

PILOT PROJECT No. 5
"Cultural awareness training (and language teaching)"

FINAL REPORT and EVALUATION

PROJECT TITLE

Cultural Awareness Training (and Language Teaching)

PILOTING INSTITUTION(S)

Preparatory course for the Viennese universities

PILOTING INSTRUCTOR(S)

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PROJECT SUMMARY

Please describe briefly the overall goal and objectives of the pilot project.

Recognize and deal with diversity in multicultural teams:

Recognize cultural differences (subjective culture) beyond visible traits in history and geography (objective culture)

Compare one's own and contrasting cultures in terms of nonverbal behavior, communication styles, values and taboos

Become aware, accept, appreciate differences

Recognize one's own role

Recognize how the speech-act "agree/disagree" is realized in different cultures

Identify one's own attitude towards "having to wait" in different situations

Discover differences in the notion of "being in time" in different situations

Analyze the strengths and limits of educational systems and pedagogical principles in different countries

Self-assessment of one's own learning styles

Be initiative and make suggestions

Distinguish between helpful cultural generalizations and destructive stereotypes / prejudices

Introduce some basic aspects of the notion of the "subconscious" within the context of the notion of "culture"

Understand some basic aspects of the notion of "communication"

Identify and work on crucial issues relevant for the university course "Training in intercultural communication" ("Interkulturelles Praktikum" I.Mohr/H.Reha) and the project nr.6 "A Good Guide to Bad Manners" (H.Vogler)

TARGET GROUP

Please indicate age, gender, national profile and number of students in the pilot group and level of their language proficiency according to the European Framework.

The target group of the project consisted of participants in the final semester of the preparation course. It consisted of 33 students, 25 attended lessons in Geography (and Economics) and/or History (and Social Studies)
24 participants attended the language course German as a Foreign Language (10 lessons per week)
10 of them participated in the course "Training in intercultural communication" (Interkulturelles Praktikum / IKP)
Age: Between 20 and 31 years
Gender: 10 female, 14 male students
Nationalities: 19 Chinese, 2 from India, 2 from Saudi Arabia, 1 from Thailand
Language level: A2 to B1

PILOT PROJECT RELATION TO CHAGAL PRINCIPLES

Please specify how your project fits into the CHAGAL Curriculum Guidelines.

Teaching language (or any other subject) serves to understand culture and society of the respective country as well as one's own country
Study skills and academic competence
Language competence (language of study)
Intercultural and socio-cultural competence

METHODOLOGY

Please give a description of the methodology that you will use to achieve your pilot project objectives. Indicate the tools/instruments that will be developed/used during the pilot project (e.g. visual aids, questionnaires, handouts, teacher-developed materials etc.).

Self-assessment inventories
Visual aids, for example, "iceberg-model" of culture
Selection of pictures for the description of "That's me"
Handouts
Questionnaires
Use of materials developed by colleagues
Group discussions
Experiential activities and reflecting on the experiences (debriefing)

ACTION PLAN

Please provide a short description of the activities carried out within your pilot (e.g. who was doing what and when).

October 2003:

- Presented the students with questionnaires on the topic "typical" behavior"
- That's me: Presenting oneself through randomly chosen pictures
- Reflection on (hidden) pedagogical principles of formal school education and their change and one's own attitude towards learning (How I learned something new) / compare with competencies required in today's academic and professional world (such as team-work, creativity, independence,...) reflect on "self-made" job-descriptions of the "ideal teacher"

November/December 2003:

Mid-term discussion on the course of events in the multicultural teams of the course "Training in intercultural communication" (Interkulturelles Praktikum / IKP - I. Mohr/H.Reha). find out crucial issues

- Issue of "time" (having to wait, coming too late/too early)
- Not accepted (taboo) behavior in different situations
- Accepted/not accepted conversation topics, remarks, questions in different situations
- Lesson on exclamations by a student-teacher (good heavens!)
- Lesson on the "iceberg-model" of culture
- Lesson on attributions of national cliches, stereotypes, prejudices
- Carry out an interview with prepared for questions for the purpose of realizing cultural differences (eye-contact, welcome, let's drink coffee together, being in time, how are you, pay a compliment, criticize, conversation topics: politics, weather, salary, marriage and children, illness)
- Card-game "social hierarchy" (from Thiagi) - followed by an oral and written debriefing

January:

- Lesson: Communication beyond language

"Rapid debriefing" (Thiagi) in the final session of the course "Training in intercultural communication" (Interkulturelles Praktikum / IKP - I. Mohr/H.Reha):
"What did I learn through participation in the course?"

February:

- Questionnaire for the purpose of receiving feedback on issues covered in the course

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Please indicate what YOUR idea of the outcomes was BEFORE starting the pilot project (=text of your proposal).

My idea of the foreseeable outcomes was that the students involved get guidance for cultural awareness.

This will contribute to more satisfying relationships amongst international students themselves and between international and Austrian students.

It will contribute to identifying realistic learning-aims for study abroad

ACTUAL OUTCOMES

Please compare the outcomes AFTER the end of the pilot project to the expected outcomes above.

It is difficult, but not impossible to train cultural awareness within the context of the language-class in a preparatory course! The particular difficulty in this case was related to the fact that the composition of the class was predominantly Chinese, a group showing ambivalent cues. One had the impression of a passive group under tremendous pressure to show success. But most of them did not seem to be equipped with the appropriate attitude and working-style. One had the impression of a group passively consuming teaching-efforts. On the other hand there was willingness to cooperate in unusual pronunciation exercises and other kinds of activities.

The Chinese group seemed to be open-minded about project-oriented learning styles but it was difficult to motivate them to learn independently using a work-sheet (visiting the main library). A certain amount of pressure had to be put on them to carry out the expected tasks.

The actual outcome : There is an eagerness on part of the students to adapt to new learning-approaches, but it is necessary to accept traditional styles while constantly training for new challenges.

The conclusion drawn from this pilot project is that cooperation of intercultural training in the class-room and project-oriented approaches are worthwhile efforts to be pursued.

It is important that instructors of the preparatory institution take part in the interim meeting of the university course "Training in intercultural communication (Interkulturelles Praktikum/IKP) when the Austrian students express their concerns. It is recommended to have an interim-meeting with international students at the preparatory course of Viennese universities.

LIST OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Please list the materials you have developed (e.g. questionnaires, forms, handouts, records, notes, students' feedback etc.). - Please include the documents into the **APPENDIX** .

- Questionnaire for students on culture-related topics covered in the course (including summary of the feedback)
- Summary of spontaneous (written) responses to the question "What did you learn?" given by all participants (including instructors) of the course "Training in intercultural communication" (dimensions of learning mentioned)
- Guiding questions for several interviews on different cultural topics

PILOT PROJECT FINAL EVALUATION

Please answer the guiding questions below as far as possible. Additional comments are highly welcome, though.

1. Please describe the added value of the pilot project: benefit for the chagal student target group (e.g. with regard to competences, study skills, integration ...).

By means of appropriate activities and games students undergo interactive experiences and get the opportunity to reflect on them. They learn about different values, beliefs, attitudes, behaviours within their interacting group and about themselves. (The card-game "social hierarchy" for example.: students stick pin their cards chosen by chance on their forehead. They move around and get to know their position in the "card-hierarchy" by cues given to them by others. After a while they line up according to their expected position in the "hierarchy"). This is an example of an activity which helps to focus the attention of students on a specific set of behaviour. Students find themselves acting out in a specific way. They may notice that there are situations in everyday life in the surrounding foreign culture where one's own behaviour, patterns of thought and judgement could be in conflict with the existing one. The objective is that students get encouraged to observe their environment independently and to notice "critical incidents" (shake hands, eye-contact, distance, conversation-topics, counselling situations...) This kind of independence is a prerequisite for socio-cultural integration and successful academic study.

2. If applicable, please give a brief outline how (methodologically, in terms of content...) your pilot project supported / guided students into academic study - more efficiently, intensively... Than it would have been possible without the pilot project?

The overall objective to distract the students' attention from national traits, from attributions like "polite" (Chinese) versus "impolite" (German), from trivial comparison. The issue at stake is in what way politeness/impoliteness is realized in the respective country. To mention an example: In what way (by which verbal or non-verbal means) is satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the course-instruction expressed (by means of suggestions for improvement, by means of stern face-expression, by means of refusal of cooperation, by means of absenteeism...) It makes them aware of differences. Independent thought and notice of differences are essential means for successful academic study.

3. To underpin the findings above: please give a summary of students' feedback:

Students agree by an overwhelming majority that capability to work in a team and the ability to solve problems should be the focus of formal instruction (in addition to "discipline"!).

A large majority of the students says that they watch their surrounding in terms of communication-patterns and notice behaviour and discern conversation -topics which they didn't notice before.

They report that the interview on a topic about cultural differences helped them to get into contact and start a conversation with Austrians

The "rapid debriefing" at the final session (Austrian and international students) showed that the learning-experience in the course "training in intercultural communication"(Interkulturelles Praktikum /IKP) took place within five dimensions:

- Knowledge about objective culture (ranging from fairy tales to eating-habits, from water-pipe to family life at home)
- Working in a team
- Contact/friendship/understanding each other
- Personal insights about one's own weaknesses and strengths
- And (of course) practice of the German language

Besides factual knowledge and practice of the language other areas of learning (team, contact, personality growth) are of equal importance!

4. If any, which level of study language proficiency would you think as preconditional for carrying out a project like your pilot project? Please indicate the level according to the European Framework.

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5. Please describe the added value of the pilot project: benefit for the academic community at (host) universities (e.g. benefit for academic (everyday) life, for academic studies, effects on the internationalisation process /Bologna Process, benefit for majority student groups ...).

The outcome of the pilot project "cultural awareness training (and language teaching" appears to be more beneficial when combined with a project to be carried out by the students themselves. This was the case with this project. It cooperated with the project „Bad manners all over the world" (H.Vogler) and the course "Training in intercultural communication" (Interkulturelles Praktikum /IKP - I. Mohr)/10 students. The latter course directly benefits the majority students in that it is designed to develop intercultural competence of them. It is a university course (two hour credit) that offers the opportunity for well-guided

intercultural training over a period of one semester. It is organised in small teams of one Austrian and two international students who meet regularly and work on a common project.

6. You have finished a chagal pilot project. How much extra work did it afford (hours per week)?

How would you define the pilot project workload in terms of cost-benefit-ratio?

The benefits: Experimenting, testing, learning

The workload is difficult to discern since it is interconnected with the obligatory preparatory duties. Extra work was caused by developing feedback exercises and evaluation and preparing for the report as well as team coordination.

7. Sustainability:

- How do you feel about continuing your pilot project work/ developing it further / implement your findings into your teaching? If applicable, please indicate any plans how you will proceed further.

In the ongoing semester this pilotproject will be carried out a second time. It is again in cooperation with the course "Training in intercultural communication"(Interkulturelles Praktikum /IKP-I.M ohr/H.Reha). The focus will be on developing further the studentquestionnaires, feedback procedures and criteria for assessing the learning-process.

- Is your pilot project /or parts of it?/ transferable into mainstream teaching/learning at your institution? In which way would you suppose it might be implemented? Do you intend to do anything about it? Is there any support the chagal team can offer?

It should be transferred! However, the institution and the universities should make clear and transparent the educational objectives (study skills, ...) which are expected from the preparatory institution. Educational objectives should be officially announced to the students involved. Value must be put on it. Students at the preparatory institution should - in addition to their language competence - be credited for their study skills.

The preparatory course of the Vienneses universities depends on the readiness of the universities to invest resources for the cooperation with the preparatory institution. It is necessary to establish courses for intercultural training at universities in ccoperation with preparatory institutions. Besides theory and factual knowledge students in this kind

of course would gain urgently needed soft skills (as there are teambuilding processes, personality growth, communication styles, etc)

APPENDIX: Supporting Documents

- Questionnaire for students on culture-related topics covered in the course (including summary of the feedback)
- Summary of spontaneous (written) responses to the question "What did you learn?" given by all participants (including instructors) of the course "Training in intercultural communication" (dimensions of learning mentioned)
- Guiding questions for several interviews on different cultural topics