students liked formatively assessed group work because it gave them an opportunity to discuss ideas, be reflective and garner feedback. Asian students liked group work as it enabled them to work collectively with their friends and to articulate their initial ideas and thoughts through conversation. One possible explanation as to why students overall enjoyed the approach could be because activities such as the Barbie, “Hello Kitty” case and the cultural games enabled them to bring their own cultural self reference criteria into the task, thereby creating and sharing knowledge using personal experiences and providing examples of practice across cultures. For some, this was by way of pictorial representation. Others preferred to construct meaning in a literary fashion. Undertaking all activities during class time removed the pressure brought on by assessment deadlines and provided opportunities for student-to-student learning and student-to-teacher feedback.

Asian students enjoyed case work more than western students, who tended to think that cases were not up to date and were therefore less relevant to the world of work. A point to note here is that the answer was slightly ambiguous because, when the question was originally written, the teaching staff were thinking of a case study as a written case that students were evaluating. However, the responses related to various aspects of case work, so that in future research there will be a need to differentiate the question. The UK students tended to interpret

it as addressing the actual cases, whereas the Asian responses suggested they were reflecting on the activity. Western students' favorite activities were group work and class presentations, provided they were not used for summative assessment. Asian students liked team-based activities regardless of whether assessment was summative or formative. They liked case work as it gave them an anchor of practical knowledge on which to reflect, but not the pressure of having to absorb information quickly.

Regarding worst experiences, some students left blank or stated they would not change anything about the module. Those who did have criticisms singled out Q&A as a technique for testing learning, the speed reading techniques used for case evaluation and the "Esperanto" exercise as the least popular. Asian students could not work out the Esperanto passage regardless of whether this was given as a listening or reading exercise due to language distance. Comments included: *"The lesson about the world language. I can't understand"* (Chinese student). *"The weird language to translate. Don't know it at all"* (Chinese student). *"Listening to language totally unknown. Feel confused"* (Chinese student). Western students were more able to translate the message due to language proximity (i.e., how close Esperanto is to their L1 point of reference in terms of sound, vocabulary, grammar and writing systems). Western students did not mention the Esperanto passage as negative.

In the context of role reversal as a tool for showcasing ideas, students appeared to have liked the opportunity to do things differently. Some commented that, whilst they liked the lessons, they were not happy if the activities were not finished in class, since that meant sometimes chasing others for the final slides. As they were aware that their slides would be slotted into the class slides as a future resource there were a few occasions when students continued to work after class.

Clearly, there is variation in education systems within these regions as well as between them. Whilst it may be invidious to over-generalize, there are characteristics of many students' backgrounds which may advantage or disadvantage them in postgraduate business programmes. "Eastern" education systems tend to emphasize rote learning and respect for authority, downplaying the value of student input. "Western" systems are more liberal, encouraging creativity, participation and the deployment of critical thought. In particular, in the UK university sector, the last of these is necessary for students to achieve the highest grades. The use of case studies, assessments based on business problems and presentations are common in business schools, requiring students to evaluate situations, make recommendations based on selective use of appropriate techniques and to justify these choices and recommendations publicly. This requires a greater degree of adjustment by Eastern, compared with Western, students new to postgraduate business education in the UK.

The East/West stereotypes, representing the polar extremes of the East/West education systems are, apart from varied abilities in English language competence, often perceived by teaching staff as giving rise to the principal difficulty in teaching international student cohorts. However, these extremes are part of a spectrum of cultural differences that are particularly important in the teaching of international business. The authors' own experience, and that of many colleagues, motivated the search for teaching methods which both minimised barriers to learning and capitalised on the cosmopolitan composition of their classrooms (which potentially provides a live environment for enhancing the learning experience of international business students and staff). Whilst the East/West differences are the most obvious, manifest in a significant difficulty encountered by staff, we suggest that, carefully managed, "Role Reversal" in the classroom can both overcome hurdles and actively contribute to the appreciation of international business. The East/West issue served as a catalyst for the search for more effective teaching, but the proposed methods have universal application given the

flexibility of the approach and the fact that activity type takes into account the cohort's preferences discussed as part of the pre-module questionnaire about the students' worst and best learning experiences.

Efficacy of the pedagogy based on focus group discussions post module

Our experience is that role reversal addresses the sources of difference brought about by educational system, language and learning style by engaging students, through their own contributions, explicitly in different ways with curriculum content through working collectively. The approach enables them to customise their learning by bringing out their assumptions and those of others, contributing to the development of a global mindset, the importance of which is concisely summarised by Chan, Fung and Yau (2018). We put this into practice by giving student groups in the relevant sessions freedom to select how they approached a set task, leading to a repertoire of approaches that were then open to scrutiny by the whole class. The efficacy of the pedagogy was captured after the conclusion of the module by asking the students to answer the two questions about their learning experiences and by inviting them to participate in focus groups concerning their experiences of the module. A number of themes emerged as part of the focus group discussions.

First, students signalled the importance of discussion and conversation. This was seen to be one of the things they enjoyed most. The opportunities to think things through with peers and with the lecturer was seen as positive, with students saying the process enabled them to “...transfer what you have learned, in your way to other students to share what you have learned and to share your ideas....”; the interaction made “me feel I am not just a student, just listening to the lecturer but I'm one of the participants to enjoy this class.”. In this sense role reversal provided an opportunity for students to engage with higher order thinking, but they

also saw merit in the activities being student-led. Second, students placed emphasis around breadth of activity. Here, there were different attitudes and references within the group. For some students their favorite tasks were the cases. Some of the female students particularly liked the case of Shiseido because of the focus on beauty, whereas, some of the male students preferred Honda. Others liked best the more creative tasks such as the Antelope and activities related to Barbie and Hello Kitty. *“I think the antelope activity and Barbie is most impressive part, for me”*. *“Presentation actually”*... *“because during the procedure all of the members become a bit closer and actually the way you practice this, the way they learned how to separate our works and work together”*. *“Each group had the opportunity to communicate with the teacher”*. As a pedagogy, role reversal was seen by students as useful because of the feedback and communication opportunities. Students stated they liked *“the two-way communications”* and the fact that *“each group had the opportunity to communicate with the teacher”*. Regarding feedback students raised its importance to them: *“Actually the most impressive class is the last class. You said a lot of things to us a lot of comments about our work”*.

Focus groups discussions were predominately positive, but two areas were raised as having potential for improvement. The first related to how the groups were put together. Some students mentioned they would have liked the opportunity to work with students outside of their immediate friendship group. Whilst, technically, all students could choose where they sat, a small number of students did mention they found it hard to say they wanted to move to a different group. The second, point was the length of radio programmes and videos. The preference was for short video interjections of around 5 minutes or so rather than longer ones.

In addition to the positive responses received it should be noted that the module was an elective and students were actually free to switch to alternative modules within the first few

weeks should they so decide. Whilst this option was available the great majority of the students who first registered on the module continued with it.

Role reversal as pedagogy: teachers' reflections

The authors found a number of benefits from role reversal as a pedagogic device in their classes. It offered an opportunity to engage with curriculum content in ways that alleviate some of the barriers to learning brought about by education systems, language and learning style by exploring first how the members of the cohort felt they learnt best, and second by creating tasks that sought to capture the different preferences within the cohort. Furthermore, it unlocked students' own resources in such a way as to add considerable value to curriculum themes. The principal benefits of this unlocking are of central importance in international business education: developing cultural sensitivity through production of course material through working with others to generate material, being on the receiving end of the reactions of others to that material, and responding critically to the material generated by others; enrichment of the base material through incorporation of cultural, national and institutional orientations based on students' own background and experience; revealing bias, explicit or implicit, in base materials. Further, the end product is effectively a tangible document which ensures these benefits are captured and recorded for future reference. This is, of course, also of benefit to staff. Mapping task to curriculum theme around cohort experiences enabled exploitation of the different learning preferences across groups. By and large the lessons were fun, creative and engaging, the excitement being enhanced by the unpredictability of final outcomes. The researchers found that the majority of international marketing topics and themes lent themselves to the approach and that, therefore, it was straightforward to map curriculum content to activity. International marketing is a fluid topic and lends itself well to current real

world business, facilitating the use of real time scenarios and examples. The researchers also found many ways to be creative once they had begun to think outside the traditional lecture box.

Using the students' findings as a resource for lesson material had a number of benefits for building both the teacher-student and student-student relationships and for maximizing the opportunity to learn. First, it enabled the lecturer to read all the slides after the lesson, to assess the overall value of the session and to provide rapid feedback. Second, it served to motivate students to engage with the topic and encourage their creativity and originality, as shown by the slides produced by each group. Although the student groups were not required to disclose their identity to others, the exposure of each group's work to the whole class generated competition to produce work of high quality. Third, the eclectic dimensions of the slides captured many more different perspectives of the world than the author(s) could have produced.

Overall, the researchers found that role reversal enabled staff and students to capture their experiences in a creative way and that it heightened student engagement within the classroom. Each group's presentation of slides to the rest of the cohort created an ethos of positive competition among groups. This positive attitude resulted in the production of excellent quality slides to showcase the students' learning across the different sessions. The technique harnessed high levels of engagement and imagination within the classroom throughout the lesson. The resource packs produced by the students around the different curriculum themes and activities enabled them both to think more deeply about the different topics and themes and to connect the information together. The researchers also observed that, whilst curriculum information was available on the Virtual Learning Environment, students attended lessons because they felt the slide and resource toolkit creation process added considerable value to their learning. In this respect, the approach had a number of advantages. First, it enabled students to take charge of their learning, as well as to engage with it. Second,

it enabled a mechanism for entering into a continuous dialogue, serving as a tool for promoting high quality feedback. Third, the teacher-student, student-teacher and student-student interaction facilitated 360° feedback. All stages of the learning process are captured through constant monitoring (e.g. student conversation in class, slide creation process, discussion and staff collation of information and correction of any information within and across the sessions). In general, the researchers found the approach to be a useful tool for creating a teaching environment around reflective and creative thinking, as well as providing students with an opportunity to engage with deep rather than surface learning. The benefits of role reversal were not only the enthusiasm with which students took ownership of their learning, but also that competition among groups generated strong team loyalty and stimulated production of extremely high quality resources in terms of content, presentation and creativity. We found, despite their unfamiliarity with the approach, students were highly motivated and engaged. This was evidenced by apologetic emails from students if they were not able to attend, with some asking if their slides could be included if they prepared them – despite the fact that the broad curriculum themes could be read in any good international marketing textbook and through the reading of journal articles. This suggests they felt they had missed something important. We also found that students were far more creative in their slides than anything that the lecturer could have produced using traditional lecture materials. The modern student is very familiar with the new technologies available for engagement and this facilitates a degree of innovation in the classroom. Role reversal offers a fun way to showcase these skills and offered a dynamic learning environment for dealing with the challenges and opportunities brought about through difference in the class.

Staff interested in using role reversal as a pedagogy for learning and engagement should note the following. First, while role reversal creates unique teaching resources and session slides, appropriate readings need to be prepared as background materials, so that students who

do not attend for genuine reasons are not disadvantaged. Second, whilst the technique requires and can generate a high level of student engagement and input, activities need to be properly planned and explicitly linked to the syllabus. In this respect, instructions need to be clear and students need to be given appropriate support from the staff. Finally, staff need to be both adaptable in their approach and to be prepared for a range of scenarios, since, by default, control is passing to others. This needs to be effectively managed. As experienced educators will know building a strong rapport with students is important for ensuring productive effort. Getting students to speak up and show what they can or cannot do is a challenge, especially, when attempting to do this with cohorts who come from extremely different educational backgrounds. We therefore suggest that role reversal is introduced incrementally with partial role reversal tasks been set in the early phases of the course. We also stress the importance of ensuring comprehensive and early feedback to students on the work they complete in class. Feedback creates a sense of reality between what was done, why it was done that way and what a student did or did not understand as part of the process. Table IX: Role Reversal as Pedagogy: Toolkit for Educators (based on the author(s) experiences and reflections).

Insert Table IX Here

Conclusion and research limitations

The findings endorse the work of earlier studies of “pedagogies of engagement” by Edgerton, (2001) and Hallinger and Lu, (2011) which highlight how positively students from Asia respond to the challenges of highly engaged teaching. Our findings suggest that reverse teaching offers an alternative and effective approach for creating a student-centred

environment, reversing Bloom's taxonomy by approaching the more demanding elements earlier and utilizing more interactive teaching mechanisms.

The findings illustrate that tailoring pedagogical method to content through role reversal is a major potential resource for dealing constructively with differences brought about by education system, learning style and language in L1 and L2 settings. The research makes three contributions. First, we show the added value that can be obtained by adopting a framework which explores learning using role reversal. We adopted an interdisciplinary lens to synthesise educational practice, learning and language literatures in order to show "how" and "why" East/West learners perceive and respond to information differently. Contributing to building theory by integrating the findings from these three important strands in the literature. Second, by analyzing students past experiences we show the importance of understanding these differences when teaching courses with highly cosmopolitan student cohorts. The third contribution is to show how role reversal may be used as both a pedagogic device and a research tool for creating educational toolkits informed by reflective practice, to generating learning style approaches that generate deeper perspectives of meaning and understanding when teaching internationally diverse cohorts. Combining experiential learning with role reversal builds effective engagement, interaction and understanding through conversation in the classroom. Table X: summaries the benefits for teaching in general and more specifically in international business.

Returning to our two research questions we conclude that role reversal addresses the sources of difference brought about by educational system, language and learning style by exploring how the cohort identifies with their own experiences of learning and by adjusting activity type within class to reflect this. This can bridge cultural barriers to learning and enhance appreciation of the subject by integrating the effect of students' background. As stated

above, whilst the pedagogy was inspired initially by the authors' experience with students from Asia Pacific, it can be used with all students since the initial screening phase enables the educator to capture students' self evaluations of their learning experiences and then to build upon the positive elements of the different educational models. In this respect the pedagogy can be applied to teaching students from other world regions. Just as leading business school faculty incorporate the business experience of their students in MBA and other post-experience programmes, we argue that background culture and education are valuable resources in the teaching of international business to international cohorts and that the role of faculty is best as moderator rather than traditional lecturer. As mentioned earlier our research does not suggest that any one approach is better than the other, but rather hopes to serve as a catalyst for scholars to think about what they do, why they do it and to reflect upon how different types of teaching practices might be used within their specialist areas. Utilizing new technologies optimally and developing a platform for creative learning is particularly important in times when innovation is becoming a priority. Placing students at the centre of learning enables them not only to own their knowledge (Barnett and Coate, 2005), but also to be co-creative in their thinking. Role reversal as pedagogy offers one platform for achieving this. It should be noted we are not suggesting that it's the only method that should be used, but are rather using it as an example of a method which could be used and one we have found valuable and useful in our classes. It does, of course, require considerable staff engagement, too. The teaching method is relevant to readers of the Journal because in essence, the classroom provides a laboratory resource that uses students' own experience and background to illuminate first hand International Business issues which considerably enriches their education. All business requires an understanding that people think differently and varying degrees of differences are inherent in almost all aspects of present-day international business. Students gain greater insight into these issues by being exposed to the interpretations of information, problems and cases provided by other students

from different cultural and institutional backgrounds. In our classroom scenarios, the international commonalities and differences are live and addressed explicitly.

Limitations

The research is not without its limitations. The main one is that the findings are conducted from an interpretive perspective, where the emphasis was on understanding the learning experiences of students in a particular class/cohort so as to explore how teaching style might be adapted to optimize the opportunity for learning and cohort participation in diverse settings. The findings reported are therefore somewhat content- and time-bound and so care should be taken not to over generalize. Future research might explore more direct links between student satisfaction, understanding and experience in different disciplinary settings. We should add that our research was not concerned with comparing the results of summative assessment under various teaching regimes, rather with motivation and engagement in the classroom. Further research might also investigate aspects of assessment and performance.

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FIGURE I: ‘Student Verbal Responses to Object Identification Task (including illustrations)’

Box 1: Object used in class	Boxes 2-8: Students’ responses
<p style="text-align: right;">1</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">PHOTOGRAPH OF OBJECT SHOWN TO STUDENTS</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">2</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">GOAT</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">3</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">SHEEP</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">4</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">DONKEY</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">5</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">ANTELOPE</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">6</p>  <p style="text-align: center;">KANGAROO</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">7</p> <p style="text-align: center;">IS IT A SYMBOL OF PEACE?</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">8</p> <p style="text-align: center;">IS IT A SOUVENIR?</p>

Source: All images made available via non-restrictive licences. Images 2,3,4 and 7 via Pexel, Image 6 via Pixabay’

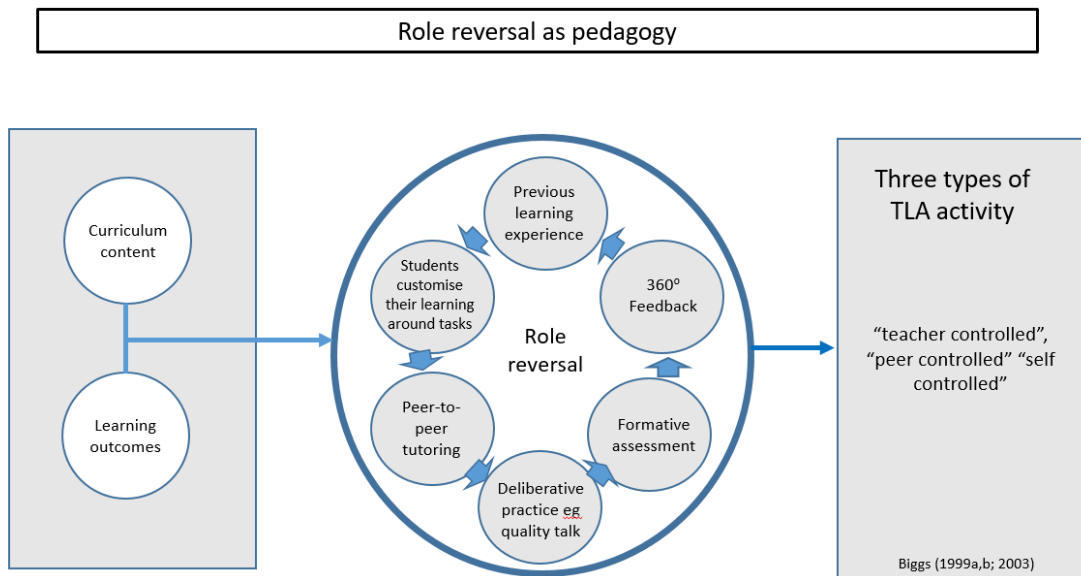
FIGURE II

The three sources of difference that impact on classroom expectation in East/West settings

Source of Difference	Impact in Classroom
Education System	Different expectations re delivery method and engagement with material <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teaching based on different religious foundations• Different emphasis on assessment• Different attitudes to knowledge and the goals of learning• Social differences in the status of teachers• Different cultural perspectives of education and its purpose• Different perspectives of self and social identity (group vs individual)• Different expectations in family-child relationships
Language	Different interpretations of material <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Language differences and language barriers• Not all words make sense outside of the country-of-origin• Translation and metric equivalence issues• Different orthographic backgrounds
Learning Style	Different expectations of learning style(s) and perspectives <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Different attitudes to knowledge and the goals of learning• Different expectations of teacher-student relationship• Contrasting approaches to student teacher interaction (passive vs active)• Different interpretations around the act of listening and questioning• Different and contrasting environments affect sense making processes (Antelope example)

FIGURE III

Role reversal in action



Curriculum content is linked to the learning outcomes of the module. Previous learning experiences are explored so as to create a broad range of tasks around cohort experiences. Students customize their learning by deciding their approach to the problem so as to address the sources of difference brought about by educational system, language and learning style. The process is supported by peer tutoring around quality talk. Powerpoint slides and conversation form the basis for showing learning and are linked to formative assessment. 360 degree feedback occurs from peer-to-peer, student-to-teacher in class and through teacher feedback on the final class slides. The completed slides become the learning resource for the session and are curriculum based in terms of thematic content but are student-led.

TABLE I.

Sources of Difference: East/West Education systems

East Asia: Education system characteristics	West: Educational system characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Large power distance societies (China) • Religious foundation based on teachings of Confucius, Buddha • Chinese perspective of academic freedom linked to Confucius. System is designed to reflect cultural values • Cultivates the “idea of character” objective of Confucian education • Examination driven system • Collective society emphasizes importance of group • Structure of relationships: Teacher and student informed by Confucian philosophy • Respect for authority: authoritarian figures • Emphasis on moral education and ethics • Emphasis on effort over ability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small power distance societies (UK) • Religious foundations nominally based on Christian values • Philosophical principles deriving from Socrates, Plato, Aristotle • UK perspective of academic freedom associated with teaching, learning and research. • Academic freedom is independent of state • Associated with constructionist philosophy (Dewey, Vygotsky, Freire) • Constructionist approach where students have more control/take ownership over learning • Teachers are facilitators of the learning process • Individualistic society • Emphasis on articulation of information – with interactive examples, learning to work with people, asking questions

Table compiled using a range of sources.

Source: Hsu, 1975; Gewurtz, 1978; Trandis, 1984; Hofstede, 1986:313¹; Pratt, 1991; Chan, 1999; Bush and Qiang, 2000; Nisbett, 2003; Wang, 2004; Wang, 2005, 2009; Gu, 2006; Wu, 2008; Rao and Chan, 2009; Guo and Lamb, 2010; Thakkar, 2011; Egmond, et al, 2013; Zhu and Jian, 2018

TABLE II

Sources of Difference: East/West Learning style

East Asia: Learning style	West: Learning style
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passive approaches to learning • Emphasis on listening and receiving information • Chinese style learning strongly influenced by culture and history. Emphasis on the social application of knowledge • Collective society orientation • Learning effectiveness related to excellence of teacher • The value placed on relationships is hierarchical and in stark contrast to the West • Reams of notes, Rote learning and memorization • Strong focus on visual/spatial through the study of Chinese characters • Knowledge learning defined by Confucian is rule learning • Confucian heritage is instructor centered • Surface learning. Students encouraged to question less • Informed by “Cheng ming”, usually translated as Rectification of Names based on Confucius ideas • Strong “<i>Jen</i>” (humanity) and “<i>Li</i>” (ritual) are the core Confucian values that inform learning style and behavior 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Active approaches to learning • University lectures with interaction • Teachers respect the independence of students • Individual society orientation • Learning effectiveness relates to two-way communication • Relationships have more autonomy • Sharper focus on the individual as opposed to group • Active learning encouraged • Curriculum focus on critical thinking • Strong focus on problem solving and asking questions • Students encouraged to speak in class • Learner centered • Diversity of opinion encouraged as part of discussion and viewed positively • Deep learning. Students encouraged to question

Table compiled using a range of sources.

Source: Wilhelm, 1970 Redding, 1990; Wagner, 1981; Trandis, 1984; Hofstede, 1986; Wilcoxon, 1990; Yum, 1988; Zhang, 1994; Lee, 1996; Chan, 1999; Martinsons and Martinsons, 1996; Brooks, 1997; Biggs, 1999; Chan, 1999; Biggs and Watkins, 2001; Wang, 2004; Wu, 2008, Li, 2003, 2005; Zhou, 2005; Reagan, 2005; Yang, Zheng and Li, 2006; Zhang, 2013

TABLE III

Sources of Difference: East/West Language

East Asia: Language characteristics	West: Language characteristics
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Multiple dialects/versions• Uses a logographic system• Symbols represent the words themselves• Chinese is a tone language.• Chinese focuses on meaning• Emphasis on second part of sentence	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Common language - English• Uses alphabetic/phonetic character• Learners of English have only 26 letters• English language emphasizes structure• Changes in pitch used to express emotion• Concept of time uses: tenses (e.g. past, present, future)• Emphasis on first part of sentence

Table compiled using a range of sources.

Source: Zhang, 1985; Baron & Strout-Dapaz, 2001; Wang and Koda, 2005; Hamada and Koda, 2008, 2010; Rajaram & Bordia, 2011

Table IV:

Sample Activities: Role reversal as pedagogy

The table shows a sample of the types of task presented to the students for reflection and evaluation using role reversal as pedagogy. The approach builds on the TLA approach proposed in the works of Biggs (1999a,b) and Bianchi and Blancy (2008) concerning the different levels of enquiry for fostering student engagement.

<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Role Reversal</u></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Enquiry Based Learning</u></p>
<p>Social learning constructs (culture, community, language, context) were considered as part of the in class activity design and actioned using role reversal/team based learning</p> <p>Role reversal – students as part of every lesson create the lesson packs to represent the curriculum theme and their interpretation of what they had learned.</p> <p>The process was teacher-controlled – in that the activities were all designed by the lecturer and were aligned with the different curriculum themes. All slides were sent to the lecturer for checking at the end of the lesson. Feedback was given and a pdf file of the findings as part of the process and core teaching aids included.</p> <p>The process was peer-controlled – as the focus was on problem based learning and what the student did to construct meaning around the topic</p> <p>The process was self-controlled – given the self management. Self monitoring and information gathering skills generated as part of the approach</p>	<p>Slide creation enabled a creative platform for students to share and articulate their experiences and thought processes with other students so as to foster peer-to-peer learning and teacher-to-student learning within and across groups. (Teacher-controlled, peer-controlled and self-controlled) (Biggs, 1999b)</p> <p>Master slides of the classes contribution are prepared as a pdf file to show the themes and class learning for the session. The work is checked by the teacher and feedback (using a different color) is provided on the slides.</p> <p>At the start of each lesson the lecturer revisits and reminds students of what we learnt in our previous week(s) and adopts a “through the looking glass approach” to management. The slides then become the students learning resource and are available to the group. Across the various weeks students are also invited to do the summary to their peers and the lecturer</p> <p>Master slides include: Key images introduced by lecturer at start of the lesson, followed by the students work by each group, summary slides on what this all means in the context of the different curriculum themes, the literature, cases, activities and examples</p>
<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Sample of Activities:</u></p> <p>Case study (Published cases)</p>	<p>Teaching and learning context designed to stimulate high level engagement (Bianchi and Blancy, 2008)</p> <p>Confirmatory approaches were used to re-enforce the learning idea. A range of cases were analysed. An introduction to the session using the PPT, 15 minute speed reading, group discussion activity, broader class analysis built around questions. Followed by slide summarizes of the case by students</p>
<p>Communication games highlighted international differences and enabled students to bring their own cultural self reference criteria into the activity thus creating knowledge sharing using personal experiences. This generated examples of practice across cultures</p>	<p>The activities used a combination of activities to create a performance based learning enquiry scenario.</p> <p>Activities included back to back communication game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Esperanto message unravelling activity • Verbal communication game – message decoding

	<p>The approach used inquiry based learning, enabling students to focus on the process they went through while engaged in the task so as to develop the social aspect of learning and to highlight self reference criteria (SRC) differences across groups</p> <p>Student evaluations of the Antelope used open enquiry approaches. Students were given/asked to look at a wooden carving and using open enquiry methods identified a SRC for positioning the product in different markets. They designed procedures for carrying out an enquiry around their initial evaluation of the objects and for communicating their results</p>
<p>Real world engagement as part of full role reversal – some examples</p> <p>Case creation example I: Barbie</p> <p>Activities built around press reporting’s on company performance: Barbie and Lego, radio broadcasts, photographs of play over the decades</p> <p>Students draw on previous knowledge built up in the class to address the Barbie/Lego situation. The task is to test the question, evaluate/ provide explanations</p> <p>Case creation example II: Hello Kitty</p> <p>Students draw on knowledge built up in the class to address/are provided with a question and the task is to test the question, evaluate/ provide explanations</p> <p>A range of images/pictures are used to start the conversation. Lesson starts with a discussion on brands – brand recognition/lack of recognition cross country. Product space and repositioning</p> <p>As part of the discussion students consider why Hello Kitty is a successful brand when other Asian brands are not</p>	<p>Guided inquiry. Students draw on previous knowledge built up in the class combined with the newspaper article and a radio broadcast. Students are provided with a newspaper clipping to explain how Lego sales have beat Mattel. The challenge is to reposition Barbie or develop a new product. The task is to generate an explanation/supported by evidence on what they company should do next</p> <p>As part of the process students design a product, and create 4 slides to show what they have learnt from the lectures. The slides outline the product and its attributes and show how the product will capture a child’s imagination across countries, showing how the product will inspire the children of tomorrow</p> <p>Guided inquiry. As part of the process students are presented with a problem where they are informed Sanrio Ltd is looking to recapture its iconic brand “<u>Hello Kitty</u>” in the market place. They are told the marketing team have noticed that “Hello Kitty” is suffering brand fatigue in Japan and is worried about the brands future. As part of the task students have to reposition the brand so as to secure the future of Hello Kitty.</p> <p>As part of the process students developed methods for evaluating if “fatigue” had really occurred for this product and develop 3 slides which capture what they have learnt from the previous lectures and show how they will capture/re-build the brand for the future</p>
<p>Slide creation and poster design used as partial role reversal</p> <p>The question and method of data collection available are discussed in the context of primary and secondary data. This was linked to a case analysis of Kellogg’s</p>	<p>Structured Enquiry: The task was to generate an explanation with supportive evidence for market transfer of products from Germany to India, displaying the findings in a poster for class presentation. Here students evaluated the lessons from Kellogg’s in India and explored how to position Knopper’s</p>

<p style="text-align: center;">Feedback</p> <p>360° Feedback student-to-teacher, teacher-to-student and student-to-student</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">TLA feedback and novel learning resources</p> <p>Continuous dialogue in class creates feedback</p> <p>After the class students receive additional feedback through the master slides</p> <p>Student summary presentations to their peers Teacher summary presentations to the class</p>
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Activities encouraged “enquiry based learning” (e.g confirmation enquiry, structured inquiry, guided inquiry and open enquiry) (Banchi and Bell, 2008).

TABLE V

Common responses for worst experiences in home countries

Students from East Asia	Western students
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Examination-oriented education (-)• Memorisation and lack of application (-)• Listening to lecturers reading materials aloud, dated materials (-)• Powerpoint slides were perceived as boring and unimaginative (-)• Lack of interaction and monotonous activities in class (-)• Lectures/teaching skills; unfavourable characters (-)• High School (-)• Entrance examinations (-)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Group members' lack of engagement in group work (-)• Lack of interactive learning (-),• Overcrowded class (-)• Studying subjects out of ones' interest and for the wrong reasons (-)• Managing money (-)

TABLE VI

Common responses of best experiences in home countries

Students from East Asia	Western students
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lecturers (responsible; knowledgeable; experienced; helpful; kind; patient; friendly) (+)• Friendly classmates (+)• Both theoretical and practical (including internship) aspects in learning (+)• Events with interaction (+)• Acquiring transferable skills (+) (e.g., independence; working in teams; acquiring learning habits; autonomy; problem solving skills; self-development; life skills) (+)• Junior Middle School (+)• Clear and well defined tasks (+)• Work experience (+)• Summer program (+)• Nursery – no pressure in doing well (+)• Case study (+)• Real project (+)• Learning animals by pictures in my childhood (+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Real work experience (+)• Good learning environment:• Safe and happy, (+)• Good lecturers (friendly; passionate) (+)• Internship (+)• Working at a company (+)• University lectures with interaction• College – independence (+)• Articulation of information – with interactive examples (+)• Meeting people (+)• Learning how to work with people (+)

TABLE VII.

Common responses regarding worst experiences of UK module

Students from East Asia	Western students
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• None/nothing (+)• Speed reading – found difficult (-)• I think the learning experiences were good. I really enjoyed it. (+)• Everything is fine for me (+)• Slide creation if activity not finished in class (-)• My English is weak• The listening activities in another language (-)• The lesson about world language, I couldn't understand (-)• Old fashion powerpoint style¹(-)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Preferred activities where we had to design – did not find the case studies helpful (-)• Working as a team for the assessment (-) - but liked team work in class (+)• The task was good (+) but we found it difficult as a team to come up with an idea that we agreed on sometimes (-)

Note: Some students wrote none/nothing or left blank. The old fashioned powerpoint style relates to the text book support slides put on learning central – as background reading – if students were unable to attend¹

TABLE VIII.

Common responses regarding best experiences of UK module

Students from East Asia	Western students
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The lessons are very interactive and interesting There are many interactive activities for us to brainstorm. So we could receive different ideas about (Hello Kitty) (+)• Group study, group discussion, teamwork and collaboration (+)• Module is interesting. Enjoyed the antelope and Knoppers, Hello Kitty, the Indian furniture and Barbie (+)• Lots of real practice such as Hello Kitty, Barbie and report (+)• Group work - it was a fantastic management task (+)• We had a lot of practical activities which I really appreciate. For examples we do a lot of PPT presentations which I really appreciate (+)• Good ambiance in class; the way we talked about content (+)• Interactive activities/lessons (+)• Case study (+)• Learned plenty of practical skills (+)• Case study and teamwork of the Powerpoint presentation (+)• The way we worked in groups/shared ideas• Teacher (+)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Activities as they emphasized content (+)• Slide creation (+)• Groupwork – it was a fantastic management task (+)• Teacher (+)• The activity tests (+)• Enjoyed the activity we did with the wooden animals as it emphasised theoretical concepts. Allowed us to be more creative (+)• Using theory with practice was helpful to understand. (+)• The group was great to work with (+)• The discussions, creating power points, interactive lessons (+)• The best learning experience for me was when we had the possibilities as a group to make the lesson through Powerpoint (+)

TABLE IX. Role Reversal as Pedagogy: Toolkit for Educators

Lessons learnt by author(s)	Experiences/reflections of planning, teaching and evaluating when using role reversal as pedagogy
Planning Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Curriculum mapping – matching skills to learning outcomes, themes/content and class activities. • Role reversal requires careful organization and management – especially when teaching large groups. • Role reversal pedagogy creates unique teaching resources, but staff need to be aware that session slides need to be prepared as background materials. • Careful thought should be given to the type and timing of assessment: group work needs to be monitored throughout to ensure productive effort. • Whilst formative assessment is valued and effective, curriculum activities, learning outcomes and summative assessment type need to be carefully balanced. • Curriculum information needs to be available on the Virtual Learning Environment with some introductory slides and reading information to cater for students who are unable to attend. One way the authors dealt with this was to recommend a core text and reading materials matched to topics. • When conducting activities, respecting difference is important. For example, not all students want to put their names/numbers on slides. Students in the class are given the choice of anonymity or not on their slides. Some do and some do not. This is perfectly acceptable since the idea is to develop and show knowledge, synthesis and reflection. • Building rapport with students takes time and trust needs to be generated. The technique should be introduced incrementally and the process clearly explained. In this research a combination of partial and full role reversal was done to address this issue.
Teaching Phase	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teaching aids and tasks should seek to capture the different dimensions of learning so as to maximize the opportunity for student engagement between learning outcome, activity and curriculum mapping. • Variation of activity is important for capturing diversity. • Not all students will feel comfortable with presentations, especially if the class is large and in the initial stages. Giving students time and space to evaluate and try new things is important. Educators need to be mindful of this and to be respectful and sensitive to the needs of different people in the group • Activities should be designed to be completed in class. Ensuring work is completed in class is important for avoiding potential conflict within groups • A combination of partial and full role reversal is recommended • Students need to be introduced to role reversal progressively. Lesson one should focus on developing some soft skills. Subsequent lessons should use partial role reversal techniques as a first step since it takes time to build rapport and confidence with students. Full role reversal will roll out around session 5 • Staff need to be prepared to commit to feedback – this is a key motivator for students to produce the excellent work. The learning resources produced need to be checked, corrected and formatted by the teacher, so the students understand what was good or not so good • Whilst lessons are enjoyable staff need to be able to think on their feet, given the freedom that is associated with this teaching method.

Evaluation
Phase

- Whilst role reversal techniques do not alleviate all the problems brought about by L2 transferability, they do offer an opportunity to build a broader approach for capturing learning and student engagement in culturally diverse settings.
 - The technique is fun and engaging
 - The technique enables students to take ownership of their learning
 - Educators need to be adaptable and switch activities accordingly to match different group needs
 - Continuous feedback is important for learning evaluation
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TABLE X

Role reversal as pedagogy: Benefits for teaching

Benefit (general) teaching	Benefits (specific) for IB
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• High level of engagement & motivation• Relationships: Staff-student/student-student.• Class time used to help students master material• Student produce teaching notes, enhancing their learning• Feedback is immediate so students receive the benefits of formative scrutiny as they produce the course material	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding of other cultures is built into the process• Cultural, national and institutional perspectives become explicitly incorporated into course material, using the students own background, knowledge, experience as resources to add value• Implicit bias in base materials may be revealed• Problems with group formation are largely sidestepped. Even if groups are relatively culturally homogenous they become sensitized to culture by exposure to the work of other groups and by the reactions of staff and other groups to their own