Chapter 10

Internationalizing Higher Education: English Language Policy and Practice

Maureen Snow Andrade  
Utah Valley University, USA

Norman W. Evans  
Brigham Young University, USA

K. James Hartshorn  
Brigham Young University, USA

ABSTRACT

Although global educational mobility often requires fluency in a foreign language, this fluency may be insufficient for academic tasks, and institutions may provide insufficient opportunities for further linguistic progress. This chapter examines higher education practices for the assessment of English language skills and continued development of English language proficiency for international students. Implications indicate that although institutions view international students as critical to strategic planning and feel these students need increased English language proficiency, institutions generally have not considered innovative approaches. The results support the viability of the proposed framework to guide institutions through a thorough examination of current practices and identification of future direction for research.

INTRODUCTION

Globalization and internationalization are closely connected concepts. The former refers to the interconnectedness of the world economy, including the use of information technology, the ongoing expansion of the knowledge economy, and the place of the English language, while the latter refers to policies and practices implemented to address globalization (Altbach, Reisburg, & Rumbley, 2009). Globalization cannot advance without deliberate efforts toward internationalization. In a higher education context, global advancement involves “integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension” (Knight,
This chapter addresses how institutions of higher education can enact thoughtful, strategic, and innovative approaches to internationalization through the admission of international students for whom English is an additional language, and continue providing support for English language development.

As English-speaking nations seek to remain competitive in attracting the world’s 3.5 million globally mobile students to their higher education institutions (Choudaha, Chang, & Kono, 2013), care must be taken to establish a well-orchestrated approach to their pre- and post-enrollment experiences. While the literature is replete with studies on international student adjustment, retention, and cultural and academic experiences (Andrade, 2006, 2008, 2009, 2010; Andrade & Evans, 2007, 2009; Barrett-Lennard, Duworth, & Harris, 2011; Galloway & Jenkins, 2009; Ritz, 2010; Russell, Rosenthal, & Thomson, 2009; Tochkov, Levine, & Sanaka, 2010), for the most part, institutions have yet to adopt a seamless, coordinated effort to monitor the success, learning outcomes, and contributions of these students. To be effective, this planning must focus on pre-enrollment to post-graduation and be carried out in ways that reflect each institution’s values, priorities, and resources.

The objectives of this chapter are as follows: 1) establish the need for strategic action to support the continued development of English language proficiency for non-native English speakers (NNES), 2) identify common issues in institutional practice related to the assessment and development of NNES’ English language skills, 3) introduce a research-based framework that supports students’ ongoing English language development, 4) report the extent to which the framework is being implemented in higher education institutions and the feasibility of its implementation, and 5) explore implications and directions for future research and implementation of the framework.

BACKGROUND

Recognizing the merits of studying abroad, substantial numbers of students pursue higher education opportunities outside their country of origin. Experiencing a new culture, practicing and developing skills in a foreign language, and interest in degrees not available in local institutions are some factors that draw students to distant locations for further study. In some cases, admission requirements and cost of higher education abroad may offer increased access. In other cases, a degree from a particular institution or nation may be considered more prestigious and desirable than its counterpart in the home country.

Institutional benefits for hosting international students are also significant. The most frequently mentioned of these is financial. International students contributed over $27 billion to the U.S. economy in 2013, 65% of which was funded through personal and family sources (Institute for International Education [IIE], 2014). Additionally, most campuses have some type of global or intercultural learning expectation for students, which may consist of required coursework and co-curricular involvement. Such learning outcomes are the result of research-based findings from employers and educators who indicate the importance of intercultural knowledge and competencies derived from involvement in diverse environments (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2011).

These outcomes are being adopted throughout higher education institutions to address the global challenges and opportunities that today’s college graduates will face, and are often measured by instruments such as the National Survey for Student Engagement (NSSE). The latter instrument specifically asks students to report on the extent and level to which they have interacted with students different
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