



ASSESSMENTS IN CULTURE-RELATED COURSES FOR ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS – VIEWPOINTS AND PRACTICES



Do Thi Mai Thanh

Phan Thi Van Quyen



University of Languages and International Studies

Vietnam National University, Hanoi

CONTENT

BACKGROUND

COURSE OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENTS

CONCLUSION

- University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi (ULIS, VNU)
- Up to now, ULIS has been recognized as the national leading center of foreign language teacher and specialist education.
- Our Missions and Vision: “The University of Languages and International Studies (ULIS) is a prestigious research – oriented university in language education, linguistics, international studies and related social sciences and humanities. Our mission is to contribute to the national development through **the pursuit of excellence in education, research, and the provision of quality services relevant to social demands. We particularly value creativity, dynamics, honesty, responsibility, and capability to work and gain success** in a multicultural and competitive globalizing world.”

(<https://en.ulis.vnu.edu.vn/aboutulis-overview/>)



BACKGROUND

- Intercultural communication and Language, Culture and Society are the two culture-related courses for English majored students at University of Languages and International Studies, Vietnam National University, Hanoi.
- The aims of these courses are to
 - ❑ equip the future teachers of English, interpreters, translators and linguistic researchers with the social and cultural knowledge to facilitate the further language and culture teaching and study.
 - ❑ to raise their awareness of language and cultural differences, cultural biases and cultural stereotypes, the sociocultural impacts on language uses, thus, respect the diversity of the world.
- Therefore, in our courses, we focus on exploring students' creativity, competences and autonomy.
- To evaluate our students' work and achievement, holistic assessment is often used.

INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION – COURSE OBJECTIVES

- ❖ Apply basic concepts and processes of cross-cultural and intercultural communication in exploring, understanding and analysing cross cultural and intercultural phenomena.
- ❖ Use their informed understanding and increased sensitivity of their own culture and those of others to reflect on their own beliefs, actions and behaviours and to observe those of others to enhance effective intra-, inter- and cross-cultural communication.
- ❖ Identify adaptive challenges facing a person, or an organization in different cultural contexts and in their own contexts of constant change.
- ❖ Demonstrate their improved communication skills through ability to reflect, to suspend judgment, and to respect differences.

LANGUAGE, CULTURE AND SOCIETY – COURSE OBJECTIVES

The aims of this course are to cover

- ✚ The interrelationship of Culture, Society and Language.
- ✚ The influences of some socio-cultural factors namely age, gender, social class, politics and media on the use of language.
- ✚ Issues related to language use such as stereotyped and biased language, linguistic politeness, persuasive language, the power of language in many aspects of social life.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

- Holistic Assessment (Akubילו, F (2012); Meyers, N., & Nulty, D. (2009): maximizing student- learning outcomes, teachers/ assessors should develop materials and course objectives that are *relevant* , *realistic* , *motivating* and *matching* to the strengths of the students.
- *Intercultural communication* and *Language, Culture and Society* - content teaching and project-based courses – should be adapted to fit the Vietnamese circumstances and contexts.
- The course syllabus requirements are changed to fit in the course objectives, therefore, the assessments should be made to meet these criteria.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

What should be the assessment objectives of these content teaching and project based courses for English majored students?

- 1 Their English language proficiency? (No)
- 2 Their knowledge of the subjects (main focus)
- 3 Their progressive changes in skills and attitudes (main assessment)

COURSE ASSESSMENT

HOW ARE CULTURE-RELATED COURSES ASSESSED?

How culture-related courses are assessed?

Reflection and reflective practice:

- Reflective mini-essays/clips/portfolios
- Experiential learning essays

Self-assessment through self-awareness activities

- Group presentation on task-based project to explore people around them in order to see the differences between their "selfness" and "otherness"

Group presentation creativity

- Promote the strengths of group members. Each member will make use of their diversified competence and creativity via their ways of presenting their groupwork: *making video clips, live-presentation, live role-play, live talk-show/game show, recorded role-play and analysis, recorded presentation, poster, teacher-student role swap and students' initiated formats.*

COURSE ASSESSMENT

HOW ARE CULTURE-RELATED COURSES ASSESSED?

- **Reflection papers/essays.** Students write a short essay (300-400 words) reflecting their changes after the course, for example:

What changes do you think the course bring about to you? Compare the time before and after you learnt this course.

- **Project-based exploration of cultural behavior and perceptions.** Students are asked to work in groups to conduct small scale research by surveying/ observing people around them.

Design and conduct a small-scale survey on a particular community's common beliefs, values and social norms. (Suggestion: The 'community' in your survey may consist of: People in your community (your neighbours, classmates, students at your university ...; your same age/ course/ sex ... friends ...)

Example: Students' research topics: *premarital sex, LGBT discriminations, people with tatoos, gender inequality ...* in Vietnam (their nearby community) and foreigners visiting/ living in Vietnam to see the differences.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

HOW ARE CULTURE-RELATED COURSES ASSESSED?

- ***Vlog or Blog of self- exploration.***

Students make a video recording, short clip or blog exploring themselves entitled “How something/somebody changes me” (based on some videos, for example “How travel changes me” by Nas Daily <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CjZvyxUq8JA>)

Example: Students’ exploration of self identity and changing attitudes towards cultural differences.

COURSE ASSESSMENT

HOW ARE CULTURE-RELATED COURSES ASSESSED?

- **Results**

- ✚ Changes in their cultural attitudes (changes in values/beliefs; reduction of ethnocentrism, prejudices, discrimination and stereotypes)
- ✚ Improvements of skills (adaption, creativity, critical thinking ...)
- ✚ Enhancement of their sensitivity of intercultural communication and their awareness of cultural differences and diversity.

CONCLUSION

- To evaluate our students' work and achievement, holistic assessment is used.
 - The course grading can be assessed via
 - ✓ students' participations in the class (reflective mini essays/portfolio/peer and self assessment),
 - ✓ group presentation on particular task-based projects and final assignment (analytical/ argumentative/ experiential learning essays).
 - The main assessment focuses on
 - ✓ the students' acquisition of the course's knowledge
 - ✓ their progressive changes in skills (adaption, creativity, critical thinking ...)
- and
- ✓ their changes in attitudes (reduction of ethnocentrism, prejudices, discrimination and stereotypes; awareness of cultural differences and the respect of cultural diversity ...)

APPENDIXES

Topics for presentation

- TOPIC 1: Design and conduct a small-scale survey on a particular culture's common beliefs, values and social norms.
- TOPIC 2: Investigate some biased beliefs that might lead to distorted images of (a group of) peoples/ nations/ cultures and their impacts. These biased beliefs might cause/ be caused of ethnocentrism/ stereotypes/prejudice/ overgeneralization, discrimination, racism etc.
- TOPIC 3: Investigate the linguistic/communicative and cultural transfer phenomena in Vietnam
- TOPIC 4: Choose some values discussed in the course and investigate how those values are manifested in our own culture or other cultures. Of course you have to consider other factors such as social and environmental factors to explain those cultural behaviors and expressions. Give your critical opinions. You can select a particular cultural dimension/ pattern to analyse.
- TOPIC 5: Conduct a mini survey on how people of a particular group (age/gender/a culture/ a country ...) use and interpret certain non-verbal behaviors/concepts (e.g. gestures, time, markers etc). Do you think the meanings of certain behaviours are universal? What suggestions do you recommend to boost the adaptation in the intercultural contexts?

Reflection essay

- What changes do you think the course bring about to you? Compare the time before and after you learnt this course.

Topics for final essay

- If you have traveled/ will travel to (an)other culture(s), what are skills/ concepts that made you/ will make you more or less effectively adapt or not adapt in intercultural communication?
- Write an analysis/ reflection/ narrative essay of 1200-1500 words discussing the process of cultural adjustment and adaptations. Use specific examples to support your ideas.
- Intolerance and acceptance/ appreciation of other social and cultural differences are the aspects of the globalization world nowadays. What are some problems and solutions that frame the contexts for prejudices/ stereotypes and acceptance/tolerance?

REFERENCES

- **Akubailo, F** (2012), Holistic Assessment of Student's Learning Outcome, *Journal of Education and Practice*, Vol 3, No 12, 2012.
- **Meyers, N., & Nulty, D.** (2009). How to use (five) curriculum design principles to align Authentic learning environments, assessment, students' approaches to thinking and learning outcomes, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 34(5), 565-577.

Thank you!

A vibrant, hand-drawn illustration of the words "Thank you!". The word "Thank" is written in a bold, blocky font with each letter in a different color: 'T' is yellow, 'h' is orange, 'a' is green with a dotted pattern, 'n' is purple, and 'k' is orange. The word "you!" is written in a similar style: 'y' is green with a dotted pattern, 'o' is pink with a dotted pattern, and 'u!' is blue with a dotted pattern. The exclamation point is also blue with a dotted pattern. Several colorful flowers are scattered around the text: a blue flower with a purple center is above the 'k'; a blue flower with a purple center is to the right of the 'k'; a large pink flower with a yellow center and white dashed lines is in front of the 'y'; a blue flower with a purple center is to the left of the 'y'; and a small blue flower with a purple center is above the 'u!'. The entire graphic is set against a plain white background.