

**Thursday 4 June**

**12:00 - 12:40pm**

Room: Block Y, Room Y304

**Presentation Title:** Border Crossings: Identity and Learner Autonomy in an Australian University

<b>Presenter / Co-presenters:</b>	Sara Cotterall, Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia
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<b>Theme:</b>	Learner and teacher experiences
<b>Presentation Type:</b>	Paper presentation

### **Abstract**

Studying at university in a foreign country involves a complex mix of linguistic, academic and cultural challenges. Successful "border crossings" of this kind require individuals to adopt new ways of communicating and behaving, and to shape new identities for themselves. Chik (2007) has suggested that the formation of identity plays a critical role in the development of learner autonomy, and therefore the ability to manage the learning experience. While a number of previous studies have documented the stories of migrants as they encounter new cultures and communities (e.g. Pavlenko 1998, 2001), this project explores the experience - part migrant, part sojourner - of international graduate students navigating a foreign academic environment. I argue that these learners' stories can offer insights to other international students and also to teachers and institutions who wish to provide support for their students. I will begin by presenting the findings of a pilot survey of international graduate students' experiences at Macquarie University in Sydney, Australia. Then I will outline the methodology I am adopting as I gather the stories of the study participants.

### References:

- Chik, A. (2007). From learner identity to learner autonomy: a biographical study of two Hong Kong learners of English. In P. Benson (Ed.), *Learner autonomy 8: Teacher and learner perspectives* (pp. 41-60). Dublin: Authentik.
- Pavlenko, A. (2001). "How am I to become a woman in an American vein?": Transformations of gender performance in second language learning. In A. Pavlenko, A. Blackledge, I. Piller & M. Teutsch-Dwyer (Eds.) *Multilingualism, second language learning and gender* (pp. 133-174). New York: Mouton de Gruyter.

### **Biodata**

Sara Cotterall has been teaching and researching in the field of learner autonomy for over 20 years. She has worked as a language teacher, teacher educator and researcher in Australia, China, England, France, Greece, Japan and New Zealand. She is currently a doctoral student at Macquarie University in Australia.