



# **International Academic Staff**

## The Roles of Languages, Cultures, and Personalities

---

Kendall Richards  
Nick Pilcher  
Gyung Sook Jane Lee

palgrave  
macmillan

## International Academic Staff

Kendall Richards • Nick Pilcher  
Gyung Sook Jane Lee

# International Academic Staff

The Roles of Languages, Cultures,  
and Personalities

palgrave  
macmillan

Kendall Richards  
School of Computing  
Edinburgh Napier University  
Edinburgh, UK

Nick Pilcher  
The Business School  
Edinburgh Napier University  
Edinburgh, UK

Gyung Sook Jane Lee  
Institute of Liberal Arts Education  
Chonnam National University  
Bukgu, Korea (Republic of)

ISBN 978-3-031-58759-7      ISBN 978-3-031-58760-3 (eBook)  
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-58760-3>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2024

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use. The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG.

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

Paper in this product is recyclable.

# CONTENTS

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Languages; Cultures; Personalities</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Our Data</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Korea</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>The UK</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Worldwide</b>	<b>83</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Key Themes and Illustrative Examples</b>	<b>105</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>137</b>
	<b>Appendix: Vignettes and Questions</b>	<b>147</b>
	<b>Name Index</b>	<b>161</b>
	<b>Subject Index</b>	<b>163</b>



# Introduction

## INTRODUCTION

This book aims to help International Academic Staff (IAS) live, function, and enjoy; working in places and institutions different from where they grew up and were educated. When we use the term ‘different’ we are defining to be different in ‘cultures’ (either workplace culture, subject culture, or outside culture) or ‘places’ (either outside work or perhaps inside work) and often in ‘languages’ (perhaps of the subject, of meetings, or for socializing). It also aims to help host institutions to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment for IAS through an understanding of their lived experiences. To do this the book presents and compares the findings from three very different studies: in-depth interviews and focus groups with native speaking professors and foreign professors in Korea; in-depth interviews with non-native English-speaking staff working in the UK and teaching their subjects in the English language; and in-depth interviews with native speaking English individuals teaching their subjects in other languages—the languages of the country in which they were teaching (Chinese, Dutch, Japanese, Catalan, Italian, French). Throughout we focus on the issues and challenges these individuals have faced and draw comparisons and contrasts between these revolving around the interstices of languages, cultures, and personalities.

Understandably, given the huge number of areas that could be the focus of the book, a key question is that of specifically why we chose to

focus on these three elements of ‘languages,’ ‘cultures,’ and personalities.’ Why, for instance, was it that we did not choose to focus on gender, religion, race, and racialization? Firstly, it is of course obvious that not one book can cover all areas, but this is of course rather obvious. Secondly, however, we anticipated that many of these issues would arise (either positively or negatively) in any of the interview data that we gathered, and they did, if somewhat indirectly; for example, how in Brazil the fact that it took a very long time to ‘break into’ the local culture could perhaps be argued to be passively related to issues of race and racialization. Primarily though, or reason to focus on the three areas of languages, cultures, and personalities was because we felt that few studies had focused on how the three worked together. We felt that there were many studies into the key role played by ‘language’; many studies into the key role played by ‘culture’ and many studies into the key role played by ‘personality.’ What we wanted to do here was to study how these were perceived to operate together, to impact on each other, or to synergistically work together. Was it, for example, the case that learning the respective language of the area where an individual was working greatly helped them to adapt to the culture? Was it the case that there may have been different languages at work and outside work? Was it the case that a particular personality trait shone through as being one that helped individuals to thrive in their environments, and was this in turn linked with languages and cultures? It was these specific questions that we were interested in, and specifically so in the way in which the answers to these questions operated with the underlying philosophies of thinkers such as Lev Vygotsky, Mikhail Bakhtin, and Valentin Voloshinov, that stressed the key role played by the ‘context’ of usage. Whilst these thinkers stressed the key role of context for the role of languages and education, we wanted to see how these ideas operated with the languages, cultures, and personalities of the individuals we spoke to. Then, from the answers to our questions here, we aimed to identify key themes and vignettes for others to reflect on. By our use of the term ‘others’ we meant IAS working anywhere globally, but also their host institutions and also any staff at all who work with IAS.

Consequently, we draw together the main themes and present a number of vignettes from our data in the form of practical materials for, we envision and hope, use by institutions in developmental sessions for IAS and perhaps home staff as well, and for individual IAS to read and compare their own experiences against. We note that although our staff were working in particular places and contexts, we believe their experiences to

be applicable to almost any context in terms of the theoretical generalization (cf. Flyvbjerg, 2006) and through their value as points of reflection for others.

On the path to achieving our goal the chapters of the book are as we now describe here. This chapter, Introduction, provides a context by relating some of the past and more recent literature on the key themes of Globalization and Internationalization of HE; the linguistic spread of English and EMI; the importance of cultural empathy and the role of personalities. Following this Chap. 2: Languages; Cultures; Personalities goes into more depth regarding the key philosophies and understandings in these areas. It considers key philosophies on what constitutes ‘language’ and the key roles of context and dialogue; on how ‘culture’ can be seen and recent thinking and critiques of essentialist-based nationality informed models of cultural understanding and their perennial appeal; and the importance of ‘personality’ in the adjustment and adaptation of individuals to new environments. Chapter 3: Our data then outlines our overall approach to data collection as well as provides details of how we three authors met and what we have worked on together over the years and what our own backgrounds and knowledge are. For example, Jane is Korean but has lived and taught in both Korea (in Korean and English) and in Australia (in English); Kendall is originally from Australia but studied Chinese and has used the Chinese language to communicate to students in China; Nick is originally English but now resides in Scotland and has lived and worked in Japan, Singapore, and Argentina. We reflect on our positionalities in this chapter and how they impact on the data collected in terms of its applicability and generalizability to other contexts and to reflection by others. In this chapter we also outline the methods and focus of our data collection and consider key issues such as saturation and generalizability. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 then present and discuss our data. Chapter 4: Korea presents and discusses data from professors (Korea) of their experiences of teaching in English Medium Instruction (EMI). Chapter 5: The UK presents and discusses data from interviews with non-UK lecturers lecturing their subjects in the UK in a language (and in one case a culture) other than their native language. Chapter 6: Worldwide presents and discusses data from interviews with native English-speaking lecturers about their experiences of lecturing their subjects in a language other than English. Throughout these three chapters the focus is on the key roles of languages, cultures, and personalities in the challenges and successes of these lecturers in teaching, living, and thriving in the



countries they were working in; pedagogically, professionally, and also personally. Following these three chapters, Chap. 7: Key Themes and Illustrative Examples brings together the main themes and observations from the three data chapters. Here we compare and contrast the experiences of the three very different groups with a focus on providing practical materials in the form of vignettes and discussion questions for use in developmental workshops and for reflection by individuals. We also invite reflection from others on our own positionality and backgrounds here as well. These materials outline and present the key message of the book which is that those who thrived and were able to fully engage and immerse themselves in the systems and countries they were working in did so because they were able to speak the language, operated fully in the culture (and here we mean the culture of life inside and also outside the institution), and had a personality that was open to doing this, and was happy to make mistakes. Our vignettes and practical materials here aim to help others focus on achieving similar goals as the individuals we spoke to who we (and often they) consider were successful in professionally and personally thriving in their different environments. We emphasize the holistic, rather than discrete, role played by Languages, Cultures, and Personalities operating together synergistically. Chapter 8: Conclusion summarizes our main findings and arguments and contextualizes them alongside past and more recent literature. For now we turn to the main task of this chapter and relate some of the past and more recent literature around the themes of Globalization and Internationalization of HE; the linguistic spread of English and EMI; the importance of cultural empathy and the role of personalities.

These themes have been much studied and researched but study and research are often done so separately. This has not, we argue, meant that such research has been carried out in silos, leading to dangers such as tribal rivalry (Gerstein & Friedman, 2016) or the defining of key terms differently (Brown, 2017). Nevertheless, we do argue there is a benefit to considering such issues as a whole as this can help lead to a more holistic understanding of how individuals succeed when working in places different from those they grew up in or are familiar with. Such a focus can help reveal issues that may not be seen or accounted for through other types of research. For example, many studies investigate differences in cultures and the impact this may have, but if they fail to also consider what personal qualities successful individuals may need to have, they may miss vital information of use. Similarly, many studies may focus on the complexities and

challenges of different vocabulary when learning a subject though English Medium Instruction (EMI), but if they do not also highlight the cognitive load involved with what is in essence studying two things, they may not appreciate how much harder it may be to commit information to long-term memory (Kirschner et al., 2006). We argue throughout the book that such a holistic focus is of benefit both to any individuals moving to other parts of the world to work, and also to the institutions that employ them. We outline the value of this as it is presented in the book here throughout.

## GLOBALIZATION AND INTERNATIONALIZATION OF HE

Internationalization of faculty has always existed, and has not always been voluntary, for example the exodus of staff from Germany in the 1930s (Huang & Welch, 2021) or, comparatively, in Britain in the 1980s, particularly in the sciences (Schuster, 1994). Since the 1990s, HE worldwide has become increasingly international and global, due to a range of factors such as the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe or the rising demand for national higher education systems to be international (Huang & Welch, 2021). Whilst there has often been a talk of staff moving from the ‘Global North’ to the ‘Global South’ to work, such terminology has been heavily critiqued and problematized in much recent literature (see below, note on terminology), and movement is neither in one direction nor without its complexities. For example, in the UK, according to the Higher Education Statistics Agency figures cited by universities of UK, in 2020–2021 32.1% of UK academic staff consisted of non-UK nationals, with some subject fields attracting higher percentages (47.7% in Engineering & Technology) than others (38.9% in administrative and business studies). Of these non-UK nationals, 24.1% were non-EU staff and 21.8% EU staff (UUK, 2023) with the largest percentage increases were in staff from India and Nigeria, and the largest staff decreases from EU countries, which is arguably understandable given the UK policy to exit the European Union.

Globally, whilst it is possible to find statistics on the number of international students worldwide (e.g. UNESCO, 2022) locating statistics on International Faculty worldwide is more challenging and only seems possible for individual countries. Nevertheless, what these statistics do show is a large percentage of international staff working in institutions, and that this percentage is increasing in a range of countries such as the Netherlands

(Jonge, 2021), Malaysia (in private universities (Muhammad et al., 2021)), and China (Wu & Huang, 2021).

Worldwide, the pandemic is said to have resulted in a reduction of academic employment in 14 out of 57 countries with data (UNESCO, 2022). However, it is unclear whether this has affected international staff. Whilst on the one hand it can be assumed to have done so, as the pandemic also increased virtual mobility (UNESCO, 2022) it is hard to say without further data whether this was the case. Although some work does note the negative impact of the pandemic on international activities with reduced international activities now taking place, for example in Japan (Huang, 2021).

Regarding what many studies consider, many focus on the experiences of ‘flying faculty’ and short-term visits of international staff to other country campuses and institutions (e.g. Smith, 2014). Others focus on staff relocating for longer time periods to other countries to teach, some settling down permanently. Such work has the ultimate goal of improving the experience of staff relocating to one new environment, and also often focuses on the experience of staff teaching their subjects in the English language. A range of work considers the experiences of international academic staff (IAS) in the UK, some observing how IAS feel undervalued, and although they may not actually feel segregated as such, they nevertheless feel there is a missed opportunity in terms of a lack of aligning and transitioning (Bailey et al., 2021). Such work outlines the need for UK institutions to move more towards the cultural knowledge and experience of their IAS (Bailey et al., 2021, p. 351), noting that currently, “both IAS and international students are therefore often expected to adapt to the institution rather than institutions making changes and addressing the cultural differences which exist” (cf. Schartner & Cho, 2017). In studies of staff in other countries it is often noted that few studies have focused on international staff in, for example, China (Wu & Huang, 2021) and that the motivations for going to work in another country and system could be simply due to pure chance, or for family reasons (Wu & Huang, 2021).

In this book we complement this literature by presenting the experiences of IAS in three very different environments: first-language Korean-speaking and second or other language Korean-speaking professors teaching their subjects in EMI and living and working in Korea; second or other language English-speaking IAS and first language speaking English IAS individuals teaching their subjects in English and living and working in Scotland and; first language speaking English IAS teaching their

subjects in languages other than English in countries abroad and living and working there. Here the angle on Globalization and Internationalization is one from multiple perspectives and considers the key roles played by the interaction and operation of languages, cultures, and personalities. Such an angle helps shed light on the key role of these three elements in a range of different environments, both positively, where particular aspects are an advantage, and negatively, where the lack of certain aspects is a disadvantage. We show how the advantages helped these individuals thrive in their environments, and the disadvantages can be said to constitute barriers or challenges to be overcome. We highlight these advantages and disadvantages in each of the chapters where we present and discuss our data for the particular contexts they focus on (Korea, Scotland, Worldwide) and then consider them cumulatively, comparing and contrasting the experiences and highlighting vignettes and when we consider to be key points in Chap. 7. Here the focus is to consider these aspects relating to Globalization and Internationalization from the perspective of developmental workshops for IAS and as a reflection for individual IAS as well.

## THE LINGUISTIC SPREAD OF ENGLISH AND EMI

English's rise as a global language comes from two principal phases of the first spread of English through the British colonial expansion of the seventeenth century and later through the rise of the United States to global economic dominance (Crystal, 2012). In terms of the spread and establishment of English as a medium for the communication of academic ideas, many (if not all) leading journals are now published in English, and this in turn has established English, rather as subjects are established, as being the language and medium of choice (cf. Goodson, 2013). In other words, English has arguably become a Global Lingua Franca through its use in business and academe (Galloway & Rose, 2015). Understandably, this has in turn led to the huge growth in English Medium Instruction (EMI) in countries such as Italy (Costa & Coleman, 2013), Finland (Hahl et al., 2016), Korea (Lee, 2017), China (Hu & Lei, 2014), and Taiwan (Huang, 2015). Subjects taught extend to almost all today, including, for example, Shipping (Tseng et al., 2018, 2020). Challenges with EMI are, unsurprisingly perhaps, very much related to the proficiency of those studying the subject in the language of instruction, whether this is studying in English when the person's first language is Chinese (Tseng et al., 2018, 2020), Korean (Shin, 2021), or otherwise. Often, it is argued that

it is an advantage for students to learn a subject in English as it means their level of English will ostensibly improve. However, EMI policies have been criticized for their supposed link to neoliberalism (Phyak & Sah, 2022) and through a wider lens the spread of English has been linked to the death of languages (Crystal, 2002) and the loss of cultures that accompanies such a death, given the intrinsic connection between languages and cultures (Lussier, 2011).

With regard to the idea of teaching in other languages not English that are the native language of the students, for example a first language German-speaking academic moving to China and teaching their subject in Chinese, or a first language English-speaking American academic moving to Japan and teaching their subject in Japanese, the literature is non-existent. Literature which focuses on China does not talk about foreign academics teaching in Chinese (e.g. Wu & Huang, 2021) or teaching in Japanese (Huang, 2021) or in Korean (Shin, 2021). Further, whilst it is noted in some literature that IAS are keen to learn certain languages for their wider currency (such as Chinese or Japanese) than their specificity (Korean) (Shin, 2021), the notion of actually *teaching* their subject in the first language of the other country is not considered. Indeed, in the case of Korea, recent literature notes that language barriers mean that Korean students will study with Korean staff, whereas international students will study with international staff (Shin, 2021). Notably, not only are there ‘negative’ benefits such as these to teaching in the Korean language, but there are also ‘positive’ benefits as well. For example, teaching in the language that the students have as their first language allows them to focus purely on the subject at hand, and this in turn can aid their ability to commit the subject material to long-term memory, through the removal of an extra layer of cognitive complexity (cf. Kirschner et al., 2006). In addition, teaching in the language of the students also helps the IAS become familiar with the language itself and this in turn has benefits for adapting both within the institution itself and in the wider community and culture outside. We therefore in the book complement existing studies into EMI by considering the value for IAS of using languages other than English to teach their subjects (Chap. 6: Worldwide); of the benefits of EMI when English is the first language of many of the students (Chap. 5: UK); and of the benefits and disadvantages of using EMI when English is not the first language of the students (Chap. 4: Korea). We further compare and contrast these benefits and disadvantages of EMI in ‘Chapter 7: Key Themes and Illustrative Examples’ and consider them alongside their

operation for IAS in the context of Globalization and Internationalization and from the angles of how all such factors operate within and through the aspects of Languages, Cultures, and Personalities.

### THE IMPORTANCE OF CULTURAL EMPATHY

Cultural adaptation is noted as a key factor (cf. Pherali, 2012) in relation to aspects such as food, with IAS from China talk of experiencing challenges eating out with local people in the UK due to having different tastes in food (Hsieh, 2012). Further, some studies have focused on the adaptation of IAS to UK pedagogical and institutional practices (Minocha et al., 2019), noting again a need for UK institutions to focus on better transitioning for IAS, and not just for international students (Morley et al., 2018). Such work focuses specifically on pedagogical aspects such as the PG Cert, or Post Graduate Certificate in Academic Practice (Minocha et al., 2019), commenting that IAS “felt that the PG Cert, in its present form, was too conventional and was underpinned by a very traditional UK-centric perspective” (ibid., p. 950). Other work shows how such adaptation to the home environment is expected of IAS in other countries, for example in China (Han, 2022) where IAS are expected to conform to the Chinese system and often struggle with a hierarchical structure they have little experience of (cf. Hsieh, 2012; Xu et al., 2022). Further work is noted to be required here, for example that in the context of China, “the traditions, norms and practices of the higher education system and the national culture remain a visible force in shaping the experience of international academics, and there are much left to be examined for the higher education internationalization efforts of HEIs in Asian countries to achieve such ends” (Han, 2022, pp. 1267–8). Cultures have also been found to be an issue in terms of different pedagogical approaches, for example in South Korea IAS have been found to experience challenges due to the different local pedagogical norms (Ghazarian & Youhne, 2015). Cultures have also been found to be a key issue in relation to balancing family and academic life, and in an inability to transition into the community the IAS has travelled to (e.g. in the case of Hong Kong (Morley et al., 2018)). Such a lack of an ability to adapt was often not said to be due to choice, but attributed to a lack of language proficiency (e.g. in China, Wang, 2022). Even when it is noted that IAS living in China felt they had moved out of an ‘English bubble’ into the Chinese community,

they were arguably still living in a bubble, and were using only the English language (see Wang, 2022).

We complement the literature here by considering the role played by language proficiency in the first language of where IAS are living and working, both in terms of the languages used to teach the subject and in terms of the languages used to function in the culture of the institution, and of outside the institution. We consider the key role that languages play here in both accessing and in understanding and thriving in the culture the IAS are working and living in. We do this through considering the role of languages both in and also as a tool to access, the cultures, and also by considering the key role of personality traits in working, teaching, and thriving in the countries the IAS are working in. Again we focus on these themes in Chaps. 4, 5, and 6, but draw them together in Chap. 7.

## THE ROLE OF PERSONALITY

The value of personality traits is touched upon and noted in many studies (e.g. Bailey et al., 2021 highlighting the value of ‘self-directed behaviour’) but remains underexplored as such, particularly in terms of how it plays a role in the professional and social lives of IAS working in countries other than their own. We complement the existing literature here by exploring and considering precisely how personality traits, and what particular personality traits, are considered to be advantageous, and which ones are considered disadvantageous in the successful working and thriving of IAS in their work environments. Notably, we do this alongside and with the aspects of languages and cultures.

## A NOTE ON METHODOLOGY

In terms of their methodology, many studies published in journal articles are quantitative in nature (e.g. Huang, 2009; Xian, 2015) and are survey based. Even if articles focus on aspects such as research productivity (Huang, 2009), they nevertheless underline the key role of cultural empathy, language proficiency, and also particular personality traits in integrating into new environments. Other qualitative studies focus on specific groups of individuals and invariably target the field of English as the Medium of Instruction (EMI) (e.g. Larbi & Ashraf, 2020). Some draw on data from a single case study to focus specifically on cultures and use frameworks such as Berry’s module of intercultural strategies (Bailey et al.,

2021). Some use surveys and focus groups (e.g. Schartner & Cho, 2017). Others draw on interview data with varying numbers of interviewees, for example 18 (Han, 2022), 8 (Larbi & Ashraf, 2020), 34 (Minocha et al., 2019), 14 (Morley et al., 2018), 33 (Wang, 2022), 7 (Pherali, 2012), 54 (Śliwa, & Johansson, 2014), 33 (Wang & Chen, 2021), or 28 (Braun Střelcová et al., 2022).

Given we base what we write here on around about 30 interviews, a key question many readers will have, and justifiably so, is why we are presenting the data here in a book and not in a journal article. For us, this has specifically two angles; a methodological one, and a content one. Methodologically, the number of interviewees relates directly to the issue of saturation—i.e. does the number of interviewees provide sufficient data for there to be little else worth discovering through the undertaking of additional interviews. Some literature finds saturation to occur at as low a number as 12 interviewees (Guest et al., 2006), others at 17 (Francis et al., 2010). Although we have a total of over 30 interviewees, for each of the three studies this was around about 10, and so it could be argued that whilst the number of interviewees does indeed meet saturation criteria according to the literature from the perspective of the overall total of interviewees, it does not do so in terms of saturation for each of the three individual data sets. In other literature, rather than seek to determine saturation by a number that is determined in advance of data collection, Braun and Clarke (2021, p. 201) highlight how it is “inescapably situated and subjective.” Indeed, Saunders et al. (2018, p. 1893) suggest saturation should be “operationalized in a way consistent with the research question(s) and the theoretical position and analytic framework adopted.” In terms of our data here, we were satisfied that the number of interviews we undertook revealed to us a recurrence of key points in the different contexts we studied. This was particularly so from our standpoint of approaching each study with an exploratory and broadly interpretivist standpoint that sought to identify key factors in relation to languages, cultures, and personalities outlined by the IAS we interviewed for theoretical rather than practical comparison and reflection by others (cf. Flyvbjerg, 2006). Content wise, we were keen to present and discuss what we have in a book for reasons of the greater length allowed, and secondly for the fact that this allowed us in addition to create practical materials for developmental workshops in institutions and for reflection by individual IAS, which was something we wanted to do with the data. We would not have been able to do this in an