



The World Conference on Language Learning

London, United Kingdom

10 - 12 November 2023

Internationalisation at Home Under Threat: Foreign Language Skills Needed

Heléna Stakounis

Durham University

Abstract

Internationalisation at home strategies claim that “home students”, those who are not travelling abroad for their studies, can have an international experience the same way the “international students” coming onto the internationalised university campus have. These non-mobile students, it is argued, can become interculturally competent global citizens through heterophilous interaction with their international classmates and via an internationalised curriculum. However, plenty of research now shows that heterophilous interaction does not always occur and neither does internationalisation of the curriculum, leaving “home students” at risk of missing out on the international student experience they were promised. A lack of foreign language skills is potentially part of the problem. This presentation reports on a year-long qualitative study in one UK university following 14 core participants, and involving over 60 hours of classroom observations, and 120 interviews with students, university staff and faculty. Findings show that a lack of foreign language skills is hampering internationalisation at home efforts in multiple ways and limiting home students’ opportunities for volunteer work, work, travel, intercultural learning and a global outlook. This presentation will argue that for internationalisation at home to be successful, foreign language learning is essential.

Keywords: employability, foreign language skills, heterophilous interaction, internationalisation at home, mobility