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Diversity in UK higher education: (Re)constructing social integration of international students through team teaching

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the impact of team teaching on social integration and academic engagement among international students in UK higher education. Through semi-structured interviews with international students in a business module, the research reveals that team teaching enhances communication, engagement, and inclusion. Thematic analysis shows that this teaching method improves interaction and integration by familiarizing students with diverse accents, boosting confidence, and promoting collaborative engagement in multicultural settings. Team teaching also supports inclusive learning by increasing participation and facilitating interaction across linguistic and cultural boundaries. Extended sessions strengthen relationships among students and instructors, fostering deeper engagement and trust. The study provides unique insights into the experiences of international students in UK universities, highlighting the role of team teaching in addressing integration challenges. It advocates for institutional policies and professional development programs to implement effective team-teaching approaches, aiming to create inclusive and enhanced learning experiences for international students.

Keywords: Inclusive learning, international students, learners' diversity, social integration, team teaching, qualitative

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INTRODUCTION

As higher education institutions become increasingly diverse and multicultural, they pose a growing need to explore innovative approaches that enhance students' learning experiences while addressing diversity and inclusion challenges (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2018; De Leersnyder et al., 2021; Browers & Ho, 2022; Avcilar & Gök, 2022; Marangell & Baik, 2022). Recent developments indicate that learning environments in most higher education institutions consist of both domestic and international students and staff from different backgrounds across the globe (Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2019). Like many other Western countries, higher education institutions (HEIs) in the UK experienced an increase of 559,825 overseas students in 2023 (The Economic Times, 2023; Hattersley & Nicholson, 2024). This increase in the number of international students pursuing higher education abroad has been argued to have the potential of creating a more diverse learning environment regarding cross-cultural and linguistic diversity (Rose-Redwood & Rose-Redwood, 2018).

While diverse learning settings should be embraced as they augment students' performance, creativity, and idea generation (Haddad et al., 2021), they may also have an adverse impact on social integration and learning experience for international students. Among these challenges, proficiency in the local language used as a medium of instruction at the host institution is singled out as the most significant and complex one. It directly impacts communication, engagement, inclusion, and social integration among international students who come from diverse linguistic, racial, and cultural backgrounds (Wang et al., 2023; Quibrantar & Ezezika, 2023). For example, Ecochard and Fotheringham (2017) argue that language proficiency difficulty hinders social integration by blocking smooth communication among classmates and university staff. Furthermore, literature posits that good communication, engagement, and inclusion are highly associated with good learning experiences of international students, and vice versa (Hodis et al., 2023; Konstantinidou & Kyriakides, 2022; Markey et al., 2023; Altes et al., 2024).

Team Teaching for Enhanced Learning Experience of International Students

HEIs are challenged to explore innovative approaches to address social integration challenges and enhance the learning experiences of international students (Zhang, 2019). For example, Rose-Redwood and Rose-Redwood (2018) argue that it is the role of the host university to adjust and accommodate the social integration needs of international students. One approach that has gained significant attention in addressing integration challenges facing students is team teaching (Schwartz & Minkov, 2023). Research suggests that team teaching, which incorporates effective pedagogical strategies, can enhance social integration among students by fostering improved communication, engagement, inclusion, and overall learning experiences (Minett-Smith & Davis, 2019; Northedge, 2003; Wang et al., 2022). Consequently, team teaching has gained popularity in higher education institutions across various countries (Minett-Smith & Davis, 2019; Vesikivi et al., 2018).

While there is existing research on the role of team teaching as an effective pedagogical strategy for teaching (Minett-Smith & Davis, 2019; Northedge, 2003), the extant literature in team teaching is limited to workplace contexts (John & Meinel, 2020), students with special needs and disabilities in pre-university levels (Iacono et al., 2021; Gurgur & Uzuner, 2011), specific language classrooms (Álvarez et al., 2023), and staff experience (Minett-Smith & Davis, 2019). Although the existing research presents both the efficacy and limitations of the team teaching approach in various aspects (Wang et al., 2022; Pathrose et al., 2022; De Backer et al., 2023; Kim et al., 2021; Kuliukas et al., 2023), there is limited evidence regarding the efficacy of team teaching in improving social integration in the HEIs learning contexts with a mixture of international students with varied levels of English language proficiency, accents, and dialects.

This study seeks to bridge this gap by examining the role of team teaching, specifically its impact on the social integration of international students in the learning process. The study focuses on three key aspects of social integration: communication, engagement, and inclusion. Specifically, the study seeks to answer the question: How does team teaching enhance the social integration and learning experiences among diverse international students in a HEI in the UK?

The study is guided by the following sub-research questions:

- In what ways does team teaching improve social integration among the diverse international students in an English university in the UK?
- How does team teaching foster engagement and an inclusive learning environment among the diverse international students in a HEI in the UK?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Team Teaching

There are different team teaching models. Krammer et al. (2018) and Baeten and Simons (2014) identified five team teaching models and labelled them as the observation model, the coaching model, the assistant teaching model, the equal status model, and the teaming model. While other models suggest the existence of varied hierarchies of profiles of instructors involved, the equal status model, which is the focus of this study, refers to team teaching in which two instructors have equal status. This model is further broken down into three groups: (a) parallel teaching, (b) station teaching, and (c) sequential teaching (De Backer et al., 2023). Parallel teaching entails the division of a class into subgroups, with teachers delivering the same educational material to each subgroup simultaneously (Baeten & Simons, 2014). On the other hand, station teaching is when educators divide the educational materials into different segments and deliver those materials at different tables with groups of students in the same venue (Gurgur & Uzuner, 2011).

Compared to the other two models, the most commonly practiced team-teaching model, which is also the primary focus of this study, is the sequential model, also known as alternate teaching, serial arrangement, or rotational team teaching (Baeten & Simons, 2014; López-Hernández et al., 2023). In this model, instructors split the teaching materials or class tasks, delivering the same lesson or course to a shared group of students (Baeten & Simons, 2014). Each instructor takes on distinct responsibilities for specific stages of the lesson or module. Notably, while one instructor is teaching, the other's presence in the classroom is not required (Baeten & Simons, 2014). This approach is of interest in this research because while it encourages all instructors to be present during the delivery of the content, it does not insist on the necessity of co-presence of instructors for the lecture to take place. Hence, the approach is not only practical but also suits the workload of lecturers in most higher education institutions who may not always be available to teach jointly in a single class simultaneously (Salim et al., 2019).

Despite varying models, team teaching shares a common meaning. It is also known as collaborative or cooperative teaching, where two or more lecturers or instructors collaborate and work together in one or more stages of teaching. These stages, in any model, encompass developing teaching materials, planning, decision-making, delivering materials, and assessing a specific group of learners and module (López-Hernández et al., 2023; Baeten & Simons, 2014; Krammer et al., 2018). In this study, the conceptualization of "team teaching" is borrowed from Simons et al. (2020) and Malak and Gambescia (2023), where two or more instructors collaborate in some or all stages of teaching, such as planning, instruction, and evaluating a course, to a group of students in a single physical space.

Arguments for Team teaching

Due to its deeper planning and engagement process, team teaching is argued to be beneficial in a diverse learning environment. It enhances learning experiences by leveraging the strengths of multiple educators and learners, provides extra support, and promotes a more interactive and inclusive classroom (Schwartz & Minkov, 2023). Other benefits include meeting students' unique needs, providing heightened support and personalised focus, offering dynamic and diverse instructional sessions, and leading to notable advancements in learning outcomes (Gurgur & Uzuner, 2011; Baeten & Simons, 2014). It is also argued that team teaching may develop new perspectives on concepts in students due to their exposure to different viewpoints from various educators of different backgrounds and cultural origins (López-Hernández et al., 2023). Moreover, team teaching may promote interaction among students and between students and their instructors, heightened student participation and engagement (Kim et al., 2021). Besides the benefits of team teaching accrued from different teaching methods and from culturally and linguistically diverse instructors, other arguments for team teaching in a diverse learning environment include effective communication, improved engagement, and enhanced inclusion.

These benefits are linked to the intercultural communication theory, which explains how cultural differences may impact the way people exchange information by addressing how norms, values, perspectives, and ethnolinguistic vitality shape communication styles and interactions (Guirdham, 1999). This study was informed by the high-context communication theory, which emphasizes the importance of context in intercultural communication to analyze the impact of classroom interactions. On one side of the classroom, interactions were between two international lecturers (one Black African and one local English) who were team teaching a business module using an equal status sequential approach. The other side consisted of learners from various countries, including Iran, South Korea, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, India, and the United Kingdom, participated in the team teaching. This setup, where message producers and receivers belong to varied social and cultural backgrounds (Guirdham, 1999), offers international students several advantages as expounded below.

Effective Communication

Effective communication is vital in any learning setting, especially in diverse classes with students from varied cultural and language backgrounds (Saab, et al., 2007). In this context, there is limited interaction between international and domestic students (Arkoudis et al., 2013). Central to this, especially in English-speaking countries, is the variety of English language versions (Arkoudis et al., 2013). Research shows that team teaching fosters improved communication among international students themselves and with their instructors, breaking the barrier of learning caused by English language proficiency and variations in terms of dialects and accents (Schwartz & Minkov, 2023; Pesonen et al., 2021). The collaboration between instructors allows for a broader range of perspectives, diverse teaching strategies, and increased support for students with varied versions and proficiencies of the English language (Pesonen et al., 2021). This strategy fosters a supportive environment that promotes a sense of belonging and connection among students (Beninghof, 2020; Marangell & Baik, 2022).

Improved Engagement

While learners' engagement in a diverse learning environment is essential for a successful learning experience, Arkoudis et al. (2013) found that interaction and engagement between students in a diverse group are limited. This is primarily because students tend to prefer interacting with those who share similar cultural and language backgrounds (Arkoudis et al., 2013). By having instructors from diverse groups working collaboratively, students who are also from diverse groups benefit from various teaching techniques and differentiated instructions. This approach provides students with opportunities to increase

their confidence and participation in the learning process while leveraging each instructor's strengths, resulting in increased student motivation and interest in the subject matter and enhanced learning experiences. Similar observations are made by Frelin et al. (2025) that team teaching fosters students' social skills and collaborative abilities by modelling positive interactions between educators and students themselves.

Enhanced Inclusion

The concept of diversity and inclusion revolves around acknowledging and valuing the unique characteristics of individuals across various societal differences. While the specific dimensions of significance may differ across different societies, they generally include attributes such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, age, religious beliefs, languages, or other identifiable qualities (Razack & Philibert, 2019). The pursuit of fostering inclusivity stands as a core objective within the realm of education, aiming at cultivating an environment wherein each student is supplied with a sense of worth and the necessary support, irrespective of their unique differences (Ainscow & Messiou, 2018). To achieve this, team teaching is arguably a necessary method as it allows educators to leverage diverse perspectives, teaching styles, accommodating a broader range of student needs and learning preferences (De Weerdt et al., 2024).

Arguments Against Team Teaching

Team teaching does not come cheap or without flaws. Fitria and Dewi (2025) identified three categories of challenges that arise in team teaching: interpersonal challenges, institutional challenges, and pedagogical misalignment. Interpersonal challenges encompass personality clashes that erode trust and communication styles that result in miscommunication among instructors (Fitria & Dewi, 2025; Malak & Gambescia, 2023). Institutional challenges include insufficient time for collaborative lesson planning, inadequate administrative support such as resource allocation, and lack of professional development opportunities for enhancing team teaching skills (Fitria & Dewi, 2025). As argued by Frelin et al. (2025), team teaching requires extensive joint planning and shared execution throughout the teaching process, that in turn demands time, effort, strong commitment and negotiation to develop shared understanding among instructors.

Pedagogical misalignment arises from differing pedagogical philosophies and instructional strategies, such as contrasting approaches to classroom management, student engagement, and assessment methods (Fitria & Dewi, 2025). This argument concurs with Hagen et al. (2003) and Kuliukas et al. (2023) that team teaching can be inconsistent when instructors use dynamic approaches based on personal experiences, beliefs, and understanding, leading to confusion and affecting students' assignments and grades. It is also argued that team teaching comes along with a substantial allocation of energy and time for co-planning and co-teaching, thereby intensifying the workload of instructors or can fail to be implemented in the absence of effective staff to organise (Kim et al., 2021; Frelin et al., 2025).

Furthermore, it is important to recognize that carefully planned, designed, and executed team teaching is not a panacea to social integration of international students. Other factors, such as exposure to diverse perspectives, the nature of diversity, cultural, disciplinary, linguistic, and pedagogical practices, play crucial roles in achieving the integration goals of team teaching.

Evidences indicate that an orchestration of personal, institutional, and structural support for team teaching is essential for its successful implementation and effectiveness (Fitria & Dewi, 2025; Malak & Gambescia, 2023; Frelin et al., 2025). Enabled team teaching allows instructors to collaborate effectively and create cohesive instructional designs that promote inclusivity and engagement among students from diverse backgrounds. While substantial evidence demonstrates the positive impact of team teaching on learner communication, engagement, and inclusion, there is limited research on its application in enhancing

and (re)constructing social integration and managing diversity among international students in higher education institutions, particularly in the UK.

RESEARCH METHOD

To meet the aims and objectives of this study, a qualitative approach that allows for flexibility and delves into the deep experiences of the participants was adopted (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Furthermore, the overall research question is focused on understanding how team teaching enhances the learning experience in a heterogeneous learning setting. This necessitates applying a qualitative approach to capture deeper understanding and views of a diverse group of students (Myers, 2019).

As a result, purposive sampling technique was applied to identify and select cases that have abundant relevant information pertaining to the phenomenon of focus (Patton 2014; Campbell et al., 2020). We selected six students from a business students' cohort at one HEI in the UK. These students were attending a business module that was being implemented using equal sequential team teaching. Two instructors were teaching the same module to the same students, and each lecturer was accountable for dissimilar lesson phases (Simons et al., 2020). One instructor was a Black African male lecturer who earned his PhD from a UK university. He had over five years of teaching experience in UK universities and other relevant education qualifications from Africa. The other instructor was a local English male senior lecturer with over a decade of teaching experience at UK universities. He had completed his entire education in the UK.

The study concluded with six participants as saturation was achieved, whereby iterative questioning was no longer discovering new codes, patterns, insights, and themes during the fifth and sixth interviews (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The interviews finalized with the six participants affiliated with six countries who also reflected good diversity in terms of English language proficiency levels (see Figure 1). These were purposively selected based on their availability and willingness to participate in the study (Etikan et al., 2016). Along the continuum of varied levels of English proficiency as indicated in Figure 1 below, the participants included students from Iran where English is considered a foreign language; South Korea where English is taught as a subject in primary and secondary school but not as a medium of instruction in the majority of institutions and levels of education; Sri Lanka where English has been an optional medium of instruction since 2001; Nigeria where English is used as a medium of instruction from schools to universities but as a second language; India where English is used as a medium of instruction in some schools alongside Hindi; and the UK where English is the primary language for home, education, and business.

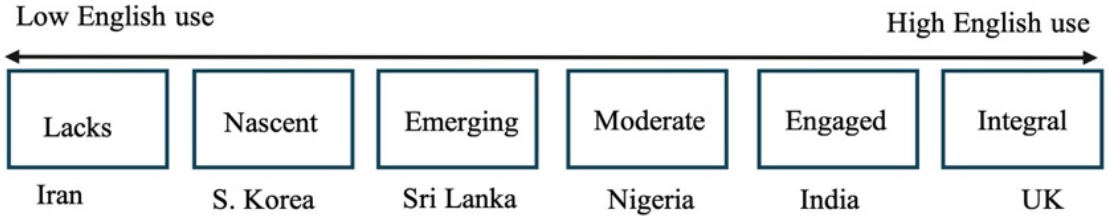


Figure 1: Language Proficiency Continuum and Nationality diversity of participants

Data Collection and Analysis

The semi-structured interviews were conducted using an online communication platform, namely Microsoft Teams (Self, 2021). Opting for online interviews offered an opportunity to include a wider range of participants with a lot of flexibility, which could be difficult through traditional face-to-face interactions. Additionally, a notable number of participants expressed feeling more comfortable during the semi-structured interviews through online communication platforms (Opara et al., 2023).

An average of 60-minute interviews were conducted with each participant, and to complement the interview transcripts, detailed notes were also taken during the interviews (Muswazi & Nhamo, 2013). The interview focused on gathering their views on the role of team teaching in enhancing communication, engagement, and inclusion of international students from diverse backgrounds (please see interview questions in Appendix I: Interview Guide with international students). The focus was on team teaching that involved lecturers and international students with varied English language accents, dialects, and proficiency levels.

Thematic analysis applying an inductive approach to data analysis was used (Patton, 2014). Furthermore, following the suggestion of Braun and Clarke (2006), we initially familiarised ourselves with the collected data as part of the analysis process. To achieve this, we carefully listened to the audio interviews several times and transcribed them into Microsoft Word. Subsequently, a comprehensive examination of the transcriptions in relation to the study's objectives was conducted through repeated careful reading. Initial impressions were duly recorded, notes were taken, and relevant parts of the data showing participants' viewpoints on the impact of team teaching on communication, engagement, and inclusion were coded. As indicated in Figure 2 below, the formulated codes underwent a rigorous evaluation, organization, comparison, and subsequent clustering of those that shared similarity. The process involved structuring and organising data from first and second-order codes that ultimately led to the formation of themes and sub-themes aligned with the study's objectives (Roberts et al., 2019).

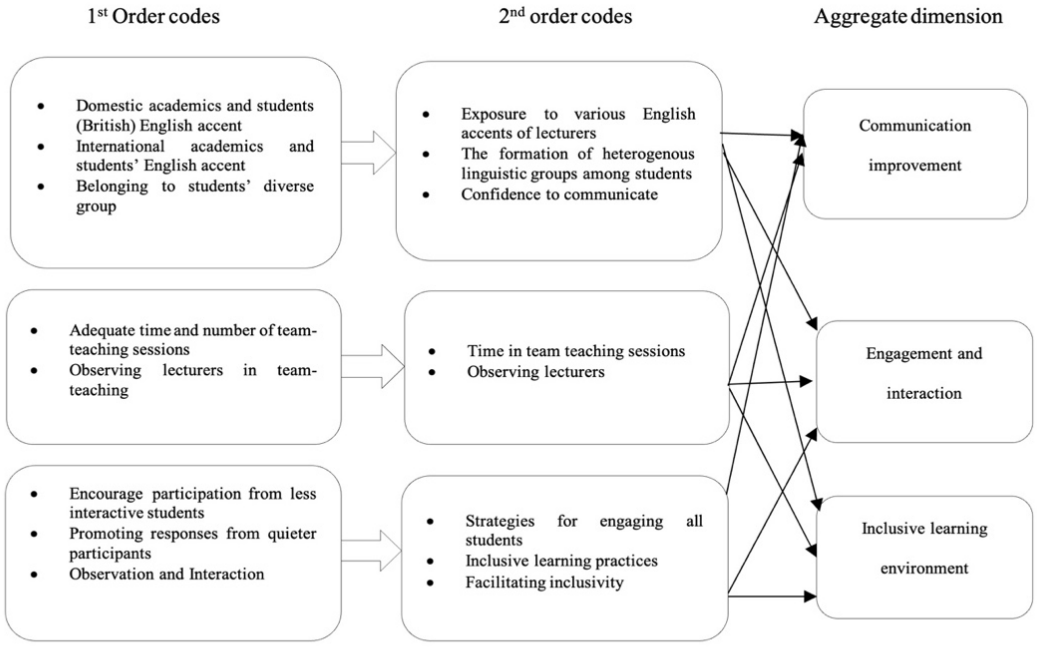


Figure 2: Data analysis structure
Source: Roberts et al. 2019

Trustworthiness of the Data

To ensure rigour and quality of the data, measures were taken to ensure that the findings and conclusions emanating from the qualitative accounts represent both the voices of the participants and the local contexts of the study phenomenon (Hammersley 2008; Cho & Trent, 2006). Specifically, the study involved enough respondents that were from different countries that have varied use of the English language in their education systems and as a language of communication. Also, the participants were persistently asked similar main and probing questions with the aim of minimising the range of misunderstandings and biases in terms of the ways the informants would have understood and encoded issues under scrutiny. Moreover, having data from informants with different experiences and scrutinising their responses to arrive at a combined or representative account and claims representing their views in terms of findings and conclusions, enhanced the rigour of this research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This research aimed to explore how a team-teaching approach may improve learning experiences through enhanced communication, engagement, and inclusion among the diverse groups of international students with various English language proficiency, dialects, and accents in the HEI in the UK. The results are organised based on the following sub-research questions:

(1) In what ways does team teaching improve social integration among the diverse groups of international students in a HEI in the UK?
(2) How does team teaching foster engagement and inclusive learning environment among the diverse students in a HEI in the UK?

Team Teaching and Social Integration

The interviewees had conflicting opinions on how team teaching could enhance social integration among students and improve learning experiences for diverse international students in a UK Higher Education Institution. Three main themes from the views of students are expounded below.

The first theme was related to the exposure to varied English language versions from their lecturers and fellow students. International students acknowledged their struggles with various English accents and dialects during various learning sessions. “Understanding their accent, understanding the language, understanding their patterns is kind of difficult for us as international students...” (P2). Arguably, this had a negative impact on their level of integration in terms of smooth communication in the academic setting, as commented by Student P1: “So, making a conversation with a variety of students is a hard part for me…”

However, these views could be argued to reflect the initial experiences of international students before prolonged exposure to team teaching. The findings indicated that later, team teaching was viewed by the same students as addressing integration and communication tensions. These views emerged after exposure to team teaching consisting of lecturers from diverse English language backgrounds and accents from different countries. The exposure to various English accents and dialects from the teaching team made students familiar with these accents and dialects. The instructors’ confidence despite their diverse backgrounds, accents and dialects inspired students to improve their communication skills and confidence, leading to better integration and understanding of the module, as seen in Student P4.

> Listening to different lecturers with different accents helps us get used to different accents and makes it more inclusive. By listening to more and more accents, it gets to the point of naturalisation. I mean it becomes not a problem anymore to understand those with different accent from mine and understand the subject as well.

Similar views were also provided by other three international students – Student P1, Student P2, and Student P3. Altogether, the views suggest that team teaching played a significant role in boosting

students' integration, engagement, and communicative abilities, particularly in using English to communicate more freely with their peers and instructors with whom they did not share similar versions of English accents, dialects, and proficiency. This concurs with Tajino and Walker (1998), who posit that team teaching may encourage students to improve the use of English as a medium of communication, which is beyond the medium of instruction.

The second theme was linked to group formation. Other participants asserted that the smooth communication among themselves is also influenced by being part of a linguistically diverse group of students. For example, Student P1 said:

> …. Our group discussion is a mixture of international students. There is the one guy from UK, and one is from India, the other three ladies are from Nigeria and Iran. And I clearly understand what they're saying, and it makes me feel comfortable.

Thus, to ameliorate communication in the diverse learning setting, heterogeneous linguistic groups of students need to be formed organically and at the beginning of the program as asserted by Student P3 "… more than half of the group members attended the induction week, the first week of the program, and we have been using the same group for classroom group assignments as we usually sit closely during lectures." It follows that a tendency of the instructors to use a team teaching approach to provide group assignments influenced the class group formation and group dynamics, which subsequently improved communication during teaching and learning among the international students.

The last theme related to confidence building, whereby the participants alluded to the potential benefits of exposing international students to instructors with diverse English accents and dialects, as it fosters a sense of confidence and connection among them. Additionally, they underscored the importance of cross-cultural communication skills acquired by interacting with native English speakers, as it can enhance the confidence of international students in using English for educational and communicative purposes.

> …….an international student I feel confident when I see international instructor much confidently talk to domestic students (Student P6)
>
> ...it has boosted our confidence as students as we see also an international lecturer has a different accent and dialect. So, that make us feel at ease, comfortable and not ashamed of our accents and thus boost our confidence to communicate (Student P1)

The excerpts indicate that international students increased communicative confidence by interacting with an international instructor who has a different English accent and dialect. These interactions help normalize the accents. Additionally, seeing this lecturer confidently engage with native English-speaking students can further strengthen the communication confidence of international students. Therefore, through team teaching, incommunicative and less confident students can gradually improve communication and confidence in using the English language and integration. The findings concur with McKenzie et al. (2022) that a sense of confidence in integrating and communicating in a context with diverse language proficiency is facilitated by the establishment of trust among students themselves and with members of the teaching team.

Team Teaching and Students' Engagement

It was agreed by most participants that team teaching played a role in elevating their own engagement and interaction with their instructors. Participants revealed the importance of giving oneself time to adjust and create deeper engagement in a new environment in an academic setting through the following approaches associated with team teaching.

First was the time and frequency of teaching. The findings revealed that the length of time that team teaching is taking place and how frequently it takes place have an impact on the improvement of integration through improved communication and interactions among community members in the academic

setting. Findings indicated that student integration was deeper from longer and more frequent team teaching sessions than shorter and less frequent team teaching sessions. This is because spending more time working together and interacting in a group setting facilitated by the team teaching approach helped students engage and learn better as reported by Student P2 below:

> For those who have improved so far, it is because of both the long-time sessions and a greater number of sessions they have been exposed to team teaching and in interacting together. …….one member of my group said he has been able to engage and learn due to the time that we have been together as well as when some lecturers use team teaching for extended periods of time.

The quotes above imply that students need sufficient time, number of sessions, and interactions to build strong engagement and interactions among themselves. Consequently, team teaching requires better instructional planning and organization that would allow reasonable time for effective engagement and foster a better learning experience. Subsequently, instructors need to deliberately plan for instructional time that would compel students to deliberately interact with each other and with the lecturers for better integration through familiarization with diverse accents and dialects (Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013). Nevertheless, Kim et al. (2021) support the allocation of more time and frequencies of team teaching but warn that it does not come cheap as it may translate to more investment on the part of HEIs in terms of time and financial cost for these sessions to be effective.

Second, students' integration skills seem to emanate from observing how instructors in team teaching converse and engage with each other and students. For instance, Student P5 posits that: "observing lecturers in team teaching, how they confidently talk to each other (occasionally they co-teach) and with us students despite their accent differences, helps to understand how we need to communicate and engage to overcome language barriers". The findings illuminate that students develop insights and learn practically how team teaching can reduce communication barriers leading to better engagement. This is similar to the assertion by Schwartz and Minkov (2023) that students may be influenced by the communication and engagement techniques demonstrated by instructors in team teaching, leading to changes in their own behaviour. This boosts students' confidence, enthusiasm, commitment, and involvement (Razack & Philibert, 2019; Arkoudis et al., 2013).

McKenzie et al. (2022) argue that for students to easily interact with instructors and their peers, they need to see instructors as role models and reflect such interactions with their peers with the intention to learn. As seen above, trust is developed once students have shared similarities with their instructors. That is, there is diversity on both sides, students and lecturers, and team teaching plays a great role in ironing out the differences and boosting integration abilities.

However, participants emphasised that the effectiveness of team teaching depends on the specific circumstances and individuals involved, beyond careful planning before execution. They underscored the need for a case-by-case study to fully understand the impact of team teaching, as commented by Student P3: "One challenge would be if there was a lack of commitment from students who have limited proficiency in English". The finding is supported by Garran et al. (2015), who argued that for fruitful team teaching, which supports genuine collaboration and partnership, a concerted set consisting of motivation, time investment, and dedicated effort is necessary. From this finding, it is also evident that the instructors of the module were intrinsically motivated to use team teaching, since despite their varied social, cultural, and language backgrounds, there was no university policy or extrinsic motivation encouraging or compelling instructors to practice team teaching.

Team Teaching and Inclusive Learning

Participants were of the view that for team teaching to uphold inclusion, the instructors should ask thought-provoking questions and encourage participation from students to enhance engagement and inclusion. This finding highlights the influence of instructors who employ team teaching approaches and

incorporate debates and discussions into their teaching and learning sessions. These methods encourage students to express their thoughts freely, thereby fostering an inclusive learning environment. Regarding this, Student P3 said:

> Aiming questions towards people who have limited interaction in the lecture will compel them to respond to the questions from instructors who use team teaching and other contributions from other students. This is significant for inclusive learning. Giving everyone in the room a chance to answer a question.

The finding concurs with Shanmugavelu et al. (2020) and Malak and Gambescia (2023) that questioning techniques by an instructor in the classroom can boost inclusive teaching and learning by intentionally limiting the number of responses given by active students and deliberately offering chances to inactive students to respond. This exposure of inactive students should, however, be cultivated through friendly continuous engagement, active listening, and careful observation of a diverse group of instructors. Like Wu and Liu (2024) and Marangell and Baik (2022), the interactions with instructors who possess distinct linguistic variations foster a more comprehensive and inclusive educational environment, allowing students to comfortably reflect, communicate, engage, and feel part of the group despite their linguistic diversity and cultural disparities. Regarding the contribution of team teaching to an inclusive educational environment, Student P4 said:

> Listening to different lecturers who are teaching as a team but with different accents helps us get used to different accents and makes it more inclusive.

In the same vein, Student P5 said:

> Our observation of and interactions with team teaching carried by international lecturers have brought a sense of comfortability and inclusive learning to us. I remember there was one student in our group who was bad at English, but his confidence increased after interacting with the instructors in the team teaching and reflected their practices to us fellow students.

This contradicts other findings, such as the study by Vogler and Long (2003), which expressed concerns about potential conflicts that may arise between instructors when applying team teaching, as well as the potential confusion that team teaching could cause among students. However, we argue that the potential conflict may happen when team teaching may be complicated by differing perceptions of team-teaching members and potentially bring unfavourable experiences to students, instead of fostering meaningful inclusion among students in a diverse learning environment as argued by Morelock et al. (2017) and Fitria and Dewi (2025).

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

Drawn from the findings, the practical implication of this research is to develop and implement effective institutional policies that promote the use of team-teaching approaches to enhance both inclusive learning and experiences of international students who are studying in countries where the local language and culture are different from theirs. The following institutional measures are recommended:

HEIs with a significant number of international students should facilitate and harness team teaching approaches through institutional structures such as team teaching policies. This should be supported with adequate recruitment of international instructors who should be working with local instructors within the HEIs. A good mixture of international instructors and students will expose international students to the varied interactions, accents, dialects, and hence improve their confidence and comfortability and subsequently their social integration, communication, and engagement skills.

As part of institutional professional development programs, education institutions should put in place training programs for instructors to apply team teaching approaches through the development and

implementation of team-teaching approaches for various objectives, including enhancing inclusivity and learning experiences of international students.

Limitations of the Study

This study used a limited sample size of international students and universities in the UK, which may not represent the entire population of international students and universities in the UK. This may limit the transferability of the findings to other international students in other universities in the UK and other English-speaking countries. Further, the study relied on self-reported experiences of international students concerning the implications of team teaching on managing international students' diversity and promoting inclusive learning. The lack of findings from observation data limits the richness and nuances regarding what exactly transpired in the team teaching classrooms. Hence, studies that may incorporate observation in the same topic are encouraged. Nevertheless, these findings demonstrate that team teaching through a sequential approach is a viable and impactful strategy for enhancing international students' integration in diverse higher education institutions by improving communication, engagement, and inclusive practices.

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Appendix I: Interview Guide with international students

Main Questions:

1. Can you provide any specific examples or instances where team teaching has enhanced communication in the classroom?
2. How do you perceive the use of team teaching in fostering an interactive classroom environment?
3. What are some specific ways in which team teaching encourages student interaction and engagement?
4. Have you noticed any challenges or limitations in the implementation of team teaching to foster an interactive classroom? If so, could you please elaborate?

Possible Follow-up Questions:

1. Could you please share any experiences that demonstrate the positive impact of team teaching on communication, either from your personal experience or based on observations?
2. From your perspective, how does team teaching contribute to the development of international students' communication skills?
3. What strategies or techniques have you found effective in leveraging team teaching to promote effective and productive communication among international students?

Main Questions:

1. In your experience, how does leveraging the strengths of multiple educators promote a sense of inclusion among students from diverse backgrounds?
2. Can you share any specific examples or instances where the collaboration between multiple educators has contributed to inclusivity in the classroom environment?
3. How do you perceive the impact of team teaching on creating a supportive and inclusive atmosphere for students from diverse backgrounds?
4. In your opinion, what are some ways in which team teaching can be utilized to address the unique needs and challenges faced by students from diverse backgrounds?

Possible Follow-up Questions:

1. Based on your observations or personal experiences, how does team teaching enhance a sense of belonging and acceptance among students from diverse backgrounds?
2. How does team teaching address any potential barriers or obstacles to inclusion that may arise in the classroom?

3. Have you noticed any challenges or difficulties in leveraging the strengths of multiple educators to promote inclusion? If so, could you please elaborate?

Final Questions:

1. Do you have any additional thoughts or insights you would like to share regarding team teaching and its impact on communication and inclusivity?
2. Based on your experiences, do you have any recommendations or suggestions for improving the implementation of team teaching to enhance communication and foster inclusivity in the classroom?