

# Internationalisation At Home: The Language Barrier

The University of Western Australia  
Faculty of Arts – School of Social Sciences  
ANTH4101: Interviews and Focus Groups

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October 2016

## Contents

1	Executive Summary.....	3
1.1	Research Question .....	3
1.2	Summary of Findings.....	3
2	Introduction .....	4
2.1	Context and Significance.....	4
2.2	Literature and Terminology .....	4
2.3	Focus Questions.....	5
3	Method .....	5
3.1	Recruitment .....	5
3.2	Participants .....	6
3.3	Focus Group .....	6
3.4	Transcription and Analysis .....	6
4	Research findings .....	7
4.1	Language as a Barrier to Engagement .....	7
4.2	Consequences of the Barrier.....	8
4.3	Permeability and Responsibility.....	9
4.4	Cultural Awareness .....	10
4.5	Strategies for Overcoming the Barrier: Culture and Curiosity.....	11
5	Future Directions .....	12
6	Conclusions .....	13
7	References .....	13
8	Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet.....	15
9	Appendix B: Focus Group Schedule .....	17
10	Appendix C: Focus Group Transcript.....	18

# 1 Executive Summary

## 1.1 Research Question

This report is part of the *Intercultural Learning At Home* project, conducted by Professor Loretta Baldassar and previously funded by the University of Western Australia's Alumni Annual Fund Grant. The purpose of the project is to improve relations between international and local students. The project is informed in part by the interviews and focus groups conducted by Honours and Postgraduate students as part of the Anthropology and Sociology unit *Advanced Qualitative Methods: Interviews and Focus Groups*.

This report looks at the communication barrier between native-English ("local") and English as a Second language (ESL/ "International") students at UWA, drawing on the perspective of three local students with a background in Linguistics who participated in a focus group on 12 September 2016.

## 1.2 Summary of Findings

A number of characteristics of the language barrier between local and international students emerged in the focus group:

- a) The language barrier has negative consequences for international students in terms of lost academic and social opportunities
- b) The language barrier is not impermeable
- c) Responsibility for overcoming the barrier rests on both local and international students
- d) Responsibility is associated with increased cultural awareness and specific knowledge of communicative and cultural difference

- e) It is recommended that all UWA students are provided with an opportunity to learn about cross-cultural differences in communication, in order to overcome the language and communication barrier and improve relations between local and international students.

## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Context and Significance

The University of Western Australia is seeking to attract more international students by “provid[ing] the best possible student experience, including facilities, curricula, and interactions between students”, as part of UWA’s Internationalisation Strategy Goals (UWA 2015). On-campus research suggests that differences in language and communication may constitute a possible barrier to interactions between local and international students (e.g. Rowe 2015). The aim of this project is to contribute to the conversation about the nature of this barrier and how it may be overcome, through the perspective of local students with a background in linguistics and social aspects of communication.

### 2.2 Literature and Terminology

The analysis in this report draws on the idea of multiculturalism as a way of negotiating differences that “is neither merely individualistic nor premised on assimilation” (Modood 2005 as cited in Meer & Modood 2012).

The focus group questions, analysis, and report are framed with a linguistic categorisation of speech in mind (e.g. Fromkin, Blair, & Collins, 1999), meaning that language and communication can be described at different levels:

- I. Accent/phonology (speech sounds and patterns of stress)
- II. Vocabulary/semantics (the words people use and what they mean by them)
- III. Grammar/syntax (the order of words and the grammar associated with them, e.g. past tense)
- IV. Pragmatics (how language is used and styles of communication, e.g. polite, assertive)

### 2.3 Focus Questions

The focus group questions pertained in general to characteristics of communicating with International students, and the factors that make it easier or more difficult to communicate effectively (see Appendix B). Specific questions were designed to probe any potential differences in different aspects of language – for example, if differences in pragmatics would be perceived differently to differences in accent and vocabulary.

## 3 Method

### 3.1 Recruitment

The focus group was advertised through a bulk email to students enrolled in a third year Linguistics unit (see Participant Information Sheet, Appendix A). One student responded, and offered to recruit some of his friends by word of mouth. The focus group was also verbally advertised by the researcher in the third year lecture that was held prior to the scheduled focus group time, to gain participants opportunistically who were available after the lecture. It is likely that the participants were 'self-selected' to be enthusiastic students.

### 3.2 Participants

The focus group consisted of 3 participants, all male, aged 20-35, Australian, native-English speakers, who were enrolled in a third year Linguistics' unit.

### 3.3 Focus Group

The focus group was held in a quiet room on campus. There was a time limit of one hour due to the participants' schedules. Excluding the time taken to explain the details of the focus group and answer the participants' questions, the recorded part of the focus group lasted 35 minutes (see Focus Group Schedule, Appendix B). Given the number of participants and the similarities between them, the session was judged to be sufficient to elicit the range of views held by the group.

### 3.4 Transcription and Analysis

The focus group was transcribed broadly in a "play script" style (Johnstone 2000, p.115) to focus on the content of the focus group, rather than the extra-linguistic information about speech overlap etc. Quotes throughout this report include a number that refers to the line numbers assigned to each utterance in the transcript. Participants are referred to by initial only (G, M, B, and A (moderator)).

The transcript was analysed both independently by the researcher and collectively in the unit seminar following the completion of all focus groups. In this seminar, common themes were collated, and through discussion and consensus were sorted into 'descriptive', 'substantive', and 'theoretical' categories. The seminar discussion gives the findings of this report a broader scope, and also helps control for the researcher's own selective interpretation of the data as someone who has similar characteristics to the focus group participants (late-20s, Australian, native-English speaker, with a degree in Linguistics).

Where appropriate, the analysis also draws on the data from another project researcher, Stephanie Murray, who conducted a similar focus group with local members of a student club.

## 4 Research findings

### 4.1 Language as a Barrier to Engagement

This focus group recognised differences in language and communication between local and international students as a barrier to engagement. These differences were perceived non-uniformly between Asian and non-Asian international students; namely, international students from non-Asian backgrounds were only spoken of as having minor differences in grammar, whereas international students from Asian countries were perceived as more often having differences in pragmatics. However, differences in grammar (239,241), accent (19), and pragmatics (148-151), were all perceived as potentially contributing to a language barrier regardless of background.

(239) B: [...] syntax stands out as the most immediately stigmatised, if you have a different syntax to vernacular English

(240) A: mhm

(241) B: then that's the thing that will really set you apart

(19) G: There's a tendency for people to say "this person *doesn't* speak English", if they just have a strong accent sometimes

(148) B: I imagine that would be really intimidating coming from, from say that background into a culture where people just speak straight away

(149) G: yeah

(150) B: and

(151) M: and in that classroom dynamic you can see how those people just get drowned out, and yeah the [unclear] suffer in a way, their education suffers

#### 4.2 Consequences of the Barrier

The group further characterised the communication barrier for international students in terms of difficulties accessing the curriculum and loss of opportunities for making friends.

With respect to accessing the curriculum, this was attributed to a lack of confidence in 'speaking up' in classes that require active participation –as a result of lower English-language proficiency but also as a result of cultural differences in communication and politeness. The loss of opportunities for making friends was primarily attributed to pragmatic differences (114-118).

(114) G: there is often a shyness in, in a lack of confidence in, in uh, in, in English, can make someone very shy and then reluctant to

(115) A: mhm

(116) G: speak out, and then they don't get as many chances to meet people, which means less conversations, and

(117) A: yeah

(118) G: a sort of vicious cycle in a way

While the group discussed all aspects of language (accent, grammar, pragmatics) as potentially contributing to the communication barrier (see section 4.2), these data suggest that the common denominator in both academic and social situations is pragmatic/cultural

difference – one wonders if differences in accent and grammar can be more easily ‘overlooked’ if a student has the same pragmatics as the local cohort.

### 4.3 Permeability and Responsibility

The real question emerging from the group discussion was whether the language barrier is permeable; and if so, whose responsibility is it to overcome it. The participants provided two perspectives on this question. In section 4.4 we will see that these perspectives relate to how the individual thinks about culture.

In the first perspective, the communication barrier between local and international speakers is largely impermeable, and met with some resistance, particularly when it comes to group assignments:

(19) G: do you know I hear from, I’ve heard from one or two people, “I was in a group and it was so frustrating ‘cause some of the people in the group *didn’t* speak English” [...]

This frustration was echoed by Murray’s focus group participants, who commented that

“you almost hope that you don’t get an international student [...], because sometimes um their English proficiency levels aren’t as high as... (pause) aren’t as level with everyone”

“like, it sounds awful to say that, but yeah, it’s a lot of extra work”

This perspective was expressed with a fair amount of guilt; the students had some awareness that this view of international students was ‘awful’, but conceived of the time and effort in overcoming the barrier to do group work with international students, or accommodate international students into their club, as too great.

The second perspective, espoused by this focus group, is that the language barrier is more permeable; and because of its permeable nature, local and international students both have a responsibility for overcoming it:

(53) G: in Australia today, it's something that you have to be a little, you have to give a little leeway, and, and, I find just paying attention and really concentrating is often enough to get through even the thickest accent

Overcoming the barrier wasn't necessarily expressed as being easy – both perspectives recognise that it involves work (e.g. 'really concentrating' (53)) – but in the second perspective this work is *possible*; the group talked about assuming this responsibility as a function of how they perceived the communicative and cultural differences (section 4.4).

#### 4.4 Cultural Awareness

The participants explicitly linked their perception of the language barrier as permeable and their acceptance of responsibility for overcoming it, to their knowledge and conceptualisation of cultural difference.

(76) B: I think the um, the linguistics background has made me very aware that the onus is equally on me to understand them, than it is on them to communicate to me

In this conceptualisation, cultures are 'different' and 'relative' rather than 'deficient' or 'weird'.

(266) G: I think it's recognising that your own, recognising first that you have a culture of communication

(267) A: mm

(268) G: and that it's not the default one and every one, every other one is an aberration

(269) M,B: [agreement]

(270) A: yeah

(271) G: it's to recognise that yes, *you* use a specific method which is, a particular one to your culture, um and the other one isn't deficient or weird, it's just that they're two different ones [...]

(327) M: it is a big mindshift knowing that it's all relative

The group's comments seem to reflect a multicultural understanding of the world (Meer & Modood 2012). The participants don't position themselves as 'global citizens' in the sense of owning a single cosmopolitan identity – they still conceive of 'us' and 'them'. Rather the group view everyone as having their own unique culture and identity, in particular regarding how people use language differently in different cultures (Meyerhoff 2006).

#### 4.5 Strategies for Overcoming the Barrier: Culture and Curiosity

The participants provided some insights into how the communication barrier can be overcome, by helping people to shift their perceptions of culture. This starts with acknowledging that not everyone conceptualises culture in the same way; for many, cultures can be 'normal' or 'abnormal' (273), and it is difficult to even become aware that people might have different cultures of communication (320-322).

(273) G: but it's it's difficult. My mum will never, see things that way, always be no no we just do things *normal* in Australia

(320) B/M?: it [unclear] a strange kind of, introspection, just having to look at your own language

(321) A: yeah

(322) B: and methods of communication, it's probably something that it's harder to arrive at naturally, like you don't

To that end, the group recommended taking a more formal, educational approach to thinking about linguistic and cultural difference. Two of the group had taken the Linguistics broadening unit *LING1901: Language learning and the multilingual world*, which teaches cross-cultural differences in communication, why these differences are important, and how to negotiate these differences in a variety of situations to facilitate better cross-cultural communication. With that knowledge in mind, the participants demonstrated a tendency to get curious about the communication barrier, by questioning the assumptions of both of others (19) and of themselves (105):

(19) G: [...] and I say to them, were they *really* a UWA student that sat exams and passed tests and got through that didn't speak English, is it just that you couldn't understand some things they said, or they *occasionally* couldn't understand you

(105) G: in a lot of Asian cultures you'll ask a question and because they want to give the indication they're thinking clearly about it, and they want to give you the right answer, they'll pause and then you think why are they not answering, have they not heard me, and I, I've experienced that myself with my friend [--], and then [...] I said to him, when you pause after I've asked you something and then answer me are you sort of indicating that you're really taking the question seriously? And he said well of course [105]

## 5 Future Directions

The participants of the focus group represent a particular subset of the local student community at UWA who are already interested in language and communication. It would be valuable to do a couple of comparison studies:

- a) with similarly aged students who have not taken the LING 1901 broadening unit and do not have any background in linguistics or
- b) with students who had completed the LING1901 unit but without a general background in linguistics

This could help determine the perspective of the general student population, and would help to isolate the effect of the LING1901 unit.

## 6 Conclusions

This focus group looked at the communication barrier between local and international students from the perspective of three local students who had an interest in linguistics and communication. The results of this group showed that the communication barrier was recognised by many local students regardless of academic background; however the participants of this group used their background to inform their conceptualisation of culture such that differences in culture and communication were just that – differences. While they still conceived of overcoming the barrier as hard work, they accepted more responsibility for doing so, and their tendency was to become curious rather than frustrated.

## 7 References

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## 8 Appendix A: Participant Information Sheet

### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

**Project title:** *Mix-ups and Misunderstandings: Perceptions of Communication Breakdown between Local and International Students*

**Project reference number:** RA/4/1/6850

I am Associate Professor Loretta Baldassar from the Discipline of Anthropology and Sociology at The University of Western Australia. I wish to invite you to participate in my research project, entitled *Intercultural learning at home*. This project aims to bring local and international students together through the development of formal and informal curricula. One way that this will be achieved is through the Anthropology and Sociology unit *Advanced Qualitative Methods: Interviews and Focus Groups*, in which social science students will conduct interviews, focus groups, and other qualitative research focused on international and domestic student relations. I wish to invite you to participate in the research of Amy Budrikis.

For many of these students, this will be their first experience of conducting an interview or focus group. This project is designed to provide them with valuable experience in learning the craft of qualitative research. We thank you in advance for your participation.

Students from different cultural and language backgrounds can have different expectations about what is normal and what is not normal in a conversation. These differences can lead to “communication breakdowns”, where two people have not understood each other. Sometimes this can lead to funny mix-ups; at other times, it can lead to more serious misunderstandings, and inhibit people from making friends.

This project seeks to understand what makes communication work, and why communication sometimes breaks down between native English and English as a Second Language (ESL) speakers, from the point of view of local students. By participating in this project you will be helping us understand how to make the experience of studying abroad more successful for international students. Participation in this project involves attending a focus group with 6-8 other students. The group will take about an hour, and the date and time will be confirmed to accommodate as many participants as possible, during the week of September 12<sup>th</sup> – 16th. Participants must speak English as a first language.

The focus group will be audio-recorded as a requirement of the researcher. If you do not wish to be recorded, you are advised not to participate.

All information provided by you will be treated as confidential and stored securely in either a locked cabinet or password protected computer. All notes, surveys, and recordings resulting from data collection will be used for private research purposes by the student, in consultation with myself. They will be destroyed following the completion and assessment of the student’s project. No names or other information identifying you, or anyone you talk about, will be divulged publicly, and the data provided will be presented under a pseudonym where it appears in conference presentations and

publications. Moreover, any information capable of identifying you will be permanently removed from the student's records and destroyed immediately following the data collection period.

Your participation is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from the research at any time without prejudice in any way. You need give no reason or justification for withdrawing. In such cases, records of you, the participant, will be destroyed unless you agree that the researcher may retain and use the information obtained prior to your withdrawal. If you have any questions about this research, please do not hesitate to contact either myself or Amy Budrikis by email or telephone.

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## 9 Appendix B: Focus Group Schedule

**I'm interested in what makes communication successful between local students and ESL students, and also what happens when communication breaks down. So I'll ask some very general questions, and look at specific questions if we need to**

*Background information:*

1. Can you tell me about what you're studying, and what languages you speak?

*Generally:*

2. What are some of the characteristics of communication with ESL students?
3. What are some of the factors that make it easy to communicate with ESL students?
  - What sort of things do you talk about?
  - Why do you think communication is successful then?
4. What are some of the ways miscommunication can happen between local and ESL students?
  - Can you tell me about a time where you felt that there was some miscommunication between you and an ESL student?
  - Can you tell me about a time where you felt that an ESL student misunderstood you?
  - Can you tell me about a time where you felt that you misunderstood an ESL student?
    - was it an issue of linguistics? Accent? Vocabulary?
    - Was it an issue of pragmatics? differences in politeness?
    - Was it an issue of culture? Not sharing a common background of (cultural) knowledge? Other cultural differences?
5. How do you think communication with ESL students might be improved?

*If conversation is limited:*

- There are no 'right' or 'wrong' answers. What I want to acknowledge is that not every ESL student comes to UWA speaking the same variety of English, and some students have a higher English proficiency than others, so I don't want you to feel that it might be 'politically incorrect' to talk about these things – even within Australia or within this university, native English speakers have different accents and speak differently from each other, and it's okay to talk about difference.

*Conclusion*

- Those are all the questions I have – does anyone want to add anything else, or have any other questions for me?
- Thank you all for coming, that was a really great discussion, and I hope you found it as interesting as I did.
- Just to re-iterate, I'll be anonymising the transcript, and let me know if you'd like to see a copy of that; and you can call or email me at any time to discuss anything about this focus group

## 10 Appendix C: Focus Group Transcript

In group: B, M, G, A (moderator)

1	A: Okay so this is an interview, a focus group I'm doing for anthropology, it's the 12 <sup>th</sup> of September, it's about two o'clock in the afternoon, and I've got these three lovely guys here to talk about perceptions of communication with ESL students. So. <b>Just for some background information first, if you could tell me what you're studying, I know you're all in linguistics, but maybe what degree you're doing, and also what languages you speak, just something about yourself</b>
2	G: Well, again, I'm G-- and I'm studying linguistics, as a major alongside media and communication studies. I've studied a lot of different languages, never to a very conversational degree, more out of just interest, if I were to say languages that I can hold a conversation in, uh, it would be French and Norweigan
3	A: Cool
4	M: Yeah, I'm M--, majoring in Linguistics as part of an Arts degree. I've done sort of intro level French, German, Italian, and going a bit further with Latin, so, not that that's any use in conversation
5	A: good conversational language, Latin, everything rhymes in it, you know. Yup.
6	B: And I'm B--, doing Linguistics and Philosophy, have done a year in Mandarin and French, but I'm not really quite at conversational level
7	A: Cool. So I guess we all have experience of learning another language and trying to speak another language, except maybe Latin. Do you get to practice speaking Latin
8	M: yeah, but it's a one-way conversation
9	A: Yeah, cool
10	All: [laugh]
11	A: Okay, so – yeah, I mean we all know obviously ESL, English as a second language – students, could be – go with that what you want. <b>Can you tell me about, what are some of the characteristics you think of communicating with ESL students?</b>
12	[pause +++ (7 seconds)]
13	M: (do you) have thoughts about that
14	G: In, in my experience at least at UWA, um, the overwhelming majority of ESL students have been near native, um
15	M: [agreement]
16	G: I'm struggling to think of anyone who even had a particularly strong accent, um [++] so I think, yeah I think the level of English that is used by ESL students I encounter is always of a, of a near native level
17	M: yeah
18	B: likewise, I'm not even sure how many ESL students I've met, or if they're proficiency has been that good that I just can't tell
19	G: do you know I hear from, I've heard from one or two people, "I was in a group and it was so frustrating 'cause some of the people in the group <i>didn't</i> speak English", and I say to them, were they <i>really</i> a UWA student that sat exams and passed tests and got through that didn't speak English, is it just that you couldn't understand some things they said, or they <i>occasionally</i> couldn't understand you. There's a tendency for people to say "this person <i>doesn't</i> speak English", if they just have a strong accent sometimes. Um, but I've never met anyone that I've felt even struggled with English
20	A: mhm
21	G: in classes

22	M: I must admit, I've had some observations, like in intro French and German type units where um, you know, just case examples, a few Asian students, their mastery of English hasn't been that great, and, yeah they, they've definitely struggled trying to tackle a second language as well, so, whether that's an issue for, that's relevant here as well, I don't know
23	A: yeah, <b>do you think that there are particular things that they might have struggled with moreso</b>
24	M: uum, it's just the general, the general English, I don't know maybe it's more of a cultural thing as well 'cause they're not confident with their English, they've certainly struggled in a second language context
25	A: mm
26	M: trying to then participate in a very active subject, so
27	A: yeah, quite a bit of confidence to speak up in
28	M: yeah, so it's hard to disentangle those two factors, but yeah that's just what I've observed
29	G: It's interesting that you bring up, um, [...] uh learning that third language through the medium of a [second language
30	M: yeah
31	G: a good friend of mine is a native Mandarin speaker, and we were, we learnt French together and I once said to him, "Which language do you learn French in?"
32	A: mm
33	G: and he said that he always translates into English because he's learning through English, but he will, when he goes to the dictionary, he'll translate to Mandarin because he gets the semantics so much clearer that way but he learns the grammar in English and he thinks about French in English, which I thought was interesting
34	A: so he speaks Mandarin
35	G: that's his native language
36	A: and second language English
37	G: yup
38	A: and then when he's learning French –
39	G: he <i>learns</i> in English
40	A: the grammar through English but the semantics through –
41	G: yup
42	A: oh that's cool!
43	G: to get that subtlety, um, although his English is immaculate, he still prefers to learn that way, but you know
44	A: yeah. It's good if you've got those big – global languages where you're more likely to have Chine – or Mandarin French
45	G: yeah
46	A: good dictionaries, yeah. Yeah. You were saying about accent before
47	M: mhm
48	A: thaaat, [...] you weren't, okay because this is interesting as well, because it, and especially as you guys are all linguists so <b>I think you have potentially three different perceptions which [unclear] – so your own, and then your linguist perceptions, and then your perceptions of what other people think, which is really interesting what you're saying about, um, [...] where someone might perceive [...] a stronger accent</b>
49	G: Mm
50	A: as being
51	G: Yeah, I, I do, I think when I [laughs] sort of my connections with my parents who are, you know, everyone's parents are frustrating, my, my mum is frustrating in her

	approach to people speaking English who don't speak, who speak it as a, as a, as a second language. My mum is - I think a lot – there's a number of people who automatically, who are ready to judge someone as not being, speaking well
52	A: mm
53	G: in a second language. My mum will say, that person doesn't speak English, I'll say, no they clear, they had a <i>conversation</i> with us in English, their accent is strong but it doesn't mean they can't speak English. She'll say, oh, I couldn't understand them, yes well, that's a difficult thing to [cu?]- that's a hurdle to overcome, um, but, in Australia today, it's something that you have to be a little, you have to give a little leeway, and, and, I find just paying attention and really concentrating is often enough to get through even the thickest accent
54	A: yeah
55	G: um, but some people don't want to give that time to, um – I'm mainly having a go at my mum
56	[laugh; unclear]
57	A: well, is your mum studying at UWA?
58	G: no
59	A: then, well, okay
60	G: no she's not
61	A: but I'm sure you know that could [unclear] here as well. <b>I mean do you feel like as, either as linguistics students or as students of languages, that that changes your perception of how other people speak English?</b>
62	M: I'm, I'm usually very impressed with – [particularly?] like people from European backgrounds and south American, it's often only the tiniest little thing you'll hear after hours of speaking with them, that goes no, you're not native because of this slight
63	A: mm
64	M: it's often like with relative clause stuff they'll say "the person <i>that</i> did that" [rather than] "the person <i>who</i> "
65	A: mm
66	M: stuff like that
67	G: the one error in English sentence structure that I hear all the time, even from people who have been living in an English-speaking country for decades is when there's an embedded clause they'll invert the subject and do, or an auxillary or something, as you would a question, so they'll say "do you know where is he"
68	A: mhm
69	G: and I hear that from <i>very very</i> advanced speakers of English
70	M: yeah
71	G: and that's almost like a shibboleth of second, English as a second language
72	M: yeah, but yeah as I said it's very subtle
73	G: mm, yeah, it's tiny
74	M: and it comes out after hours of speaking
75	A: ...yeah
76	B: I think the um, the linguistics background has made me very aware that the onus is equally on me to understand them, than it is on them to communicate to me
77	A: yeah
78	B: and then that sort of gets rid of all - pressure and prejudice that you might –
79	A: yup
80	B: put on someone
81	A: like a two-way conversation, yeah
82	B: yeah

83	A: yeah. Yeah. You were saying I think before M-- about umm ... I don't know if you mentioned umm, Asian students in particular
84	M: yeah
85	A: and I
86	M: I just, again, in case they're not, I'm not stereotyping or anything like that, literally what I've observed
87	A: yup
88	M: is, yeah, first year language classes trying out a general elective, I suppose
89	A: and I should probably say, you know I mean, um, ... do feel free to say whatever you want because I think um, um, there are dif – potentially differences in ... in what requirements are needed by what universities to, for English, to come to Australia, so no, um ... not going to read anything into it if you say oh some people have <i>different</i> levels of proficiency than others, like don't feel like that's a
90	M: yeah
91	A: problematic thing to say, if, you know, that's your observation then that's totally understandable, yup, yup
92	G: there are definitely um, ... countries that have education systems and cultures that embrace other languages much more, you look at Scandinavian countries where every single person you will meet speaks English like a near native, um, because from the very first day of primary school they're taught English and all, all the, American television is subtitled, it's never dubbed, so people just grow up with English around them. I've often felt that in Norway if tomorrow they just said we're not going to speak Norwegian anymore, very little would change.
93	A: yeah
94	M: mhm
95	G: They have advertisements made in Norway for Norwegians in English, which is just – it's so bizarre that they'd say, oh it was probably just expressed well in English and everyone speaks it so why not, whereas, like um, my friend Blair for instance grew up in China and China is now, is craving English tuition, but he said he didn't really properly learn it, it was introduced a bit later in his, in his time there so um, yeah, the, an education system that makes English language a priority I think was, is the major element there
96	M: do you think it's also a sound system thing, if the native sound system is very different
97	G: yeah
98	M: to English, they'll always
99	G: I mean, for example Norwegian phonology and English phonology is relatively close compared to say Thai or Mandarin and, and the two, um, and also they're Indo-European, but then again the Finns speak amazing English
100	M: yeah
101	G: and um, they have, uh, because their English education system is so, pushes English so much. Yeah, and then India, you know India has got, has such a large
102	A: mm
103	G: English speaking population, um, but their language is quite different
104	M: mm
105	G: languages, yeah
106	A: yeah. <b>So, do you think, um, what are some of the factors then that make it easier to communicate with ESL students</b>
107	[pause]
108	M: I think it's a co-operative attitude, I don't think any of us are coming at it from a

	judging point of view
109	A: no yeah,
110	M: [laugh] we're not going to not talk to them because it's too difficult, we'd always try and help, and yeah, um,
111	A: for you and for others as well
112	M: yeah
113	A: you're probably a bit more, more in classes than I am at the moment obviously and can, yeah
114	G: I guess I think, um, you touched on it before, there is often a shyness in, in a lack of confidence in, in uh, in, in English, can make someone very shy and then reluctant to
115	A: mhm
116	G: speak out, and then they don't get as many chances to meet people, which means less conversations, and
117	A: yeah
118	G: a sort of vicious cycle in a way
119	<b>A: how do you think that compares with, for example, local or um, a English as a native language student who is also shy, but doesn't have that language – barrier, potentially</b>
120	B: I think it's just an extra barrier to overcome, just because you need to be that much more confident to commit to the words you're about to say
121	A: yeah
122	B: and, and trust that your meaning is going to get across the way you intend it
123	A: yeah. And do you think then, there's the same perception of, - from other local students – about someone who's shy because they're just a shy person or someone who's shy because of their English, potentially
124	[pause]
125	B: I feel like shyness plus language barrier
126	A: yeah
127	B: just draws more attention to itself
128	G: yeah, I'd, I'd probably agree, it's a very difficult question but, I think that's
129	A: yeah. It's not on my, it's not – just, I was thinking about [unclear]
130	M: and also maybe culturally ingrained shyness, maybe, people may exhibit, I don't
131	[unclear – don't put lolly packet next to microphone!!]
132	A: mm, so more so from, coming from a different cultural background, rather than
133	M: yeah, differences with males and females and that sort of thing
134	A: ... yeah
135	G: different concepts of how a teacher should be addressed
136	A: mm
137	G: different ideas of when speaking to someone in authority, how long you should take before you begin your response to something
138	M: yeah
139	G: causes so many cross cultural
140	M: yeah, so the differential attitude to politeness where, they'll, someone in authority they'll, they won't ever initiate talking to someone
141	G: yeah, I – it's a, seems as though, a lot of Anglophone cultures if you're asked a question, you start answering immediately even if you don't know the answer
142	[laughter]
143	M: yeah
144	A: yeah
145	G: and so you'll start of with something like "Well that's an interesting question" you

	have to fill that gap, whereas in a lot of Asian cultures you'll ask a question and because they want to give the indication they're thinking clearly about it, and they want to give you the right answer, they'll pause and then you think why are they not answering, have they not heard me, and I, I've experienced that myself with my friend Blair, and then I did LING 1901, Celeste's core about cross cultural communication and I said to him, when you pause after I've asked you something and then answer me are you sort of indicating that you're really taking the question seriously? And he said well of course,
146	A: [laugh]
147	G: well of course, that's obvious, that's just how you answer questions
148	B: I imagine that would be really intimidating coming from, from say that background into a culture where people just speak straight away
149	G: yeah
150	B: and
151	M: and in that classroom dynamic you can see how those people just get drowned out,
152	?: mhm
153	M: and yeah the [unclear] suffer in a way, their education suffers,
154	?: mhm
155	M: lack of opportunities to participate
156	A: ... I think that's so interesting because I think of people who, almost be – who are English as a first language and almost because they don't speak as much, when they do speak everyone then listens to them and it's like a, oh they must have something very important to say if they're going to talk now, so, yeah
157	G: something I was thinking about just earlier today, and I did this as a kid, um, it's, if you, uh, I know a number of people who do this, if they're shy and they're not sure about an answer or they just don't really want to have to talk they speak really quietly, which makes no, and then no one can understand them so they have to repeat it
158	A: mhm
159	G: and, if you just say it nice and clearly the first time then you don't need to talk anymore and you can
160	A: yeah
161	G: go but I would, I would, I would mumble because I, I didn't want, because I didn't want to have to talk, but then they'd have to keep saying you're going to have to repeat that
162	A: [laugh]
163	G: so I'd have to talk for longer, and the logic never really, wasn't clear to me as a kid but I see it now and think, just say it and move on, but it's not that easy, it just isn't, but
164	A: mm, I am definitely a mumblor and then I have to repeat myself and [laugh] yup, yeah. <b>Have you all taken Celeste's course?</b>
165	M: which one
166	A: ooh, which one were you
167	G: this was LING 1901, it's not a core unit, it's um, a broadening unit, of cross cultural communication, and that was, I think - a, a lot of what I'm saying today is probably due to my indoctrination from that
168	M: out of the textbook
169	A: and this is a very interesting group to
170	M: yeah
171	[laugh]
172	G: but it really was a profoundly eye opening unit, and it's a unit where I think there was only one other person who, uh, was doing linguistics
173	?: really

174	G: everyone else was, were, was, there was engineering students and medicine
175	A: mm
176	G: and all kinds of things, um, and so, and people from all over the world as well, lots of international students, and it's just about the different ways that we communicate, how different socialisation
177	?: mm
178	G: and, and the problems that can arise, like
179	A: mhm
180	G: like increased incarceration rates, when you have two cultures that defer to authority dramatically differently and one is in authority and the other isn't, um, yeah powerful unit, I really enjoyed it
181	M: and it's, uh, like the sociolinguistics [stuff? stance?] so I think it's just a continuation of
182	G: yeah, yeah there's a lot of cross over
183	M: yeah, but those politeness strategy things were really, um, informative as well, like even Aussie politeness strategies versus other English speaking, um, we're very forward in Australia and even coming from an English background being more reserved and everything, that's really valued it's, yeah, not valued here as much [laugh]
184	A: yeah, that's interesting yeah because it's not just, uh, English as a second language but English from Canada or the US or
185	M: different parts of the world
186	A: <b>do you have particular experiences of speaking to someone, who speaks English but from a different English speaking culture that you can think of</b>
187	M: yeah – American relatives and everything, so
188	A: yeah
189	M: yeah, so they um – yeah, I don't know what
190	A: well I mean you know what sort of things kind of stick out in your mind as oh that was like maybe a bit odd or
191	M: yeah again though they've come from different like British backgrounds but they've generally become louder over the years, living in the US
192	A: yup
193	M: I think that's where they have to, the megaphone talk sort of
194	A: mhm
195	M: interactions but yeah
196	A: yeah
197	M: stuff like that I suppose
198	A: yeah
199	A: in that um, in LING 1901 was that a mix of students in terms of their English background
200	G: yeah, yeah, it was people from all over the world, and like it was a very broad group and in the, in the main assignment uh, you are specifically placed in groups with people from different backgrounds, uh in my group we had three people who'd grown up in Perth, a guy from Singapore and a guy from India um, and we had to make a short film on uh, on a cross cultural miscommunication, uh yeah which was good fun
201	A: mm
202	G: so we did one about a Singaporean lecturer and an Australian student and the, one thing that causes so many problems in a lot of, um, Anglophone or Western I guess and Asian, um, communication is, um, in a lot of Asian cultures if you, if someone is talk, telling you something, offering you something, and looking for your opinion and you sit, you can sit there going yup, or okay, yup, great, yup, absolutely, yup, yup. You're not

	saying you agree, you're saying you, you're listening
203	A: mhm
204	G: and then people go away thinking they took it, they liked it all and then they get an email saying they're not doing this
205	A: yeah
206	G: and it was based on that so she asked for an extension and he's going yup sure, oh abs, I completely understand, absolutely, and then he says no
207	?: yeah
208	G: and she's really annoyed and he thinks she overreacted and, yeah
209	M: that's a good one, that happens a lot
210	G: yeah
211	A: ... generally or, like
212	M: I think even between, even between native English speakers I think people can get the wrong idea about people being too agreeable in certain contexts and then after the fact they, they've gone away and thought about it, yeah
213	A: mm
214	G: this isn't with a student um, um, but when I worked in the automotive industry, there was a company that was [xxx] that is, is a Korean company and some of the Australian guys working there who were working daily with Koreans would say, they really frustrate me because they, you arrange to do something and then they don't do it and they say it was never arranged, and at the time I thought that's really weird, I wonder what's going on there, and it makes more sense, looking into the um
215	A: mm
216	G: sort of um Pan-Asian way of acknowledging that you're listening
217	A: mhm
218	G: which we would use the same techniques to indicate acceptance
219	A: yeah ...
220	<b>A: did you get a sense from either the LING 1901 or the sociolinguistics – of what other people learnt from those units, other changes in perception from them, like oh I never thought about it that way before kind of thing</b>
221	...
222	M: I'm not sure what the students got out of it
223	[unclear]
224	B: the biggest thing I took away from it was just – the way in which prestige is mapped onto language, and just being able to see that from sort of a bird's eye perspective, you can really sort of, uh, step back and, be really aware of how you are – applying your own judgements of where social value lies
225	G: that's important when we're talking about um, different groups of native English speakers, it is harder for someone, say from, like - Bristol or Liverpool to be taken seriously in an academic context, than someone from London
226	A: yeah
227	G: um, someone from Alabama will find it harder to be taken seriously, um, amongst native English speakers
228	A: yeah, or like how you want your pilot to be Scottish?
229	G: oh okay
230	A: that's very reassuring
231	[unclear – multiple voices]
232	A: or a real kind of like Aussie accent, whereas like if it's a female voice you here, it's like oh God we're going to die, so it's yeah, so I guess this is my specific question though because what I've heard, and I haven't done these units specifically but this idea that

	different parts of language will be perceived differently in terms of ease of communication or otherwise, so, an accent can be cute or funny, like – ooh – I hope this is recording everything, it's telling me it's recording and then it just told me there's no sound – we're good, okay, <b>so accents might be perceived differently to, um, differences in grammar or differences in pragmatics or [unclear] these cultural differences, what do you think about that idea?</b>
233	...
234	M: are we talking about here sort of social judgements
235	A: yeah
236	M: of people, perhaps, yeah, social demographics. Um, could it be, I don't know in Australia there's that sort of covert prestige sort of thing where bogan speak has a lot of cred
237	A: mm
238	M: amongst, in the in group, you know, yeah
239	B: the different um, uh systems you mentioned are I think, syntax stands out as the most immediately stigmatised, if if you have a different syntax to vernacular English
240	A: mhm
241	B: then that's the thing that will really set you apart
242	A: yeah. We were talking about small differences, what to me are small differences in syntax before like the embedded clauses and that kind of thing but is there a point there where it becomes, oh no that's just, too wrong or that, that syntax is just too different
243	...
244	A: I haven't really thought about this myself, so yeah
245	...
246	M: I don't know, I suppose if you're talking about coming across a non-native speaker
247	A: mm
248	M: with yeah, with severely – non-standard [unclear – word order?] stuff like that, that would obviously be a marker for, that their English isn't good
249	G: thinking back to when a French friend of mine came to Australia having never really learnt English, I was, I had just started learning French, he had just started learning English and we decided to meet up once a week and teach each other, and it was very difficult to begin with but, um, I look at some of the constructions he would form which are thoroughly logical and he was clearly analysing the language and using it in a, in a, in a way somewhat similar to as a child does while [enquiring??], and the one example which was really jarring, he said 'so I will can use this'
250	A: mhm
251	G: which is an utterly logical way to put it
252	A: mhm
253	G: future tense of can, [perfect?] but I had no idea what he meant, and once I realised it was the future tense of can, it, it's clear but it, I couldn't understand what he was saying, um, in French of course you, can is not any kind of auxiliary it's just an ordinary verb um, but yeah I just simply couldn't penetrate what he was going for
254	A: mhm
255	G: yeah
256	A: yeah that's an interesting example ... I feel like I've heard that someone before, but – yeah. So. My last question and we have talked about this in part is, um, <b>how you think either communication with ESL students or perception of communication with ESL students could be improved</b> – cause you guys are all like, you know, sociolinguists, you've got that kind of thinking about it – that maybe other local students don't necessarily have – or maybe they do

257	G: I do think LING1901
258	[laugh]
259	G: everyone should do it, just out of personal interest
260	A: yeah
261	G: it's so such a, it o[pens], it just clarifies so much of the world, um
262	A: mm
263	M: yeah like an educational stance
264	G: yeah
265	M: to improve everyone's knowledge and, ability to be tolerant
266	G: I think it's recognising that your own, recognising first that you have a culture of communication
267	A: mm
268	G: and that it's not the default one and every one, every other one is an aberration
269	[agreement]
270	A: yeah
271	G: it's to recognise that yes, <i>you</i> use a specific method which is, a particular one to your culture, um and the other one isn't deficient or weird, it's just that they're two different ones, it's it's hard to get that across like linguists understand it
272	A: mm
273	G: but it's it's difficult. My mum will never, see things that way, always be no no we just do things <i>normal</i> in Australia
274	[agreement]
275	G: and in other cultures they just do them, weird, it's not us that needs to change
276	A: yeah. I wonder <b>how that works in a classroom where most students potentially have, similar kinds of you know, culture of communication, I mean that always interests me, you know, and then you have one or two or three who are quite different, how you manage that ... I don't know maybe, does it - matter for – how you make friends, or, does it matter for, what you get out of class like academically if you have quite a different culture of communication or ...</b>
277	M: I think it can create sort of real disparity in how classes get taught, what students get out of it if, again it's probably like a – dominating type of student or group of students versus those who aren't, it depends on the subject and everything, how interactive the unit needs to be, so, if it's all just rote learning then you can just, be silent, not even turn up to classes
278	A: mhm
279	M: and even have to engage in that group dynamic so, mm
280	...
281	A: <b>is it the same in philosophy?</b> I've never taken a philosophy unit, I don't know how their kind of structured
282	B: um, they're very, conversation based, a lot like this
283	A: yeah
284	B: we just sit around a table and
285	A: yeah
286	B: discuss, um – I can't actually think of too many ESL students that I've had
287	A: mhm
288	B: in my classes, um, and everyone, just about everyone has been very verbal
289	A: mhm
290	B: and willing to
291	A: yeah
292	B: speak so ...

293	A: yeah. Do you think that's – why do you think that is that there aren't so many ESL students in
294	...
295	B: perhaps because, um – you're talking about philosophical issues, they tend to be more nuanced so you perhaps need a greater command of the language, maybe um ...
296	A: yeah
297	B: that could be, could be it
298	G: it could also be um, that, um probably, yeah a a proportion of ESL students are international students who are here because they, for career oriented things and they're thinking philosophy I can do on my own time
299	A: yeah
300	G: I'm here to do an engineering
301	M: or never
302	[laugh]
303	G: yeah
304	M: sorry
305	[laugh]
306	A: yeah
307	M: yeah definitely like yeah, practical outcomes based sort of education
308	G: yeah, I mean the amount of money that you have to pay to be an international student
309	A: mm
310	G: you want to really get the most out of it and
311	A: no offense
312	B: non taken
313	A: yeah
314	M: yeah we're all purists here, education for education's sake
315	A: yeah I'm all for that. Okay yeah um, I should do 1901 sometime because it sounds
316	G: it's great fun
317	A: really good yeah
318	G: it's really cool
319	A: and that's cool to hear you talking about it, like we should totally like promote it more, everyone should do it, first year unit when they come to uni, okay
320	B/M?: it [sounds like?] a strange kind of, introspection, just having to look at your own language
321	A: yeah
322	B: and methods of communication, it's probably something that it's harder to arrive at naturally, like you don't
323	A: mm
324	B: if you're not in an educational setting
325	A: like I don't have an accent what are you talking about
326	[unclear]
327	M: it is a big mindshift knowing that it's all relative
328	G: yeah
329	M: that core notion of relativity
330	G: there was, um, I'm a bit of an avid reader of cracked dot com and there was an article a few weeks ago which was five things that you assume everyone has that, that we just don't
331	A: mm
332	G: the first one is birthdays

333	A: oh, yeah
334	G: I was talking to a friend who's Somalian and said, she asked me when my birthday was and I said to her, when's yours, and she said I have no idea
335	A: yeah
336	G: 'cause it's just not a, it's not a thing in Somalia, the day someone dies is celebrated but she said she just simply doesn't have one, generally um, it's, if they come to another country the day they first arrive becomes their birthday
337	A: mm
338	G: so hers is the day her family came here
339	A: mm
340	G: but for any other reason they'll just say like November, uh January first, the day they were born
341	A: mm, mhm
342	G: because it just doesn't matter to Somalians
343	M: do they have a year of birth though?
344	G: yeah they have, they have their own calendar and everything but they, the birthday is, they don't see the need
345	M: but they year of birth do they know
346	G: oh they, they know how old they are
347	M: yeah
348	G: um but they just sort of this year I'm thirty two
349	M: I see
350	A: yup, yeah that's, that's really interesting because I um, I do um like volunteer helping asylum seekers to fill in their visa applications and it'll be like, what's your address with your street number and your street name and your postcode and they're like no, like it is this village and it is this shop, like you can not fit it so yeah, assuming what people have. So you guys have been really interesting to talk to – I think we've run out of time, do you have anything else you want to, add or any questions
351	G: no, uh, it was pretty interesting conversation I think
352	M: yeah
353	A: cool, well okay um, so thank you for coming, and I will transcribe that, and actually if I get your emails I can send you, and you can be like oh that was fun – and I'll just stop the recording now [END

