

Developing EFL Learners' Multicultural Competence and Communication Skills: Reflections on a University Student Programme

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Abstract

This study introduces a pioneering multicultural student programme launched at a publicly funded university in Hong Kong during the 2024/25 academic year. The initiative comprised three core components: the Cultural Exchange Mentoring Network, the Global Leadership Development Series, and the Intercultural Engagement Initiative. The mentoring network paired experienced student mentors with mentees from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, supporting their integration into the campus community. Following the leadership series, participants, guided by their teacher advisors, organised themed activities that promoted intercultural engagement and inclusion. These efforts culminated in a competition where students demonstrated their achievements and intercultural competence through group presentations, employing a range of public speaking strategies. The top-performing group was awarded a study tour to Singapore. Using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle, this research highlights the insights of a university English teacher who advised the winning group. Over a nine-month period, the teacher, acting as a reflective practitioner, observed the development of 18 EFL (English as a Foreign Language) students, from event planning and learning reflection to presentation rehearsals and university visits in Singapore. By analysing the teacher's reflections, student-written responses, and video data, the study aims to shed light on innovative approaches to English public speaking training and multicultural education within the context of higher education.

Keywords

EFL learners, multicultural education, public speaking, reflective practice, student development.