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**Cultural differences in Vietnam:
Differences in work-related values between Western
and Vietnamese culture and cultural awareness at
higher education**

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Cultural differences in Vietnam: Differences in work-related values between Western and Vietnamese culture and cultural awareness at higher education

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This dissertation is set in the context of the South of Vietnam. Vietnamese culture has long been influenced by Confucianism, which comprises high collectivism, large power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and long-term orientation (Thang, Quang & Warner, 2007). However, the economies in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam have recently witnessed a transitional development. After the economic reform “Doi Moi” was implemented in 1986, the Vietnamese government activated the country’s economic activities by reorganizing state-owned enterprises, encouraging private businesses, and attracting foreign direct investment (Weng, 2015). Because of the need to transform but still dominated by Confucian ideology, the Vietnamese economy has been in a mixed landscape, undergoing dramatic changes and struggling within the old and novel typologies simultaneously. This transformation brought in not only international practices but also international managers, since the current personnel were not adequately qualified to keep pace with the new trend (Weng, 2015). Local managers lacked the management knowledge to cope with the human-related issues arising in a market economy (Thang et al., 2007). McDaniel, Drew, Schermerhorn & Huynh (1999) suggested that the managerial competencies of those local managers must be upgraded to align with world levels of Human Resource Management in order to survive fierce economic competition.

Moreover, following the influx of foreign companies into the country, the call for more industry-ready graduates has been taken into account by many policy makers. Yet, it remains true that “many of the companies apparently found it difficult to find local employees that match their needs” (Weng, 2015, p. 82). According to a recent survey study (Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam, 2017), about 50% of the new graduates do not meet the expectations of the international employers with respect to language competence and communication skills. Imprinted by Confucian ideology, lecturing and rote learning still dominate throughout the educational system and because of this, skills development remains a big challenge for universities to overcome (Tran & Swierczek, 2014). Recently, various universities in Vietnam switched to a more communication-focused curriculum. Yet most studies are still struggling how to implement a communication-focused curriculum with more attention for intercultural competences. In spite of facing challenges to promote skills development, universities in Vietnam have insisted on their aims to enable learners to communicate effectively with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds in an internationalized and multicultural world. This mission requires innovative and creative approaches from both the higher education institutions and educators that might provide the learners with the means and skills of accessing and analyzing a wide range of cultural practices and meanings (Barany, 2016). Therefore, this project was conducted in order to accomplish the goal of students’ skills development in higher education so that a new generation of students could confidently step into the internationalized labor market.

1.2 Conceptual framework

This study focuses on enhancing undergraduates’ intercultural communication skills through incorporating knowledge about differences in cultures (Western versus Vietnamese) into the English classrooms. Exploration studies were carried out for an overview of the intercultural context before the intervention studies in the English classrooms were implemented. Thus, the dissertation attempts to build on the differences between two cultures: Western and Vietnamese or Eastern culture, the

intercultural competence (IC) concept and the interrelationship between English Language Teaching (ELT) and IC

1.2.1 Western versus Eastern or Vietnamese culture

In this dissertation, differences in values between Western and Vietnamese or Eastern culture are the main themes discussed throughout the studies. These dissimilarities are explained and analyzed in a way how they affect the communication and relationships between the interlocutors of the two cultures. Indeed, these cultural values of the two cultures might be the main elements that need to be firstly underpinned and seriously taken into account if an individual needs to survive in this globalized changeable era as culture is envisaged as an onion with many layers that one must peel back. Peeling back the skin of the onion is like tackling with the implicit beliefs and tacit values that differentiate one cultural group from another. Acknowledging cultural beliefs and values then provides a foundation for developing effective business practices in an international context (Taras, Steel & Kirkman, 2011). The context of this dissertation took place in a developing country, Vietnam where the two opposite cultural typologies cross in the intercultural workplace context. While differences do exist between nations in Asia, their similarities are undeniable because of the influence of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism (Kim, 2010). Accordingly, the typology of Eastern or Confucian culture has long been dominating Vietnamese people's communication and behavior patterns and practices. Confucian tradition encourages individuals to use "mind-to-mind" communication; in general, people from Eastern culture like the Vietnamese considerably value non-verbal communication and they are very ambiguous in their conversations. On the other hand, similar to many other Southeastern Asian countries, Vietnam is developing and a huge number of foreign companies are penetrating into the region. This means that the Vietnamese people with a Confucian mind now have to adapt to the new trend. However, this trendy wave is not easy for them to adapt because according to many studies delved into the Western philosophy, it is implied that Western people are direct, enthusiastic to talk, open to communication, competitive, confronting, demanding, assertive and aggressive (Kawar, 2012; Qingxue, 2003). Consistent with this mindset, previous cross-cultural communication studies observing assertiveness and argumentativeness proved that Asians are less assertive than Westerners (Kawar, 2012). Due to those considerable dissimilarities, studies about Vietnamese cultures have summarized some common cultural problems that expatriates face while working and living in Vietnam: nonverbal communication, sense of time, face savings, relationship building, negotiating, underestimation, overestimation, no attempts to understand Vietnamese working style. On the other hand, researchers also asserted problems that Vietnamese professionals face while working with Western workers such as: being treated as inferior, being requested immediate results, overwhelming straightforward command and feedback, etc. (Ashwill, 2005; Reeder, 1987; Tran, 2013). It is undeniable that miscommunications and misunderstandings can occur when these two cultures cross and an integrative way of communicating seems to be necessary for interlocutors from both cultures.

1.2.2 Intercultural competence

In recent years, the field of cross-cultural training becomes more and more prevailing due to globalization and internationalization and research has shown that cross-cultural training is useful for preparing people to work in another culture. Accordingly, intercultural competence training has evolved in many directions thanks to this trend (Bhawuk, 2001). Intercultural competence has been

rigorously examined and differently defined by many researchers and educationalists. In a review study, Griffith, Wolfeld, Armon, Rios & Liu (2016) summarized twenty-six intercultural competence constructs used in the higher education literature and these competences are believed to be connected with models used in education, training and research. The twenty-six IC constructs generally denote that “intercultural competence” always implies “communicative competence” and IC can be defined as the ability to develop and maintain relationships and the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations on the basis of one’s intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes. All the parties being involved in training and doing research about intercultural competence have not yet reached the consensus on both the definition and all the underlying dimensions involved. Because of the discrepancies and variability of the intercultural competence models and dimensions, it is a big challenge for educators and trainers to opt for an appropriate model. However, in all the constructs formulated, there are three components of intercultural competence: *knowledge*, *skills* and *attitudes*, which are essential to be taken into consideration. *Knowledge* involves culture specific and culture general knowledge, knowledge of self and other, knowledge of individual and societal interaction and insight regarding the ways in which culture affects language and communication. *Skills* refer to the ability to interpret a document or event from another culture and relate it to documents or events from one’s own, the ability to discover or interact (skills of discovery and interaction), the ability to acquire new knowledge and to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction, the ability to direct own learning and the ability to evaluate critically perspectives, practices and products in own and foreign cultures (critical cultural awareness). *Attitudes* concerns to relativizing self and valuing other and positive disposition towards learning (Byram et al., 2002; Sercu, 2010). Within these three components, Byram et al. (2002) indicated that the purpose of instruction is not to change the learners’ values but to make the learners explicit and be aware of any evaluative response to others.

1.2.3 The interrelationship between English Language Teaching (ELT) and Intercultural Competence (IC)

For many decades, the integration of ELT and IC has evolved into a practical phenomenon in every corner of the English classroom as many educators, researchers and practitioners agreed upon the significance and value of culture and cultural aspects in foreign language teaching. Foreign language teaching does not only involve linguistic performance and verbal communication, but also intercultural awareness and intercultural skills (Atay, Kurt, Camlibel, Ersin & Kaslioglu, 2009; Fungchomchoei & Kardkarnklai, 2016; Sercu, 2010). For this reason, the intercultural dimensions have become central keys for many ELT training programs and curricula. The intercultural dimensions defined by Byram et al. (2002) as a key set of competences referring to the linguistic and social skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for the learners to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural contact situations. In this sense, teaching English language cannot be separated from promoting the learners’ intercultural competence. Many educationalists have agreed that despite of being proficient in English, most students are unable to function properly in an intercultural context due to their shortage of IC knowledge (Fungchomchoei & Kardkarnklai, 2016; Jackson, 2014; Mitchell, Pardiniho, Yermakova-Aguiar & Meshkov, 2015; Vo, 2017).

The challenging task to the ELT teachers, therefore, is how to assist students to cross the borders of different cultures right in their English classrooms. It becomes imperative to work out a training program so that both teachers and students can reach their ultimate goals. These goals are considered crucial in the 21st century and fit in the aims and guiding principles of language teaching of

the Council of Europe “Education for intercultural understanding”. These guiding principles include the following components: linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, knowledge, skills of interpreting and relating, skills of discovery and interaction, intercultural attitudes, and critical cultural awareness (Byram et al., 2002; Fungchomchoei & Kardkarnklai, 2016). Obtaining these skills, language learners become “intercultural speakers”, who will be successful not only in communicating information but also in developing a human relationship with people of other languages and cultures (Byram et al., 2002). The learners, accordingly, are expected to reach the level of both language and intercultural fluency. At all educational levels, this is the main responsibility of ELT training programs.

Given this situation, this dissertation focuses on the development of future graduates’ intercultural competence by incorporating intercultural communication into the English classrooms. In order to reach this goal, I firstly, explored how the communication and relationship between the Vietnamese employees and foreign employers or managers, particularly the Western superiors, are structured and organized in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in the South of Vietnam. After the exploration studies, the author aimed at designing an intervention study of intercultural communication instruction utilizing “critical incident open-ended tasks” incorporated into the English classrooms with the view of enhancing the students’ awareness of intercultural communication. Accordingly, in this dissertation, four studies were conducted to answer four research questions.

The first and second study investigated work-related values that could affect the communication and relationships between Western employers and Vietnamese employees in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam. Holding an insightful view into the differences between employers and employees from different cultural backgrounds in organizations in Vietnam could improve workplace environment as well as assist higher education institutions in designing further cross-cultural training curriculum. Thus, the first two research questions addressed in this dissertation are:

1. To what extent do Vietnamese employees and Western employers/managers differ with respect to their work-related values?
2. What are the perceptions of Vietnamese employees and Western employers/managers towards communication in the workplace in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam ?

In the third and fourth study, the author designed an intercultural lesson to explore the effects of intercultural communication instruction with “critical incident open-ended tasks” on English non-majored undergraduates’ intercultural competence. Integrating culture instruction into the language lessons is a good preparation for students’ intercultural encounters. Then, the third and fourth research questions in this dissertation are:

3. What are the effects of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks on English non-majors’ awareness of intercultural communication?
4. Do the English non-majors develop their awareness of intercultural communication over time during a ten critical incident task instruction course?

1.3 Overview of the dissertation

This dissertation aims to examine the communication and relationship between Western employers or managers and Vietnamese employees in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in order to get an in-depth look into the challenges and problems that these professionals face in their daily work in an intercultural context in Vietnam. Afterwards, on the basis of the findings, I implement an intervention of intercultural communication instruction with “critical incident open-ended tasks” in which many

workplace scenarios are worked out by the students. The intervention is formulated to explore the effects of intercultural communication training by means of critical incident approach on students' awareness of intercultural communication and I also endeavor to enhance students' communication skills through the utilization of this intervention. The chapters (2-5) in this dissertation are organized in line with the aims presented. In chapter 6, summary of the main points of all the studies and practical implications as well as a final conclusion for the whole project are provided.

Chapter 2 relates to the first research question. The study investigated the differences between employees and employers of Vietnamese and Western companies in terms of their work-related attitudes. This study aimed to answer the question: *"To what extent do Vietnamese employees and Western employers/managers differ with respect to their work-related values?"* The study was conducted with 94 Western and Vietnamese companies in two areas: Ho Chi Minh city and the Mekong Delta in the South of Vietnam. Questionnaires were delivered to 763 Vietnamese employees, 43 Vietnamese employers/managers and 33 Western employers/managers. I performed an exploratory factor analysis on the employees' questionnaire data and used the same procedure analysis for the employers' questionnaire. The study specified the most significant differences in work-related attitudes between Western and Vietnamese professionals.

Chapter 3 addresses the second research question. This study was conducted in order to validate the findings obtained from the questionnaire data in study one. I explored in-depth the problematic issues with respect to intercultural communication between Western employers/managers and Vietnamese employees in the same foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures that the questionnaire data were collected. Two research questions guided this study: 1) *What are the perceptions of Vietnamese employees towards communication in the workplace in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam?* 2) *What are the perceptions of Western employers/managers towards communication in the workplace in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam?* Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 Western employers/managers and 33 Vietnamese employees. Many probing questions were used to assist the participants to relate their experiences of their communication with their cross-cultural counterparts. These experiences included 1) their interests when working in the current company, 2) their opinions about intercultural communication with their cross-cultural interlocutors, 3) the problems or incidents they faced during the interactional process, what was done and how they fixed the problems and 4) their expectations from their cross-cultural partners. Six cultural values from the first study were adopted as a base for the interview analysis and then cross-case matrix was applied to code all the interview protocols into these six dimensions.

Chapter 4 regards to the third research question in this dissertation. The study aimed to explore the effects of intercultural communication training by means of critical incident task on English non-majored undergraduates' intercultural competence. This study sought for answer to this question: *"Do intercultural communication training with critical incident open-ended tasks enhance English non-majored undergraduates' awareness of intercultural communication?"* In order to examine the effect of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks on learners' awareness of intercultural communication, we performed a multivariate analysis of covariance with the condition (intercultural communication instruction with critical incident task or regular education) as independent variable, the four indicators of awareness of intercultural communication at the posttest as dependent variables, the pretest scores on the same indicators as covariates. The study proved that intercultural communication instruction with critical incident tasks could provide a basic foundation which can serve many needs and from which further cross-cultural learning may develop.

Chapter 5 provided further insights into the effects of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks. The study was targeted to develop English non-majors' awareness of intercultural communication throughout the teaching of cultural general knowledge with ten critical incident open-ended tasks. This study focused on answering the following research questions: 1) *What are the effects of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks on English non-majors' awareness of intercultural communication?* 2) *Is this effect different for students who differ in their ability in awareness of intercultural communication?* 3) *Do the English non-majors develop their awareness of intercultural communication over time?* 4) *Do students who differ in their ability in awareness of intercultural communication score differently on different critical incident tasks?* In order to examine the effects of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident tasks, I performed univariate analysis of covariance with the condition (intercultural communication instruction with critical incident task or regular education) as independent variable, the posttest scores as dependent variable and the pretest scores as covariate. Next, I performed a multivariate analysis of covariance with the condition (intercultural communication instruction with critical incident task or regular education) as independent variable, the four indicators of awareness of intercultural communication at the posttest as dependent variables, the pretest scores on the same indicators as covariates. Afterwards, I examined how many ability groups could be distinguished based on the pre-test scores. The analysis of covariances for two, three and four binned groups was also repeated. In order to observe how the students develop their awareness of intercultural communication over ten tasks, I plotted the original scores of the ten tasks, both for the total scores and for the four indicators. All these analyses were done in order to grasp an in-depth view of the impact of the intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended task between the experimental and control group and also among the three ability groups of students over ten critical incident open-ended tasks.

Chapter 6 brought about a general discussion of the whole project, provided practical implications and a short summary to conclude all the points presented.

CHAPTER 2

An exploration study into differences in work-related attitudes between Western employers and Vietnamese employees in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam

This chapter has been published in an adapted form as: Tran, T. T. Q, Admiraal, W. & Saab, N. (2017). Cultural distance in the workplace: Differences in work-related attitudes between Vietnamese employees and Western employers. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 12(10), 91-110. Doi: 10.5539/ijbm.v12n10p91.

Abstract

In this globalized and internationalized world, intercultural communication at workplaces is a topic often examined. This study aimed to shed light on the cultural differences in work-related values between Western and Vietnamese professionals in Vietnam. In total, 94 Western and Vietnamese companies in two areas in the South of Vietnam participated. Questionnaires were completed by 763 Vietnamese employees, 43 Vietnamese employers/managers and 33 Western employers/managers. The findings from the questionnaire data indicate that there are substantial differences in work-related attitudes between Western employers and Vietnamese employees that are related to both cultural differences and position in a company. *Sense of time* and *face-concern* are the two prominent differences between Western and Vietnamese professionals. Implications are discussed for further training of Vietnamese prospective graduates so that they can work effectively with Western employers/managers in the future.

2.1 Introduction

As a result of globalization, many foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures are mushrooming in East Asia, where expatriates from Western nations and local staff work and interact together on a daily basis (Brew & Cairns, 2004). Since the two parties are from two divergent cultures, conflicts and misunderstandings at the workplace are inevitable. This can make it difficult for both parties to complete their tasks and work productively. In such a setting, cultural distance has been understood to be the key reason for conflicts and misunderstandings (Brew & Cairns, 2004; Froese & Peltokorpi, 2011; Hofstede, 2001; Peltokorpi, 2008; Redmond, 2000). Cultural distance can be defined as the degree of dissimilarity between two cultures. The more dissimilar the cultures are, the harder it is for interlocutors to adjust. Peltokorpi (2008) argued that living in a culturally similar country is less stressful than living in a culturally distant country since similarities help to predict and explain host national behavior. She also discussed the negative influence of cultural distance on interaction in work settings. Cultural distance creates challenges and communication barriers for both employees and employers. In addition, cultural distance in communication and management style can negatively affect the organization's workforce productivity. Higher education programs could prepare Vietnamese students to work in this international work situation. However, we do not know much about cultural distance and its effects in the Vietnamese setting. The current study was aimed at providing greater insight into differences between employers and employees from different cultural backgrounds in organizations in Vietnam.

2.2 Theoretical background

2.2.1 The Vietnamese workplace context

The economies in Southeast Asia, including Vietnam have recently witnessed a transitional development. After the economic reform "Doi Moi" was implemented in 1986, the Vietnamese government activated the country's economic activities by reorganizing state-owned enterprises, encouraging private businesses, and attracting foreign direct investment (Weng, 2015). Because of the need to transform but still dominated by Confucian ideology, the Vietnamese economy has been in a mixed landscape, undergoing dramatic changes and struggling within the old and novel typologies simultaneously. This transformation brought in international managers, since the current personnel were not adequately qualified to keep pace with the new trend (Weng, 2015). Local managers lacked the management knowledge to cope with the human-related issues arising in a market economy (Le, Rowley, Truong & Warner, 2007). McDaniel, Schermerhorn & Huynh (1999) suggested that the managerial competencies of those local managers must be upgraded to align with world levels of Human Resource Management in order to survive fierce economic competition. Moreover, following the influx of foreign companies into the country, the call for more industry-ready graduates has been taken into account by many policy makers. Still, "many of the companies apparently found it difficult to find local employees that match their needs" (Weng, 2015, p. 82). Graduate employability has become a topic of both concern and debate among higher education institutions, employers, enterprises, students and their families (Tran, 2012). The main mission of higher education institutions

is training and producing an educated labor force for the industry. However, in Vietnamese universities, this mission is difficult to reach because of the lack of connections between university, research institutions and the internal industry. This absence of collaboration hinders preparing students with the necessary skills and knowledge required by the contemporary labor market. Moreover, since Vietnamese culture bears similar traits to China in many aspects such as high collectivism, large power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, masculinity, and long-term orientation (Vuong, 2002). Although recently there have been studies indicating that Vietnamese professionals have shown their attitudes towards individualism, which means that employees direct more to individual achievement and the high power distance dimension is not as high as it was 10 years ago thanks to the trend that the younger generations are becoming more individualistic and independent, lots of studies noted certain attributes of Vietnamese workers such as indirectness in their communication with others, respect for hierarchy, lack of work orientation and adherence to timeline and lack of language ability to communicate effectively with foreign workers (Le, Rowley, Truong & Warner, 2007; Tran, 2012; Pham, 2014; Weng, 2015). Accordingly, the educational system have difficulties to address Western norms on, for example, trainees' communication skills, teamwork skills and other interpersonal skills. To prepare future workers better, teaching and learning about interpersonal and cross-cultural communication skills should be done in both enterprises and higher education institutions.

2.2.2 Cultural distance in work-related values between Western and Vietnamese culture

In general, belief systems are crucial to the study of intercultural communication because they entail the core of our thoughts and actions (Qingxue, 2003). In this study, the four cultural dimensions reflecting the differences in belief system between Vietnamese and Western culture: *sense of time*, *power distance*, *low versus high cultural context orientation* and *work-related value orientations* are selected as the basics for the questionnaire item generation because of the following reasons. *First*, we aimed to examine the gap in preferences and expectations between Western employers and Vietnamese employees; Vietnamese employers and employees; Western and Vietnamese employers and Vietnamese employees working in Vietnamese companies and Vietnamese employees working in Western companies. Previous studies in Vietnam (Chi, 2012; Pham, 2012; Thang, Rowley, Quang & Warner, 2007; Tran, 2013; Truong & Nguyen, 2002) have just touched one or two cultural dimensions and they have not focused much on *work-related value orientations* yet. *Second*, we endeavored to tackle what cultural dimensions causing the most problems to professionals from two different cultures and according to many other studies (Hofstede, 2001; Pham, 2014; He & Liu, 2010, etc.), *sense of time*, *power distance* and *low versus high cultural context orientation* are three significant differences between Vietnamese and Western culture. Vietnam is strongly imprinted by Confucianism which was the last dimension Hofstede added to his work for Eastern countries. In Hofstede's framework, Vietnam scored high on long term orientation (perception of time) (80) which indicated that in this dimension, Vietnam was proved to be greatly distant from other Western countries (The United States: 29; The United Kingdom: 25; The Netherlands: 44; Sweden: 33; Germany: 31; New Zealand: 30; etc.). In addition, previous studies (Ali, 1993; Bochner & Hesketh, 1994; Podrug, 2011) adopted *power distance* and *low versus high cultural context orientation* to determine *participants' decision-making styles* and *relationship with superiors* in other contexts different from South East Asia. In this study, we chose the same values but for an examination in the context of Vietnam. However, when we conducted factor analyses for the questionnaire items with these four cultural dimensions as four scales, these four cultural dimensions became 7 dimensions afterwards (see method

section). In the following sections, elaborations and definitions of the four main basic dimensions together with their sub-dimensions are presented.

1. Sense of time

“*Sense of time*” is the way people feel, experience and evaluate time (Venter, 2006). Different culture has different perspective towards time, punctuality and pace of life and those concepts are manifested in their manners and attitudes. Many researchers have conceptualized the distance in time perception between Western and Eastern culture which affects professionals’ manners, decisions and expectations in a cross cultural workplace. Wang, Wang, Ruona & Rojewski (2007) and Brew & Cairns (2004) contended that time orientation in Confucian cultures like Chinese and other Eastern countries tends to be more past-oriented than present and future-oriented. This means that people in those cultures are inclined towards tradition and time is considered to be flexible and repeatable and is used to achieve ultimate human reward. This perspective notifies a sharp contrast with Western culture, which focuses on efficiency and, thus, time is carefully designated in order to achieve personal and organizational goals (Arman & Adair, 2012; Kathryn, 2006; Kwar, 2012; Kvassov, 2003; Smith & Pham, 1996).

This dimension has also been divided into two sub-dimensions (thanks to factor analysis): *being on time in a direct way* and *being on time with a condition*.

- a) *Being on time in a direct way*: the items aimed to measure the extent to which employers and employees evaluate the degree of punctuality in daily work situations.
- b) *Being on time with a condition*: the items also aimed to measure the extent of punctuality the employers and employees evaluate in daily work situations, but with a condition added.

2. Power distance

The concept of “power distance” is defined as the extent of human inequality among individuals of the society and how people cope with it. Equivalently, power distance can be interpreted as a cultural dimension illustrating the degree to which individuals feel comfortable with an unequal distribution of power and how much of an equal distribution they expect and find acceptable (Bochner & Hesketh, 1994; Hofstede, 2001; Merkin, 2006)

In Hofstede’s survey results, Vietnam earned the score of 70 which indicates that Vietnam is a high power distance society in which people “accept a hierarchical order”; thus people are aware of their positions in that hierarchy and needs no further justification. On the contrary, most of the countries in Western cultures are regarded as small power distance societies because in Hofstede’s survey results (1984), they performed the low score on power distance, for instance, Australia (36), Newzealand (22), America (40), United Kingdom (35), Germany (35), The Netherlands (38), Switzerland (34), Belgium (65), Norway (31), Sweden (31), Denmark (18), etc. In those cultures, egalitarianism is significantly valued and subordinates have a say in important matters; thus “hierarchy is considered an arrangement of convenience” (Hofstede, 2001).

Similarly, this value has been split into two sub-dimensions: *taking part in management’s decision making* and *open relationship with higher management* (thanks to factor analysis).

a) *Taking part in management's decision making:*

Employee involvement in work-related decisions has been proved to be positively associated with labor productivity. However, cultural values, particularly power distance might highly influence the degree of employee involvement in work-related decisions (Le, Rowley, Truong & Warner, 2007). Accordingly, this might complicate the direct feedback between Western higher managers and Vietnamese employees as they own two opposite views on decision-making process (Bjorkman & Lu, 1999). In Vietnamese culture, most people highlight a “we” identity and employees might rarely speak out their own voice in the process of higher management’ decision-making even if they are requested to do so (Le, Rowley, Truong & Warner, 2007; Qingxue, 2013; Wang, Wang, Ruona & Rojewski, 2007). In contrast, Western individualistic culture accentuates an individual’s thoughts and opinions, initiative and achievement and individual decision-making (Wang, Wang, Ruona & Rojewski, 2007)

b) *Open relationship with higher managers*

This value is directed by the degree of power distance the employees perceive towards their higher managers. The more power from the employers the employees discern, the more distance they make. According to Diem (2013), Hieu (2013), Liu & He (2010) and Wang (2009), in low power distance countries, the distribution of authority is exercised and the emotional distance between employers and employees is quite small. However, in high power distance country like Vietnam, a great distance in relationship between employers and employees is frequently acknowledged. Accordingly, countries with higher power distance scores would demonstrate more formal employer-employee relationships than compared to lower power distance countries (Bochner & Hesketh, 1994; Sagie & Aycan, 2003).

3. Low versus high context cultural orientation

a) *High-context society*

In order to define a high-context society, it is vital to define a high-context communication or message. A high-context communication is characterized as a message with very little coded, explicit or transmitted part of the message. The message itself can usually lie in either the physical context or is internalized in the person. For this reason, when people in high-context societies are in interactions, they crack messages by using the interactants’ roles, physical, sociorelational and perceptual environment. Despite the fact that “words and sentences may be collapsed and shortened”, conversations are still going on and interlocutors remain well-informed. Furthermore, in this culture, the frequency of silence and non-verbal behaviors used is significantly high if the social status of the speakers is taken into consideration (Sanchez-Burks & Barak, 2005; Sage, 2005; Shoji, Nevgi & Tella, 2012).

b) *Low-context society*

Pertaining a different perspective, messages and information in low-context cultures are explicitly coded or we can call “elaborated codes”. People heavily rely on “verbal code system” for creating and interpreting meaning. Although those interlocutors can recognize non-verbal context, they favor and

tend to focus more on the verbal context. Because of these features, communicants in those societies feel a need to talk and uncomfortable with silence or non-verbal communication (Sanchez-Burks & Barak, 2005; Sage, 2005; Shoji, Nevgi & Tella, 2012)

According to Hall (2000), many collectivistic cultures have high-context tendencies including China, Japan, North and South Korea, Vietnam, and many Arab and African cultures while many individualistic cultures constitute low-context tendencies, comprising of Switzerland, Germany, Scandinavia, Australia, Newzealand, the Netherlands, Belgium, the United States, France and the United Kingdom, etc. When people in the high-context cultures are in interactions with nationals from the low-context cultures, they communicate differently and vagueness usually happens; thus this predisposes people to communication breakdowns.

In this study, low versus high-context cultural orientation was addressed in terms of *face-concern* which is one's consideration and threat of losing their face in either personal or social circumstances.

c) *Face-concern*

Jariya (2012) and Pham (2014) defined “face-saving” as people’s realization of face protection to prevent social disapproval or criticism not only on themselves but also the community they belong to. Scholars have consistently pointed out that concern for face is of utmost importance in most Eastern cultures (Kim & Nam, 1998). This means that great emphasis is placed on reaching a consensus within organizations in order to save mutual face and maintain harmony. Because of this, the Eastern Vietnamese employees tend to beat around the bush when it comes to negative issues. The listeners always have to read between the lines what the real meaning is (Bjorkman & Lu, 1999). In contrast, face concern in Western culture implies the individual’s want to be approved of and the individual’s want to be free from imposition (Pham, 2014). In fact, in Vietnamese culture, face is determined by hierarchical social status and harmonious relationship with other people whereas in Western culture, face is determined by the individual’s internal attributes such as competence. Accordingly, the Vietnamese employees tend to use more indirect communication in social context for the sake of face concern which might cause a lot of ambiguity and misunderstandings to Western professionals.

4. **Work-related values**

In this study, work-related values are addressed in two sub-dimensions: *accountability* and *work-performance versus autocratic orientation* which are the two prominent different characteristics to measure individuals’ work effectiveness between Vietnamese and Western cultures (Gelfand, Lim & Raver, 2005; Mai & Hoang, 2015; Le, Rowley, Truong & Warner, 2007).

a) *Accountability*

Gelfand, Lim & Raver (2004) defined accountability as “the perception of being answerable for actions or decisions, in accordance with interpersonal, social, and structural contingencies, all of which are embedded in particular sociocultural contexts” (Gelfand, Lim & Raver, 2004, p. 137). This concept emphasized the characteristic of cultural specificity in which individuals in different cultures are educated to understand the unique expectations of accountability. In individualistic culture, accountability normally rests with specific individuals, both for individual and organizational

successes or failures, whereas in collectivistic culture, individuals are usually not hold accountable for the group's successes or failures. The Vietnamese culture bears this specific trait of collective responsibility in which people identifying themselves as part of a specific group, team or unit and individual accountability is not clearly defined (Bjorkman & Lu, 1999; Le, Rowley, Truong & Warner, 2007).

b) Work-performance versus autocratic orientation

Being influenced by Confucianism, autocratic leadership is commonly seen in Vietnamese organizational culture (Hoang, 2015; Le, Rowley, Truong & Warner, 2007). In this kind of leadership, the management usually generate strong dominance over their employees and govern all the actions and decisions in their offices. In addition, communication with employees is formal and written forms are fundamentally prioritized.

In contrast, work-performance orientation leadership facilitates employees' advancement, idea generation, creativity and innovativeness. Work-performance orientation can be defined as "the degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence" (House, 2001). In Western culture as in individualistic culture, autonomy and individual initiative are encouraged and the employees have greater chances to take their own actions in their workplace context (Bochner & Hesketh, 1994; Le, Rowley, Truong & Warner, 2007; Weng, 2015).

2.2.3 Aim of the current study

The current study aimed at providing insights into differences between employers and employees from different cultural backgrounds. More specifically, differences between employees and employers of Vietnamese and Western companies were examined in terms of their work-related values. We aimed to answer the following questions:

- To what extent do Vietnamese employees and Western employers differ with respect to their work-related values?

We also generated the following three research questions to investigate how the other groups differed from the first two groups in order to grasp the complete picture of the divergence between the two cultures in the Vietnamese workplace context.

- To what extent do Vietnamese and Western employers differ with respect to their work-related values?
- To what extent do Vietnamese employers and employees differ with respect to attitudes towards work-related values?
- To what extent do Vietnamese employees working in Western companies and in Vietnamese companies differ with respect to attitudes towards work-related values?

2.3 Methods

2.3.1 Participants

In total, 94 Western and Vietnamese companies in two areas in the South of Vietnam (Ho Chi Minh City and the Mekong Delta) participated. We searched for the companies' information on the Internet, using reports on the Global Trade in Customer Language website (<http://eu.ecizi.com>). We also searched for companies using the researchers' networks. We collected the companies' information;

then we sent emails, phoned or visited the companies in person to ask for their permission to carry out our research at those companies. We visited 128 companies, and 94 of them agreed to participate. Of these 94 companies, 47 were foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures and 47 were Vietnamese private and state companies. In the 47 foreign companies, 33 higher managers (all Westerners including Americans, Australians, New Zealanders, and Europeans) and 360 Vietnamese employees participated. In the 47 Vietnamese companies, 43 Vietnamese higher managers and 403 Vietnamese employees participated. We provide background information on the participants in Table 2.1.

2.3.2 Data collection

Development of the questionnaire

Data were collected using a questionnaire with separate versions for the employers and the employees (see Appendix 1). The items of the questionnaires were based on the literature on cultural distance between Western and Vietnamese culture and aimed at measuring professionals' attitudes towards work-related values. Both questionnaires were divided into two parts: the "preference" part and the "importance" part. The "preference" part asked the participants to indicate their preferences regarding the items while the "importance" part asked the participants to indicate how important the items were. We had the preference and importance part because we would like to make a distinction between (1) what the employers expect from their employees and vice versa and (2) how important the issues (policies in the company) are for both the employers and employees. By doing this way, we can examine whether there are clashes in their ideas in certain values in both their expectations from the counterpart's actions (preference) and their thoughts about some policies in the companies (importance). The five-point Slider scale was used in both parts of the questionnaire. Both questionnaires were designed in English and then translated into Vietnamese. We employed a back translation to ensure the validity of the translation. The questionnaire was piloted with one foreign and one Vietnamese company. During the piloting phase, the questionnaires' scales were modified from Slider scales to Likert scales because the Vietnamese participants were hesitant to answer using scale points without wording. The employees' questionnaire had 59 items and the employers' 61 items. All items were scored on five-point Likert-type scales with the equivalent to "1 = not at all", "2 = not really", "3 = somewhat", "4 = quite a lot", "5 = very much".

Procedure

One of the researchers visited each company in person to deliver the paper questionnaires and elaborate on the instructions for the questionnaires. Some companies completed the questionnaires with the researcher's instructions; others, due to time constraints, used an instructional guideline distributed to the companies' secretaries, receptionists, or personnel department's secretaries to do the questionnaires. However, all those agents received careful instructions for questionnaire response from the visiting researcher. Statements of participants' implied consent were included in the instrument. Vietnamese employers and employees received a Vietnamese version of the questionnaire, whereas Western employers were administered with an English version.

Table 2.1
Participants

Background Information	Vietnamese companies		Western companies	
	Employees	Employers	Employees	Employers
1. Age				
<18	0	0	0	0
18-29	158	8	125	3
30-39	127	25	119	17
40-49	22	8	17	13
50 or older	4	2	1	0
2. Sex				
Male	95	19	77	30
Female	216	23	183	3
3. Job status				
CEO		3		9
Deputy CEO		0		4
Senior manager		6		4
Middle manager		3		8
First-line manager		17		6
Supervisor		14		1
4. Years of working in Vietnam				
1-2 years	35	1	23	4
3-5 years	91	0	73	13
More than 5 years	71	11	55	10
10 years	28	4	46	2
More than 10 years	69	21	61	4
More than 20 years	17	6	5	0
5. Years of working with Non-Vietnamese				
1-2 years	88		86	
3-5 years	64		80	
More than 5 years	28		71	
10 years	2		8	
More than 10 years	9		9	
More than 20 years	2		1	
6. Highest degree				
Elementary	0	0	0	0
Secondary	1	0	0	0
High school	5	0	0	0
Vocational	10	0	17	0
College/University	273	35	228	26
Other	22	8	15	7
7. How large is the organization?				
Micro (<10 employees)		5		1
Small (<50 employees)		9		14
Medium-sized (<250 employees)		13		11
Large (>250 employees)		11		6

Professionals' work-related values

The questionnaire items meant to measure the employers' and employees' work-related values. In order to explore underlying dimensions, we performed an exploratory factor analysis on the employees' questionnaire data (using Principle component analysis and Varimax rotation) separately on the preference and importance part of the questionnaire. We decided for four factors for the preference part, based on the elbow criterion, explaining 48% of the variance between employees. Items with factor loadings $>.4$ on one factor and $<.4$ on the other factors were included; all other items were excluded.

Table 2.2

Two example items for seven factors

<i>Measures</i>	<i>Example items</i>	
	<i>Employees' questionnaire</i>	<i>Employers' questionnaire</i>
1. Being on time in a direct way	32. Being late for meetings at work.	1. I expect that my employees keep a deadline to finish their assigned work.
2. Being on time with a condition	40. Asking for a deadline extension if I have good reasons	4. I allow my employees to leave the office earlier than the appointed time if they have good reasons.
3. Taking part in decision-making	4. Being consulted before the employers/higher managers' decisions are made.	12. I expect of employees that they take part in the decision-making process of higher management
4. Open relationship with employers	13. Talking freely to higher managers	9. I expect that my employees talk freely to employers/higher managers
5. Accountability	31. Being kept responsible for the quality of the work that I produce	8. I expect that my employees do assigned tasks out of their job functions if necessary.
6. Face concern	23. Withdrawing my point of view instead of encountering my employers/higher managers.	35. I expect that my employees withdraw their point of view instead of encountering with their employers/higher managers.
7. Work performance versus autocratic orientation	Promotion on the basis of my actual contribution (item 51 for employees' questionnaire and 53 for employers' questionnaire) Adequate time to explore and develop new ideas (item 55 for employees' questionnaire and 57 for employers' questionnaire) (The items for this dimension are the same for the employees' and employers' questionnaire)	

We repeated this analysis procedure for the items of the importance part of the questionnaire, which resulted in one underlying factor, explaining 52,3% of the total variance. We then performed reliability analyses on these five factors and subdivided the "sense of time" factor into two sub-factors named

“being on time in a direct way” and “being on time with a condition”. Similarly, the “power distance” factor was split into two sub-factors labelled “taking part in decision-making” and “open relationship with higher managers”. This procedure resulted in seven factors (in Table 2.2, we included two example items for each factor). In this way, we had four reliable scales for *sense of time* and *power distance* respectively:

- 1) *Being on time in a direct way* refers to the extent to which employers and employees evaluate the degree of punctuality in daily work situations.
- 2) *Being on time with a condition* also denotes the extent of punctuality the employers and employees evaluate in daily work situations, but with a condition added.
- 3) *Taking part in decision-making* refers to the extent to which decision-making between higher managers and employees in daily work situations is shared.
- 4) *Open relationship with higher managers* refers to the degree of intimacy or closeness in daily communication in the workplace between employers and employees.
- 5) *Face concern* refers to the extent to which employees save their face in order to keep their own and others’ prestige in daily work situations.
- 6) *Accountability* refers to the extent to which self-accountability in their daily work situations is performed by the employees and employers evaluate and control their employees’ accountability in these situations.
- 7) *Autocratic versus work-performance orientation* refers to the extent to which how employees’ work-performance is controlled and evaluated by their higher managers.

Table 2.3
Summary of the Questionnaire

Measures	Number of Items		Cronbach Alpha		
	Employees’ questionnaire	Employers’ questionnaire	Vietnamese employees	Western employers	Vietnamese employers
1. <i>Being on time in a direct way</i>	4	4	.68	.65	.83
2. <i>Being on time with a condition</i>	3	3	.79	.81	.80
3. <i>Taking part in decision-making</i>	3	5	.86	.63	.74
4. <i>Open relationship with employers</i>	9	8	.85	.60	.834
5. <i>Accountability</i>	4	4	.69	.61	.80
6. <i>Face concern</i>	4	3	.75	.77	.86
7. <i>Work performance versus autocratic orientation</i>	9	9	.85	.67	.848

After establishing the seven factors of work-related values for Vietnamese employees, we employed this structure on the employers' data. In Table 2.3, we included for each factor the number of items and the reliability in terms of Cronbach's alpha.

2.4 Analysis

In order to answer the research questions, multivariate analyses of variance were performed with two groups of participants as factor and the seven work-related values as dependent variables.

2.5 Results

In general, correlation between the seven work-related values shown in Table 2.4 are low to moderate as might be expected after factor analyses with varimax rotation. For employees, *Taking part in decision-making* and *Open relationship with employers/managers* ($r = 0.584$), *Being on time in a direct way* and *Being on time with a condition* ($r = 0.412$), and *Open relationship with employers/managers* and *Work-performance orientation vs. autocratic orientation* ($R = 0.402$) are positively correlated. For employers, we found more moderate positive correlations, which refer to different associations than in the employee sample.

Table 2.4

Correlations between the seven scales referring to work-related values.

Below the diagonal for employers, above the diagonal for employees (1 = *Being on time in a direct way*; 2 = *Being on time with a condition*; 3 = *Taking part in decision-making*; 4 = *Open relationship with employers/managers*; 5 = *Accountability*; 6 = *Face concern* and 7 = *Work-performance orientation vs autocratic orientation*).

Employees							
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1		0.412***	-0.141***	-0.090*	-0.034	0.080*	-0.069
2	0.269*		-0.256***	-0.241***	-0.237***	0.050	-0.145***
3	-0.006	0.248*		0.584***	0.025	0.228***	0.321***
4	0.504***	-0.039	0.211		0.144***	0.266***	0.402***
5	0.585***	-0.007	-0.121	0.511***		-0.207***	0.014
6	0.422***	0.656***	0.378***	0.183	0.171		0.197***
7	0.334**	-0.10	0.142	0.337**	0.283*	0.155	
Employers							

*** $p \leq 0.001$; ** $p = 0.01$; * $p = 0.05$ $N_{\text{employees}}$ varies between 742 and 744; $N_{\text{employers}} = 70$.

In Table 2.5, the means and standard deviations are presented for each of the four groups of participants on the seven cultural dimensions.

Table 2.5*The means and standard deviations on the seven cultural factors*

Measures	Western companies		Vietnamese companies	
	Western employers (n = 47)	Vietnamese employees (n = 47)	Vietnamese employers (n = 38)	Vietnamese employees (n = 32)
	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)	Mean (SD)
1. <i>Being on time in a direct way</i>	4.59 (0.31)	3.50 (0.28)	4.30 (0.36)	3.55 (0.26)
2. <i>Being on time with a condition</i>	3.48 (0.54)	2.96 (0.28)	2.93 (0.47)	2.99 (0.40)
3. <i>Taking part in decision-making</i>	4.06 (0.28)	3.40 (0.46)	3.93 (0.36)	3.25 (0.46)
4. <i>Open relationship with employers/manager</i>	4.20 (0.21)	3.74 (0.27)	4.12 (0.29)	3.71 (0.29)
5. <i>Accountability</i>	4.11 (0.43)	3.35 (0.30)	4.04 (0.47)	3.37 (0.35)
6. <i>Face concern</i>	3.91 (0.49)	2.99 (0.35)	3.15 (0.49)	2.88 (0.22)
7. <i>Work-performance orientation versus Autocratic orientation</i>	4.22 (0.29)	3.87 (0.32)	4.19 (0.35)	3.76 (0.37)

2.5.1 Western employers and Vietnamese employees

From the multivariate analyses of variance, we see that Western employers showed higher scores on work-related values (Wilks' λ (7,56)= 57.885; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.879$), compared to Vietnamese employees. The test of between-subjects effects indicated that both groups differed significantly on all seven work-related values with higher scores for Western employers on *Being on time in a direct way* ($F(1,63) = 212.712$; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.774$), *Being on time with a condition* ($F(1,63) = 20.788$; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.251$), *Taking part in decision-making* ($F(1,63) = 44.724$; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.419$), *Open relationship with employers/managers* ($F(1,63) = 54.647$; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.468$), *Accountability* ($F(1,63) = 72.799$; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.540$), *Face concern* ($F(1,63) = 70.608$; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.532$) and *Work-performance orientation vs. autocratic orientation* ($F(1,63) = 28.087$; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.312$). All difference can be seen a large difference with a proportion of explained variance of at least 25 (Cohen, 1988). The largest differences are seen for the work-related value of *Being on time in a direct way* ($\eta^2 = 0.774$).

2.5.2 Western and Vietnamese employers

From the multivariate analyses of variance, we see that Western employers showed higher scores on work-related values (Wilks' λ (7,62)= 6.657; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.429$), compared to Vietnamese employers. The test of between-subjects effects indicated that both groups differed significantly on three-related values with higher scores for Western employers on *Being on time in a direct way* ($F(1,69) = 12.467$; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.155$), *Being on time with a condition* ($F(1,69) = 20.606$; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.233$), and *Face concern* ($F(1,69) = 40.256$; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.372$). All difference can be seen a

large difference with a proportion of explained variance of at least 26 (Cohen, 1988), although considerably smaller than with the difference between Western employers and Vietnamese employees. The largest differences are seen for the work-related value of *Face concern* ($\eta^2 = 0.372$).

2.5.3 Vietnamese employers and Vietnamese employees

From the multivariate analyses of variance, we see that Vietnamese employers showed higher scores on work-related values (Wilks' λ (7,68) = 31.546; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.763$), compared to Vietnamese employees. The test of between-subjects effects indicated that both groups differed significantly on six out of the seven work-related values with higher scores for Vietnamese employers on *Being on time in a direct way* ($F(1,75) = 110.665$; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.599$), *Taking part in decision-making* ($F(1,75) = 60.941$; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.452$), *Open relationship with employers/managers* ($F(1,75) = 37.628$; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.337$), *Accountability* ($F(1,75) = 58.123$; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.442$), *Face concern* ($F(1,75) = 9.821$; $p = 0.002$; $\eta^2 = 0.117$) and *Work-performance orientation vs. autocratic orientation* ($F(1,75) = 32.241$; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.305$). All difference except one can be seen a large difference with a proportion of explained variance of at least 25 (Cohen, 1988). The largest differences are seen for the work-related value of *Being on time in a direct way* ($\eta^2 = 0.599$). The smallest, but still significant, differences can be seen for *Face concern* ($\eta^2 = 0.117$, moderate). No significant differences were found for *Being on time with a condition* ($F(1,75) = 0.406$; $p = 0.526$).

2.5.4 Vietnamese employees from Western companies and Vietnamese companies

From the multivariate analyses of variance, we see that employees of Western companies showed higher scores on work-related values (Wilks' λ (7,566) = 3.456; $p = 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.040$), compared to employees of Vietnamese companies. The test of between-subjects effects indicated that both groups differed significantly on three work-related values with higher scores for employees of Western companies on *Taking part in decision-making* ($F(1,573) = 9.311$; $p \leq 0.002$; $\eta^2 = 0.016$), *Open relationship with employers/managers* ($F(1,573) = 6.784$; $p \leq 0.010$; $\eta^2 = 0.012$), and *Face concern* ($F(1,573) = 14.991$; $p \leq 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.026$). The test of between-subjects effects indicated that both groups differed significantly on one other work-related values with higher scores for employees of Vietnamese companies on *Being on time with a condition* ($F(1,573) = 4.071$; $p \leq 0.044$; $\eta^2 = 0.007$). All difference can be seen a small or negligible difference with a largest proportion of explained variance of at least 3 (Cohen, 1988). No significance differences were found for *Being on time in a direct way* ($F(1,573) = 1.110$; $p = 0.293$), *Accountability* ($F(1,573) = 0.197$; $p = 0.657$), and *Work-performance orientation vs. autocratic orientation* ($F(1,573) = 2.699$; $p = 0.101$).

2.6 Discussion and conclusion

In this study, cultural differences were examined between employees and employers in Western and Vietnamese companies in Vietnam. The findings showed that Western employers exhibited higher mean scores than Vietnamese employees in all seven work-related values. Significant differences were also found between Vietnamese employers and Vietnamese employees, with higher scores for Vietnamese employers in six work-related values, except for the value: *being on time with a condition*. However, these differences between Vietnamese employers and Vietnamese employees were smaller compared with the differences between Western employers and Vietnamese employees. Additionally, we found three significant differences between Western and Vietnamese employers: *Being on time in*

a direct way, *Being on time with a condition* and *Face-concern*, with higher scores for Western employers. The fact that *Being on time with a condition* disappeared and *Face concern* is small in the multivariate analyses of variance between Vietnamese employers and Vietnamese employees (2.5.3), compared with the findings from 2.5.1 means that the cultural differences are the largest in these two values. In the multivariate analyses of variance for the Vietnamese employees from Western and Vietnamese companies, we found very small differences between the employees from two types of companies in three work-related values: *taking part in decision-making*, *open relationship with employers/managers* and *face-concern*, with higher scores for the Vietnamese employees working in Western companies. In conclusion, the differences between Western employers and Vietnamese employees seem to be caused partly by cultural aspects and partly by status differences between employers and employees. We go into more detail below on two cultural dimensions: *sense of time* (including *being on time in a direct way* and *being on time with a condition*) and *face-concern*, since the largest differences between Western employers and Vietnamese employees and between Western and Vietnamese employers were found in these dimensions, which indicates that these are two significant differences between Western and Vietnamese professionals.

2.6.1 Sense of time

Consistent with pertinent literature, this cultural dimension showed the largest difference between Western employers and Vietnamese employees and employers. The findings could be explained in part by *time perception* theory (Arman & Adair, 2012; Kathryn, 2006; Kavar, 2012; Kvassov, 2003; Smith & Pham, 1996; Venter, 2006) in which the Westerners are always skillful in time management and hold an exact time clock. Their plans and schedules are clearly set to ensure that they never fall behind on their deadlines. By contrast, Vietnamese professionals following Confucianism are not always on time and do not stick to exact deadlines. Time extension at workplaces is quite common in Vietnam and people in organizations understand the situation and feel at ease with the stretching of time. This explains why they scored quite low in the questionnaire, and it is the reason for *sense of time* being the most significant distinction between Western and Vietnamese professionals.

2.6.2 Face concern

Face concern was found to be significantly different in the two groups too (Western employers versus Vietnamese employees and Western versus Vietnamese employers). Among three groups, Western employers, Vietnamese employers and Vietnamese employees, the Western employers scored the highest, the Vietnamese employees the lowest, and the Vietnamese employers in the middle (the higher the score, the less the participants' concern about face). However, the Vietnamese employers' scores were closer to those of the Vietnamese employees' than those of the Western employers', which indicated that the Vietnamese employers scored much lower than the Western employers. There might be two reasons for the differences in these groups. Firstly, title, status, and formality are very important in Vietnamese society as indicated in its high power distance score (Hofstede, 1984, 2001). In organizations, there is a clear subordinate-superior relationship (Vuong, 2002). When Westerners hold the position of superiors and Vietnamese professionals, the post of subordinates, the latter would suppress their points of view in order to behave ethically to senior people. Secondly, in accordance with previous findings (Pham, 2012, 2014; Merkin, 2006), Vietnamese professionals who are interdependent people and depend on public recognition might withdraw their egos and benefits in order to save their own as well as others' face. Strictly speaking, in Vietnamese culture, face

maintenance for both sides is more important than achievements (Pham, 2014). The conclusion can be drawn that saving face is significant for Vietnamese employers and employees. However, the Vietnamese employees working in Western companies performed higher scores on this value than those of the Vietnamese employees in Vietnamese companies, which revealed that after some time working with the Western employers/managers, these Vietnamese employees somehow adapted and slightly adjusted their attitudes as Sam & Berry (2010) found that individuals might have large variations in psychological well-being and sociocultural competence in the process of acculturation.

2.7 Limitations

The first limitation is that the Western employers who participated in the current study had various cultural backgrounds and various nationalities. They were grouped to make a comparison with Vietnamese employers and employees possible. Different categories of employers might score differently on the seven factors of work-related values. However, the standard deviations of the scores of the Western participants were similar to the standard deviations of the scores of the Vietnamese groups of participants.

The second limitation of this study is the lack of a Western employee sample working in the same companies as the Vietnamese employees. As the Western employers both represent people from different cultures and hold the position of management, the results might be affected by two conditions. Consequently, it is difficult to determine whether the differences were due to cultural distance or position distance. Therefore, we tested differences for both pairs of participants (Western employers versus Vietnamese employees and Vietnamese employers versus Vietnamese employees). However, in the future, when there are more Westerners working as employees in Vietnam, this research can be validated by comparing employees from these two cultures in the same companies.

2.8 Implications

Based on the findings, we formulate four implications for work-related interaction between Western employers and Vietnamese employees.

First, in Vietnamese culture, face loss is considered a vulnerable situation which might cause an emotional barrier between two parties, Western employers and Vietnamese employees. Accordingly, it is suggested that both direct and indirect facework strategies should be exercised simultaneously in order “to lessen the blow of the direct communication that needs to be used to get points across” (Merkin, 2006, p.155). This means that in order to coax the employees’ appreciation, the Western employers might play the role of both a quietly powerful but considerate boss. Then, the Vietnamese employees might feel more at ease to reduce the distance, talk openly and voice their opinions to the higher managers.

Second, since the concept of time is quite stretched in Vietnam, the Westerners must understand that the Vietnamese employees take time to do their work because they desire to do it in a rigorous and effective way. Hence, strict measures to discipline employees’ time and deadlines at workplaces such as finger sensor scanning for timework or salary reduction might lead to adverse effects. The employees might be on time and stick to the deadlines. Yet, they might be annoyed and try to avoid the punishment by completing the tasks without fully devoting their energy to the company’s benefits, with as a result that the quality of their work might be affected. Thus, both sides should moderate their time management in order to accomplish a deal satisfying the company’s needs.

Third, the condition provided in “being on time with a condition” factor might shorten both the cultural and position distance. It might be advisable that employers examine the reasons for lateness of their employees in order to improve mutual understanding. Additionally, the employees might be more explicit about why tardiness occurs so that the employers discern their employees’ difficulties in order to draw out effective solutions. In many cases, the communication might be much improved when the reasons are worked out.

Fourth, for a better workplace environment, training should be given to both expatriates and locals so that cultural distance can be understood and appreciated (Fabian, Peltokorpi & Kyung, 2012). Consequently, both parties might be more sympathetic and tolerant to cultural differences to interact effectively in a multicultural workplace.

2.9 Concluding remarks

In conclusion, the current study was carried out for the purpose of designing training courses for future graduates in Vietnam who are prospective employees in those foreign subsidiaries and have interactions on a daily basis with Western employers. The findings provide insight into what differences are the greatest between the two cultures and what future graduates who are going to work with Western professionals should work on most. The findings also suggest that solely teaching the language is not sufficient for effective communication and the importance of culture instruction along with language instruction in higher education.

CHAPTER 3

A qualitative exploration study into communication concerns between Western employers and Vietnamese employees in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam

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Abstract

The contemporary labor market requires highly-internationalized workers who are trained and endowed with “communication and soft skills”. Nevertheless, half of the new graduates in the current labor force in Vietnam are not prepared with those skills for working in a multicultural context (Tran, 2012, 2015). In order to understand the problematic issues with respect to intercultural communication, the present study aims to explore in depth the communication issues in the intercultural workplace context in Western subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Ho Chi Minh city in Vietnam. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 Western higher managers and 33 Vietnamese employees to gain insights into their main concerns in working with their cross-cultural counterparts. The results indicated that there were many concerns in the Western managers’ viewpoints centralizing around (1) *lack of communication* and (2) *lack of autonomy in getting work done and motivation in professional development* from the Vietnamese employees. From the Vietnamese employees’ side, there were not many concerns brought about and the negative points were not frequently mentioned. Implications are suggested for composing intercultural communication curricular not only for higher education training but also for employee and employer coaching.

3.1 Introduction

In the last decades, Vietnam has been undergoing a big transformation in the economy. The fast growing economy has attracted many international companies. Higher education in Vietnam is considered to be responsible for providing students with professional knowledge and skills to satisfy the demands of the international employment market (Pham, 2008). However, half of the new graduates in Vietnam are not prepared for working in a multicultural context (Tran, 2012, 2015) and 50% of students need to be retrained for “communication and soft skills” when they get their job in order to meet the requirements of the contemporary labor market (Luong, 2010; Tran, 2012). In a report on Higher Education in East Asia by World Bank in 2012, it was claimed that “communication and language remain one of the primary concerns for foreign managers operating in Vietnam” (Weng, 2015, p. 83).

Moreover, considering the fact that expatriates from Western nations and Vietnamese host-nationals (local staff) work and interact together on a daily basis and the two parties are from two divergent cultures, conflicts and misunderstandings at the workplace are inevitable. This might be a problem for both parties to complete their tasks and obtain work productivity. Cultural distance has been understood the key reason for those conflicts and misunderstandings (Brew & Cairns, 2004; Froese & Peltokorpi, 2011; Hofstede, 2001; Peltokorpi, 2008; Redmond, 2000). Cultural distance, in fact, is a crucial factor taken into account when business failures occur because it is contended that in many cases when no explanations can be found for a business challenge, culture should be blamed (Taras, Piers & Bradley, 2011). Besides, professional interaction might frequently lead to conflicts and communication problems even in a well-organized institution. Accordingly, more problems and conflicts might occur when professionals from two divergent cultures communicate and interact. The purpose of this study, therefore, is to examine what type of communication issues come about when professionals from the two divergent cultures, Western and Vietnamese, work side by side.

The significance of this study is constituted from several reasons. First, the number of foreign subsidiaries and joint ventures in the area of Southeast Asia in general and in Vietnam in particular has been increasingly growing; conducting this study makes a significant contribution to the body of knowledge of cross-cultural management in Southeast Asia in which closely similar cultural background is recognized. Second, outcomes of this study may be used as a manual to assist the host-country nationals as well as foreign expatriates to avoid cultural-sensitive situations in their daily work. This information is useful for international human resource managers to invent cross-cultural training programs for both the host-country nationals as well as the prospective foreign managers coming to work in those areas. Third, the subsequent effect of this study, which is raising both the Western employers’ and Vietnamese employees’ awareness of the problems they encountered and how to avoid them might also be disseminated to other enterprises in the area of Asia and around the world. Finally, the findings of this study might be beneficial to higher education educators to provide their students with useful tips in order to work with foreign expatriates in the future, preparing them for working in an international competitive labor market.

3.2 Theoretical background

3.2.1 Impact of cultural distance on communication in a multicultural workplace

Cultural distance affects communication in the multicultural workplace and effective communication plays a crucial role in international business. As the distance between Western and Vietnamese culture is significant (Vo & Hannif, 2013), its impact on communication between two parties is unavoidable.

Cultural distance is one of the most widely examined constructs in international business research (Manish, Mohammad, Vikas & Ajai, 2016; Shenkar, 2001). Cultural distance can be defined as the degree of dissimilarity between two cultures or “the extent to which the shared norms and values in one country differ from those in another” (Rian & Arjen, 2006, p. 162). The more dissimilar cultures are, the harder communication between people from those cultures becomes.

It is inevitable that international business requires intense communication of people from divergent cultures. During this interactional process, culture clashes frequently happen and disturb the ongoing negotiation, planning as well as production. The need to adjust, to accept and understand other people seem to be indispensable for effective communication. Attempts have been made in many studies examining the effects of cultural divergence on international business communication.

Discussing about the impact of cultural distance, Taras, Piers & Bradley (2011) confirmed six work-related value outcomes due to the differences of individualistic and collectivistic culture: 1) leadership styles, 2) group dynamics, 3) communication styles, 4) fairness and compensation, 5) conflict handling preferences and 6) work design. With respect to *leadership styles*, these researchers argued that people from individualist, low power distance cultures are consistently in favor of participative leadership while the ones from collectivistic, high power distance cultures prefer more direct and charismatic leaders. *Group dynamics* refers to collectivists having the need for being with others and the need for social support. They seem to prefer to work in a team and are more committed to the team than are individualists. On the contrary, “individualists are less likely to conform to group pressures. Consequently, collectivists show strong favoritism to the groups to which they belong, while individualists tend not to have such strong group affiliations” (Taras, Piers & Bradley, 2011, p. 192). With respect to *communication styles*, direct communication, openness and self-promotion are characteristics of individualists whereas indirectness and modesty are common attributes of collectivists. Individualists’ communication relies heavily on verbal context; most of the things are expressed in words while collectivists are not always clear in their message; they use a lot of non-verbal cues to transfer the information. Differences in *fairness and compensation* mean that individualists prefer equity rules in distribution of rewards and punishments; this means that the more you contribute, the greater rewards you deserve. In collectivistic culture, equality rules are favored in which people are much more comfortable with each member of the group receiving equal compensation regardless of individual effort or input. Furthermore, the collectivistic “high-power distance culture have strong preference for seniority rule that allocates the greatest reward or responsibility to the eldest or otherwise most senior group members” (Taras, Piers & Bradley, 2011, p. 192). In regard with the fairness in decision-making criteria, individualist cultures are closely associated with cooperative decision-making style whereas collectivistic cultures incline to a top-down decision-making process. Differences with respect to *conflict handling preferences* imply that the collectivistic cultures show a strong concern for interests of other party and the presence of a third party or a mediator. They always try to keep harmony and cooperative spirit. On the contrary, the individualists have a strong opposition to unfairness and always raise their voice if they feel there is partial treatment happening. Finally, in terms of *work design*, people from collectivistic high power

distance cultures prefer more structured and paternalistic relationships. They often prefer being clearly instructed and feel uncomfortable with initiative supervision. On the other hand, the individualists favor work design that allows for personal autonomy, flexibility, involvement in the decision-making process and opportunities to make personal contributions (Taras, Piers & Bradley, 2011). In summary, Tara and colleagues made quite a clear distinction between the individualistic and collectivistic cultural values that can influence the workplace outcomes. They also concluded that overlooking cultural dissimilarities in the workplace is equivalent to several million dollars losses, which means that cultural values might predict employee outcomes with more strength than traditional factors such as demographics, personality traits, and cognitive ability. To conclude, in order to enhance productivity and profitability as well as create a more cohesive and satisfied workplace, cultural value measures should be added to the company's toolkit contributions (Taras, Piers & Bradley, 2011).

Adding to the complications that cultural distance brings about, Frederic & Hirsch (1994) identified the reasons of Western joint-ventures' failures in Asia. The authors concluded that culture clash, which is "no understanding of the importance of cross-cultural cooperation" (Frederic & Hirsch, 1994, p. 198) was the most significant reason. This reason might be mostly derived from the dissimilarities between the two cultures. A first dissimilarity is along the dimension of individualism and group orientation. This dissimilarity might easily create conflicts because the collective orientation values relationship, face maintenance and reward sharing, whereas the individualistic orientation focuses on individual success and has little regard to relationship building (Frederic & Hirsch, 1994). The second dissimilarity refers to power distance, which includes differences in levels of employees' participation in decision-making. They concluded that "there is a need to be more sensitive to the way cultural values intrude into the joint venture process" (Frederic & Hirsch, 1994, p. 200). The researchers added that a combination of cultural awareness and professional skills is required.

Adding insights into previous frameworks by investigating the difficulties higher managers confront due to cultural distance and targeting to reduce the negative impact that cultural distance might bring about, Hasan, Mehmet & Demet (2014) probed into multinational company managers' perceptions of cultural difference management by means of structured questionnaires and question forms. The sample included 18 managers from several international organizations situated in Ankara. The findings revealed the difficulties managers faced in their multinational context. The difficulties mainly include (1) different cultural backgrounds might make reaching agreement more difficult, (2) cultural differences might make communication difficult because explaining things to members of other cultures takes a lot of time and energy, (3) information transmitted within the company must be in greater details and in more time and too much of differences in opinions and perspectives might cause communication breakdowns in certain processes and activities, and (4) some managers prefer employees from their own cultures because it is easier to have a common language with people they are working with. Nevertheless, the findings showed that those 18 managers also realized some benefits which are (1) "cultural pluralism can be defined as having different perceptions of reality, which is an important source of creativity" (Hasan, Mehmet & Demet, 2014, p. 350), and (2) it is more fun and challenging to manage an organizational structure composed of multicultural people. Finally, the authors suggested that organizations need to take cultural differences into consideration as in organizations where cultural distance is ignored, the negative consequences of this can drive the employees apart from each other. On the other hand, in organizations where cultural differences are seen as significant and effectively managed, employees have a closer relationship and a stronger commitment to their workplace, and multicultural organizations gain higher levels of creativity and

innovation. Therefore, the managers must ensure that these advantageous differences are respected, protected, developed and made use of (Hasan, Mehmet & Demet, 2014).

The study of intercultural practices is not something new, specifically for Western and Eastern culture, which are, for a long time in history, believed to have two contrasting ideologies. Yet, the problematic interaction and communication between these two entities have not been deeply examined in previous studies and particularly in the context of Vietnam, a deep-rooted Eastern culture.

3.2.2 The Vietnamese workplace context

For a long time, Vietnamese culture has been influenced by Confucianism, which comprises of high collectivism, large power distance, high uncertainty avoidance, masculinity and long-term orientation (Vuong, 2002). After the economic reform “Doi Moi” (1986), the Vietnamese government activated the country’s economic activities by reorganizing state owned enterprises, encouraging private businesses and attracting foreign direct investment (Weng, 2015). Because of the need to transfer but still dominated by Confucian ideology, the Vietnamese economy has been in a mixed landscape, receiving dramatic changes and struggling within the old and novel typology simultaneously. This transfer not only brought in international practices but also international managers as the current personnel were not qualified enough to keep pace with the new trend (Weng, 2015). As the influx of foreign companies came to the country, the call for more industry ready graduates increased; however, it has remained that “many of the companies apparently found it difficult to find local employees that match their needs” (Weng, 2015, p. 82). Several complaints were made from foreign enterprises that the local employees lacked requisite skills encompassing both the technical and behavioral skills including interpersonal communication skills. For this reason, the companies have to offer them additional training and expenses to bring them up to speed (Le, Rowley, Truong & Warner, 2007; Weng, 2015). Examinations into the relationships between Western employers and local employees, albeit not many, have also been made in order to improve their cross-cultural communication and partnership. Tran (2013) examined expatriates’ problems with cross-cultural management (CCM) and international human resource management (IHRM). The researcher used two sources for this investigation. The first instrument was a questionnaire sent to 150 expatriates (from both Asian and Western countries) who were living and working in Ho Chi Minh city. The second source was data gathered from documents, books, internet websites, articles and journals and governmental regulations related to representative office in Vietnam. Tran examined expatriates’ CCM and IHRM using the following dimensions: *cultural differences*, *nonverbal communication*, *sense of time*, *relationship building*, *negotiation*, *underestimation*, *overestimation*, and *making no attempt to understand the Vietnamese working style*. Among the four types of respondents, Asians, Europeans, Oceanians, and Americans, the Asians seemed to have fewer problems working with local people than the others as they showed the lowest mean score in most aspects. Tran (2013) also found that Europeans seemed to face more problems working with local people than the others, with the highest mean scores in five dimensions.

A survey research conducted by Weng (2015) delved into the problems and conflicts including *work orientation*, *work communication*, and *work language* that experienced international managers in Ho Chi Minh City faced when communicating with the local employees at work. *Work orientation* refers to individuals’ work planning and organization and adherence to agreed deadlines. *Work communication* concerns employees’ asking questions and giving feedback, and *work language* refers to employees’ lack of jargon and depth of understanding. After detecting and synthesizing series of problems and resolutions from the managers, Weng offered the following recommendations for

practice such as *building relations* with employees by showing interests in them and inquiring about their wellbeing in order to tackle their difficulties and anxiety at work; *building empathy or understanding* through stressing the importance of listening, understanding, and adapting; *setting expectations from the start* by telling them about appropriate behaviors, communication or otherwise; *planning for communication skills training*; *providing for individual coaching and mentoring* by imparting intricate work skills gained from the manager's personal experiences; *consulting the employees* through listening to them and discussing their recommendations with them; *scheduling regular one on one consultation sessions* as the employees are not comfortable with volunteering feedback or suggestions and need encouragement from the management on a regular basis and *reducing hierarchy or power distance*. Adding to those propositions, Weng suggested that employees should be equipped with a set of skills that matches the manufacturing and service sectors rather than the agricultural sector (Weng, 2015).

Chung & Linh (2012) investigated the cultural adaptation to the Vietnamese context of Unilever, a British-Dutch multinational consumer goods company, by taking five dimensions from Hofstede's model. Investigation into Unilever's cultural adaptation to the Vietnamese work context was conducted. The results revealed that as a Western company doing business in an Eastern-oriented nation, Unilever did indeed encounter a number of problems originating from the cultural distance. Those problems were *weak loyalty and short employment duration*, *corruption and bureaucracy*, *frequent work overload*, and *misunderstandings between foreign managers and native employees*. However, the corporation also gained various benefits from the similarities of its core values with Vietnamese culture, such as impressive success in the Vietnamese market "which created good conditions for the company to enhance its global corporate culture" (Chung & Linh, 2012, p. 62). The findings of this case study confirm that cultural distance can have both advantages and disadvantages during the process of cultural adaptation.

In the current study, we specifically examine cultural distance between Vietnamese and Western culture and its impact on communication of professionals from those two cultures. In the following section, we present 6 work-related values that we use as a frame for our interview analysis.

3.2.3 Management expectation

When an employee enters a company, an official contract between the employee and the company or the employer are signed. After signing this contract, both sides should be obligated to all the policies, terms and conditions in this contract. Specifically, in the official contract or employment contract, all the points should be explicitly written down what each party promises to do (e.g., work outputs) or give (e.g, pay or benefits) and what will happen if either party fails to perform as promised. This also means that what penalty would be conducted if either party fails to deliver or abrogate the contract (Cooper & Robertson, 2002). However, in addition to all the obligations in this contract, there are also some invisible expectations from both sides because the central point in all relationships is fulfilling each other's expectations and that definitely applies to the employer/manager and employee relationship as well. The official contract itself cannot cover the complexity of all the possible expectations of both parties (Cooper & Robertson, 2002). Accordingly, researchers usually endeavor to explore the "psychological contract" between employers and employees in order to get an insightful view of the invisible expectations that both parties long for. Nevertheless, in the context of this study, we do not carefully examine employer and employee psychological contract but we just delved into the gap in expectations between Western employers/managers and Vietnamese employees. We attempted to investigate how different expectations they have due to the cultural differences in their

backgrounds. As the Western employers/managers come to Vietnam with their duty, they are held accountable to many new standards while being forced themselves to be adapted to the new culture in the destination companies and country. Because of this mission, the Western employers/managers set quite high expectations of what they need to achieve. Therefore, besides the official contract they make with the local employees, there are some underlying values that they might await whereas from the Vietnamese employees, their expectations might be lower than those of the expatriate employers/managers since local professionals often overestimate expatriate managers/employers and believe that those employers/managers are well-qualified and worthy of the position they hold in the organizations (Syed, Hazboun & Murray, 2014). Due to the expectation gap between the expatriates and the locals, we predicted that they might hold different perspectives towards their cross-cultural counterparts' working style.

3.2.4 Differences in work-related values between Western and Vietnamese culture

In Chapter 2, we utilized a questionnaire to examine the differences in work-related attitudes between Western and Vietnamese professionals, particularly the differences between Western employers/managers and Vietnamese employees. We also presented the reasons why we selected these values, the differences between Western and Vietnamese culture embedded in these values and the factor analyses of the questionnaire, which resulted in all the underlying factors of those values. In the following section, we just briefly describe the definitions and the differentiations of these work-related values in Western and Vietnamese culture.

1. Sense of time

Sense of time is the way people feel, experience, evaluate and use time (Venter, 2006). Different cultures have different orientation towards time, punctuality and pace of life. It is believed that Vietnamese and Westerners hold contrasting conception in the notion of time. The Westerners hold a narrow view of time which means they are punctual and usually stick to firm deadlines whereas the Vietnamese tend to keep flexible deadlines and focus on achieving the goals rather than on the time use (Kathryn, 2006; Kavar, 2012; Kvasov, 2003; Smith & Pham, 1996).

2. Participation in decision-making

“Researchers have conceptualized participative leadership as a component of individualized, Western societies” (Hannif, 2013, p. 6). Accordingly, employees in small power distance organizations (in Western countries) owe limited dependence on their superiors. They are frequently encouraged to ask for consultancy from superiors or participate in higher managers' decision-making processes (James, 2005). By contrast, in cultures with large power distance like Vietnam, there is a considerable dependence of employees on employers which means that decision-making is usually concentrated on authority and workers show a preference of “autocratic bosses” which means employees are willing to obey and conduct superiors' commands without any complaint (Chi, 2012; Hannif, 2013).

3. Open relationship with employers/managers

In a large power distance culture like Vietnam, there is a tendency of tall organization pyramids; thus the distance between employees and higher managers is definite and frequent contact between them is

scarce and higher management are highly respected by their staff (Hieu, 2013; Shaw, 2014). In contrast, in small power distance countries like Western countries, employees are generally comfortable approaching and interacting with their higher managers. They are expected to “bypass” their managers frequently for the sake of promptness and efficiency of their work performances (Kawar, 2012).

4. Face-concern

In Vietnamese culture, people’s consciousness for face is extremely significant since Vietnamese people are high-context collectivists who are really scared of possible negative judgement of society on their behaviors resulting in loss of face. Therefore, the notion of self and other face-concern is quite influential in this culture (Pham, 2014). In Western culture, on the contrary, face is taken into account in terms of an individual’s desire to be admired, approved of, free from imposition and freedom in doing what one wants. Accordingly, to those individualists, loss of face is not as crucial as one’s self-achievement and they incline to fight for their own needs, success and promotions rather than keep a good face recognized by social acceptance (Pham, 2014).

5. Accountability

In Western culture, accountability is centralized around the “sense of self”. People from this culture are highly aware of their own accountability at work and attuned to evaluate their own actions and deviations from their own standards (Gelfand, Lim & Raver, 2004). For this reason, in this culture, tasks given to employees are clearly defined and designated which means that they are held accountable for their performance regarding the tasks assigned to them. In Vietnamese culture, a collectivistic culture, in contrast, accountability rests with entire groups which signifies the connection of accountability to the entire group, not an individual (Gelfand et al., 2004). As a result, in this culture, employees can be given a specific task or project in a group and the group is usually hold accountable for the accomplishment of that project. They are still given an individual task; however, since they do not get used to being responsible for their own actions, they often suspend in making strong decisions and usually wait for the employers to decide for themselves so that severe consequences happening later might be avoided.

6. Work performance orientation

Autocratic leadership, in which, the management usually generate strong dominance over their employees and a lot of guidance from the management is basically performed, are generally seen in Vietnamese organizations (Hoang, 2015). Imprinted by Confucianism, the Vietnamese people are quite familiar with this kind of leadership. In contrast, Western employers normally perform work-performance orientation leadership which focuses on the employees’ performance, innovativeness and fairness (Hoang, 2015). In other words, work-performance orientation leadership facilitates employees’ advancement, idea generation, creativity, innovativeness, fair treatment and promotion.

3.2.5 Aim of the current study

The specific nature of intercultural communication issues in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures is still under-researched in the context of Southeast Asia and Vietnam. Moreover, new graduates in

Vietnam are ill-prepared for working in a multicultural context (Tran, 2012; Tran, 2015), even though most of these new workers are supposed to work in multinational organizations. With the view of improving and optimizing the communication between Western higher management and the host-national employees in those institutions as well as providing input for higher education educators to adapt their programs to support the prospective graduates in the development of intercultural communication skills at the workplace, in the current study, we examine issues that the Western employers/managers and Vietnamese employees face when they share the same working environment. The following questions direct our study:

1. What are the perceptions of Vietnamese employees towards communication in the workplace in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam?
2. What are the perceptions of Western employers/managers towards communication in the workplace in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam?

3.3 Method

3.3.1 Participants

47 foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures located in Ho Chi Minh city participated in this study. We searched for the companies' information on the Internet, using reports on the Global Trade in Customer Language website (<http://eu.ecizi.com>). We also searched for companies using the researchers' networks. We collected the companies' information; then we sent emails, phoned or visited the companies in person to ask for their permission to carry out our research at those companies. The informed consent was sent to the Director Board and Personnel Department of each company. Field work schedule was from April to August, 2015. One of the authors conducted this field work in Ho Chi Minh city. The first author contacted 47 companies. These 47 companies participated in a previous quantitative study. From these, 21 agreed to participate in this qualitative study. This resulted into the participation of 11 Western employers/managers (from various European countries as well as from the United States: 10 males, age range 28-55 years of age and at least two years experience managing Vietnamese employees) and 33 Vietnamese employees (30 females, age range 20-45 years of age and 1 to 10 years experience working in a foreign company) working in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Ho Chi Minh city.

3.3.2 Data collection

In the present study, we carried out semi-structured interviews to explore what and how professionals from two cultures experienced in their cross-cultural communication in work situations. We aimed to gain an insightful view into the problems they encountered when interacting with their cross-cultural counterparts.

The first author visited the companies to ask for permission to conduct the interviews. All the interviews were conducted and recorded by the visiting researcher but at different places in accordance with the participants' preferences. The interview took about thirty minutes to one and a half hour for each participant depending on the participant's time availability. Notes were taken during and after the interviews to retain any insights gained or questions raised. Any follow-up inquiries were done by phone calls or emails to the respondents. The visiting author transcribed all the recorded interviews together with the assistance of the notes jotted down.

The interviews were semi-structured so that the interviewer could ask for further ideas in need. The interviewer started the interview by elaborating on the description of the research project and the interview procedure. Afterwards, the interviewee had some time to read through the interview questions before they answered. The questions composed many probing questions including two introduction questions, one main question and four follow-up questions. All the questions were employed to assist the participants to relate their experiences comprising of (1) their interests when working in the current company, (2) their opinions about intercultural communication with their cross-cultural counterparts, (3) the problems or incidents they faced during the interactional process, what was done and how they fixed the problems and (4) their expectations from their cross-cultural partners. The interviewer also had a checklist in order to check again some topics that the interviewee missed to relate in his/her conversation. See for the form of the interview questions sent to the interviewees in Appendix 2.

3.3.3 Data analysis

The data were firstly transcribed and secondly translated into English by the visiting author. This procedure was done for the first two interviews and these first two English transcriptions were checked by all the research group members for appropriate protocols. Afterwards, the rest of the data were respectively done in the same procedure. These transcriptions were coded in within-case manner first and then in across cases. We used the following six cultural dimensions that are based on a quantitative study (Chapter 2) and presented in the theoretical framework as start for our analyses: 1) *sense of time*, 2) *participation in decision-making*, 3) *open relationship with employers/managers*, 4) *face-concern*, 5) *accountability* and 6) *work-performance orientation* (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1

The cultural dimensions

Cultural Dimensions	Definition
1. Sense of time	The way people feel, experience, evaluate and use time.
2. Participation in decision-making	The extent to which decision-making between higher managers and employees in the work situation is joint or shared.
3. Open relationship with employers/managers	The extent of intimacy or closeness in daily communication in the workplace of employers and employees.
4. Face-concern	The extent to which one's performance in an interpersonal context is recognized by others through their social position and prestige.
5. Accountability	This concept can be delineated as how much self-accountability the employees perform in their daily work situations and how much the employers evaluate and control their employees' accountability in daily work situations.
6. Work-performance orientation	The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence. This notion implies the employers' facilitation of their employee's advancement, idea generation, creativity and innovativeness.

The data were analyzed in the following steps. First, each within-case matrix included all text segments was coded according to the above six dimensions and reviewed by all research group

members for agreement. Second, from each within-case, two cross-case matrices were extracted, one for the employers and one for the employees. This step was also checked by all the research group members. Eventually, the extracted representative cases were put in a table with 6 themes of the cultural dimensions for comparing the differences between the employers and employees. We chose to employ cross-case analysis since this way of analyzing the data enabled us to aggregate across cases, draw out generalizations or common communication problems that the participants faced.

3.4 Results and discussion

Both perspectives (employers and employees) on communication between the Western managers and the Vietnamese employees seem to complement each other, in which the differences are due to both cultural and status differences. There were many concerns and problematic issues in the Western managers' viewpoints centralizing around (1) *lack of communication* and (2) *lack of autonomy in getting work done and motivation in professional development*. Those expatriates complained that while working with the Vietnamese, they encounter several issues that they do not face when collaborating with their home-country partners. Nevertheless, from the Vietnamese employees' side, there were not many concerns brought about and the negative points were not frequently mentioned. They clearly stated that they have good and satisfying relationships with their higher managers. Accordingly, it seems that there are contrasting perceptions from the interlocutors of two distinguished cultures. We analyzed both the Vietnamese employees and Western higher managers' viewpoints regarding six cultural dimensions and other issues that the participants concerned with illustrating examples as follows.

3.4.1 Sense of time

The Western managers often blame the Vietnamese employees for deadline tardiness and suppressing the truth about their lateness whereas the Vietnamese employees confirmed that they have used their working time flexibly and that they should be more conscious of keeping the deadlines. The following comments highlight both the Vietnamese employees' and Western employers' sentiments.

The Vietnamese employees talked about how time should be practiced:

Vietnamese employees: *"It is not important to be late for work but you have to know how to handle your time to reach the deadlines"*.

"We have relaxing working time and our managers respect for our private life; however being on time for meetings and keeping the deadlines are very significant and we are always aware of our actions".

The Western employers expressed their concerns about their employees' lateness for deadlines:

Western employers: *"I asked my employees whether they finish their tasks, they always say "yes" to please me although they have not finished yet"*.

As we already mentioned in the framework that the Vietnamese collectivists always try to keep harmony and cooperative spirit (Taras, Piers & Bradley, 2011), the situation of avoiding conflicts frequently happens to them when they endeavor to please their employers. They would rather tell a lie that they finish the assignments than upset their superiors. Nevertheless, being under the impression that their way of working is right, they put themselves in a converse situation.

3.4.2 Participation in decision-making

The Vietnamese employees seem to be very positive when they can voice their ideas to the managers while the Western employers show their frustration because they believe that the Vietnamese are too limited in words and opinions and do not contribute many ideas for the working process.

The Vietnamese employees showed their positive attitudes towards having a voice in their companies:

One Vietnamese employee remarked: *“Compared to my former and local companies, I have a voice here and I have been fairly treated. My employer always listens to my ideas, suggestions and proposals. I can freely propose and talk about my viewpoints. I am more open since I have been working in this company”.*

The Western employers expressed their irritation for their employees’ lack of opinion contribution to the organization:

One Western employer related: *“I always encourage my employees to take their own decisions and correct their own mistakes. Vietnamese people tend to say “yes” all the time even when they do not understand anything, they still say “yes”. I prefer people to say “no” and propose things to me. Vietnamese people do not take any strong decisions and always wait for the boss to make decisions for them. I always seek for advice from my staff because I am not perfect. I have to say that I spend lots of time and energy working with Vietnamese”.*

3.4.3 Open relationship with the employers/managers

The Western managers criticize that the Vietnamese employees are very cold and keep a great distance with their higher managers; yet, most of the local employees confirmed that they get along well with their employers although some of them did say that they are afraid of their higher managers and keep a distance with them.

The Vietnamese employees talked positively about their relationship with their foreign employers:

One Vietnamese employee revealed: *“I have a very good relationship with my employer. I feel comfortable working with him. He is a very flexible person and a good listener”.*

Although others talked about their timidity when they need to contact their employers:

One Vietnamese employee said: *“My employer is quite patient and sociable. He always patiently clarified if I did not understand him. He is always annoyed if we do not understand but said “Yes”. He is ready to make things clear; so if we do not understand, just say “no” and ask for his explanation or clarification. He is also a very flexible person. However, I myself still feel afraid whenever I meet to discuss something with him”.*

The Western managers illustrated their employees’ shyness:

One Western employer stated: *“I never close my door so that my employees can approach me any time when they have questions or problems. Opening the door signals my mental and physical openness to my employees. However, they rarely dare to reach me in my office. My employees should not over-respect me and should not keep the distance with me because of these over-respecting behaviors”.*

The reason for the Vietnamese employees’ hesitation to raise their voice and reduce the distance with their managers is the impact of hierarchy or power distance. In organizations, power distance is associated with the extent of hierarchy or level of participation in decisions (Frederic & Hirsch, 1994; Merkin, 2006; Weiss, Kolbe, Grote, Spahn & Grande, 2016). Merkin (2006) also argued that power distance does influence facework strategies in face-threatening situations, especially in large power-distance culture because in this culture, the preservation of face is dependent upon hierarchical

structure and any breakdown or threat of breakdowns in such a hierarchy is face threatening. For this reason, power distance decides the kind of communication people in collectivistic cultures convey. Apparently, Merkin (2006) found that large power distance members use more indirect facework or indirect communication than their small power distance counterparts. They never show tense emotions over relationships and often keep silent because they wish to be safe in face-threatening situations. Accordingly, in many incidents, the small power distance members like the Western employers in this case feel quite uncomfortable because of their counterparts' reticence and vague conversations.

3.4.4 Face-concern

The Vietnamese employees express their preference for the open and direct communication style of their Western higher managers despite the fact that their managers show the irritation for their Vietnamese staff's indirectness and hesitance in communication which might hamper the working process.

The Vietnamese employees confided their employers' openness and directness in communication:

One Vietnamese employee said: *"She is very open and direct. We always have open and direct conversation. When she disagrees, she tells us directly what she disagrees about. She can use many bad words to scold us but she always let us talk against her about what we are thinking. There are arguments but the purposes of those arguments are to solve the problems in a direct and constructive manner"*.

The Western employers talked about their employees' indirectness in conversations due to their scare of face loss:

One employer related: *"They just response "Yes yes or no no". Especially when they make mistakes, they always keep silent. In Vietnam, people concern a lot about losing face. People tend to say "yes" a lot to please the hearer. For instance, I asked my employees whether they finish their tasks, they always say "yes" to please me although they have not finished yet. I think it is also because of "loss of face" that makes people tend to say "yes". I am very direct and easy to get frustrated because Vietnamese people are not clear in their conversation. They tend to say lies but it is not their intention to lie. It is just because they did not understand and they did not know what to do but they don't dare to speak out"*.

Consistent with the findings from the previous quantitative study (Chapter 2), the results signify that the Western higher managers fully showed their Western characteristics in their conversations. All things are explicitly and apparently stated. They directly expressed their perceived botheration and appreciation for the counterparts' attitudes and behaviors. Also, in the interviews, many Western managers emphasized that Vietnamese people do not show bad things out. Those higher managers confirmed that their Vietnamese employees always come to the managers with good news and when they face downsides, they just keep those drawbacks as secrets and solve the problems by themselves. This finding correlates with a famous spiritual saying in Vietnamese "Tốt khoe, xấu che", which literally means "displaying good things and covering bad things" (Pham, 2014). The Western higher managers also complained that if the problems were satisfactorily solved, it would be fine but if the problems were not settled and became too serious, the Western employers would recognize them and found out it was too late to fix them.

In addition, the interviews revealed that problem of language in communication were realized from both sides. Both the Western managers and Vietnamese employees confirmed that language can hamper the smooth communication for two parties. This is also one of the rationale for the lack of communication from the Vietnamese employees. The Vietnamese employees confirmed that they feel

uneasy and not confident when they do not have enough language competence. It is pointed out that lack of a shared language is the largest and persistent barrier to intercultural communication and people would be highly anxious over communication if they feel that they are not competent enough and would be assessed on their weakness (Peltokorpi & Clausen, 2010; Weng, 2015). Additionally, the Vietnamese people are not rigorously trained to think critically in order to make questions and give appropriate feedback. This contributes to their hesitation in engaging in the conversations with their cross-cultural employers.

3.4.5 Accountability

The Western employers complained that Vietnamese employees are not self-responsible in their work and need micromanagement most of the time. The Western managers also concerned for their employees' lack of motivation to get promotion on their career. On the other hand, the Vietnamese employees confirmed that their employers seek for responsibility and accuracy from them. However, one employee showed her annoyance when her employer frequently complained that the Vietnamese staff work in a Vietnamese style implying that Vietnamese people lack self-accountability and usually needs being directed. She disagreed with her employer and told him that compared to the salary that he pays to his native workers, the Vietnamese staff receive less than that; thus, why he asks for the same working level as his home-country employees do.

The Vietnamese employees disclosed their employers' working style:

One employee said: *"My employer is a careful person and he always has judgement on the final product of his employees; thus he always demands us to work at our best. We have to adapt to his style a little bit".*

One Vietnamese employee expressed her perception towards her employer's criticism about Vietnamese workers:

She said: *"Another misunderstanding occurred when my boss usually said that we worked in a Vietnamese style. I disagreed with him and told him that you need cheap labor; then you came to Vietnam to work with us; the salary we received is much cheaper than it is in your country. Therefore, you should not criticize us in that way".*

The Western employers talked about Vietnamese people' working style and how they mold their employees into regulations:

One employer revealed: *"People in Vietnam are too tightly attached to their family and they are hugely supported by their family and spend lots of time taking care of their family; therefore, they are not motivated to fight for their career. People may read newspaper, go out for coffee, chat or even sleep during working hours. However, I cannot push them too much and challenge them too much. The effects can be even worse if I impose strong penalty on them. Therefore, I should lead, motivate, encourage and discuss with them in a soft voice. I will give them time first and mold them into our regulations later. I try to build up trust among us and when trust is established, things can be easily worked out".*

3.4.6 Work-performance orientation

The Western managers demonstrate their disappointment for the local employees' lack of innovation, reluctance to new things, changes and challenges while Vietnamese employees contended that their managers readily accept new things and help them to advance a lot in their profession.

The Vietnamese employees talked positively about their employers' open-mindedness:

One employee remarked: *“I really respect and value my relationship with my employer now since he gives me opportunities to develop and improve myself. When trust is built up between us, I can propose my ideas to change or create new things. I feel that I am not restricted in a narrow view in my profession. Compared to Vietnamese employers, my employer is more open and ready to accept changes”.*

The Western employers complained of their employees’ resistance to changes and passive working style:

Two employers said: *““Vietnamese look at only one target; they cannot look at two targets at the same time or to look for many alternatives. My employees should have their own way to keep the clients; they should not depend only on me for the company networks”.*

“People here stay resistant to changes. In contrast, in our Western culture, we like new things and challenges”.

The Western employers indicated that the Vietnamese people are tightly attached to their family. They generally set their family the first priority, which might have as side-effect that they do not struggle for their career. One of the common complaint from foreign managers that Vietnamese employees usually take days off for weddings, funerals, death anniversaries, family visit or family problems, which makes the employers quite annoyed and frustrated. The employers substantiated that the local employees do not take their whole-hearted enthusiasm for their job because they are distracted by many other activities.

Another reason for the Vietnamese employees’ inadequacy for autonomy and getting promotion is lack of work independence. Work independence does make for a more committed and motivated employee. However, the Western employers realized that the Vietnamese employees do not shape their own work independence due to the influence of the educational system and culture and they need their managers to mold them into regulations all the times. This might make the foreign managers quite unhappy.

The final reason for this difference and complaint is the differences in working style due to cultural dissimilarities and the employers’ over-expectation from their employees. The Western employers come to Vietnam with the ideal idea to rearrange a new world for their subsidiaries by bringing their country’s ideology into a new and incomparable context. On the other hand, the local employees are quite overwhelmed when the new style of the Western employers is speedily experimented. Thus, sometimes, in their haste to accomplish things, the employers’ adaptation may fail and they cannot reach their goals.

Accordingly, in regard to the same story, the picture was differently depicted since it was portrayed by two paradoxical ideologists. It seems that intercultural communication is intensely affected by the cultural context and how to handle it is still an unsolved question. With all the information provided, we desire to uncover the mysterious question in order to assist foreign managers as well as the local employees to achieve their aims in their cross-cultural professional environment.

3.5 Implications

The results indicate the main concerns in intercultural communication between Western higher managers and Vietnamese employees, which is a significant source for the improvement of intercultural communication in outsourcing companies and joint-ventures. In the following text, we discuss some recommendations for communication enhancement through leveraging the cultural differences. The findings suggest that pre-departure adaptation is a good preparation for expatriates’ later adjustment and on-site training is significant for both the foreigners and host country nationals

(Peltokorpi, 2010). It is important that the companies together with the universities play active roles in supplying those communicative cross-cultural training so that culture-based misunderstandings and negative stereotypes can be diminished. During coaching, the following issues should be addressed.

Trust establishment

The interviews in this study gained insights into how the Western managers successfully communicate with their Vietnamese employees by building trust. Most of the higher managers confirmed that problems can be worked out when their employees trust them. When trust is established, the power distance is reduced and employees are more open to share and contribute. Scheduling face to face meetings and informal social events is a way to build trust and solve the problems since the employees have chances to communicate to their managers through informal, clear and explicit conversations.

Planning

Being well-prepared contributes to eighty percent of success. One manager noted down that Vietnamese employees normally cannot reach their goals and deadlines due to their unplanned actions. Therefore, in order to ensure work progress, the local employees should learn to set up a specific and detailed plan for each task assigned. They should be trained to develop this skill at universities, for example by organizing plans for their study project. Educators should stimulate their awareness of the importance of developing those plans during their work lifetime in the study programs.

In the role of management, the Western employers should micromanage, supervise their employees' plans and observe every step taken so that immediate actions can be taken for any delays or cessations. Then, conflicts can be avoided because of miscommunications about work progress and failures of keeping the deadlines.

Fortifying work independence

Vietnamese people are perceived as not highly autonomous in their work because they prefer more structured and paternalistic relationships which involves being clearly instructed and requiring initiative supervision (Taras, Piers & Bradley, 2011), they should be coached to take initiative roles at universities in their daily study and other school activities. More work simulated situations and projects should be instructed and conducted by the students to help them get accustomed to the intercultural context.

Besides, both the Western managers and Vietnamese employees can be trained to establish their employees' work independence. The managers, as mentors, should scaffold this procedure. After that, they may slowly decrease or take out the scaffolds. Following are some simple ways that some managers already used for scaffolding and found them effective:

- Micromanaging the employees by observing their schedules and their work progress.
- Arranging two-way communication with the local employees via face-to-face meetings, phone calls or emails. With this kind of management, information can be updated and the employees can express in time their opinions and concerns and receive the feedback and advice from the management. The employees themselves also found that two-way communication is very effective to work out the problems.
- Providing regular professional training (once in a month, two or three months) within the companies as a Human Resource Management strategy that the Western higher managers

already employed is a very convincing way to promote the employees' autonomy because the employees are trained to acquire not only necessary and useful skills for their profession but also the skills to be independent in their work.

3.6 Limitations

The first limitation is that there was not much negative information obtained from the Vietnamese employees. Imprinted by the culture, specifically power distance, the Vietnamese professionals are usually reluctant to offer straight and downside information about their managers (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003; Jacqui & Tran, 2009; Pham, 2014). They did not straightly express their grievances and they seemed to provide quite good and neutral information. Even many Western managers emphasized that Vietnamese people do not show bad things out; they generally come to the managers with good news and when they face downsides, they just keep the information as secrets and solve the problems by themselves. Therefore, in order to catch the real image of their intercultural communication with their Western higher managers, we used many probing questions. Further research may also use observational tools to gain more behavioral examples from their workplaces.

The second limitation is the gender issue in which nearly almost the managers are males whereas most of the employees are females; however, we cannot separate them. Thus, the power distance is doubled which might make a bigger difference between them. In order to work this out, we suggest that further research may choose the foreign companies with balanced number of male and female employees and employers so that more valid data can be obtained.

3.7 Conclusion

In closing, cultural differences might bring several issues to the workplace if there is no preparation for the consequences. Knowledge and experiences in intercultural communication and management are indispensable for cultural awareness. Cultural distance has been recognized not only by its disadvantages but also its benefits. In fact, multinational organizations have been proved to enjoy many benefits when entering the world market if people understand the ways to manipulate those precious assets (Hasan, Mehmet & Demet, 2014). With the useful information collected in this study, contribution to the intercultural communication research body can be made by creating a manual for composing intercultural communication curricular not only for higher education training but also for employee and employer coaching.

CHAPTER 4

An experimental study of effects of intercultural communication training with critical incident open-ended tasks on the intercultural competence of English non-majors

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Abstract

In this internationalized world, graduate employability in terms of intercultural communication skills needs to be taken into account in higher education. The present study aims to explore the effects of instructing cultural general knowledge in combination with critical incident open-ended task instruction on English non-majored undergraduates' intercultural competence. One group of students received ten weeks of instruction of cultural general knowledge with critical incident open-ended task and another group received regular English classes. Data were collected from the students' pre- and post-test. The results showed a significant and strong effect of the intervention with intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks on students' intercultural awareness. Implications for educational practice are presented for further teaching of intercultural communication with critical incident open-ended tasks.

4.1 Introduction

Nowadays, in the Mekong Delta and Ho Chi Minh city, the economy is thriving and lots of foreign companies are constructing their businesses in these areas. This means that in several organizations, Western employers and Vietnamese employees collaborate. In order to attain work productivity, these Western and Vietnamese professionals should communicate in an effective way. The Vietnamese professionals can be educated in effective communication and intercultural awareness during their school career. Intercultural awareness should be part of English classes for Vietnamese students, next to language acquisition. Nevertheless, in higher education, intercultural communication is neglected or taken into consideration at a low frequency level. There are many underlying rationales for the lack of culture incorporation and intercultural skills training in the English lessons such as grammar-translation method dominance, teachers' work load and shortage time for making up student-centered lessons and poor facilities. The growing demand to integrate intercultural learning and English language learning has challenged the conventional practice of teaching English in Vietnam (Nguyen, 2013). Accordingly, shifting from traditional teaching practice to an innovative teaching practice in order to develop students' intercultural capacity is one of the most important missions of English language education in Vietnam. The current research aims to develop insights in how future graduates' intercultural competence can be enhanced by intercultural communication training using critical incident open-ended tasks in English language education.

4.2 Theoretical background

4.2.1 Intercultural competence development in Vietnam

As socializing and communicating appropriately in a foreign language, specifically English, is a benefit for obtaining a job, it is crucial for language teachers to emphasize the role of culture instruction in the language classrooms. Both employers and educators believe that learners should be prepared for living in a multicultural world and become skillful negotiators in increasingly intercultural work situations (Lies, 2010; Tran, 2017; Webber, 2005). In the context of Vietnam, after the implementation of *Doi Moi* policy (1986), the economy has rapidly changed, which also has caused a big transformation of the labor market. Though "work-readiness" is gradually taken into consideration by most related stakeholders including employers, higher education institutions, students and their families, not much has been done to strengthen the connection between higher education institutions and enterprises to bring the students up to the speed of internationalism (Tran, 2012). The effort in preparing students with necessary skills and knowledge required by the contemporary labor market has not been successfully done due to the traditional teaching and learning methods in higher education institutions, the inadequate infrastructure, the lack of funding and the lack of connection among universities, research institutions and the internal industry (Tran, 2012). A study by Tran (2013) delving into what skills are the most essential for Vietnamese graduates to work effectively with employers showed that both employers and graduates perceive soft skills encompassing collaborative work skills, communication skills, independent working skills, presentation skills, social understanding and decision making skills as the most significant attributes employers are looking for.

Tran (2013) also emphasized that communication skills help students to enter the job market and maintain their success at work. Nguyen (2013) conducted a study to examine how culture, culture learning and intercultural competence development are integrated into English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms in higher education in Vietnam. Two noticing findings came about. First, the subject of culture and culture learning is either rarely treated or treated in courses separated from the EFL program (Nguyen, 2013). Second, both teachers and students identified a number of constraints that limited their opportunities and motivation to engage in teaching and learning culture (Nguyen, 2013). Also, Nguyen, Harvey & Grant (2016) examined Vietnamese EFL teachers' belief about the role of culture in language teaching. The findings showed that the teachers mainly focused on the language knowledge and skills in their EFL classes and culture was subsequently a minor part of their teaching. The teachers reported some noticeable reasons for the lack of culture instructions in their lessons comprising of: students' low level of language proficiency, the demands of university examinations, time constraints versus heavy workload of language to be covered and teachers' perceptions of their own limited cultural knowledge (Nguyen, Harvey & Grant, 2016).

While language and culture instruction are two inseparable domains, it is essential that culture should become a core and integrated element in language teaching in order to promote the development of language learners' intercultural competence (Nguyen, Harvey & Grant, 2016). Additionally, while intercultural competence needs the development of general cultural knowledge about one's own as well as other cultures (Perry & Southwell, 2011) and cognitive, affective and behavioral process, critical incident technique or critical incident tasks (CIT) had been demonstrated to provide learners with those attributes since Cushner (1989), Aoki (1992) and Tolbert & McLean (1995) contended that after being trained with critical incident technique, the participants were better able to act under ambiguous situations thanks to their knowledge about cultural concepts and problem-solving ability. Accordingly, in the current study, critical incident tasks were adopted to give training in combination with general intercultural knowledge instruction with the view to enhancing EFL students' intercultural competence.

4.2.2 Critical incident tasks

Critical incident tasks are communication situations which the participants (or one participant) consider as problematic and confusing. Typically, critical incidents consist of examples of situational clash events - situations where unexpected behavior occurs. Flanagan (1954, p. 327) defines the critical incident technique as... "a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles". The purpose of the critical incident technique is to develop one's ability to see interaction situations from perspectives of different cultures. Critical incidents might be quite an effective strategy to promote cross-cultural awareness because they highlight the differences and misunderstandings from a cultural perspective, and create chances for learners to think critically and analytically about these critical situations.

For ages, CIT has been used by many intercultural trainers (Aoki, 1992; Bochner & Coulon, 1997; Brislin, 1986; Cushner, 1989; Flanagan, 1954; Herfst, Oudenhoven & Timmerman, 2008; Lindy, Gail, Bob, Noel & Maureen, 2006; Milner, Ostmeier & Franke, 2013; Tolbert & McLean, 1995) in different forms and with different names, for instance, cultural assimilator, intercultural sensitizer activity, situational judgement test and encounter exercise. Basically, the mentioned critical incident techniques have three common characteristics. The first characteristic implies that critical incident tasks are all hypothetical situations or vignettes "involving two or more well-meaning

characters from different cultures which results in some kind of misunderstanding, puzzlement, or problem” (Snow, 2015, p. 287). The second shared element is that critical incident tasks contain one or more questions asking the learners to consider the cause of the problem or misunderstanding (Snow, 2015). Lastly, if the goal of training is to change behaviors or attitudes, other approaches are more applicable than the critical incident exercises; the purpose of critical incident technique is to raise learners’ awareness only (Collins & Pieterse, 2007; Hiller, 2010; Tolbert & McLean, 1995).

CIT was initially developed by Flanagan (1954). In this study, he collected 1000 pilot candidates’ reports about the specific reasons for failure in learning to fly. The study proved its usefulness for better procedures for obtaining a representative sample of factual incidents regarding pilot performance. From this study, Flanagan concluded that the findings would underpin practical problem-solving in areas such as employee performance enhancement and scientific behavioral analysis. Thanks to Flanagan’s study’s success, the use of CIT flourished in multiple disciplines comprising of aviation program, medical and health care training, employee and expatriate training, intercultural competence development program, etc.

Cushner (1989) utilized CIT - the author called the technique the culture-general assimilator – to teach 28 adolescent international exchange students representing 14 countries and hosted by Intercultural Program New Zealand for a period of one year after their arrival in the host country. The control group of 22 students received traditional Intercultural Program New Zealand orientation. The results indicated that students who were taught with CIT were better able to identify dynamics which mediate cross-cultural interaction and adjustment, compared to the other students. This can be specified in the following indications: (1) students in the experimental group demonstrated greater ability to generate and analyze misunderstanding in a personal incident, (2) they had greater control of their environment, and (3) regarding problem-solving abilities, they had a strong tendency to approach situations with more cultural-knowledge and to take more of an initiative in their problem situations. From the findings, the author concluded that the culture-general assimilator can become an initiator to introduce important cultural concepts via hypothesized scripted manner, thus, can help students to be able to communicate effectively with people from other cultures as they now might relate a body of knowledge, concepts, and vocabulary to their conversational situations.

Similar results were found in seven other studies conducted by Mitchell & Foa (1969), Chemers (1969), Worchel & Mitchell (1970), O’Brien, Fiedler & Hewett (1971), Aoki (1992), Herfst, Oudenhoven & Timmerman (2008) and Nakagawa (2014). Congruent with Cushner’ findings, the participants in those studies also obtained isomorphic attributions. Isomorphic attributions mean that people from different cultures formulate analogous interpretations to given behaviors. These attributions indicate individuals’ ability to communicate effectively in intercultural context, have greater control of their environment and be active and initiative in problem-solving situations.

Albert (1986) emphasized one possible defect of critical incident technique which implied that learners might not attain the importance of social factors and contexts through a simple critical episode; thus, it may be crucial to make these factors explicit as not all learners are sufficiently intuitive to grasp the points in the incident and its explanations. For example, an incident narrates a long conversation between a Chinese employee with his Western mentor or manager about the Chinese employee’s hesitance to raise his voice or participate in the company’s meeting. Throughout the conversation, a lot of argumentative statements between these two characters are presented. If the students were not informed before about the cultural and social factors such as the Chinese employee’s face saving manner in public places and the participative leadership style of Western companies’ culture, they would not be able to understand why the characters in the scenario do this and say that.

Because of this, Albert (1986) noted that CIT should be incorporated with other approaches in order to maximize the effectiveness of learning.

In these studies, CIT can be classified into two major categories: *tasks with close-ended questions* (cultural assimilator, intercultural sensitizer activity and situational judgement test) and *tasks with open-ended questions* (encounter exercise). *Tasks with close-ended questions* are constructed from a hypothetical scenario with multiple choice exercises, including a list of possible explanations for the situation and an answer key that discusses the merits of each possible explanation (Richard, Leah, Brigitte, Joseph & Ou, 2016; Snow, 2015). *Tasks with open-ended questions* requires learners to generate possible explanations of the situation for themselves. The open-ended format requires more of students' engagement in the discussion to work out the answers than the close-ended ones do, and might therefore better suited to be incorporated in English as Foreign Language classes (Snow, 2015). Open ended tasks also provide good speaking and expository writing practice.

In the current study, we decided to adopt CIT in combination with general intercultural knowledge instruction to enhance the English non-majors' intercultural competence. We decided to choose the critical incident open-ended task instead of the close-ended one. In order to achieve the goal, we aimed to answer the following research question:

Do intercultural communication instruction by means of critical incident open-ended tasks enhance English non-majored undergraduates' awareness of intercultural communication?

4.3 Method

4.3.1 Design

A pretest-posttest control group design was used to examine the effects of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication. Both the intervention group and the control group were instructed with the same instructional course designed for English non-majors with their majors in the technical domain. The course textbook was adapted from the English course book named "Outcomes Intermediate: Real English for the Real World, 1st Edition" by Hugh Dellar & Andrew Walkley (2011). The intervention was the implementation of intercultural communication instruction with ten critical incident tasks (ten workplace scenarios) (see Appendix 3) added to the course instruction. Students in the experimental condition and control condition completed the pre- and post-test (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1
Research Design

Group	Pre-test	Intervention	Post-test
EC (n=234)	O ₁ (W1)	IC & CI	O ₂ (W11)
CC (n=88)	O ₁ (W1)	R	O ₂ (W11)

Note: EC = Experimental condition; CC = Control condition; IC & CI = Intercultural Communication Instruction with Critical Incident Tasks; R = Regular course teaching; W1 = Week 1; W11 = Week 11 (the students had 10 weeks for the course); O = measurement of learners' intercultural awareness; O₁ = Pretest; O₂ = Posttest

4.3.2 Participants

Participants were 322 second-year English non-majors in 6 classes of Technical Engineering (131 females). The participants were of the same age of 19 years old. The students' classes were randomly divided into experimental (4 groups with 234 students) or control (2 groups with 88 students) condition. All students were required to take an entrance university examination and an English placement test in their first year. Moreover, they followed two courses of General English for English non-majors in their first year and they all passed the final tests of those courses. All the participants were from the Mekong Delta regions in Vietnam.

4.3.3 Procedures

The course took place in 10 weeks with 2 meetings of 4 hours each week. For the treatment condition, students received intercultural communication instruction with one critical incident task of 1 and a half hour in one meeting per week. The other meeting of 2 and a half hour was used for regular education or textbook instruction and students' practice of 4 English skills for TOEIC test. In the control condition (CC), the students only received the regular course instruction with the textbook and practice of 4 English skills for TOEIC test of 4 hours each week. The students in the control group received more English-skill assignments than the experimental group. In Table 4.2, we summarize the setup of the procedures of the treatment condition.

Table 4.2

Course Procedures for the Treatment Condition

	Lessons	Procedures
IC (Intercultural Communication Instruction) & CIT lessons	1 3 5 7 9 11 13 15 17 19	Initiating activity + introduction of the critical incident task + discussion of the critical incident task in pairs + performing the critical incident task individually + wrap-up Initiating activity + discussion of the critical incident task in pairs + performing the critical incident task individually + wrap-up
Regular lessons	2 4 6 8 10 12 14 16 18 20	Regular textbook tasks + students' practice of 4 English skills for TOEIC test

Of the four experimental groups, two were instructed by one instructor, who is one of the authors and has been engaging in teaching English as a foreign language for 7 years. The other two groups were instructed by the other instructor, who is also an English teacher and has had experiences in teaching English as a foreign language for ten years. The two student groups in the control condition were instructed by two other teachers, one teacher for each group. These two instructors are also English teachers. The first one has been involved in instructing English as a foreign language for 15 years and the other for 8 years.

Treatment condition

Students in the experimental condition were given a critical incident task treatment. In the first three weeks, lessons were built up with five parts: 1) an initiating activity, 2) introduction of the critical

incident task, 3) discussion of the critical incident task in pairs, 4) performing the critical incident task individually and 5) wrap-up.

- In the initiating activity, cultural differences between Western and Eastern culture in the workplace were introduced through supplementary cultural materials including the cultural notes in the form of texts or pictures or cultural video clips. The purpose of this initiating activity was to help the learners grasp the major cultural points that would emerge in the critical incident task afterwards.
- Then, the critical incident task was introduced and explained. In the first three lessons, a model or instructions of the task was provided so that the students could master the aims and significant points in performing the task.
- Next, the students discussed the incidents in pairs. In all tasks, the students were asked to summarize the scenario of the incidents and work out the problematic issues of those incidents in the perspective of effective intercultural communication. We let the students discuss the incidents in pairs as we aimed to facilitate effective social skills among the students which is a stimulus for their awareness of intercultural communication (Marjan & Seyed, 2012; Rebecca, 1997; Theodore, 1999). Additionally, considering the fact that the complicated structure of the critical incident tasks and their follow-up questions require critical and higher-order thinking skills from learners to arrive at an appropriate answer, the function of working out the problems in pairs can ease the process of figuring out the answer.
- In the following step, the students were requested to perform their answer individually on an answer sheet since we aimed to gain the students' final product in their own perception which means that we expected to see how they extracted the information they obtained from their peer discussion and demonstrated this knowledge in their own perspective. We decided to give freedom to the learners' choice of language for answering the questions since we considered that their limited level of English competence, which is elementary, might hold them back from giving the best response to the task. Finally, there was a wrap-up phase in which teachers summarized and asked questions about what the learners had just studied. In this phase, the instructor also explained the answer and gave feedback to the students for the task they have just done.

In the last seven weeks, lessons had only four parts leaving out the introduction of the task as students were accustomed to the task.

Twelve critical incident tasks (including the pretest and posttest) from several Intercultural Booklets (see Appendix 4) designed as training guides for Intercultural Education Program were utilized for the intervention program. There was one task (task 8) written by the first author on the basis of a real story in a foreign subsidiary in Vietnam. These tasks were selected because of three reasons. First, these critical incident themes are congruent with the cultural issues coming about from earlier studies, which are the main authentic concerns of professionals currently working in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam. Second, these incidents were purposely designed for undergraduate students taking their first course in intercultural communication (James, 2015) and for professional training of the multicultural corporations in an effort to improve their workers' relations, equalize opportunities and enhance workplace experiences for their increasingly multicultural labor force (Norquest College, 2015). The intended trainees of these critical incidents are consistent with the participants of this study as we aimed to train the undergraduate students, who took their first course in intercultural communication and are supposed to work with foreign professionals after their graduation. Finally, these critical incidents demonstrate an in-depth look into two contrasting cultural

ideologies, Eastern and Western culture. They have the consistency in the characters in which one party consists of Asian professionals, possessing an Eastern view whereas the other party includes Western professionals, owning a Western vision. The two distinctive characters entirely fit in our goal of making comparison of these cultural system, awakening learners' awareness of the dissimilarities and touching their curiosity, openness and empathy for the Western culture.

Control condition

The two student groups in the control condition were instructed by two other teachers, one teacher for each group. These two instructors are also English teachers. The first one has been involved in instructing English as a foreign language for 15 years and the other for 8 years.

In the control condition (CC), the students only received the regular course instruction with the textbook of four hours each week. The students in the control group received more English-skill assignments than the experimental group.

4.3.4 Data collection

The pretest and posttest were structured in the same format as the ten critical incident tasks of the intervention. Participants completed the pretest at the beginning of the course and the posttest one week after the final critical incident task of the experimental condition.

Data were gathered via students' answer sheets. In the answer sheet, respectively, there is an instruction for the students to do the task, the critical incident which is a problematic workplace scenario in the form of texts or conversations among characters and a table with four questions. The students were asked to read the scenario in five minutes and then discuss the scenario and work out the solutions to the problem in pairs in twenty minutes. Afterwards, they wrote down their answers to the four questions in the table individually. The four questions were formulated in line with three indicators: (1) *students' understanding of the scenario (scenario understanding – question 1)*; (2) *students' understanding of the miscommunicated points in the scenario (miscommunication understanding – question 2)*; (3) *students' awareness of effective communication in Western or Eastern culture (awareness communication Western or Eastern – question 3 and 4)* and constructed in an ascending level of difficulty in which the students uncovered the issue from a basic analytical ground to a higher critical thinking arena (the pre-test and post-test are included in Appendix 3).

The students' answers were rated with a rubric, based on the Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Value Rubric for grading (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2013), the model of Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1993) and Deardorff's intercultural framework (Deardorff, 2006). We decided to integrate this rubric to our grading criteria because this rubric offers a "systematic" way to measure learners' capacity to determine their own "cultural patterns", make a comparison with others and "adapt empathetically and flexibly to unfamiliar ways of being" (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2013).

Students' answers in the pre-test and post-test were rated in 10 point grading scale with 5 levels (see Appendix 5). For each of the four questions, 2.5 points could be earned, in which level 1 (0.5 point) is the lowest and level 5 (2.5 points) is the highest.

The students' answers were graded by the first instructor of the experimental group, one of the authors of this article. In order to ensure the reliability of the grading procedure, the two instructors of the experimental groups rated the posttest of one experimental group (N=56) with a satisfactory correlation ($r = 0.692$).

4.3.5 Data analysis

Students were grouped in classes and instructors. Six groups of students participated with four groups of students in the experimental conditions and two groups in the control condition. The four groups of students of the experimental condition were instructed by two teachers, each of them teaching two groups. To check whether the variance of the pre-test and post-test scores that can be attributed to the group level variance component models with two levels (group and student) were analyzed for the pre-test and posttest scores, both the total score and the scores on the three indicators. In all analyses, variance at the group level did not differ significantly from 0 showing low proportions of variance explained at the group level. Therefore, we performed multivariate analysis of covariance at the student level with condition (intercultural communication instruction with critical incident task or regular education) as factor, the post-test scores on the three indicators of awareness of intercultural communication as dependent variables and the pre-test scores as covariates. Subsequently, we performed paired-samples t-test for each indicator between pre-test and post-test scores within each condition.

To examine a potential instructor effect, we also tested differences in change of pre-test scores to post-test scores between the two teachers within each condition with repeated measures analyses of variance. In both the experimental condition and control condition, we did not find any difference between the teachers in change of the pre-test scores to the post-test scores: experimental condition ($F(1,166) = 0.780; p = 0.379$) and control condition: ($F(1,66) = 1.488; p = 0.227$). We had similar results for the change in each indicator.

4.4 Results

In Table 4.3, we present the descriptive statistics for both conditions. We found a multivariate effect for condition (Wilks' $\lambda = .452$; $df = 3,228$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .548$), which showed a significant difference between both conditions on the posttest scores on students' awareness of intercultural communication. Students from the experimental condition generally showed significant higher scores on the posttest on awareness of intercultural communication than the students from the control condition, after controlling for the pre-test scores (see Figure 4.1).

The test of between-subjects effects with three indicators as dependent variables showed a significant difference of three indicators in the posttest's results between the experimental and control condition, after controlling for the pre-test scores. The largest difference was found in *awareness communication Western or Eastern* (indicator 3) ($F(1, 234) = 141.324$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = 0.503$). A smaller but still significant effect was found in *scenario understanding* (indicator 1) ($F(1,234)$; $p = .001$; $\eta^2 = 0.217$) and *miscommunication understanding* (indicator 2) ($F(1,234) = 53.774$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = 0.356$).

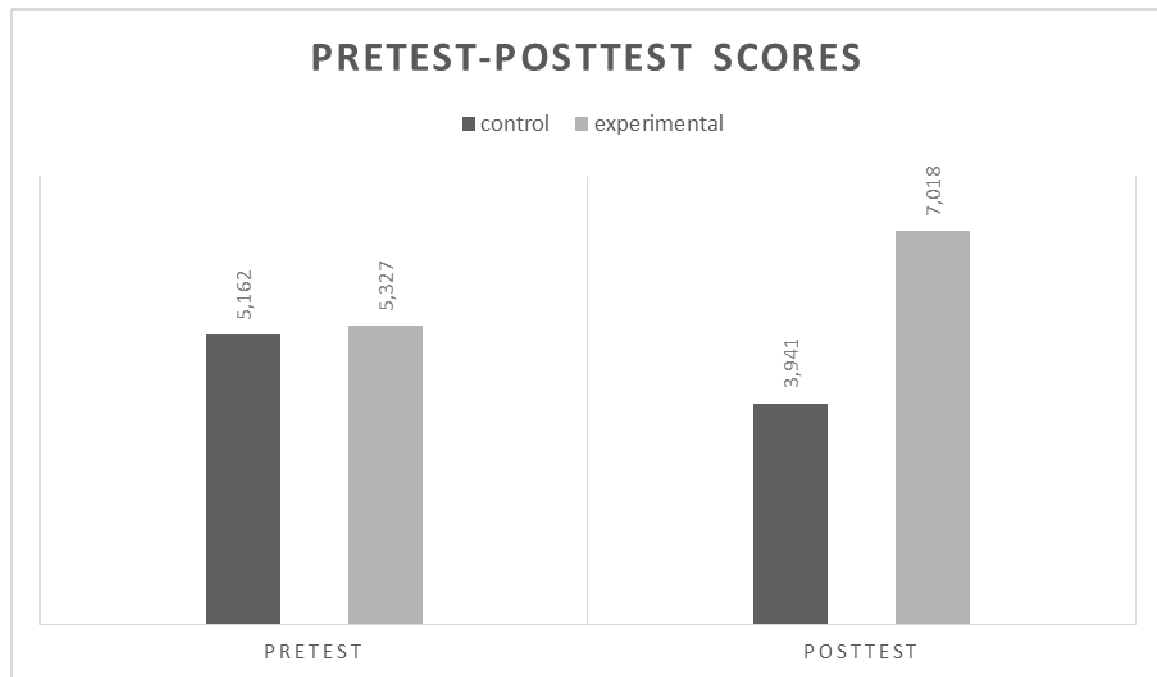


Figure 4.1 Pre and Posttest scores of the Experimental and Control Groups

Table 4.3
Means and Standard Deviations of Pretest and Posttest

Indicators	Experimental				Control			
	Pre-test		Posttest		Pre-test		Posttest	
	Mean (SD)	N	Mean (SD)	N	Mean (SD)	N	Mean (SD)	N
Scenario understanding (Indicator 1)	1.638 (0.522)	185	1.826 (0.417)	167	1.607 (0.411)	84	1.272 (0.629)	68
Miscommunication understanding (Indicator 2)	1.168 (0.619)	184	1.695 (0.517)	167	1.119 (0.5)	84	0.897 (0.419)	68
Awareness communication Western or Eastern (Indicator 3)	2.505 (1.08)	185	3.509 (0.842)	167	2.446 (0.832)	84	1.772 (0.637)	68
Total	5.327 (1.671)	168	7.018 (1.339)	168	5.162 (1.288)	68	3.941 (1.256)	68

Next, we performed paired samples t-test between the pre-test and post-test scores for each condition. For the experimental condition, all differences between pre- and post-scores were significantly different with higher scores on the post-test with $p \leq 0.001$ (indicator 1: $t(167) = -4.026$; indicator 2: $t(167) = -9.665$; indicator 3: $t(167) = -10.329$; total pre-test: $t(167) = -11.590$). For the control condition, all differences between pre- and post-test scores were significantly different with lower scores on the

post-test (indicator 1: $t(67)= 4.366$; $p\leq 0.001$; indicator 2: $t(67)= 2.558$; $p=0.013$; indicator 3: $t(67)= 4.658$; $p\leq 0.001$; total pre-test: $t(67)= 6.022$; $p\leq 0.001$).

4.5 Discussion

Students following the intercultural communication instruction by means of critical incident task procedure showed a stronger development of their awareness of intercultural communication compared to the students in the control condition. Accordingly, we conclude that intercultural communication intervention through teaching critical incident open-ended tasks with student pair work generally enhances students' intercultural competence in terms of awareness of intercultural communication.

We found significant differences of answers on critical incident open-ended tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication between the experimental and control group among the three indicators: (1) *understanding of the scenario*, (2) *understanding of the miscommunicated points in the scenario*, and (3) *awareness of effective communication in Western or Eastern culture*. The differences were stronger for indicator 3 than indicator 1 and 2. Those results are predictable since the three indicators representing four questions were designed in an ascending level of difficulty, in which number 1 is the easiest, number 2 in the middle and 3 and 4 are the most difficult ones. We can apparently see that the trained students and untrained ones have differences in a logical development of intercultural competence. Their development goes from *curiosity and discovery* (scenario understanding), next *observation, analysis, evaluation and interpretation* (miscommunication understanding), then *adaptability, flexibility and empathy* to finally, *effective and appropriate communication* (awareness communication Western or Eastern). Students in the experimental condition were found to be able to use the knowledge they gained from training to explain and give suggestions to cross-cultural misunderstanding compared to students from the control condition. Replicating other studies' results (Aoki, 1992; Cushner, 1989; Flanagan, 1954; Nagakawa, 2014; Lindy, Gail, Bob, Noel & Maureen, 2006, etc.), the findings highlight the effects of the intercultural communication treatment and critical incident technique is a desirable tool for cross-cultural training in EFL classes, particularly introduction to important cultural concepts that direct further cross-cultural training.

4.6 Implications

Intercultural communication instruction by means of critical incident open-ended tasks is promising for providing cross-cultural teaching as part of EFL classrooms. We also postulated the following implications. First, teaching cultural general knowledge might not be enough for the learners' preparation to emerge in an intercultural context (Tolbert & Mclean, 1995). The learners need essential skills to succeed in their professional environment and intercultural communication instruction through using the critical incident approach might bring them up with those necessary skills in order to gain control of the international workplace settings. Besides, although the main goal of the current study is to enhance future graduates' intercultural awareness, we believe that intercultural communication instruction with critical incident technique is also useful for future expatriate managers training because in an intercultural context, awareness of intercultural communication from both parties is needed. Second, critical incident tasks might be effective when it is combined with other ways of teaching. In our study, the instructors did perform the initiating task in which the major cultural points that would emerge in the critical incident task were presented through

texts, pictures or video clips. Third, in order to optimize the training, we conceived that pair work or group work could be a good option. Learners collaborated and argued a lot to figure out what was happening in the scenario and even for the explications and resolutions to the problems. Fourth, due to time limitation and the workload of combining the course book and the intervention of intercultural communication with critical incident tasks, some of the extra English language assignments were eliminated in the experimental group. We suggest that in future study, more time is needed for the course so that the instructors are not in pressure of time to finish two tasks simultaneously and the learners also have more rooms to fully develop both language and intercultural competence. Finally, we also suggest that CIT might be effective when a series of tasks are applied, which means that practice of the tasks should happen regularly so that the students get accustomed to the structure of the task.

4.7 Limitations

The students in the experimental condition received both intercultural communication instruction and communication skills in their speaking lessons of regular education. Because of this, the results might be affected by two conditions: intercultural communication skills and general communication skills. In further research, we suggest that students' development in regular education should also be taken into account.

Two instructors of the experimental groups found out that the students were a little bored when they did the same task with the same format every week. Some students were really motivated until the end of the course but some others lost their interests when they did the same task every week. Therefore, we suggest that in the following research, critical incident tasks should also be instructed every week; nevertheless, role play or other forms of cross-cultural training can be incorporated in order to help students gain real performance experience from the skills they obtain from the critical incidents or critical incident tasks should be alternated with other teaching formats.

In the current study, intercultural communication was instructed by means of critical incident open-ended tasks to promote English non-majors' awareness of intercultural communication. The study is a quasi-experimental study with two conditions: experimental and control. The experimental group received teaching intercultural communication with critical incident tasks and the control group received regular education in which the students were instructed with normal course for English non-majors. Although teaching of communication skills was included in the control condition, it cannot be concluded that the development of the students in the experimental group of their intercultural awareness is affected by relatively more attention to intercultural communication (as addition to communication skills in general), the critical incident tasks as a teaching method, or both of them. Although giving lectures to compare two or more cultures that should be appear in the critical incident tasks is a compulsory step in the intervention (Shibata, 1998), this is still a limitation of this study. In further studies, a better design in which the experimental group receive both intercultural lectures and critical incident open-ended tasks and the control group receive only intercultural lectures should be made. Only in this case, more accurate interpretations of the effects of critical incident open-ended could be obtained.

4.8 Conclusions

Integrating culture instruction into the language lessons as a preparation for students' intercultural encounters should be a main concern in higher education. To carry out this mission, intercultural

communication instruction by means of critical incident tasks could provide a basic foundation which can serve many needs and from which further cross-cultural learning may develop. We hope that the successful implementation of this intercultural course with critical incident tasks will give and boost to the growing trend of intercultural competence teaching in the region.

CHAPTER 5

An experimental study to gain further insights into the effects of intercultural communication training with critical incident open-ended tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication

This chapter has been submitted for publication in an adapted form as: Tran, T. Q. T., Admiraal, W. & Saab, N. (under review). Effects of critical incident tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication.

Abstract

Due to the internationalization and globalization of businesses in Vietnam, the new generation students need to develop skills in intercultural communication. The current study aims to develop English non-majors' awareness of intercultural communication through intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks. One group of 234 students received ten weeks of instruction of intercultural communication with critical incident task and another group of 88 students received regular English classes. Data were collected from the students' answers on pre- and post-test and on papers from ten critical incident tasks. The results showed a significant and strong effect of the intervention of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication, with the strongest effect for the groups of low and middle scoring students. Within the intervention group, students' scores on awareness of intercultural communication over ten critical incident tasks fluctuated as these covered different themes and situations. Implications for educational practice refer to further teaching of intercultural communication with critical incident open-ended tasks.

5.1 Introduction

In higher education, graduates need new competences and skills to work knowledgeably and comfortably in a global society. Students who want to work in large enterprises or in an international setting should acquire skills such as intercultural competence and soft skills (Cai, Gu & Wong, 2017; Sercu, 2004). Yet higher education does not seem to provide enough opportunities for students to develop these competencies, with Vietnam not being an exception (Tran, 2012). The number of foreign companies, subsidiaries and joint-ventures has been increasing throughout Vietnam with many foreign employers and managers, particularly Western higher managers who work and interact extensively with the Vietnamese employees. According to a recent survey study (Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam, 2017), about 50% of the new graduates do not meet the expectations of the international employers with respect to language competence and communication skills. Recently, various universities in Vietnam switched to a more communication-focused curriculum. Yet most studies are still struggling how to implement a communication-focused curriculum with more attention for intercultural competences. The current research aims to provide insights into the development of future graduates' intercultural competence by incorporating intercultural communication into the English classrooms.

5.2 Theoretical background

5.2.1 Critical incident tasks

Cross-cultural training is necessary for preparing people who have to work in another culture (Bhawuk, 2001; Landis & Bhagat, 1996;). Foreign language classrooms are important venues for this because building language skills should be related to cultivating intercultural knowledge and skills (Snow, 2015). Educators might use different types of approaches to provide intercultural competence training. A review of the cross-cultural training literature indicates that critical incident technique is still one of the most researched and accepted methods for intercultural competence training (Bhawuk, 2001). Based on Flanagan's study (1954), critical incident technique was defined as: "a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles" (p.1). Generally, critical incidents are means for enhancing awareness and understanding of human attitudes, expectations, behaviors and interactions. The purpose of this technique is to engage participants in the roles they are already performing or preparing for (in the workplace, in educational settings, and in society at large) (Norquest College, 2015). Critical incidents in intercultural communication training are descriptions of situations in which a misunderstanding, problem or conflict arises as a result of the cultural differences of the interacting parties. Cultural differences that people bring to the situation are implicitly manifested in the incident and are meant to be discovered by the trainee participants (Bhawuk, 2001; Collins & Pieterse, 2007; Tolbert & Mclean, 1995).

Characteristics of an effective critical incident task

According to Flanagan (1954), two pivotal characteristics of critical incidents are completeness and clarity, which are worked out in the description of incidents as follows. A critical incident should include: (1) interpersonal attitudes that reflect a contrast between the home culture and the target culture, (2) the customs or norms of the target culture, (3) the contrasting values of the two cultures and (4) the various social situations that participants may be confronted with at work or other social settings. In short, the critical incidents themselves can focus on behaviors, ideas, perceptions and attitudes of members of both cultures and on the crucial differences in those factors between interlocutors from the two cultures so that they can help learners use their own cultural framework and the framework of other cultures for the interpretation of behaviors in the same way as do members of the other culture (Bhawuk, 2001)

Snow (2015) distinguished two types of critical incident exercises: *cultural assimilators* (close-ended tasks) and *encounter exercises* (open-ended tasks) and Snow argued that the open-ended task brings more advantages to the learners compared to the close-ended one. *Cultural assimilators* are real-life situations that depict a cultural misunderstanding or clash between people from two different cultures. Following the scenario, it has multiple choice exercises, including a list of possible explanations for the situation and an answer key that discusses the merits of each possible explanation (Richard, Leah, Brigitte, Joseph & Ou, 2016; Snow, 2015). *Encounter exercises* are also real-life scenarios but they require learners to generate possible explanations of the situation. The open-ended format requires more of students' engagement in the discussion to work out the answers than the close-ended ones do, and might therefore better suited to be incorporated in English as Foreign Language classes (Snow, 2015). Open ended tasks also provide good speaking and expository writing practice.

Snow (2015) argued that the advantages of the open-ended tasks outweigh the one of close-ended tasks and emphasized the interplay between intercultural competence and repeated use of these encounter exercises. Critical incident open-ended tasks that are repeatedly used offer learners reasonably realistic practice thinking through the process of interpreting incidents. Snow contended that the use of these task could lead to: (1) awareness of problematic situations and the habit of switching to more conscious thinking modes, (2) consideration of multiple interpretations of a situation, (3) awareness of factors which may negatively impact the interpretation process and (4) awareness of the benefit of the doubt choice and how the choice of an interpretation affects subsequent interactions with the interlocutors from the target culture.

Common themes of critical incident tasks in workplace context

In the present study, we aimed to educate undergraduates who might work with Western employers after their graduation. Thus, in the scenarios of the critical incident tasks, we targeted at the workplace context as our training goals. According to Brislin (1986) and Bhawuk (2001), workplace context scenarios between the individualistic and collectivistic culture (Western versus Vietnamese culture) can be centralized around the themes described in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1*Themes of critical incident tasks in workplace context between individualistic and collectivistic culture*

Concepts	Behavioral settings	Individualistic culture	Collectivistic culture
Concept of self	1. Missing a deadline	Negative consequence	Acceptable
	2. Failure to follow schedule	Negative consequence	Acceptable
	3. Valued skills	Technical	Interpersonal
	4. Being direct and forthright	Preferred	Avoided
	5. Hiring a friend's relative	Not acceptable	Acceptable
	6. Hierarchy	Less distinctive	Distinctive
Prioritization of goals	1. Work versus pleasure	Sacrifice work	Sacrifice pleasure
	2. Individual gain versus group responsibility	Individual gain	Group responsibility
	3. Reward allocation	Equity rule	Equality rule
	4. Social loafing	Likely in groups	Less likely in groups
	5. Selection and promotion	Merit-based	Favors in group
Motivation for behavior	1. Work place behaviors	Less normative	Formal norms
	2. Interacting with superiors	Less normative	Formal norms
	3. Work orientation	Task focused	More social
	4. Decision making	Many styles	Procedure oriented
	5. Problem solving	Resulted oriented	Procedure oriented
Orientation to relationships	1. Laying off employees	Rational	Relational
	2. Providing service	Charge fee	Earn credit (unequal exchange)
	3. Relationship versus task	Task focused	Relationship focused
	4. Work relationship	Short term	Long term

Usefulness of critical incident tasks

Critical incident tasks might be beneficial to intercultural competence training. Cross cultural training may be more effective and time-efficient if it focuses on the process of learning about and adjusting to cultural differences rather than transmitting culture-specific information about a given destination (Tolbert & Mclean, 1995). Within this goal, critical incident tasks could bring the learners to a higher cognitive and affective level. Empirical studies proved that the critical incident technique has significant impact on trainees' ability to retain and generalize cultural information and to formulate isomorphic attributions. Formulating isomorphic attributions means that participants' attributions are believed to be similar to the cultural characteristics of their interacting counterparts (Albert, 1986; Bhawuk & Brislin, 2000). Many authors claim that critical incident technique could underpin the

acquisition of intercultural understandings, knowledge and competence (Collins & Pieterse, 2007; McAllister, Whiteford, Hill, Thomas & Fitzgerald, 2006; Snow, 2015). Critical incidents are open to multiple interpretations and thus provide opportunities for the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills via professional reasoning processes (McAllister, Whiteford, Hill, Thomas & Fitzgerald, 2006). More importantly, Cushner (1989) and Collins & Pieterse (2007) emphasized that participating in critical incident analysis might boost students' awareness of cultural experiences so that future incidents are acknowledged, attended to and even analyzed. In this way, a commitment to enhanced awareness and honesty in future behavior may occur.

5.2.2 The present study

In the current study, we decided to implement the intercultural communication instruction with the open-ended critical incident tasks to examine English non-majors' awareness of intercultural communication. The following research questions guided our research:

1. *What are the effects of intercultural communication instruction by means of critical incident open-ended tasks on English non-majors' awareness of intercultural communication?*
2. *Is this effect different for students who differ in their ability in awareness of intercultural communication?*
3. *Do the English non-majors develop their awareness of intercultural communication over time?*
4. *Do students who differ in their ability in awareness of intercultural communication score differently on the different critical incident tasks?*

5.3 Method

This study partly utilized the same data as Chapter 4. In Chapter 4, we used the students' pretest and posttest papers for analysis. In this study, we used students' papers on pretest and posttest and also on 10 critical incident open-ended tasks for all the analyses.

5.3.1 Design

A pretest-posttest control group design was used to examine the effects of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication. Both the intervention group and the control group were instructed with the same instructional course designed for English non-majors with their majors in the technical domain. The course textbook was adapted from the English course book named "Outcomes Intermediate: Real English for the Real World, 1st Edition" by Dellar and Walkley (2011). The intervention was the implementation of intercultural communication instruction with 10 critical incident tasks (ten workplace scenarios) (Appendix 3) added to the course instruction. Students in the experimental condition and control condition completed the pre- and post-test (see for an overview of the research design in Table 5.2).

Table 5.2*Research Design*

Group	Pre-test	Intervention	Post-test
EC (n=234)	O ₁ (W1)	IC & CI	O ₂ (W11)
CC (n=88)	O ₁ (W1)	R	O ₂ (W11)

Note: EC = Experimental condition; CC = Control condition; IC & CI = Intercultural Communication Instruction with Critical Incident Tasks; R = Regular course teaching; W1 = Week 1; W11 = Week 11 (the students had 10 weeks for the course); O = measurement of learners' intercultural awareness; O₁ = Pretest; O₂ = Posttest

5.3.2 Participants

Participants were 322 second-year English non-majors in 6 classes of Technical Engineering (131 females). The participants were of the same age of 19 years old. The students' classes were randomly divided into one experimental (4 groups with 234 students) or one control (2 groups with 88 students) condition. All students were required to take an entrance university examination and an English placement test in their first year. Moreover, they followed two courses of General English for English non-majors in their first year and they all passed the final tests of those courses. All the participants were from the Mekong Delta regions in Vietnam.

5.3.3 Procedures

The course took place in 10 weeks with 2 meetings of 4 hours each week. For the experimental condition, students received intercultural communication instruction with one critical incident task of 1 and a half hour in one meeting per week. The other meeting of 2 and a half hour was used for regular education or textbook instruction and students' practice of four English skills for TOEIC test. In the control condition (CC), the students received the regular course instruction with the textbook and practice of four English skills for TOEIC test of 4 hours each week. In order to have similar student efforts in both condition, the students in the control group received more English-skill assignments than their peers of the experimental group. In Table 5.3, we summarize the setup of the procedures of the treatment condition.

Table 5.3*Course Activities for the Treatment Condition*

Procedures	
IC	
(Intercultural Communication Instruction) & CIT lessons	Initiating activity + introduction of the critical incident task (*) + discussion of the critical incident task in pairs + performing the critical incident task individually + wrap-up
Regular lessons	Regular textbook tasks + students' practice of 4 English skills for TOEIC test

Note: (*): Only in the first 3 weeks, this part is added

Of the four experimental groups, two were instructed by one instructor, who is one of the authors and has been engaging in teaching English as a foreign language for 7 years. The other two groups were instructed by another instructor, who is also an English teacher and has had experiences in teaching English as a foreign language for 10 years. The two student groups in the control condition were instructed by two other teachers, one teacher for each group. These two instructors are also English teachers. The first one has been involved in instructing English as a foreign language for 15 years and the other for 8 years.

Treatment condition

Students in the experimental condition were given a critical incident task treatment. In the first three weeks, lessons were built up with five parts: 1) an initiating activity, 2) introduction of the critical incident task, 3) discussion of the critical incident task in pairs, 4) performing the critical incident task individually and 5) wrap-up.

- 1) In the initiating activity, cultural differences between Western and Eastern culture in the workplace were introduced through supplementary cultural materials. The purpose of this initiating activity was to help the learners grasp the major cultural points that would emerge in the critical incident task afterwards.
- 2) Then, the critical incident task was introduced and explained. In the first three lessons, a model or instructions of the task was provided so that the students could master the aims and significant points in performing the task.
- 3) Next, the students discussed the incidents in pairs. In all tasks, the students were asked to summarize the scenario of the incidents and work out the problematic issues of those incidents in the perspective of effective intercultural communication.
- 4) In the following step, the students were requested to perform their answer individually on an answer sheet since we aimed to gain the students' final product in their own perception which means that we expected to see how they extracted the information they obtained from their peer discussion and demonstrated this knowledge in their own perspective.
- 5) Finally, there was a wrap-up phase in which teachers summarized and asked questions about what the learners had just studied. In this phase, the instructor also explained the answer and gave feedback to the students for the task they have just done.

In the last seven weeks, lessons had only four parts leaving out the introduction of the task as students were accustomed to the task.

The themes presented in Table 5.1 capture critical work for intercultural interactions at the workplace between the individualistic and collectivistic culture which can be used as a guide to develop critical incidents. As we had an exploration study of the workplace context in foreign subsidiaries in Vietnam in 2015, we developed critical incident tasks based on the findings of this study and on the above themes. 12 critical incident tasks (including the pretest and posttest) from several Intercultural Booklets (see Appendix 3 for the specifications of 12 tasks) designed as training guides for Intercultural Education Program were utilized for the intervention program. One task (task 8) was written by the researcher on the basis of a real story in a foreign subsidiary in Vietnam. These tasks shared three aspects:

- 1) Themes are congruent with the cultural issues coming about from earlier research.
- 2) These incidents were purposely designed for undergraduate students taking their first course in intercultural communication and based on information from professional training of the multicultural corporations in an effort to improve their workers' relations, equalize

opportunities and enhance workplace experiences for their increasingly multicultural labor force (James, 2015; Norquest College, 2015).

- 3) These incidents demonstrate an in-depth look into two contrasting cultural ideologies, Eastern and Western culture with cultural dimensions such as time perception, face-concern, direct and indirect communication, family orientation, participation in work decision-making and power distance (Tran, Admiraal & Saab, 2017).

Control condition

Students only received the regular course instruction with the textbook of four hours each week. In addition, the students in the control group received more English-skill assignments than the experimental group.

5.3.4 Data collection

Students' awareness of intercultural communication has been measured by their completion of the 12 critical incident tasks, including a pre-test and post-test. The pretest and posttest were structured in the same format as the ten critical incident tasks of the intervention. Participants completed the pretest at the beginning of the course and the posttest one week after the final critical incident task of the experimental condition.

Data were gathered via students' answer sheets. The answer sheet includes an instruction for the students to do the task, the critical incident which is a problematic workplace scenario in the form of texts or conversations among characters and a table with 4 questions. The students were asked to read the scenario in 5 minutes and then discuss the scenario and work out the solutions to the problem in pairs in 20 minutes. Afterwards, they wrote down their answers to the 4 questions in the table individually. The 4 questions were formulated in line with 3 indicators: (1) *students' understanding of the scenario (scenario understanding)*; (2) *students' understanding of the miscommunicated points in the scenario (miscommunication understanding)*; (3) *students' awareness of effective communication in Western or Eastern culture (awareness communication Western or Eastern)*. These four questions were constructed in an ascending level of difficulty in which the students uncovered the issue (questions 1 and 2) and showed awareness of intercultural communication (questions 3 and 4).

The students' answers were rated with a rubric, based on the Intercultural Knowledge and Competence Value Rubric for grading (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2013), the model of Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1993) and Deardorff's intercultural framework (Deardorff, 2006). Students' answers in each task were rated in 10 point grading scale with 5 levels, with level 1 = 0.5 point and level 5 = 2.5 points (Appendix 4). For each of the four questions, 2.5 points could be earned. The students' answers were graded by the first instructor of the experimental group, one of the authors of this article. In order to ensure the reliability of the grading procedure, the two instructors of the experimental groups rated the posttest of one experimental group (N=56 of 234 students) with a satisfactory correlation ($r = 0.692$).

5.3.5 Data analysis

Students were grouped in classes and instructors. Six groups of students participated with four groups of students in the experimental conditions and two groups in the control condition. The four groups of students of the experimental condition were instructed by two teachers, each of them teaching two

groups. To check whether the variance of the pre-test and post-test scores that can be attributed to the group level variance component models with two levels (group and student) were analyzed for the pre-test and posttest scores, both the total score and the scores on the three indicators. In all analyses, variance at the group level did not differ significantly from 0 showing low proportions of variance explained at the group level. Therefore, we performed analyses at the student level only.

To examine a potential instructor effect, we also tested differences in change of pre-test scores to post-test scores between the two teachers within each condition with repeated measures analyses of variance. In both the experimental condition and control condition, we did not find any difference between the teachers in change of the pre-test scores to the post-test scores: experimental condition ($F(1,166) = 0.780$; $p = 0.379$) and control condition: ($F(1,66) = 1.488$; $p = 0.227$). We had similar results for the change in each indicator.

In order to examine the effects of the critical incident tasks (research question 1), we performed multivariate analysis of covariance at the student level with condition (intercultural communication instruction with critical incident task or regular education) as factor, the post-test scores on the three indicators of awareness of intercultural communication as dependent variables and the pre-test scores as covariates. Subsequently, we performed paired-samples t-test for each indicator between pre-test and post-test scores within each condition.

In order to answer research question 2, we first examined how many ability groups could be distinguished based on the pre-test scores. We repeated the multivariate analysis of co-variance described above for 2, 3 and 4 binned groups. The analysis for three binned groups were selected to answer research question 2 as the clustering into three groups provided significant findings in contrast to clustering into either two or four ability groups.

In order to answer research question 3, we plotted the original scores of the 10 tasks, both for the total scores and for the three indicators.

In order to answer research question 4, we performed multivariate analysis of variance within the experimental condition with ability group (low, medium and high) as factor and the sum scores for all 10 tasks. Then for the tasks in which the three ability groups differ, we performed multivariate analyses of variance within the experimental condition with ability group (low, medium and high) as factor and the scores for each task on the three indicators of awareness of intercultural communication as dependent variables

5.4 Results

5.4.1 Effect on awareness of intercultural communication

In Table 5.4, we present the descriptive statistics for both conditions. We found a multivariate effect for condition (Wilks' $\lambda = .452$; $df = 3,228$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .548$), which showed a significant difference between both conditions on the posttest scores on students' awareness of intercultural communication. Students from the experimental condition generally showed significant higher scores on the posttest on awareness of intercultural communication than the students from the control condition, after controlling for the pre-test scores (see Figure 5.1).

The test of between-subjects effects with three indicators as dependent variables showed a significant difference of three indicators in the posttest's results between the experimental and control condition, after controlling for the pre-test scores. The largest difference was found in *awareness communication Western or Eastern* (indicator 3) ($F(1, 234) = 141.324$; $p = <.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.503$). A smaller but still significant effect was found in *scenario understanding* (indicator 1) ($F(1,234)$; $p .001$;

$\eta^2 = 0.217$) and *miscommunication understanding* (indicator 2) ($F(1,234) = 53.774$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = 0.356$).

Next, we performed paired samples t-test between the pre-test and post-test scores for each condition. For the experimental condition, all differences between pre- and post-scores were significantly different with higher scores on the post-test with $p \leq 0.001$ (indicator 1: $t(167) = -4.026$; indicator 2: $t(167) = -9.665$; indicator 3: $t(167) = -10.329$; total pre-test: $t(167) = -11.590$). For the control condition, all differences between pre- and post-test scores were significantly different with lower scores on the post-test (indicator 1: $t(67) = 4.366$; $p \leq 0.001$; indicator 2: $t(67) = 2.558$; $p = 0.013$; indicator 3: $t(67) = 4.658$; $p \leq 0.001$; total pre-test: $t(67) = 6.022$; $p \leq 0.001$).

Table 5.4

Means and Standard deviation of Pre-test and Posttest with three indicators

Indicators	Experimental				Control			
	Pre-test Mean (SD)	N	Posttest Mean (SD)	N	Pre-test Mean (SD)	N	Posttest Mean (SD)	N
Scenario understanding (Indicator 1)	1.638 (0.522)	185	1.826 (0.417)	167	1.607 (0.411)	84	1.272 (0.629)	68
Miscommunication understanding (Indicator 2)	1.168 (0.619)	184	1.695 (0.517)	167	1.119 (0.5)	84	0.897 (0.419)	68
Awareness communication Western or Eastern (Indicator 3)	2.505 (1.08)	185	3.509 (0.842)	167	2.446 (0.832)	84	1.772 (0.637)	68
Total	5.327 (1.671)	168	7.018 (1.339)	168	5.162 (1.288)	68	3.941 (1.256)	68

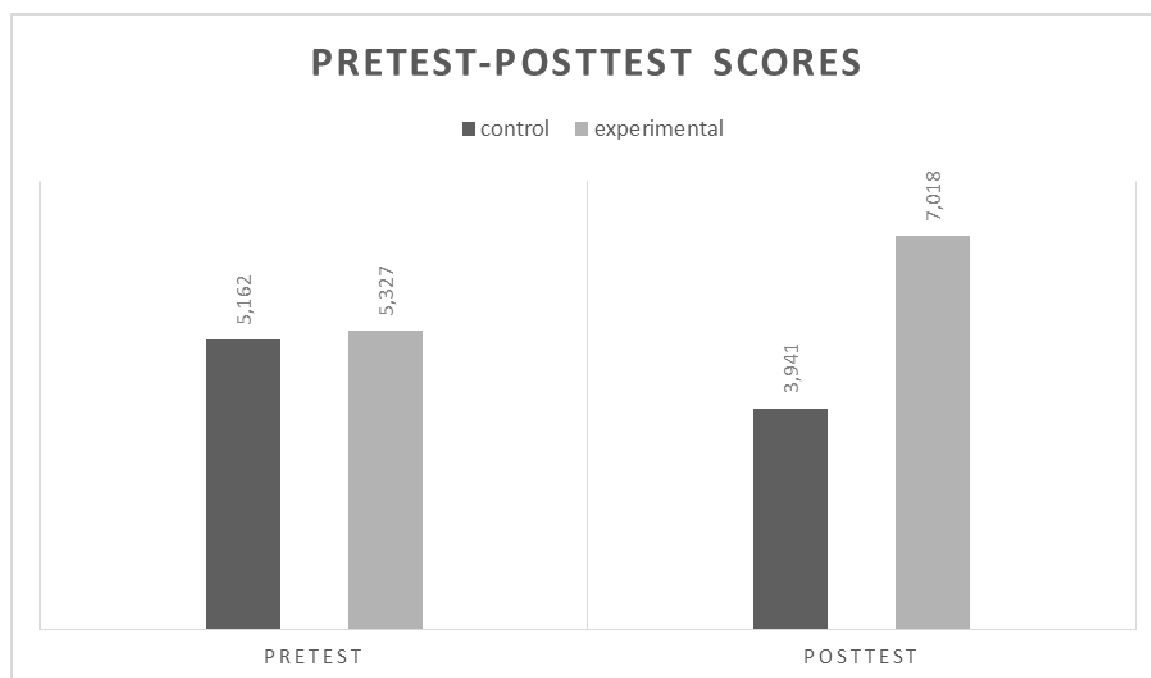


Figure 5.1 The effects of critical incident open-ended tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication

Since the largest difference between the experimental and control group was found in indicator 3 (awareness communication Western or Eastern), we selected two students to illustrate what a low or a high score on this indicator looks like. In Table 5.5, the performance is shown of these two students on task 3.

Table 5.5

Qualitative Analysis of Students' Paper between the Low and High Scorer for Indicator 3 from Task 3

	Student with a low score	Student with a high Score
Answer to question number 3 (How would you think George should behave considering Bo's cultural background?)	George <u>should sympathize</u> with Bo.	In Bo's culture, <u>people do not often speak out when they do not agree nor they have an idea</u> ; they think that "a wise head makes a close mouth". They <u>also feel shame to express ideas between the crowds</u> . So George <u>should change Bo's mind slowly by advices and encourages</u> , not to accept his suggestion.
Answer to question number 4 (How would you think Bo should behave considering George's cultural background?)	Bo <u>needs to learn much more</u> and <u>more comments</u> in meeting.	In George's culture, <u>people just speak out when they have something to say</u> . This habit helps their community going better and having a clear direction to develop. In this situation, <u>Bo should change his habit and gets on well to the new community</u> if he wants his career getting better.

From Table 5.5, it is obvious that the student with the high score could highlight the contrast between Western and Eastern culture and offered an acceptable suggestion for both characters. In contrast, the student with the low score could not emphasize the cultural differences and made a very general statement about the solution to the problem. It is worth noting that the student with the high score did not get the highest score because of grammatical mistakes and unintentionally did mistake answering question number 3. The correct answer was that “George should accept Bo’s suggestion that Bo can ask for recommendations from the people who run the meetings for solutions of the problem”. The student probably intended to answer in that way but wrote down the answer in an opposite meaning. For the answer to question number 4, the student with the high score also did not get the maximal score because of grammatical mistakes and the solution to the problem is not clear enough; more elaborations about habit change should have been made.

5.4.2 Effect on awareness of intercultural communication for students with low, moderate and high awareness

Because the students’ scores on ten critical incident open-ended tasks fluctuated a lot, we decided to perform this analysis in order to examine accurately the students’ development of intercultural communication awareness throughout the course. The result from the analysis of co-variance with pre-test as covariate for 2, 3 and 4 binned groups indicated that the 3 binned groups, low, middle and high scores on the pre-test, explained the largest proportion variance in the post-test scores (Table 5.6).

Table 5.6

Analysis of co-variance with pre-test as covariate for 2, 3 and 4 binned groups

Groups	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Square
2 groups (low and high)	2.736	1	2.736	1.694	.194	.007
3 groups (low, middle and high)	13.374	2	6.687	4.104	.018	.035
4 groups (low, middlelow, middlehigh and high)	2.672	3	.891	.544	.653	.007

From Table 5.6, we see an interaction effect of intervention by groups that differed in awareness showing that – in addition to the main effect of the intervention on students’ awareness of intercultural communication- the effect of the intervention differed between the three student groups. From the mean scores shown in Table 5.7, we may conclude that the intervention of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks explained more variance in the post-test scores for the low and middle scoring group, compared to the high scoring group.

Finally, the results from the multivariate analysis of covariance with intervention and awareness groups as independent variables indicated a significant interaction effect in all indicators: *scenario understanding* (indicator 1), ($F(2,232) = 5.787$; $p = 0.004$; $\eta^2 = 0.049$), *miscommunication*

understanding (indicator 2), ($F(2,232) = 3.546$; $p = 0.03$; $\eta^2 = 0.031$) and *awareness communication Western or Eastern* (indicator 3), ($F(2,232) = 3.374$; $p = 0.036$; $\eta^2 = 0.029$) (see Table 5.7).

5.4.3 Students' development of awareness of intercultural communication over 10 tasks

In Figure 5.2, we have plotted the mean scores on the 10 tasks for the three groups of students that differ in their level of awareness of intercultural communication at the pre-test. Figure 5.2 clearly shows a large fluctuation in scores between the 10 tasks.

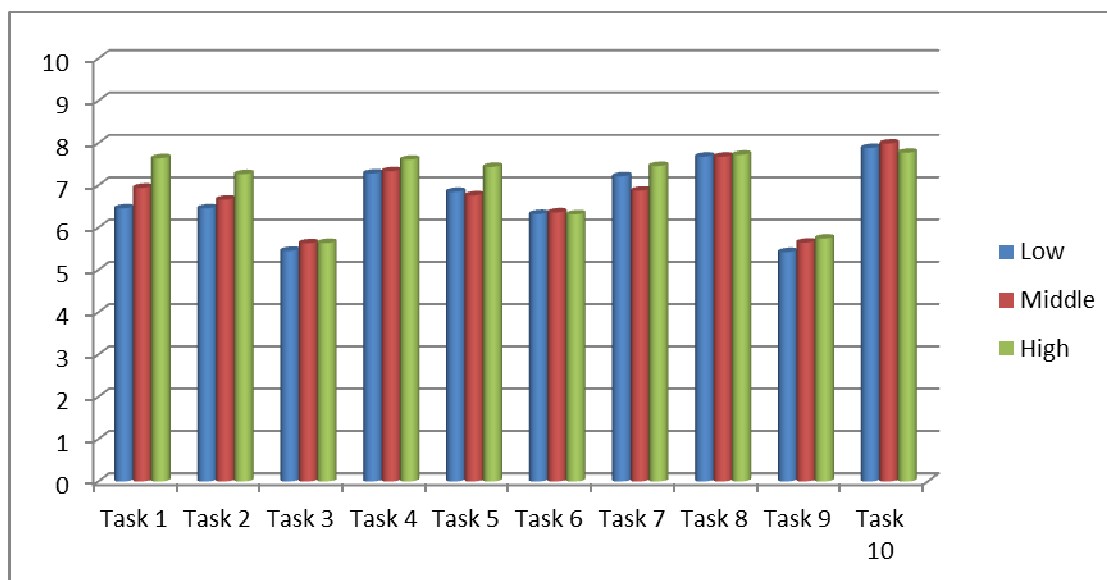


Figure 5.2 Mean scores of the three student groups on the 10 tasks

5.4.4 Differences between the three student groups in awareness of intercultural communication in each task

From the multivariate analysis of variance with the three student groups as independent variables and the scores for awareness of intercultural communication on the 10 tasks, we found a significant difference for ability group ((Wilks' $\lambda = .744$; $df = 20,222$; $p = 0.025$; $\eta^2 = .138$). The test of between-subjects effects with 10 task scores as dependent variables showed significant differences between ability groups for task 1 ($F(2, 123) = 10.296$; $p < 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.146$) and task 2 ($F(2, 123) = 4.075$; $p = 0.019$; $\eta^2 = 0.064$). For the other tasks, no significant differences were found between the three ability groups (see Table 5.8). Scheffé posthoc test showed that for task 1, the high scoring group differed significantly from the low and middle scoring group (high versus low: $p < 0.001$; high versus middle: $p = 0.012$) and for task 2, the high scoring group differed significantly from the low scoring group ($p = 0.029$).

From the multivariate analysis test for 3 binned groups with three indicators for task 1 and task 2, the results showed that, for task 1, we found significant effect for indicator 2 ($F(2, 163) = 7.830$; $p = 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.089$) and indicator 3 ($F(2, 163) = 7.658$; $p = 0.001$; $\eta^2 = 0.087$), with significant differences between the low and middle scoring group with the high scoring group for indicator 2, $p = 0.001$ and $p = 0.009$, respectively) and between the low and high scoring group for indicator 3 ($p = 0.001$).

Table 5.7

Total scores and scores on the three indicators of the pre- and post-test for students with low, moderate and high awareness scores on the pre-test

Indicators/Groups		Experimental						Control					
		Low		Middle		High		Low		Middle		High	
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Pre-test	Scenario understanding	1.304	0.563	1.675	0.306	1.992	0.377	1.477	0.430	1.625	0.265	1.938	0.359
	Miscommunication understanding	0.667	0.546	1.272	0.423	1.664	0.367	0.818	0.390	1.375	0.368	1.563	0.403
	Awareness communication Western or Eastern	1.536	1.051	2.803	0.400	3.364	0.547	1.941	0.725	2.895	0.329	3.250	0.447
	Total	3.514	1.236	5.737	0.251	7.025	0.604	4.144	0.939	5.896	0.207	6.750	0.316
Posttest	Scenario understanding	1.750	0.417	1.865	0.385	1.880	0.446	1.014	0.548	1.361	0.659	1.750	0.470
	Miscommunication understanding	1.641	0.573	1.750	0.437	1.690	0.514	0.900	0.398	0.722	0.427	1.071	0.385
	Awareness communication Western or Eastern	3.320	0.956	3.711	0.723	3.540	0.768	1.857	0.636	1.500	0.568	1.857	0.662
	Total	6.711	1.487	7.340	1.099	7.069	1.307	3.833	1.195	3.583	1.251	4.679	1.202
Total		Low		Middle		High		Low		Middle		High	
		Mean		SD		Mean		SD		Mean		SD	
		5.675		1.959		6.387		1.996		6.554		1.615	

For task 2, we found a significant effect for indicator 1 2 ($F(2, 159) = 4.220$; $p = 0.016$; $\eta^2 = 0.051$) with the high scoring group showing significant higher scores than the low ability group ($P = 0.019$).

Table 5.8

Means and standard deviation of the differences among 3 groups of students: low, middle and high in each task

Task and Group	Low		Middle		High	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
Task 1	6.457	1.475	6.944	1.223	7.644	1.077
Task 2	6.458	1.822	6.663	1.640	7.269	1.805
Task 3	5.452	2.017	5.632	1.678	5.639	1.711
Task 4	7.283	1.187	7.337	1.219	7.608	1.193
Task 5	6.849	1.512	6.764	1.589	7.440	1.427
Task 6	6.323	1.464	6.361	1.343	6.315	1.588
Task 7	7.215	1.476	6.875	1.608	7.462	1.392
Task 8	7.680	1.268	7.680	1.232	7.724	1.342
Task 9	5.423	1.873	5.648	1.465	5.745	1.663
Task 10	7.887	1.424	7.991	1.073	7.774	1.489

From the multivariate analysis test for 3 binned groups with three indicators for each task, the results showed that, for task 1, we found significant effect for indicator 2, between the low and middle with the high scoring group; for indicator 3, between the low and high scoring group. For task 2, significant effect was found for indicator 1 between the low and high scoring group. Finally, for task 5, significant effect was found for indicator 1 between the low and high scoring group.

5.5 Discussion

This study aims to examine the effects of intercultural communication instruction with ten critical incident tasks on the English non-majors' development of awareness of intercultural communication. The results indicated that students instructed with intercultural course by means of critical incident open-ended task showed a strong positive development of their awareness of intercultural communication compared to the students in the control condition. We found significant differences of answers on critical incident open-ended tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication between the experimental and control group on the three indicators: (1) *understanding of the scenario*, (2) *understanding of the miscommunicated points in the scenario*, (3) *awareness of effective communication in Western or Eastern culture*. The largest effects were found in indicator 3. Accordingly, we conclude that teaching intercultural communication by means of critical incident open-ended tasks with student pair work generally enhances students' awareness of intercultural communication.

We also explored the effect of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication in three awareness groups: students with low, middle and high scores on the pre-test. We found a significant interaction effect between intervention and awareness groups for all the indicators indicating that the intervention explained most variance in students' awareness of intercultural communication at the post-test for students with low and moderate initial awareness.

Additionally, we also observed the students' development of awareness of intercultural communication over time in ten tasks within the experimental condition showing large fluctuation in scores on the different tasks. Finally, we tested differences between the three awareness groups within the experimental condition on the 10 tasks showing significant differences on only some indicators of three out of the ten tasks. The latter means that the effect of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident task is rather stable across initial levels of awareness, although a bit stronger for students with low and moderate levels initial awareness of intercultural communication.

From the general effect of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended task on students' awareness of intercultural communication (research question 1), we see slightly different effects for the three indicators with curiosity and discovery which is indicated in indicator 1 (*scenario understanding*), observation, analysis, evaluation and interpretation, which is indicated in indicator 2 (*miscommunication understanding*), and awareness of effective and appropriate communication, which is indicated in indicator 3 (*awareness communication Western or Eastern culture*). The strongest effect was found for indicator 3, which could be understood as the most crucial indicator of awareness of intercultural communication. Students in the experimental condition generally used the knowledge they gained from their training to explain and give suggestions to cross-cultural misunderstanding. The findings highlight that intercultural communication instruction with critical incident technique is a desirable tool for cross-cultural training in EFL classes, particularly introducing important cultural concepts that direct further cross-cultural training. Specifically, the findings we found have three similarities with previous studies. First, this study confirms the development process in which the students in the experimental condition move from ethnocentrism to broad ranging cultural competence. In other words, the students could formulate a higher ethnocentric view which proceeds towards a greater level of cultural awareness and acceptance (Aoki, 1992; Cushner, 1989; Herfst, Oudenhoven & Timmerman, 2008; McAllister, Whiteford, Hill, Thomas, & Fitzgerald, 2006). Second, the students from the experimental conditions might exhibit increased knowledge about factors that mediate cross-cultural interaction and adjustment. They do acquire new elements to assist them for the explanation of interactions and communications (Cushner, 1989; Tolbert & Mclean, 1995). Finally, intercultural communication instruction by means of critical incidents tasks help to build up students' sophisticated intercultural thinking. Students tend to better memorize events in a scripted sequence as they were put into the experience. This experience probably outperforms a list of do's and don'ts that is often presented in informational presentations (Cushner, 1989; Herfst, Oudenhoven & Timmerman, 2008; McAllister, Whiteford, Hill, Thomas, & Fitzgerald, 2006).

We also examined the effects of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication among three groups of students who differed in their initial level of awareness. In general, we found a strong effect on scores of students with low and moderate initial awareness and smaller effect on scores of students with high initial awareness. Probably, students with low and moderate initial awareness need intercultural communication training with critical incident open-ended tasks in order to develop their awareness of intercultural communication more than students with high initial awareness who only reached a slightly higher level of awareness of intercultural communication. From Figure 5.2 and Table 5.8, it is quite clear that the students with high initial level of awareness do not grow any more after task 2. One explanation could be that students with initial high scores might got bored of doing the same task every week. A second explanation could be that these students might need another learning activity, maybe in combination with a critical incident task. A third explanation could be that students with initial high scores cannot grow anymore because they already have reached the maximum scores. But

that is not the case in this study: even initial high scoring students could have reached a higher level as they generally did now.

5.6 Limitation

The first limitation is that the students in the experimental condition received both intercultural communication instruction and communication skills in their speaking lessons of regular education. Because of this, the results might be affected by two conditions: intercultural communication skills and general communication skills. In further research, we suggest that students' development in regular education should also be taken into account.

In the current study, we look for the students' development of awareness of intercultural communication throughout ten tasks through the students' answers on papers. The participants in this study could not completely show their awareness of intercultural communication since they were restricted by the language and writing ability although they could choose to perform the tasks in Vietnamese (see Table 5.5 and the explanation below the table). Accordingly, we recommend that in future studies, an integration of speaking and writing assessment should be made in order to assist the students to thoroughly express their ideas.

In the current study, intercultural communication was instructed by means of critical incident open-ended tasks to promote English non-majors' awareness of intercultural communication. The study is a quasi-experimental study with two conditions: experimental and control. The experimental group received teaching intercultural communication with critical incident tasks and the control group received regular education in which the students were instructed with normal course for English non-majors. Although teaching of communication skills was included in the control condition, it cannot be concluded that the development of the students in the experimental group of their intercultural awareness is affected by relatively more attention to intercultural communication (as addition to communication skills in general), the critical incident tasks as a teaching method, or both of them. Although giving lectures to compare two or more cultures that should be appear in the critical incident tasks is a compulsory step in the intervention (Shibata, 1998), this is still a limitation of this study. In further studies, a better design in which the experimental group receive both intercultural lectures and critical incident open-ended tasks and the control group receive only intercultural lectures should be made. Only in this case, more accurate interpretations of the effects of critical incident open-ended could be obtained.

Finally, from the plot analysis of the students' development over 10 tasks, no growth in between the tasks was observed. However, the students in the experimental condition performed high scores on the posttest. This finding might be the effect of testing to the test. The students in the treatment condition did the same task every week and they knew exactly how to do it perfectly. In another observation, the different themes of the tasks, the different levels of difficulty of the tasks probably in combination with the sequence of these tasks, might explain the large fluctuation in scores of students in the experimental condition. However, we still decided to choose those variety of combinations because we thought of the quality of the course. In order to have a favorable educational program, integration of different themes and various levels of difficulties should be conducted to arouse students' interests. This might be an interesting topic for future research. In order to examine the influence of different tasks, we should use a research design which combines sequence and themes.

5.7 Implications

We can conclude that intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks is an effective method to promote learners' awareness of intercultural communication. Additionally, the intervention seems to work better for students with a low or moderate initial level of awareness than for the other students. These findings lead us to the following implications. First, teaching cultural general knowledge might not be sufficient for the learners' preparation to emerge in an intercultural context (Tolbert & Mclean, 1995). The learners need communication-oriented skills to succeed in the intercultural settings and the critical incident approach might offer them with those necessary skills. Second, as after the third task, students' awareness of intercultural communication does not increase much, it might be that a program with 3 tasks is sufficient for the students' practice. Another option would be that teachers alternate or combine other methods with the critical incident tasks so that the students, especially the high scoring students do not get bored. Finally, although the current study aims to develop future graduates' awareness of intercultural communication, we believe that intercultural communication instruction with critical incident technique is also useful for training of expatriate managers or workers. In an intercultural context like the economic situation in Vietnam, awareness of intercultural communication from both parties is needed.

5.8 Concluding remarks

Intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks is a promising method to assist educators to support the development of their students' awareness of intercultural communication. Critical incident open-ended tasks help students to develop their critical thinking, problem solving and communication skills if these tasks are appropriately implemented. In this way, these tasks support the combination of language and intercultural competence training, which as some other claims (Byram, Nichols & Stevens, 2001; Sercu, 2004) cannot be separated.

CHAPTER 6

General conclusions and discussion

6.1 The context of the study

This study was conducted in the South of Vietnam. All the data that were analyzed in the exploration studies (Chapter 2 and 3) were collected from companies in Ho Chi Minh city and Can Tho city (the capital city of the Mekong Delta). The data for the experimental study (Chapter 4 and 5) were collected at Can Tho University of Technology. The selection of the companies for the exploration studies in this project was carefully planned but in a way that the data collected would be accurate, appropriate and upright. All the companies were randomly chosen through a website called the Global Trade in Customer Language website (<http://eu.ecizi.com>). The author followed the following procedure: first, she collected the randomly chosen companies' information; then she sent emails, phoned or visited the companies in person to ask for their permission to carry out her research at those companies. Accordingly, all the participants in these exploration studies formed a group of various people with different nationalities (for the Western employers) and different regional origins (for the Vietnamese employees and employers), which ensured the internal validity of the studies.

The results from the exploration studies showed significant differences between the Vietnamese and the Western participants, even though there was a great variety within the groups: the Western group consisted of people with different nationalities and the Vietnamese group consisted of people from different regions. Nonetheless, when interpreting the results of this study, one should keep in mind that not all Western countries nor all Vietnamese regions are completely similar. In the following parts, the characteristics of those two groups will be described more in order to provide a clear frame work for interpreting the findings of the studies.

6.2 Main findings and conclusions

This dissertation is divided into two parts: the exploratory studies (chapter 2 and 3) and the experimental studies (chapter 4 and 5). The exploratory studies investigated cultural differences related to work-related values and communication between Western and Vietnamese professionals in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in the South of Vietnam. The results have shown significant differences in work-related attitudes and in intercultural communication problems and concerns between Vietnamese employees and Western higher managers. These findings will be summarized in part 6.2.1. Based on these findings, the intervention of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident technique has been examined in language classes in higher education to better prepare students to work in an international context. These findings are elaborated in part 6.2.3.

6.2.1 Findings from the studies on the intercultural workplace context

In Chapter 2, examination of the differences in work-related attitudes between Vietnamese employees and Western employers/higher managers was conducted. This study is based on research question 1: *To what extent do Vietnamese employees and Western employers/managers differ with respect to their work-related values?* Six work-related values were extracted from the international research on cultural distance in the workplace: 1) *sense of time* (this value was split into two other sub-values: *being on time in a direct way* (e.g. asking for an extension of a deadline) and *being on time with a*

condition (e.g. asking for a deadline extension if I have good reasons) thanks to Factor Analysis and Reliability Analysis), 2) *participation in higher managers' decision-making*, 3) *open relationship with employers*, 4) *face-concern*, 5) *accountability* and 6) *autocratic versus work-performance orientation*. These work-related attitudes were selected from empirical and theoretical studies reflecting differences between Western and Vietnamese culture.

The questionnaire findings showed that Western employers exhibited higher mean scores than Vietnamese employees in all work-related values. Significant differences were also found between Vietnamese employers and Vietnamese employees, with higher scores for Vietnamese employers, except for *being on time with a condition*. Additionally, three significant differences were found between Western and Vietnamese employers, with higher scores for Western employers: *being on time in a direct way*, *being on time with a condition* and *face-concern*. The researcher did not find any significant differences between the Vietnamese employees working in foreign and Vietnamese companies. The differences between Western employers and Vietnamese employees were more significant than the differences between Vietnamese employers and Vietnamese employees. Therefore, the differences between Western employers and Vietnamese employees seem to be caused partly by cultural aspects and partly by status differences between employers and employees. In conclusion, the largest differences between Western employers, on the one hand, and Vietnamese employers and employees were found in *sense of time* and *face-concern*, which indicates that these are two significant differences between Western and Vietnamese professionals. The findings provide insight into what future graduates who are going to work with Western professionals should work on most. The findings also signify the importance of culture instruction along with language instruction in higher education.

In Chapter 3, examination of intercultural communication issues between Western employers/managers and Vietnamese employees in Western subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Ho Chi Minh city in Vietnam was conducted. This study tried to answer the following questions: 1) *What are the perceptions of Vietnamese employees towards communication in the workplace in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam?* 2) *What are the perceptions of Western employers/managers towards communication in the workplace in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam?* The study specifically delved into the impact of cultural distance on daily-work communication of professionals from Western and Vietnamese culture and aimed to validate the findings from the questionnaire data in study one.

From the interviews, it seems that both perspectives (employers and employees) on communication between the Western managers and the Vietnamese employees seem to complement each other, in which the differences are due to both cultural and status differences. There were many concerns and problematic issues from the Western managers' viewpoints centralizing around (1) *lack of communication* and (2) *lack of autonomy in getting work done and motivation in professional development*. The Western managers complained that while working with Vietnamese employees, they encounter several issues that they do not face when collaborating with their home-country partners. Nevertheless, from the Vietnamese employees' side, there were not many concerns brought about and the negative points were not frequently mentioned. They clearly stated that they have good and satisfying relationships with their higher managers.

6.2.2 Elaborations on the differences between Vietnamese and Western professionals

Taking into account the statistical components of the three different groups: Western employers, Vietnamese employees and Vietnamese employers, it could be concluded that there are more differences between the Western employer group and the Vietnamese employee group than between

the Vietnamese employer group and the Vietnamese employee group (please see Table 2.1 in Chapter 2). *Firstly*, in regards to personality characteristics or individual differences, the Vietnamese groups (employees and employers) consisted of more females than males whereas in the Western employer group, there are only 3 females out of 32 employers/managers. Gender differentiations at workplaces have been long discussed by their inequalities in several aspects (Padavic & Reskin, 2002; Peterson, 2004). Peterson (2004) found out that although men and women value the same aspects of work, they have different indications for those values. While men fall for pay, money, status, power, results and achievement, women put greater value on friends and relationships, recognition and respect and virtues such as integrity and honesty. Besides, Padavic & Reskin (2002) noted that the differences of gender at workplace are usually seen in two facets (1) the sexual division of labor and (2) the undervaluation of women's work and overvaluation of men's work. These researchers eventually contended that both men and women might be susceptible to value conflict, less productivity and health problems if they are working in an environment dominated by their opposite-sex counterparts. Accordingly, value conflicts easily occur when there is domination of one sex in workplace environment and the situation in these companies could be more severe when there are three big differentiations between the Western employers/managers and Vietnamese employees: status difference, gender difference and cultural difference. *Secondly*, with reference to work experience, both groups, Vietnamese employees and Western employers/managers have short time in experience working with their counterparts (please see Table 2.1, Chapter 2). In this case, more time is needed for both sides to penetrate into the others' world to interact effectively because acculturation process takes time and the participants need to go through many stages before reaching their final goals (Anderson, 1994).

Relating to cultural differences, the author aims to make distinction between the Vietnamese people and other Eastern or Asian groups although there are also a lot of similarities between them which greatly differentiates them from Western people. For a long time, the Vietnamese value system is constructed on four main grounds (coming from the basics of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism like other Eastern countries): (1) allegiance to the family in which the benefits of the family and the community come before individual desires, (2) yearning for a good name in which a good name or keeping good face is more significant than material possession and a Vietnamese individual often avoid words or actions that could harm his/her dignity and honor, (3) love of learning in which education is accentuated, and (4) respect for other people in which harmony is a crucial nature to be preserved (Hays, 2014; Hue Private Cars, 2016). In addition, in regards to "time concepts", the Vietnamese have no impression for the word "rush" and accordingly, time is not as valuable to the Vietnamese as it is to the people from the United States (Hays, 2014). However, the current Vietnamese value system is slightly modified compared to previous years because of the influence of Socialism and Westernism. Now, there are five main ideologies affecting the system including: traditional values, Confucianism and Taoism, Buddhism, Westernism and Socialism. Particularly, the impact of Western values in recent years is captured in the sense of promoting individual awareness not only for his/her personal development but also for supporting the development of the society (Nguyen, 2016). Another significant impact of Western values on the Vietnamese people is the change in position of women. In the past, women were definitely assigned the role of housewives and mothers at home. Nowadays, thanks to this influence, many Vietnamese women are well-educated and engaged in many types of careers, leaving their kitchen corners and become professional workers (Nguyen, 2016).

The Vietnamese economy is recently greatly affected by the globalization and internationalization all over the world; nevertheless, the values system is still dominated by the

traditional and Confucian system and the Vietnamese people's characteristics are frankly distinctive from Western individuals in many ways (Luong, 2009; Weng, 2015). Moreover, taking into account the Western groups in this project, one crucial feature is that they are from different Western countries comprising of the United States of America, New Zealand and European countries such as England, Ireland, Belgium, France, The Netherlands, Poland, Germany, Switzerland, Norway and Sweden. Although these employers/managers are from divergent Western nations which are all developed countries, they come to Vietnam to work with Vietnamese people and might face similar challenges during their expatriate assignments. *First*, they have to work at a higher level than what they do in their domestic environment because they have to interact with people from a different culture with a different language (Nikolaeva, 2010). *Second*, due to the pressure to achieve productivity from the parent companies, those expatriate managers put pressure not only on themselves but also on their counterpart employees. They might set high expectations for their cross-cultural employees and endeavor to Westernize their Vietnamese workers; however, they often fail in reaching this goal and are quite distressed afterwards (Kamoche, 2001). *Finally*, there is one undeniable fact that Western people are direct and they always have problems with Vietnamese people's indirectness, which is really annoying to Westerners when working with Vietnamese people (Nguyen, 2016; Pham, 2014; Puffer, 2004). Puffer (2004) contended that indirectness is specifically frustrating for project managers driven by a time-is-money orientation. Like many other Asians, when working with the Vietnamese, building trust is the first step that expatriates should take for later success. When Vietnamese people trust their partners, they will be more open (Reeder, 1987; Sergeant & Frenkel, 1998). Pushing too fast risks everything when doing business with Vietnamese nationals (Puffer, 2004).

The author describes the characteristics of the two groups of participants in this project in order to highlight their dissimilarities which might lead to the conflicting opinions they stated in Chapter 2 and 3. The author did not explain in details the "West" characteristics of the Western group because they are composed from many nationalities; however, they are still a group of Western people with great differentiated characteristics from the group of Vietnamese people. This could be the explanation for the consequences of cultural distance between two cultures, which were presented in the result sections in Chapter 2 and 3 (please see 2.5 in Chapter 2 and 3.4 in Chapter 3).

6.2.3 Findings from the experimental studies of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks

Chapter 4 and 5 in this dissertation aimed to explore the effects of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident task on English non-majored undergraduates' intercultural competence. The research questions guided these studies were: 1) *What are the effects of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks on English non-majors' awareness of intercultural communication?* 2) *Is this effect different for students who differ in their ability in awareness of intercultural communication?* 3) *Do the English non-majors develop their awareness of intercultural communication over time?* 4) *Do students who differ in their ability in awareness of intercultural communication score differently on different critical incident tasks?* In the scenarios of the critical incident tasks, workplace context between the individualistic and collectivistic culture (Western versus Vietnamese culture) was targeted as the study's training goals and also the crucial means to impart cross-cultural knowledge as well as the skills to the students.

A pretest-posttest control group design was used to examine the effects of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication. Both the intervention group and the control group were instructed with

the same instructional course designed for English non-majors with their majors in the technical domain. The intervention was the implementation of intercultural communication instruction with ten critical incident open-ended tasks (ten workplace scenarios) added to the course instruction. Students in the experimental condition and control condition completed the pre- and post-test. Students' awareness of intercultural communication was measured by their completion of the 12 critical incident tasks, including a pre-test and post-test.

Students instructed with intercultural communication course with critical incident open-ended task showed a strong positive development of their awareness of intercultural communication compared to the students in the control condition. Significant differences of answers on critical incident open-ended tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication between the experimental and control group were found on the three indicators: (1) *understanding of the scenario*, (2) *understanding of the miscommunicated points in the scenario*, (3) *awareness of effective communication in Western or Eastern culture*. The largest effects were found in indicator 3. Accordingly, the combination of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks and student pair work generally enhances students' awareness of intercultural communication. I also explored the effect of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication in three awareness groups: students with low, middle and high scores on the pre-test. A significant interaction effect was found between intervention and awareness groups for all the indicators indicating that the intervention explained most variance in students' awareness of intercultural communication at the post-test for students with low and moderate initial awareness. Additionally, I also observed the students' development of awareness of intercultural communication over time in ten tasks within the experimental condition showing large fluctuation in scores on the different tasks. Finally, differences between the three awareness groups within the experimental condition on the ten tasks were tested and the findings showed significant differences on only some indicators of three out of the ten tasks. The latter means that the effect of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident task is rather stable across initial levels of awareness, although a bit stronger for students with low and moderate levels initial awareness of intercultural communication. Therefore, I concluded that intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks is an effective method to promote learners' awareness of intercultural communication and that the intervention seems to work better for students with a low or moderate initial level of awareness than for the other students.

6.3 Discussion of the main findings

The discussion focuses on two main themes: the differences in cultural values and the usefulness and meaningfulness of intercultural communication instruction with CIT to enhance students' awareness of cultural values in higher education language classes. Discussion of the results from differences in cultural values will be presented in part 6.3.1 and discussion of the results about intercultural communication instruction with CIT will be presented in part 6.3.2.

6.3.1 Discussion of the findings from the exploration studies

The first two studies aimed to formulate satisfactory solutions for the professionals working in intercultural fields to achieve a mutual understanding with their cross-cultural partners in order to accomplish their goals in their professional environment. Via the examination of employers and

employees' perceptions and needs, measures can be worked out to facilitate intercultural training at tertiary level.

The exploration studies led to several implications for communication enhancement through leveraging the cultural differences between Western employers and Vietnamese employees. *Sense of time* and *face-concern* are the two largest differences in work-related attitudes between Western and Vietnamese professionals coming about from these exploration studies.

The findings of differences about *time perception* are predictable and align with previous research concerning the divergent perspectives about *time use* between Western and Eastern culture (Arman & Adair, 2012; Ashwill & Thai, 2005; Kathryn & Dinh, 2006). The opposite view in measuring *time* might have consequences for work productivity because when people value *time* differently, they might work in a different manner to achieve their goals (Arman & Adair, 2012; Kathryn & Dinh, 2006). The problematic issue about *time* could be solved when people from the two cultures read their counterparts' way of thinking about how to use time (Kathryn & Dinh, 2006). For instance, since the concept of time is quite stretched in Vietnam, a collectivistic culture, (Leonard, Billing, Bhagat & Lammell, 2010; Smith & Pham, 1996), the Westerners must understand that the Vietnamese employees take time to do their work because they desire to do it in a rigorous and effective way. In contrast, the Westerners desire to accomplish their work in a short and concise time (Leonard, Billing, Bhagat & Lammell, 2010). Thus, it would be better if the Westerners searched for the reasons for the Vietnamese' tardiness and the Vietnamese are explicit about the time they finish their task. Both sides should moderate their time management in order to accomplish a deal satisfying the company's needs.

The findings from the first two studies are persistent with literature about facework between Western and Eastern culture in which in Vietnamese culture, the harmony of individual behavior with the judgement and acceptance of other people is more appreciated than the accommodation of individual desires (Nguyen, 2016; Pham, 2014), whereas the definition of face in Western culture is manifested in the individual's want to be approved of, and the individual's want to be free from imposition. In other words, the desire to be loved, supported, and admired, and the desire to have full freedom in doing what one wants, have become the key explanations in Western politeness behavior (Merkin, 2006; Pham, 2014). The first two studies provided an in-depth look into the distinctive belief in the concept of *face* between Western and Vietnamese culture. The underlying meaning of miscommunication between workers from two cultures mostly originates from how the face-savings works for them. The Vietnamese tend to avoid tense emotions over relationships by keeping silent or even lying in order to stay in a safe zone in face-threatening situations because they incline to think that that is a way to save face for them as well as the people they are interacting with (Nguyen, 2016; Pham, 2014). Nevertheless, to the Westerners' mindset, directness in conversations is appreciated (Mak, Chen, Lam, Yiu, 2009; Pham, 2014; Sanchez-Burks, Lee, Choi, Nisbett, Zhao & Koo, 2003). They would prefer to discuss things in an explicit and straightforward manner so that things can be quickly and easily worked out. Because of these divergent beliefs, clashes might occur in every single contact and hamper the smooth of daily working procedure.

In short, the findings from the exploration studies showed how cultural distance affects communication at the workplace between people from different cultures. However, in addition to the impact of cultural dissimilarities, the gap in employer/manager and employee expectation should also be taken into account. The Western employers come to Vietnam with the ideal idea to rearrange a new world for their subsidiaries by bringing their country's ideology into a new and incomparable context. On the other hand, the local employees are quite overwhelmed when the new style of the Western

employers is speedily experimented. Thus, sometimes, in their haste to accomplish things, the employers' adaptation may fail and they cannot reach their goals.

6.3.2 Discussion of the findings from the experimental studies of intercultural communication instruction with CIT

The findings from the exploration studies made it clear that cross-cultural training is needed to train the students in higher education. An experimental study with intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks was set up to find out effects of the training of intercultural skills in higher education.

Different from previous studies utilizing critical incident technique with close-ended tasks (Bochner & Coulon, 1997; Collins & Pierterse, 2007; Cushner, 1989), the experimental studies in this dissertation have used the open-ended approach in order to maximize the students' communicative and critical thinking competence. The open-ended approach requires more of students' engagement in the discussion to work out the answers than the close-ended ones do. Open-ended tasks also provide good speaking and expository writing practice and might therefore better suited to be incorporated in English as Foreign Language classes (Snow, 2015).

Findings from study 3 and 4 proved the positive effects of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks on enhancing students' intercultural communication skills. Consistent with former studies using critical incident task training (Aoki, 1992; Bochner & Coulon, 1997; Collins & Pierterse, 2007; Cushner, 1989), the results confirmed that students become more aware of the cultural differences and might be able to use the knowledge they gained to manipulate and deal with problems and conflicts in an intercultural context afterwards.

The examination of the effects of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication among three groups of students who differed in their initial level of awareness is also a distinctive feature of the studies in this dissertation compared to former research. Previous studies (Aoki, 1992; Bochner & Coulon, 1997; Collins & Pierterse, 2007; Cushner, 1989) did not examine the students' development of awareness of intercultural communication differentiating between students with various levels of awareness of intercultural communication. The findings have verified that students with low and moderate initial awareness need intercultural communication training with critical incident open-ended tasks in order to develop their awareness of intercultural communication more than students with high initial awareness who only reached a slightly higher level of awareness of intercultural communication.

6.4 Reflections and suggestions for future research

In this section, reflections on some methodological issues will be presented so that the conclusions of the studies could be more cautiously interpreted. Besides, recommendations for further research are also made on the basis of these reflections.

First, the exploration studies were conducted in order to offer some guidance for the design of cross-cultural training curriculum in higher education. However, there is a missing link between the companies and the higher education institutions in this research. The findings of the research could be further substantiated if the trained students are going to work in those companies. The training could assist those students to have a good preparation for their future interactions with Western workers. Additionally, the findings should be applied to design a training programs for the employees who are working in those foreign companies because these findings are these employees and employers'

reflections on their work experiences and they should be explicitly informed to the whole organizations as lessons to be taken into account. In further studies, it is recommended that the gap between the companies and the higher education institutions should be filled by their collaboration in many cross-cultural training programs.

Second, in the exploration studies, the limitation is the lack of a Western employee sample working in the same companies as the Vietnamese employees. As the Western employers both represent people from different cultures and hold the position of management, the results might be affected by two conditions: cultural and position difference. Consequently, it is difficult to determine how much differences were due to cultural distance or position distance, although, in this study, I tested differences for both pairs of participants (Western higher managers versus Vietnamese employees and Vietnamese higher managers versus Vietnamese employees). However, in the future, when there are more Westerners working as employees in Vietnam, this research can be validated by comparing employees from these two cultures in the same companies.

Third, the gender issue in which nearly almost the managers are males whereas most of the employees are females should also be taken into account. At the moment, gender and power issue are difficult to separate as there are not many female employers. In order to work this out, I suggest that further research may choose the foreign companies with a more balanced number of male and female employees and employers so that more valid data can be obtained.

Next, in the second exploration study, there was not much negative information obtained from the Vietnamese employees. Imprinted by the culture, specifically power distance, the Vietnamese professionals are usually reluctant to offer straight and downside information about their managers (Jacqui & Tran, 2009; Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2003; Pham, 2014). They probably did not straightly express their grievances and they seemed to provide quite good and neutral information. Many Western managers as well emphasized that Vietnamese people do not show bad things out; they generally come to the managers with good news and when they face downsides, they just keep the information as secrets and solve the problems by themselves. Therefore, in order to catch the real image of their intercultural communication with their Western superiors, I used many probing questions. Further research may also use observational tools to gain more behavioral examples from their workplaces.

Fifth, two instructors of the experimental groups found out that the students were a little bored when they did the same critical incident task with the same format every week. That might also be the reason why the students with high scores from the beginning did not reach the highest level of development. Some students were really motivated until the end of the course but some others lost their interests when they did the same task every week. Therefore, I suggest that in addition to critical incident tasks, role play or other forms of cross-cultural training can be incorporated in order to help students gain real performance experience from the skills they obtain from the critical incident tasks. In other words, these critical incident tasks should be alternated with other teaching formats.

In addition, the students in the experimental condition received both intercultural communication instruction and communication skills in their speaking lessons of regular education. Because of this, the results might be affected by two conditions: intercultural communication skills and general communication skills. In further research, we suggest that students' development in regular education should also be taken into account.

From the plot analysis of the students' development over 10 tasks, no growth in between the tasks was observed. However, the students in the experimental condition performed high scores on the posttest. This finding might be the effect of testing to the test. The students in the treatment condition did the same task every week and they knew exactly how to do it perfectly. In another observation, the

different themes of the tasks, the different levels of difficulty of the tasks probably in combination with the sequence of these tasks, might explain the large fluctuation in scores of students in the experimental condition. However, we still decided to choose those variety of combinations because we thought of the quality of the course. In order to have a favorable educational program, integration of different themes and various levels of difficulties should be conducted to arouse students' interests. This might be an interesting topic for future research. In order to examine the influence of different tasks, we should use a research design which combines sequence and themes.

In the current study, intercultural communication was instructed by means of critical incident open-ended tasks to promote English non-majors' awareness of intercultural communication. The study is a quasi-experimental study with two conditions: experimental and control. The experimental group received teaching intercultural communication with critical incident tasks and the control group received regular education in which the students were instructed with normal course for English non-majors. Although teaching of communication skills was included in the control condition, it cannot be concluded that the development of the students in the experimental group of their intercultural awareness is affected by relatively more attention to intercultural communication (as addition to communication skills in general), the critical incident tasks as a teaching method, or both of them. Although giving lectures to compare two or more cultures that should be appear in the critical incident tasks is a compulsory step in the intervention (Shibata, 1998), this is still a limitation of this study. In further studies, a better design in which the experimental group receive both intercultural lectures and critical incident open-ended tasks and the control group receive only intercultural lectures should be made. Only in this case, more accurate interpretations of the effects of critical incident open-ended could be obtained.

Finally, in the experimental studies, I looked for the students' development of awareness of intercultural communication throughout ten tasks through the students' answers on papers. The participants in this study could not completely show their awareness of intercultural communication since they were restricted by the language and writing ability although they could choose to write in Vietnamese. Accordingly, in future studies, an integration of speaking and writing assessment should be made in order to assist the students to thoroughly express their ideas.

6.5 Practical implications

This dissertation has revealed significant differences which might cause clashes in daily work situations between Western and Vietnamese professionals. Additionally, the measures to fix the problematic issues have also been disclosed, which are valuable to the scholarship of intercultural communication in professional context. The findings from the implementation of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks are also useful for further studies using the same method or designing intercultural lessons. Following are some implications from the results of the studies in this dissertation.

6.5.1 Implications for intercultural workplace context

In the exploration studies, two largest dissimilarities between Western and Vietnamese professionals coming about are *sense of time* and *face-concern*, which might become the main grounds for conflicts and misunderstandings happening. Several lessons can be taken into consideration.

First, in Vietnamese culture, face loss is considered a vulnerable situation, which might cause an emotional barrier between Western employers and Vietnamese employees. The findings from the

exploration studies suggested that Vietnamese employees are usually behind the deadlines but might tell a lie to their higher managers that they finish or when they have problems, they also hide the problems and try to fix the problem by themselves. The underlying reason for the Vietnamese's actions of concealment also emerges from their face-saving belief. They feel embarrassed to show their bad things out. Accordingly, it is suggested that Western higher managers could use both direct and indirect facework strategies simultaneously in order "to lessen the blow of the direct communication that needs to be used to get points across" (Merkin, 2006, p. 155). This means that in order to coax the employees' appreciation, the Western employers might play the role of both a quietly powerful but considerate managers. Then, the Vietnamese subordinates might feel more at ease to reduce the distance, talk openly and voice their opinions to the superiors. On the other hand, in order to help the Western higher managers catch the implicit meanings of the Vietnamese's behaviors, the Vietnamese professionals should at least offer the reason for their actions. Findings from the questionnaire data suggest that when a condition or a reason is added, differences between Western employers and Vietnamese employees are less.

Second, the interviews in the second study gained insights into how the Western managers successfully communicate with their Vietnamese employees by building trust. Most of the higher managers confirmed that problems can be worked out when their employees trust them. When trust is established, the cultural and power distance is reduced and employees are more open to share and contribute. Scheduling face to face meetings and informal social events is a way to build trust and solve the problems since the employees have chances to communicate to their managers through informal, clear and explicit conversations. Building trust might also be a way to help the Vietnamese employees reduce their embarrassment when they have something to share with their managers.

Third, both the Vietnamese employees and the Western higher managers agree that professional meetings (once a month or every two or three months) are effective for strengthening both professional and communication skills. These meetings can be acknowledged as a strategy of Human Resource Management to impart professional knowledge and experiences and fortify the relationship between superiors and subordinates.

Finally, the findings suggest that pre-departure adaptation is a good preparation for expatriates' later adjustment and on-site training is significant for both the foreigners and host country nationals (Peltokorpi, 2010). It is important that the companies together with the universities play active roles in supplying those communicative cross-cultural training so that culture-based misunderstandings and negative stereotypes can be diminished.

6.5.2 Implications for higher education

The exploration studies provides a clearer vision of how communication between the Western higher managers and Vietnamese employees is going on in the foreign companies so that a relevant intercultural lesson is formulated to train the undergraduates in higher education institutions. Since most of the information obtained from the companies are several contextual problematic working situations, I am strongly inclined to a training program of intercultural communication instruction using critical incident tasks, which are several communication situations or cultural clash events - situations where unexpected behavior occurs in which the participants (or one participant) consider as problematic and confusing. These critical incidents could help learners look for appropriate ways to deal with real-life scenarios afterwards.

Intercultural communication instruction with critical incident with open-ended tasks is promising for providing cross-cultural teaching as part of ELT classrooms. Teaching cultural general

knowledge might not be enough for the learners' preparation to emerge in an intercultural context (Tolbert & Mclean, 1995). The learners need essential skills to succeed in their professional environment and the integration of teaching cultural general knowledge with critical incident approach might bring them up with those necessary skills in order to gain control of the international workplace settings. Besides, although the main goal of the current studies is to enhance future graduates' intercultural awareness, this intervention might also be useful for future expatriate managers training and employee coaching at the workplace.

Concerning the ways to provide the tasks, it is recommended that firstly, CIT might be effective when a series of tasks are applied, which means that practice of the tasks should happen regularly. Secondly, CIT might be effective when it is combined with other ways of teaching. In the intervention, the instructors did perform the initiating task in which the major cultural points that would emerge in the critical incident tasks were presented through texts, pictures or video clips. As after the third task, students' awareness of intercultural communication did not increase much, it might be that a program with three tasks is sufficient for the students' practice. Another option would be that teachers alternate or combine other methods with the critical incident tasks so that the students, especially the high scoring students do not get bored. Thirdly, in order to optimize the training, I conceived that pair work or group work could be a good option for ELT classrooms. Learners collaborated and argued a lot to figure out what was happening in the scenario and for the explications and resolutions to the problems, which might be very beneficial for enhancing their language skills as well.

6.6 Final conclusion

In closing, cultural differences might bring several issues to the workplace if there is no preparation for the consequences. Cultural distance has been recognized not only by its disadvantages but also its benefits. In fact, multinational organizations have been proved to enjoy many benefits when entering the world market if people understand the ways to manipulate those precious assets (Hasan, Mehmet & Demet, 2014). This research project is conducted to serve the needs of the global-oriented development in the Mekong Delta and Ho Chi Minh city in Vietnam, specifically at Can Tho University of Technology. With the excessive penetration of foreign trade and culture into Vietnam, the residents should upgrade themselves to keep pace with this internationalization. Therefore, an inquiry into workplace culture and operation of foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in the area is propitious for intercultural communication training of EFL students in the region. With the information collected in the studies in this dissertation, contribution to the intercultural communication research body can be made by creating a manual for composing intercultural communication curricular not only for higher education training but also for employee and employer coaching.

6.7 Final reflections

In the context of teaching English in Vietnam in general and in the Mekong Delta in particular, most English program curriculum for non-major students do not include intercultural communication skills enhancement inserted into the main English programs. Specifically, in the context of Can Tho University of Technology, all the English courses do not touch intercultural communication skills because of the following reasons. First, focusing on the language skills already consumes a lot of teachers' and students' time and they cannot find any space to instruct and practise other relevant soft skills. Second, most of the textbooks which have been selected and adapted by the teaching staff of the

university within the past two decades stress the instruction on language and general communication skills; there are no chapters or teacher instructions about comparison of cultures in these textbooks. Third, instructing intercultural communication skills is quite a new domain to the teachers at Can Tho University of Technology. Finally, the university director board did not make any efforts yet in supporting teachers both mentally and financially to conduct well-made English programs with the insertion of intercultural communication skills.

The author of this dissertation, who had been teaching at Can Tho University Technology for 7 years before doing her Ph.D in the Netherlands, instructed several English courses for non-major students in Technical domains, Law, Business and Economics. Students of these courses were also adults who come to the University Language Center to learn General English to serve the needs of their current jobs or going abroad for permanent living. Among these learners, most of them got satisfying results and they were quite happy with the courses they took. However, the reason for conducting this research project is also based on the evaluations of a large subset of participants, who noted that the original course was not sufficient for communicating effectively in English with people from other cultures. They stated that they needed more training of the language skills and more knowledge and training of the cultures of people they are working with or might be working with in the future. From those evaluations, the author herself reckoned that not only the English-majors have a demand to learn about the cultures and intercultural communication skills of the target language but the English non-majors are also in greater demand of those skills and knowledge. For this reason, the author decided to write the proposal for this research project and looked for funding to implement the project.

During the lines of thoughts when writing the proposal, the author decided to do exploration studies at foreign companies because there was a lack of knowledge about the communication between different cultures in international organizations in Vietnam. The author wanted to get more insight in this matter in order to develop and implement the first English program inserted with intercultural communication skills enhancement at her university. For this reason, she conducted the first two exploration studies and attempted to use as much as possible the knowledge she gained from the results of the exploration studies to apply to the later experimental studies. A second step in developing the course should be to enhance the collaboration between the universities and the companies to improve the learning process of the participants. The trained students in the experimental studies should be sent to those companies for a short internship in order to interact with the foreign employers/managers for hands-on experiences. With that experience, the results of the experimental studies could be justified, modified and adapted. However, at this moment, in the context of Vietnam, the missing link between the enterprises and higher education institutions is quite significant (Ministry of Science and Technology of Vietnam, 2015). In addition, this mission is also out of the author's authority since she has just successfully convinced the university director board to implement a small course of intercultural communication training for English non-majors and asking permission from the companies for students' internship is too far of expectation in the current stage due to the limitation of financial and liability resources.

However, the author is still ambitious in carrying out further projects, firstly to disseminate what she has done in the present project to other colleagues not only in her university but also in the Mekong Delta and the South of Vietnam, secondly to look for agreements and finance to assist students with better environments for their English and intercultural communication skills practice.

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SUMMARY

Culture has always been a salient component in English language learning. Cultural education is a key component of language instruction since learning a foreign language means learning a culture of the target language. This dissertation aims to get insights into how to integrate learning a culture into language teaching in higher education. It first reports on cultural distance in communication between Western employers and Vietnamese employees in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in the South of Vietnam. Then it presents a study on the implementation of intercultural communication instruction by means of critical incident open-ended tasks in English classes at higher education using insights from the first part. This research project is conducted to serve the needs for the global-oriented development in the Mekong Delta and Ho Chi Minh city in Vietnam. With the excessive penetration of foreign trade and culture into Vietnam, the residents, especially the knowledgeable classes, should keep pace with this internationalization.

In this dissertation, the effects of differences in cultural values on communication and relationship between Western higher managers and Vietnamese employees in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures are studied. Acknowledging the dissimilarities and the problematic issues that these people encounter could help to uncover the resolutions not only to minimize but also to leverage the differences. Understanding the differences and gaining an insightful view into the communication concerns in this intercultural context could give way to a better design of an intercultural language training program as language is a cultural phenomenon that is best understood and transmitted within the scope of the culture that shapes it (Barany, 2016). The experimental studies of intercultural communication instruction using critical incident open-ended tasks in this dissertation aim to link the language and intercultural skills together in order to enhance future graduates' communication as well as intercultural competence (IC).

Chapter 1: Introduction

This introduction chapter offers an overview of the context of the research project, the theoretical framework for an inquiry into the differences between Western and Vietnamese culture, the concept of IC, the interrelationship between English Language Teaching (ELT) and IC and the structure of this dissertation.

In this chapter, first, the context of the project and the current issues of the shortage of a well-qualified workforce for the internationalized labour market are discussed. This research project is set in the context of the South of Vietnam in which an influx of foreign companies are entering the country and creating a great demand of industry-ready graduates. Yet, it remains true that “many of the companies apparently found it difficult to find local employees that match their needs” (Weng, 2015, p. 82). According to a recent survey study (Ministry of Education and Training in Vietnam, 2017), about 50% of the new graduates do not meet the expectations of the international employers with respect to language competence and communication skills. In spite of facing challenges to promote skills development, universities in Vietnam keep on their aims to enable learners to communicate effectively with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds in an internationalized and multicultural world. This mission requires innovative and creative approaches from both the higher education institutions and educators that might provide the learners with the means and skills of accessing and analyzing a wide range of cultural practices and meanings (Barany, 2016).

Second, differences between Western and Vietnamese or Eastern culture are conceptualized and analyzed. These dissimilarities are explained in a way how they affect the communication and relationships between the interlocutors of the two cultures. Indeed, these cultural values of the two

cultures might be the main elements that need to be firstly underpinned and seriously taken into account if an individual needs to survive in this globalized changeable era as culture is envisaged as an onion with many layers that one must peel back. Peeling back the skin of the onion is like tackling with the implicit beliefs and tacit values that differentiate one cultural group from another. Acknowledging cultural beliefs and values provides a foundation for developing effective business practices in an international context (Taras, Steel & Kirkman, 2011).

Third, the chapter provides the notion of IC and the interrelationship between ELT and IC. For many decades, the integration of ELT and IC has evolved into a practical phenomenon in every corner of the English classroom as many educators, researchers and practitioners agreed upon the significance and value of culture and cultural aspects in foreign language teaching and learning. Foreign language instruction should aim at not only linguistic performance and verbal communication but also intercultural awareness and intercultural skills (Atay, Kurt, Camlibel, Ersin & Kaslioglu, 2009; Fungchomchoei & Kardkarnklai, 2016; Sercu, 2010). In this sense, teaching English language cannot be separated from promoting the learners' intercultural competence. Many educationalists have agreed that despite of being proficient in English, most students are unable to function properly in an intercultural context due to their shortage of IC knowledge (Fungchomchoei & Kardkarnklai, 2016; Jackson, 2014; Mitchell, Pardiniho, Yermakova-Aguiar & Meshkov, 2015; Vo, 2017).

In short, this dissertation focuses on the development of future graduates' intercultural competence by incorporating intercultural communication into the English classrooms. In order to reach this goal, the communication and relationship between the Vietnamese employees and foreign employers or managers, particularly the Western higher managers, are explored in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in the South of Vietnam. After the exploration studies, the author aimed at designing an intervention study of intercultural communication instruction utilizing "critical incident tasks" incorporated into the English classrooms with the view of enhancing the students' awareness of intercultural communication. Accordingly, in this dissertation, four studies were conducted to answer four research questions.

The first and second study investigated work-related values that could affect the communication and relationships between Western employers and Vietnamese employees in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam. Holding an insightful view into the differences between employers and employees from different cultural backgrounds in organizations in Vietnam could improve the workplace environment. Thus, the first two research questions addressed in this dissertation are:

1. To what extent do Vietnamese employees and Western employers/managers differ with respect to their work-related values?
2. What are the perceptions of Vietnamese employees and Western employers/managers towards communication in the workplace in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam?

For the third and fourth study, an intercultural lesson was designed to explore the effects of intercultural communication instruction with "critical incident open-ended tasks" on English non-majored undergraduates' intercultural competence. Integrating culture instruction into the language lessons is a good preparation for students' intercultural encounters. Then, the third and fourth research questions in this dissertation are:

3. What are the effects of intercultural communication instruction by means of critical incident open-ended tasks on English non-majors' awareness of intercultural communication?

4. Do the English non-majors develop their awareness of intercultural communication over time during a ten critical incident task instruction course?

Chapter 2: An exploration study into differences in work-related attitudes between Western employers and Vietnamese employees in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam.

Chapter 2 reports on a study of differences between employees and employers of Vietnamese and Western companies in terms of their work-related attitudes. The study aimed to answer the research question: “*To what extent do Vietnamese employees and Western employers/managers differ with respect to their work-related values?*” The author conducted the study with 94 Western and Vietnamese companies in two areas: Ho Chi Minh city and the Mekong Delta in the South of Vietnam. The study aimed to specify the most significant differences in work-related attitudes between Western and Vietnamese professionals.

Data were collected using a questionnaire with separate versions for the employers and the employees. Questionnaires were delivered to 763 Vietnamese employees, 43 Vietnamese employers/managers and 33 Western employers/managers. The items of the questionnaires measured professionals’ attitudes towards work-related values. Both questionnaires were divided into two parts: the “preference” part and the “importance” part. The “preference” part asked the participants to indicate their preferences regarding the items while the “importance” part asked the participants to indicate how important the items were. The questionnaires were divided into the preference and importance part because the author would like to make a distinction between (1) what the employers expect from their employees and vice versa and (2) how important the issues (policies in the company) are for both the employers and employees. A five-point Likert scale was used in both parts of the questionnaire. In order to explore underlying dimensions, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted on the employees’ questionnaire data (using Principle component analysis and Varimax rotation), separately on the preference and importance part of the questionnaire. After establishing the seven factors of work-related values for Vietnamese employees, this structure was also employed for the employers’ data.

The findings showed that Western employers exhibited higher mean scores than Vietnamese employees in all work-related values. Significant differences were also found between Vietnamese employers and Vietnamese employees, with higher scores for Vietnamese employers, except for the value: *being on time with a condition*. Additionally, three significant differences were found between Western and Vietnamese employers, with higher scores for Western employers: *being on time in a direct way*, *being on time with a condition* and *face-concern*. The author did not find any significant differences between the Vietnamese employees working in foreign and Vietnamese companies. The differences between Western employers and Vietnamese employees were more significant than the differences between Vietnamese employers and Vietnamese employees. Therefore, the differences between Western employers and Vietnamese employees: *sense of time* and *face-concern* seem to be caused partly by cultural aspects and partly by status differences between employers and employees. In conclusion, the largest differences between Western employers and Vietnamese employees and between Western and Vietnamese employers were found in *sense of time* and *face-concern*, which indicates that these two aspects may indicate the most significant differences between Western and Vietnamese professionals. The findings provided insight into what differences are the greatest between the two cultures and implied the significance of arousing people’ awareness of these dissimilarities, specifically the future graduates who are going to work with Western professionals. The findings also

signified the importance of culture instruction along with language instruction so that intercultural communication training could be centralized and conceptualized within those differences.

Chapter 3: A qualitative exploration study into communication concerns between Western employers and Vietnamese employees in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam

This study was conducted in order to validate the findings from the questionnaire data in Chapter 2. An in-depth exploration of the problematic issues with respect to intercultural communication between Western employers/managers and Vietnamese employees in the same foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures from the first study was carried out. Issues that Western employers/managers and Vietnamese employees face when they share the same working environment were examined. These insights might be used to improve and optimize the communication between Western higher management and the host-national employees in those institutions as well as to provide input for higher education educators to adapt their programs to support the prospective graduates in the development of intercultural communication skills at the workplace. Two research questions guided this study: 1) *What are the perceptions of Vietnamese employees towards communication in the workplace in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam?* 2) *What are the perceptions of Western employers/managers towards communication in the workplace in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam?*

Semi-structured interviews were carried out to explore what and how professionals from two cultures experienced in their cross-cultural communication in work situations. The study aimed to gain an insightful view into the problems they encountered when interacting with their cross-cultural counterparts. The interview were set up with probing questions including two introduction questions, one main question and four follow-up questions. All the questions were employed to assist the participants to relate their experiences comprising of (1) their interests when working in the current company, (2) their opinions about intercultural communication with their cross-cultural counterparts, (3) the problems or incidents they faced during the interactional process, what was done and how they fixed the problems and (4) their expectations from their cross-cultural partners. A checklist was used in order to address some topics that the interviewee missed to relate in his/her conversation. The interview transcriptions were coded in within-case manner first and then in across cases. The following six cultural dimensions that are based on study one were used as start for the analysis: 1) *sense of time*, 2) *participation in decision-making*, 3) *open relationship with employers/managers*, 4) *face-concern*, 5) *accountability* and 6) *work performance orientation*. Each within-case matrix included all text segments that were coded in these six dimensions. Then from each within-case, two cross-case matrices were extracted, one for the employers and one for the employees. Eventually, the extracted representative cases were put in a table with six themes of the cultural dimensions for comparing the differences between the employers and employees. Cross-case analysis was selected since this way of analyzing the data enabled us to aggregate across cases and draw out generalizations or common communication problems that the participants faced.

Both perspectives (from employers and employees) on communication between the Western managers and the Vietnamese employees seem to complement each other, in which the differences are due to both cultural and status differences. There were many concerns and problematic issues from the Western managers' viewpoints centralizing around (1) *lack of communication* and (2) *lack of autonomy in getting work done and motivation in professional development*. The Western expatriates complained that while working with the Vietnamese, they encounter several issues that they do not face when collaborating with their home-country partners. Nevertheless, from the Vietnamese

employees' side, there were not many concerns brought about and the negative points were not frequently mentioned. They clearly stated that they have good and satisfying relationships with their higher managers. Accordingly, it seems that there are contrasting perceptions from the interlocutors of two distinguished cultures.

The results indicate the main concerns in intercultural communication between Western higher managers and Vietnamese employees, which is a significant source for the improvement of intercultural communication in outsourcing companies and joint-ventures. The findings also confirm the results from the questionnaire data in which, *sense of time* and *face concern* are cultural differences which might cause problematic issues for the communication and relationship between Western employers and Vietnamese employees.

Chapter 4: An experimental study of effects of intercultural communication instruction by means of critical incident open-ended tasks on the intercultural competence of English non-majors

Chapter 4 addresses the third research question in this dissertation. The study aimed to explore the effects of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident task on English non-majored undergraduates' intercultural competence. This study sought for answer to this question: "*Do intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks enhance English non-majored undergraduates' awareness of intercultural communication?*" Critical incident tasks are communication situations that the participants (or one participant) consider as problematic and confusing. Typically, critical incidents consist of examples of situational clash events - situations where unexpected behavior occurs. Flanagan (1954, p. 327) defines the critical incident technique as... "a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles". The purpose of the critical incident technique is to develop one's ability to see interaction situations from perspectives of different cultures. Critical incidents might be quite an effective strategy to promote cross-cultural awareness because they highlight the differences and misunderstandings from a cultural perspective, and create chances for learners to think critically and analytically about these critical situations.

A pretest-posttest control group design was used to examine the effects of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication. The intervention group and the control group attended the same instructional course designed for English non-majors with their majors in the technical domain. The intervention was the implementation of the integration of intercultural communication instruction with 10 critical incident tasks added to the course instruction. Students in the experimental condition and control condition completed the pre- and post-test.

Participants were 322 second-year English non-majors in 6 classes of Technical Engineering (131 females). The participants were of the same age of 19 years old. The students' classes were randomly divided into experimental (4 groups with 234 students) or control (2 groups with 88 students) condition.

Data were gathered via students' answer sheets. In the answer sheet, respectively, there is an instruction for the students to do the task, the critical incident in the form of a workplace scenario with a conversation among characters and a table with four questions. The students were asked to read the scenario in five minutes and then discuss the scenario and work out the solutions to the problem in pairs in twenty minutes. Afterwards, they wrote down their answers to the four questions in the table

individually. The four questions were formulated in line with three indicators: (1) *students' understanding of the scenario (scenario understanding)* (question 1); (2) *students' understanding of the miscommunicated points in the scenario (miscommunication understanding)* (question 2); (3) *students' awareness of effective communication in Western or Eastern (Vietnamese) culture (awareness communication Western or Eastern)* (question 3 and 4). These three indicators represented an ascending level of difficulty requiring first a basic analysis and then some higher critical thinking.

In order to examine the effect of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident tasks on learners' awareness of intercultural communication, a multivariate analysis of covariance with the condition (critical incident task or regular education) as independent variable, the three indicators of awareness of intercultural communication at the posttest as dependent variables, the pretest scores on the same indicators as covariates was performed.

A multivariate effect for condition was found, which showed a significant difference between both conditions on the posttest scores on students' awareness of intercultural communication. Students from the experimental condition generally showed significant higher scores on the posttest on awareness of intercultural communication than the students from the control condition. The test of between-subjects effects with three indicators as dependent variables showed a significant difference of three indicators in the posttest's results between the experimental and control condition. The largest difference was found in *awareness communication Western or Eastern* (indicator 3). A smaller but still significant effect was found in *scenario understanding* (indicator 1) and *miscommunication understanding* (indicator 2). The study proves that the integration of teaching cultural general knowledge with critical incident open-ended tasks and student pair work generally enhances students' intercultural competence in terms of awareness of intercultural communication and provides a basis for further cross-cultural learning.

Chapter 5: An experimental study to gain further insights into the effects of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication

This Chapter provided further insights into the effects of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks. The study was targeted to develop English non-majors' awareness of intercultural communication throughout teaching cultural general knowledge with ten critical incident open-ended tasks. The author focused on answering the following research questions: 1) *What are the effects of intercultural communication instruction by means of critical incident open-ended tasks on English non-majors' awareness of intercultural communication?* 2) *Is this effect different for students who differ in their ability in awareness of intercultural communication?* 3) *Do the English non-majors develop their awareness of intercultural communication over time?* 4) *Do students who differ in their ability in awareness of intercultural communication score differently on different critical incident tasks?* This study looked for an in-depth perspective of the effects of intercultural communication training with critical incident open-ended tasks throughout the ten-task instruction and among three ability groups of students: low, middle and high-ability students.

The design, participants and data collection of this study are similar to the previous study, Chapter 4. In order to examine the effects of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks (research question 1), a multivariate analysis of covariance was performed with the condition (intercultural communication instruction with critical incident task or regular education) as independent variable, the three indicators of awareness of intercultural communication at the posttest as dependent variables and the pretest scores on the same indicators as covariates. Next,

the analyses of co-variances for two, three and four binned groups were repeated to examine how many ability groups could be distinguished based on the pre-test scores. The analysis for three binned groups was selected. In order to answer research question 3, the original scores of the ten tasks were plotted, both for the total scores and for the three indicators. The analyses that were used for answering the second research question but now with the total score and three indicators for each task as dependent variables were repeated to answer research question 4.

Students instructed with intercultural communication training with critical incident open-ended task showed a strong positive development of their awareness of intercultural communication compared to the students in the control condition. Significant differences of answers on critical incident open-ended tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication between the experimental and control group were found on the three indicators: (1) *understanding of the scenario*, (2) *understanding of the miscommunicated points in the scenario*, (3) *awareness of effective communication in Western or Eastern culture*. The largest effects were found in indicator 3: *awareness of effective communication in Western or Eastern culture*. Accordingly, teaching cultural general knowledge in combination with critical incident open-ended tasks generally enhances students' awareness of intercultural communication. The effect of intercultural communication instruction by means of critical incident open-ended tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication in three awareness groups was also explored (students with low, middle and high scores on the pre-test). A significant interaction effect was found between intervention and awareness groups for all the indicators indicating that the intervention explained most variance in students' awareness of intercultural communication at the post-test for students with low and moderate initial awareness. Additionally, the students' development of awareness of intercultural communication over time in ten tasks was studied within the experimental condition showing large fluctuation in scores on the different tasks. Finally, differences between the three awareness groups within the experimental condition on the ten tasks were tested and the findings showed significant differences on only some indicators of three out of the ten tasks. The latter means that the effect of intercultural communication training with critical incident task is rather stable across initial levels of awareness, although a bit stronger for students with low and moderate levels initial awareness of intercultural communication. Intercultural communication instruction using critical incident open-ended tasks seems to be an effective method to promote learners' awareness of intercultural communication and the intervention seems to work better for students with a low or moderate initial level of awareness than for the other students.

Chapter 6: General conclusions and discussion

This Chapter provided summaries of the four studies, reflections on the methods and the findings and discussions of each study. Additionally, practical implications and suggestions for further studies were also discussed.

The findings from the exploration studies made it clear that cross-cultural training is needed to train the students in higher education. The questionnaire and interview method in study 1 and 2, despite their limitations, seem to be appropriate approaches for data collection. However, in future research, observational tools could be developed to get further information about intercultural workplace culture. An experimental study of intercultural communication instruction with critical incident open-ended tasks was set up to find out effects of the training of intercultural skills in higher education. Different from previous studies utilizing critical incident technique with close-ended tasks (Bochner & Coulon, 1997; Collins & Pierterse, 2007; Cushner, 1989), the experimental studies (study

3 and 4) in this dissertation have used the open-ended approach that proved its effectiveness to enhance the students' communicative and critical thinking competence. These critical incidents could help learners to look for appropriate ways to deal with real-life scenarios afterwards. However, in future research, it is recommended that a combination or an alternation of different cross-cultural training approaches should be used together with critical incident tasks in order to optimize the effectiveness of the training.

Cultural differences might bring several issues to the workplace if there is no preparation for the consequences. Cultural distance has been recognized not only by its disadvantages but also its benefits. In fact, multinational organizations may enjoy many benefits when entering the world market if people understand the ways to manipulate those precious assets (Hasan, Mehmet and Demet, 2014). This research project is conducted to meet the demands of the global-oriented development in the Mekong Delta and Ho Chi Minh city in Vietnam. An inquiry into workplace culture and operation of foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in the area is propitious for intercultural communication training of EFL students in the region. With the information collected in the studies in this dissertation, contribution to the intercultural communication research body can be made by creating standards for composing intercultural communication curricular not only for higher education training but also for employer and employee coaching.

SAMENVATTING

Cultuureducatie is een belangrijk onderdeel van taalonderwijs, aangezien het leren van een vreemde taal betekent dat je ook de cultuur van de doeltaal moet leren. Dit proefschrift heeft als doel inzicht te geven in hoe het leren van een cultuur kan worden geïntegreerd in het taalonderwijs in het hoger onderwijs. Eerst wordt de culturele afstand in de communicatie tussen westerse werkgevers en Vietnamese werknemers in zowel Vietnamese bedrijven als buitenlandse dochterondernemingen en joint-ventures in het zuiden van Vietnam beschreven. Vervolgens wordt een studie over de implementatie van *open-ended critical incident tasks* (kortweg: kritische-gebeurtenisstaak) in Engelse lessen in het hoger onderwijs gepresenteerd, gebaseerd op inzichten uit het eerste deel. Dit onderzoeksproject is uitgevoerd om tegemoet te komen aan de behoeften van de Mekong Delta en de stad Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam, waar de buitenlandse handel en cultuur steeds meer aanwezig is. Een groot deel van de bevolking in Vietnam krijgt te maken met deze internationalisering.

In dit proefschrift worden verschillen onderzocht in culturele waarden met betrekking tot communicatie en relaties tussen westerse managers en Vietnamese werknemers van zowel Vietnamese als buitenlandse ondernemingen en joint-ventures. Erkenning van de verschillen en de problemen die deze mensen tegenkomen, zou kunnen helpen om oplossingen te vinden waarbij de verschillen benut kunnen worden. Het verkrijgen van inzicht in deze verschillen en in de communicatievraagstukken binnen deze interculturele context kan als basis dienen voor een ontwerp van een effectief intercultureel taaltrainingsprogramma, aangezien taal een onderdeel van cultuur is (Barany, 2016). De quasi-experimentele studies met behulp van kritische-gebeurtenisstaak in dit proefschrift hebben tot doel de taal en interculturele vaardigheden gezamenlijk te onderwijzen om de communicatie en interculturele competentie (IC) van toekomstige afgestudeerden in Vietnam te verbeteren.

Hoofdstuk 1: Introductie

Dit introductiehoofdstuk biedt een overzicht van de context van het onderzoeksproject, het theoretisch kader voor een onderzoek naar de verschillen tussen de westerse en Vietnamese cultuur, het concept van IC, de onderlinge relatie tussen Engelse taalvaardigheid (ET) en IC en de structuur van dit proefschrift.

In dit hoofdstuk worden eerst de context van het project en de huidige problemen van het tekort aan goed gekwalificeerd personeel voor de geïnternationaliseerde arbeidsmarkt besproken. Dit onderzoeksproject vindt plaats in het zuiden van Vietnam, waar er een grote instroom van buitenlandse bedrijven is. Dit resulteert in een grote vraag naar afgestudeerden die in deze bedrijven kunnen werken. Toch blijken veel bedrijven het moeilijk te vinden om geschikte lokale werknemers te vinden (Weng, 2015). Volgens een recente enquête (Ministerie van Onderwijs en Vorming in Vietnam, 2017) voldoet ongeveer 50% van de nieuwe afgestudeerden niet aan de verwachtingen van de internationale werkgevers met betrekking tot taalvaardigheid en communicatieve vaardigheden. Universiteiten in Vietnam hebben zichzelf als doel gesteld de ontwikkeling van deze vaardigheden, het effectief communiceren met mensen met verschillende taalkundige en culturele achtergronden in een geïnternationaliseerde en multiculturele wereld, te bevorderen. Deze missie vereist innovatieve en creatieve benaderingen van zowel de instellingen voor hoger onderwijs als van docenten (Barany, 2016).

Ten tweede worden verschillen tussen westerse en Vietnamese of oosterse cultuur geanalyseerd. Deze verschillen kunnen de communicatie tussen de gesprekspartners van de twee culturen beïnvloeden. Het erkennen van culturele overtuigingen en waarden biedt een basis voor het ontwikkelen van effectieve bedrijfspraktijken in een internationale context (Taras, Steel & Kirkman, 2011).

Ten derde worden het begrip IC en de onderlinge relatie tussen ET en IC toegelicht. Onderwijs in vreemde talen moet niet alleen gericht zijn op taalkundige prestaties en verbale communicatie, maar ook op intercultureel bewustzijn en interculturele vaardigheden (Atay, Kurt, Camlibel, Ersin & Kaslioglu, 2009; Fungchomchoei & Kardkarnklai, 2016; Sercu, 2010). In die zin kan het onderwijzen van de Engelse taal niet worden gescheiden van het bevorderen van de interculturele competentie van de studenten. Veel onderwijskundigen zijn het erover eens dat, ondanks dat ze vaardig in het Engels zijn, de meeste studenten niet goed kunnen functioneren in een interculturele context vanwege hun tekort aan IC-kennis (Fungchomchoei & Kardkarnklai, 2016; Jackson, 2014; Mitchell, Pardinho, Yermakova-Aguiar & Meshkov, 2015; Vo, 2017).

Kortom, dit proefschrift is gericht op de ontwikkeling van de interculturele competentie van studenten in het hoger onderwijs door interculturele communicatie te integreren in de Engelse lessen. Om dit doel te bereiken, wordt de communicatie en de relatie tussen de Vietnamese werknemers en buitenlandse werkgevers of managers, met name de westerse managers, onderzocht in buitenlandse dochterondernemingen en joint-ventures in het zuiden van Vietnam. Na de verkenningsstudies, is er een interventiestudie uitgevoerd, waarbij "kritische-gebeurtenistaken" zijn geïmplementeerd in de Engelse lessen met als doel het vergroten van het bewustzijn van de studenten over interculturele communicatie. In dit proefschrift werden vier onderzoeken uitgevoerd om vier onderzoeksvragen te beantwoorden.

In de eerste en tweede studie werden de werkgerelateerde waarden onderzocht die van invloed kunnen zijn op de communicatie en relaties tussen westerse werkgevers en Vietnamese werknemers in zowel Vietnamese als buitenlandse ondernemingen in Vietnam. De eerste twee onderzoeksvragen die in dit proefschrift worden behandeld, zijn:

1. In welke mate verschillen Vietnamese werknemers en westerse werkgevers / managers wat betreft hun werkgerelateerde waarden?
2. Hoe ervaren Vietnamese werknemers en westerse werkgevers / managers van buitenlandse dochterondernemingen en joint ventures in Vietnam de communicatie op hun werkplek?

Voor de derde en vierde studie werd een interculturele les ontwikkeld die werd geïmplementeerd in een Engelse les om de effecten van kritische-gebeurtenistaken op de interculturele competentie van studenten te onderzoeken. Het integreren van cultuuronderwijs in de taallessen is een goede voorbereiding op de interculturele ontmoetingen die studenten later zullen hebben. De derde en vierde onderzoeksvraag in dit proefschrift zijn:

3. Wat zijn de effecten van kritische-gebeurtenistaken op het bewustzijn van interculturele communicatie van studenten?
4. Hoe ziet de ontwikkeling eruit van het bewustzijn van studenten van interculturele communicatie gedurende een instructietraject met tien taken?

Hoofdstuk 2: Een verkennend onderzoek naar verschillen in werkgerelateerde attitudes tussen westerse werkgevers en Vietnamese werknemers in Vietnamese en buitenlandse ondernemingen in Vietnam.

In hoofdstuk 2 wordt rapporteerd over een studie van verschillen tussen werknemers en werkgevers van Vietnamese en westerse bedrijven in termen van hun werkgerelateerde attitudes. Het onderzoek was gericht op het beantwoorden van de onderzoeksvraag: "In welke mate verschillen Vietnamese werknemers en westerse werkgevers / managers met betrekking tot hun werkgerelateerde waarden?" De auteur voerde het onderzoek uit bij 94 westerse en Vietnamese bedrijven in twee gebieden: Ho Chi Minh stad en de Mekong Delta in het zuiden van Vietnam. De studie was gericht op het specificeren

van de belangrijkste verschillen in werkgerelateerde attitudes tussen westerse en Vietnamese professionals.

Gegevens werden verzameld met behulp van een vragenlijst met afzonderlijke versies voor de werkgevers en de werknemers. Vragenlijsten werden afgenomen bij 763 Vietnamese werknemers, 43 Vietnamese werkgevers / managers en 33 westerse werkgevers / managers. De items van de vragenlijsten maten de attitudes van professionals ten opzichte van werkgerelateerde waarden. Beide vragenlijsten waren verdeeld in twee delen: het gedeelte "voorkeur" en het deel "belang". Het deel "voorkeur" vroeg de deelnemers om hun voorkeuren voor de items aan te geven, terwijl het deel "belang" de deelnemers vroeg om aan te geven hoe belangrijk de items waren. De vragenlijsten waren verdeeld in het voorkeur- en belangrijke gedeelte, omdat de auteur een onderscheid wilde maken tussen (1) wat de werkgevers van hun werknemers verwachten en vice versa en (2) hoe belangrijk de problemen (beleid in het bedrijf) zijn voor beide de werkgevers en werknemers. Een vijf-punts Likert schaal werd gebruikt in beide delen van de vragenlijst. Om de onderliggende dimensies te verkennen, werd een verkennende factoranalyse uitgevoerd op de vragenlijstgegevens van de werknemers (met behulp van Principal-componentenanalyse met Varimax-rotatie), afzonderlijk op het voorkeuren- en belangrijke gedeelte van de vragenlijst. Na het vaststellen van de zeven factoren van werkgerelateerde waarden voor Vietnamese werknemers, werd deze structuur ook gebruikt voor de gegevens van de werkgevers.

De bevindingen toonden aan dat westerse werkgevers hogere gemiddelde scores vertoonden dan Vietnamese werknemers in alle werkgerelateerde waarden. Er werden ook belangrijke verschillen gevonden tussen Vietnamese werkgevers en Vietnamese werknemers, met hogere scores voor Vietnamese werkgevers, behalve voor de waarde: op tijd zijn met een reden. Daarnaast werden er drie significante verschillen gevonden tussen Westerse en Vietnamese werkgevers, met hogere scores voor westerse werkgevers: op tijd zijn, op tijd zijn met een reden en gezichtsverlies. De auteur vond nauwelijks significante verschillen tussen de Vietnamese werknemers die werkzaam zijn in buitenlandse en Vietnamese bedrijven. De verschillen tussen westerse werkgevers en Vietnamese werknemers waren groter dan de verschillen tussen Vietnamese werkgevers en Vietnamese werknemers. Daarom lijken de verschillen tussen westerse werkgevers en Vietnamese werknemers: gevoel voor tijd en gezichtsverlies deels te worden veroorzaakt door culturele aspecten en deels door statusverschillen tussen werkgevers en werknemers. Dit wijst erop dat deze twee aspecten de belangrijkste verschillen tussen Westerse en Vietnamese professionals zijn. De bevindingen van deze studie gaven inzicht in welke verschillen de grootste zijn tussen de twee culturen en lieten het belang zien van het bewust maken van mensen van deze ongelijkheden, in het bijzonder de toekomstige Vietnamese afgestudeerden die met westerse professionals gaan werken.

Hoofdstuk 3: Een kwalitatief verkennend onderzoek naar communicatieproblemen tussen westerse werkgevers en Vietnamese werknemers in buitenlandse ondernemingen in Vietnam.

Deze studie werd uitgevoerd om de bevindingen van hoofdstuk 2 verder te verdiepen. Een diepgaande verkenning van interculturele communicatie tussen Westerse werkgevers / managers en Vietnamese werknemers in dezelfde buitenlandse ondernemingen van de eerste studie werd uitgevoerd. Problemen die westerse werkgevers / managers en Vietnamese werknemers tegenkomen wanneer zij dezelfde werkomgeving delen, zijn onderzocht. Dit inzicht kan worden gebruikt om de communicatie tussen het westerse management en de internationale werknemers in die instellingen te verbeteren en te optimaliseren en om input te geven aan het hoger onderwijs om hun programma's aan te passen om de

toekomstige afgestudeerden te ondersteunen bij de ontwikkeling van interculturele communicatievaardigheden op de werkplek. Twee onderzoeksvragen leidden deze studie: 1) *Hoe ervaren Vietnamese werknemers van buitenlandse ondernemingen in Vietnam de communicatie op hun werkplek?* 2) *Hoe ervaren westerse werkgevers / managers van buitenlandse ondernemingen in Vietnam de communicatie op hun werkplek?*

Semi-gestructureerde interviews werden uitgevoerd om te onderzoeken wat en hoe professionals uit de twee culturen de cross-culturele communicatie in hun werksituaties ervaren. De studie had tot doel inzicht te krijgen van de problemen die ze tegenkwamen bij de interactie met hun interculturele collega's. Het interview bestond uit twee introductievragen, één hoofdvraag en vier vervolgvragen. Alle vragen werden gebruikt om de deelnemers te helpen hun ervaringen te delen, bestaande uit (1) hun interesses bij het werken in het huidige bedrijf, (2) hun mening over interculturele communicatie met hun interculturele collega's, (3) de problemen of incidenten die zij tegenkwamen tijdens het proces van interactie, hoe zij de problemen hebben opgelost en (4) hun verwachtingen over hun interculturele collega's. De interviewtranscripties werden gecodeerd aan de hand van de volgende zes culturele dimensies die gebaseerd zijn op hoofdstuk 2: 1) gevoel voor tijd, 2) deelname aan de besluitvorming, 3) open relatie met werkgevers / managers, 4) gezichtsverlies, 5) verantwoording en 6) oriëntatie op werkprestaties. De verschillen tussen werknemers en werkgevers werden geanalyseerd.

De resultaten lieten zien dat beide perspectieven (van werkgevers en werknemers) op de communicatie tussen de westerse managers en de Vietnamese werknemers elkaar lijken aan te vullen, waarbij de verschillen te wijten zijn aan zowel culturele als statusverschillen. Er waren veel zorgen en problematische kwesties vanuit het standpunt van de Westerse managers met betrekking tot (1) gebrek aan communicatie en (2) gebrek aan autonomie om werk gedaan te krijgen en (3) motivatie voor professionele ontwikkeling. De Westerse immigranten klaagden dat ze tijdens hun samenwerking met de Vietnamezen verschillende problemen tegenkomen die ze niet tegenkomen bij hun samenwerking met andere Westerse collega's. Desalniettemin ervaarden de Vietnamese werknemers weinig problemen en werden er niet vaak negatieve punten genoemd. De Vietnamese werknemers gaven aan dat ze goede en bevredigende relaties hebben met hun hogere managers. Dienovereenkomstig lijkt het erop dat er tegenstrijdige percepties zijn tussen Westerse managers en Vietnamese werknemers.

De resultaten geven inzicht in de belangrijkste problemen in de interculturele communicatie tussen westerse managers en Vietnamese werknemers. Dit is een belangrijke bron is voor de verbetering van interculturele communicatie bij buitenlandse ondernemingen. De bevindingen bevestigen ook de resultaten van de vragenlijst van Hoofdstuk 2, waarin culturele verschillen met betrekking tot het belang van tijd en van gezichtsverlies problemen kunnen veroorzaken in de communicatie en de relatie tussen westerse werkgevers en Vietnamese werknemers.

Hoofdstuk 4: Een experimenteel onderzoek naar de effecten van kritische-gebeurtenistaken op de interculturele competentie van student met Engels als bijvak.

Hoofdstuk 4 behandelt de derde onderzoeksvraag in dit proefschrift. Het onderzoek was gericht op het verkennen van de effecten van kritische-gebeurtenistaken op de interculturele competentie van studenten met als bijvak Engels. Deze studie zocht een antwoord op de vraag: "*Vergroten kritische-gebeurtenistaken het kennisniveau van studenten in de interculturele communicatie?*" Kritische-gebeurtenistaken zijn communicatiesituaties die de deelnemers (of een deelnemer) als problematisch en verwarrend beschouwen. Kritieke incidenten bestaan uit voorbeelden van gebeurtenissen waarin onverwacht gedrag voorkomt. Flanagan (1954, blz. 327) definieert de kritieke incidenttechniek als ...

"a set of procedures for collecting direct observations of human behavior in such a way as to facilitate their potential usefulness in solving practical problems and developing broad psychological principles". Het doel van de kritische-gebeurtenistaken is om het vermogen te ontwikkelen om interactiesituaties te zien vanuit het perspectief van verschillende culturen. Kritische-gebeurtenistaken kunnen een behoorlijk effectieve strategie zijn om intercultureel bewustzijn te bevorderen, omdat ze de verschillen en misverstanden vanuit een cultureel perspectief belichten en kansen creëren voor studenten om kritisch en analytisch te denken over deze situaties.

Een *pretest-posttest control group design* werd gebruikt om de effecten van kritische-gebeurtenistaken op het bewustzijn van interculturele communicatie van studenten te onderzoeken. De interventiegroep en de controlegroep volgden dezelfde cursus voor studenten met bijvak Engels en een major in het technische domein. De interventie bestond uit de implementatie van 10 kritische-gebeurtenistaken toegevoegd aan de cursus. Studenten in de experimentele conditie en controleconditie namen deel aan de pre- en de posttest.

Deelnemers waren 322 tweedejaars studenten met bijvak Engels in zes klassen van *Technical engineering* (131 vrouwen). De deelnemers waren allen 19 jaar oud. De klassen van de studenten werden willekeurig verdeeld in experimentele (4 groepen met 234 studenten) of controle- (2 groepen met 88 studenten) groepen.

Gegevens werden verzameld via antwoordbladen van studenten. Het antwoordblad bestaat uit een instructie voor de leerlingen om de taak uit te voeren, de betreffende kritische-gebeurtenistaak in de vorm van een werkscenario met een gesprek tussen personages en een tabel met vier vragen. De studenten werden gevraagd om het scenario in vijf minuten te lezen en vervolgens het scenario te bespreken en de oplossingen voor het probleem in twintig minuten per paar uit te werken. Nadien noteerden ze individueel hun antwoorden op de vier vragen in de tabel. De vier vragen zijn geformuleerd in overeenstemming met drie indicatoren: (1) inzicht van de leerlingen in het scenario (scenario-inzicht) (vraag 1); (2) inzicht van studenten in de miscommunicatie in het scenario (miscommunicatie begrip) (vraag 2); (3) bewustzijn van studenten van effectieve communicatie in westerse of oosterse (Vietnamese) cultuur (bewustmaking communicatie westelijk of oostelijk) (vraag 3 en 4). Deze drie indicatoren vertegenwoordigden een oplopend moeilijkheidsniveau wat eerst een basisanalyse en vervolgens een kritisch denken vereist.

Om het effect van de serie kritische-gebeurtenistaken op het bewustzijn van leerlingen met betrekking tot interculturele communicatie te onderzoeken, is een multivariate analyse uitgevoerd met de conditie (kritische incidenttaak of regulier onderwijs) als onafhankelijke variabele, de drie indicatoren van bewustzijn over interculturele communicatie op de posttest als afhankelijke variabelen en de pretestscores op dezelfde indicatoren als covariaten.

Er werd een effect van conditie gevonden, dat een significant verschil aantoonde tussen beide condities op de testcores wat betreft het bewustzijn van studenten over interculturele communicatie. Studenten uit de experimentele conditie toonden over het algemeen significant hogere scores op de posttest met betrekking tot het bewustzijn over interculturele communicatie dan de studenten uit de controleconditie. Ook werd er een significant verschil gevonden van de drie indicatoren in de resultaten van de posttest tussen de experimentele en controleconditie. Het grootste verschil werd gevonden in bewustzijn van studenten van communicatie in westerse of oosterse culturen (indicator 3). Een kleiner maar nog steeds significant effect werd gevonden in inzicht in het scenario (indicator 1) en inzicht in miscommunicatie (indicator 2). De studie geeft aan dat het kritische-gebeurtenistaken met studentparen over het algemeen de interculturele competentie van studenten verbeteren in termen van bewustzijn over interculturele communicatie en een basis bieden voor verder intercultureel leren.

Hoofdstuk 5: Een quasi-experimenteel onderzoek om meer inzicht te krijgen in de effecten kritische-gebeurtenistaken op het bewustzijn van studenten over interculturele communicatie.

Dit hoofdstuk gaf nadere inzichten in de effecten van kritische-gebeurtenistaken. Het onderzoek was gericht op de ontwikkeling van het bewustzijn van studenten met het bijvak Engels over interculturele communicatie met tien kritische-gebeurtenistaken. De auteur richtte zich op het beantwoorden van de volgende onderzoeksvragen: 1) *Wat zijn de effecten van kritische-gebeurtenistaken op het bewustzijn over interculturele communicatie van studenten met bijvak Engels?* 2) *Is dit effect anders voor studenten die verschillen in hun vermogen om zich bewust te worden van interculturele communicatie?* 3) *Hoe ontwikkelen de studenten hun bewustzijn van interculturele communicatie in de loop van de tijd?* 4) *Welke score behalen studenten die verschillen in hun vermogen om zich bewust te worden van interculturele communicatie op de verschillende kritische-gebeurtenistaken?*

Het ontwerp, de deelnemers en de gegevensverzameling van deze studie zijn vergelijkbaar met de vorige studie in Hoofdstuk 4. Om de effecten van de kritische-gebeurtenistaken te onderzoeken (onderzoeksvraag 1) is een multivariate covariantie-analyse uitgevoerd met de conditie (kritische - gebeurtenistaken of regulier onderwijs) als onafhankelijke variabele, de drie indicatoren van bewustzijn over interculturele communicatie bij de posttest als afhankelijke variabelen en de pretestscores op dezelfde indicatoren als covarianten. Vervolgens werden de covariantie-analyses voor twee, drie en vier groepen herhaald om te onderzoeken hoeveel bekwaamheidsgroepen konden worden onderscheiden op basis van de pre-testscores. Om onderzoeksvraag 3 te beantwoorden, zijn de oorspronkelijke scores van de tien taken geplot, zowel voor de totale scores als voor de drie indicatoren. De analyses die werden gebruikt voor het beantwoorden van de tweede onderzoeksvraag, maar nu met de totale score en drie indicatoren voor elke taak als afhankelijke variabelen werden herhaald om onderzoeksvraag 4 te beantwoorden.

Studenten die werden onderwezen met de kritische-gebeurtenistaken toonden een sterke positieve ontwikkeling van hun bewustzijn van interculturele communicatie in vergelijking met de studenten in de controleconditie. Significante verschillen tussen de experimentele en controlegroep werden gevonden op de drie indicatoren: (1) begrip van het scenario, (2) begrip van de verkeerd gecommuniceerde punten in het scenario, (3) bewustzijn van effectieve communicatie in westerse of oosterse cultuur. De grootste effecten werden gevonden in indicator 3: bewustzijn van effectieve communicatie in de westerse of oosterse cultuur.

Geconcludeerd kan worden dat het onderwijzen met behulp van kritische-gebeurtenistaken in het algemeen het bewustzijn van studenten over interculturele communicatie bevordert. Het effect van kritische-gebeurtenistaken op het bewustzijn van studenten over interculturele communicatie in drie bewustzijnsgroepen werd ook verkend (studenten met lage, gemiddelde en hoge score op de pre-test). Er werd een significant interactie-effect gevonden tussen interventie- en bewustzijnsgroepen voor alle indicatoren, wat aangeeft dat de interventie de meeste variatie in het bewustzijn van studenten over interculturele communicatie bij de posttest verklaarde voor studenten met een laag en gemiddeld kennisniveau. Daarnaast werd binnen de experimentele conditie de ontwikkeling van het bewustzijn van interculturele communicatie over de tien taken bestudeerd. Er waren grote schommelingen in scores op de verschillende taken te zien. Ten slotte werden verschillen tussen de drie bewustzijnsgroepen binnen de experimentele conditie van de tien taken getest en de bevindingen toonden significante verschillen op slechts enkele indicatoren bij drie van de tien taken. Dit laatste betekent dat het effect van de kritische-gebeurtenistaak tamelijk stabiel is in de eerste niveaus van bewustzijn, hoewel het effect een beetje sterker was voor studenten met een laag en gemiddeld niveau

van het bewustzijn van interculturele communicatie. Het gebruik van kritische-gebeurtenistaken lijkt een effectieve methode om het bewustzijn van leerlingen over interculturele communicatie te bevorderen en de interventie lijkt beter te werken voor studenten met een laag of gemiddeld beginnend niveau van bewustzijn dan voor de andere studenten.

Hoofdstuk 6: Algemene conclusies en discussie.

Dit hoofdstuk bevat samenvattingen van de vier studies, reflecties over de methoden en de bevindingen en discussies van elk onderzoek. Daarnaast worden ook praktische implicaties en suggesties voor verdere studies besproken.

De vragenlijst en de interviewmethode in studie 1 en 2 lijken, ondanks hun beperkingen, geschikte methodes voor het verzamelen van gegevens. In toekomstig onderzoek zouden observatie-instrumenten kunnen worden ontwikkeld om meer informatie te krijgen over de interculturele werkcultuur. Een experimenteel onderzoek met kritische-gebeurtenistaken werd opgezet om de effecten van de training van interculturele vaardigheden in het hoger onderwijs te achterhalen. Anders dan eerdere studies met behulp van kritische-gebeurtenistaken met gesloten antwoordcategorieën (Bochner & Coulon, 1997; Collins & Pierterse, 2007; Cushner, 1989), hebben de quasi-experimentele studies (onderzoek 3 en 4) in dit proefschrift de open benadering gebruikt. Deze liet zien dat de communicatieve en kritische denkcompetenties van de studenten werden verbeterd. Deze kritische gebeurtenissen kunnen studenten helpen geschikte manieren te vinden om later met vergelijkbare scenario's in de praktijk om te gaan. Voor toekomstig onderzoek wordt aanbevolen om een combinatie of een afwisseling van verschillende interculturele trainingsmethoden te gebruiken in combinatie met kritieke incidententaken om de effectiviteit van de training te optimaliseren.

Culturele verschillen kunnen verschillende problemen op de werkplek veroorzaken als er geen voorbereiding op de gevolgen is. Culturele afstand heeft zowel voor- als nadelen. Dit onderzoeksproject is uitgevoerd om tegemoet te komen aan de behoeften van de internationaal gerichte ontwikkeling in de Mekong Delta en de stad Ho Chi Minh in Vietnam. Een onderzoek naar de werkcultuur en de werkrelaties van buitenlandse ondernemingen in het gebied is gunstig voor de interculturele communicatietraining in de Engelse taal van studenten in de regio. Met de informatie verzameld in de studies in dit proefschrift kan een bijdrage aan het interculturele communicatieonderzoek worden geleverd door normen te stellen voor het samenstellen van interculturele communicatiecurricula voor hoger onderwijs, maar ook voor werkgevers- en werknemerscoaching.

Vietnamese summary

Văn hóa luôn đóng một vai trò quan trọng trong giảng dạy tiếng Anh. Giảng dạy văn hóa đóng vai trò chủ chốt trong lớp học ngoại ngữ bởi vì học ngoại ngữ có nghĩa là học về văn hóa của ngôn ngữ đó. Quyển sách này chủ yếu bàn về vấn đề lồng ghép dạy và học văn hóa vào một lớp học ngoại ngữ ở bậc giáo dục Đại Học. Trong phần đầu quyển sách sẽ bàn về ảnh hưởng của khoảng cách văn hóa đến việc giao tiếp giữa giám đốc người Phương Tây và nhân viên người Việt tại các công ty nước ngoài và liên doanh ở miền Nam Việt Nam. Sau đó, dựa vào kết quả nghiên cứu trên, tác giả sẽ thảo luận về một nghiên cứu thực nghiệm sử dụng các tình huống bất ngờ xảy ra nơi công sở trong lớp học tiếng Anh ở bậc Đại Học. Dự án nghiên cứu này được thực hiện đáp ứng nhu cầu phát triển kinh tế theo hướng toàn cầu hóa ở Đồng Bằng Sông Cửu Long và thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam. Với sự xâm nhập mạnh mẽ của kinh tế và văn hóa nước ngoài vào Việt Nam, người dân Việt Nam đặc biệt là tầng lớp trí thức cần phải bắt kịp và hội nhập với xu hướng quốc tế hóa này.

Trong luận văn này, tác giả nghiên cứu sự ảnh hưởng của sự khác nhau về các giá trị văn hóa đến mối quan hệ và giao tiếp giữa quản lý, giám đốc người phương Tây và nhân viên người Việt Nam tại các công ty nước ngoài và công ty liên doanh. Hiểu biết về sự khác nhau về văn hóa và vấn đề mà họ gặp phải sẽ giúp tác giả không chỉ đưa ra giải pháp giúp đôi bên giảm thiểu rắc rối mà còn tận dụng lợi ích của sự khác biệt về văn hóa này. Việc hiểu biết này còn giúp cho tác giả có một cái nhìn thấu đáo về những khó khăn trong giao tiếp trong bối cảnh đa văn hóa; qua đó, tác giả có ý tưởng phù hợp để thiết kế một chương trình đào tạo giao tiếp đa văn hóa trong lớp học ngoại ngữ bởi vì ngôn ngữ chính là một hiện tượng văn hóa được truyền đạt và tiếp thu một cách hiệu quả nhất qua chính nền văn hóa tạo nên ngôn ngữ đó (Barany, 2016). Mục tiêu của nghiên cứu thực nghiệm sử dụng các tình huống giao tiếp nơi công sở trong luận văn này là lồng ghép việc giảng dạy ngôn ngữ và văn hóa nhằm giúp sinh viên nâng cao kỹ năng và năng lực giao tiếp đa văn hóa.

Chương 1: Giới thiệu

Chương mở đầu sẽ giới thiệu bối cảnh, sự khác nhau giữa văn hóa phương Tây và văn hóa Việt Nam, khái niệm về năng lực giao tiếp đa văn hóa, mối tương quan giữa việc giảng dạy ngôn ngữ tiếng Anh và năng lực giao tiếp đa văn hóa và cấu trúc của luận văn này.

Trong chương này, tác giả đầu tiên sẽ thảo luận bối cảnh nghiên cứu và vấn đề thiếu hụt nguồn nhân lực chất lượng cung cấp cho thị trường lao động với xu hướng quốc tế hóa hiện nay. Nghiên cứu này được thực hiện ở miền Nam Việt Nam trong bối cảnh rất nhiều công ty nước ngoài đang đầu tư ồ ạt vào Việt Nam, tạo nên một nhu cầu lớn nguồn lao động từ sinh viên vừa tốt nghiệp. Tuy nhiên, sự thật là rất nhiều công ty gặp khó khăn khi tìm nhân viên đáp ứng nhu cầu của họ (Weng, 2015, p. 82). Theo một nghiên cứu gần đây của Bộ Giáo Dục và Đào Tạo Việt Nam năm 2017, khoảng 50% sinh viên vừa tốt nghiệp không đáp ứng được nhu cầu của nhà tuyển dụng nước ngoài vì không đủ điều kiện về kỹ năng ngoại ngữ và giao tiếp. Mặc dù gặp rất nhiều khó khăn trong việc phát triển kỹ năng cho sinh viên, các trường Đại Học ở Việt Nam vẫn duy trì mục tiêu giúp sinh viên phát triển kỹ năng giao tiếp hiệu quả với những người đến từ nền văn hóa và ngôn ngữ khác trong bối cảnh quốc tế hóa hiện nay. Nhiệm vụ này của bậc giáo dục Đại Học đòi hỏi những phương pháp mới và sáng tạo từ giảng viên và nhà trường nhằm có thể cung cấp cho sinh viên phương tiện và kỹ năng để phân tích và hội nhập với những nền văn hóa khác một cách đầy đủ ý nghĩa.

Tiếp theo trong chương này, sự khác nhau giữa văn hóa phương Tây và văn hóa Việt Nam được phân tích. Sự khác nhau này sẽ được giải thích trên phương diện ảnh hưởng đến giao

tiếp và quan hệ giữa những người đến từ hai văn hóa. Bởi vì văn hóa được xem như là một củ hành tây với nhiều lớp vỏ cần được bóc tách, những giá trị văn hóa này là nhân tố chính cần quan tâm nếu một cá nhân muốn tồn tại trong một thời đại toàn cầu hóa hiện nay. Lột từng lớp vỏ củ hành tây cũng giống như phát hiện những niềm tin và giá trị tiềm ẩn làm nên sự khác biệt giữa văn hóa này và văn hóa khác. Sự hiểu biết về giá trị và niềm tin văn hóa sẽ cung cấp một nền tảng vững chắc cho việc giao thương hiệu quả trong bối cảnh toàn cầu hóa (Taras, Steel & Kirkman, 2011).

Hơn nữa, chương này cũng cung cấp thêm khái niệm về năng lực giao tiếp đa văn hóa và mối tương quan giữa giảng dạy tiếng Anh và năng lực này. Nhiều thập niên qua, việc lồng ghép giảng dạy năng lực giao tiếp đa văn hóa vào lớp học tiếng Anh trở nên vô cùng phổ biến bởi vì rất nhiều nhà nghiên cứu, giảng viên và những người làm trong ngành giáo dục đều công nhận tầm quan trọng của văn hóa và các giá trị văn hóa trong việc học và giảng dạy ngoại ngữ. Mục tiêu của giảng dạy ngoại ngữ không chỉ hướng đến việc thực hành ngôn ngữ đó mà còn cần phát triển kỹ năng và nhận thức đa văn hóa (Atay, Kurt, Camlibel, Ersin & Kaslioglu, 2009; Fungchomchoei & Kardkarnklai, 2016; Sercu, 2010). Vì vậy, việc giảng dạy tiếng Anh không thể tách rời việc nâng cao năng lực giao tiếp đa văn hóa cho sinh viên. Rất nhiều nhà giáo dục tin rằng mặc dù rất giỏi về ngôn ngữ, sinh viên không thể làm việc hiệu quả trong bối cảnh đa văn hóa nếu thiếu kiến thức về năng lực giao tiếp trong môi trường này (Fungchomchoei & Kardkarnklai, 2016; Jackson, 2014; Mitchell, Pardinho, Yermakova-Aguiar & Meshkov, 2015; Vo, 2017).

Tóm lại, quyền luận văn này chủ yếu nhấn mạnh việc phát triển kỹ năng giao tiếp đa văn hóa cho sinh viên thông qua lồng ghép kỹ năng này vào lớp học tiếng Anh. Để đạt được mục tiêu này, tác giả sẽ tìm hiểu mối quan hệ và cách thức giao tiếp nơi công sở giữa nhân viên người Việt Nam và quản lý, giám đốc người nước ngoài, đặc biệt là quản lý, giám đốc người phương Tây tại các công ty nước ngoài và liên doanh ở miền Nam Việt Nam. Sau nghiên cứu này, tác giả sẽ thiết kế một chương trình đào tạo thử nghiệm sử dụng các tình huống bất ngờ nơi công sở lồng ghép vào giờ học tiếng Anh nhằm nâng cao nhận thức đa văn hóa cho sinh viên. Theo đó, trong quyền luận văn này, 4 nghiên cứu sẽ được thực hiện với 4 câu hỏi nghiên cứu.

Hai nghiên cứu đầu tiên điều tra về sự ảnh hưởng của các giá trị văn hóa nơi công sở đến mối quan hệ và giao tiếp giữa giám đốc người phương Tây và nhân viên người Việt tại công ty nước ngoài và công ty liên doanh ở Việt Nam. Hiểu rõ về sự khác nhau giữa cấp quản lý và nhân viên đến từ các nền văn hóa khác nhau nơi công sở có thể giúp cải thiện môi trường làm việc. Vì vậy, hai câu hỏi nghiên cứu đầu tiên là:

1. Nhân viên người Việt và giám đốc người phương Tây khác nhau ở mức độ nào về sự thể hiện các giá trị văn hóa nơi công sở?
2. Nhân viên người Việt và giám đốc người phương Tây tại công ty nước ngoài và công ty liên doanh cảm nhận thế nào về giao tiếp nơi công sở?

Trong hai nghiên cứu tiếp theo, tác giả thiết kế một bài giảng về kỹ năng giao tiếp đa văn hóa với các tình huống giao tiếp nơi công sở và nghiên cứu tác dụng của bài giảng này đến kỹ năng giao tiếp đa văn hóa của sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh. Lồng ghép giảng dạy văn hóa vào lớp học ngoại ngữ là một sự chuẩn bị tốt cho việc giao tiếp đa văn hóa của sinh viên về sau. Qua đó, hai câu hỏi nghiên cứu tiếp theo là:

3. Những tác dụng của việc giảng dạy các tình huống giao tiếp nơi công sở đến kỹ năng nhận thức đa văn hóa của sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh?
4. Sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh sẽ phát triển nhận thức đa văn hóa như thế nào trong suốt khóa học với 10 tình huống giao tiếp nơi công sở?

Chương 2: Nghiên cứu về sự khác nhau về thái độ nơi công sở giữa cấp trên người phương Tây và nhân viên người Việt Nam tại công ty nước ngoài và công ty liên doanh tại Việt Nam

Chương 2 thảo luận về nghiên cứu điều tra sự khác nhau về thái độ nơi công sở giữa giám đốc và nhân viên tại công ty Việt Nam và công ty nước ngoài. Nghiên cứu này sẽ trả lời câu hỏi: “Nhân viên người Việt và giám đốc người phương Tây khác nhau ở mức độ nào về sự thể hiện các giá trị văn hóa nơi công sở?” Nghiên cứu này được thực hiện tại 94 công ty nước ngoài và công ty Việt Nam ở hai vùng: thành phố Hồ Chí Minh và Đồng Bằng Sông Cửu Long ở miền Nam Việt Nam. Mục tiêu của nghiên cứu này là tìm ra sự khác biệt quan trọng nhất về thái độ nơi công sở giữa người Việt Nam và người phương Tây.

Dữ liệu được thu thập bằng một bản câu hỏi điều tra với hai bản riêng biệt cho giám đốc/quản lý và nhân viên. Bản câu hỏi được phân phát cho 763 nhân viên người Việt, 43 giám đốc/quản lý người Việt Nam và 33 giám đốc/quản lý người phương Tây. Các câu hỏi trong bản câu hỏi này điều tra về thái độ làm việc có liên quan đến các giá trị văn hóa nơi công sở. Cả hai bản câu hỏi cho nhân viên và cấp trên được chia làm hai phần: sự yêu thích và sự quan trọng. Phần “yêu thích” đòi hỏi ứng viên trả lời về mức độ yêu thích của họ đối với câu hỏi trong khi phần “quan trọng” đòi hỏi ứng viên trả lời về mức độ quan trọng mà họ cảm nhận đối với câu hỏi. Bản câu hỏi điều tra được chia làm hai phần vì tác giả muốn phân biệt (1) giám đốc/quản lý mong đợi điều gì từ nhân viên và ngược lại và (2) sự quan trọng của các chính sách của công ty đối với cả cấp trên và nhân viên. Thang đo Likert với 5 mức độ được sử dụng cho cả hai phần của bản câu hỏi. Tác giả sử dụng phân tích nhân tố (sử dụng phần mềm SPSS) để tìm ra những giá trị cơ bản trên bản câu hỏi điều tra cho nhân viên, thực hiện riêng biệt cho phần “yêu thích” và phần “quan trọng” (sử dụng phân tích các nhân tố cơ bản và phép xoay Varimax trên SPSS). Sau khi đã tìm ra 7 nhân tố liên quan đến các giá trị văn hóa nơi công sở cho bản câu hỏi của nhân viên, 7 nhân tố này sẽ được sử dụng cho bản câu hỏi của giám đốc/quản lý.

Kết quả cho thấy giám đốc/quản lý người phương Tây có thang điểm trung bình cao vượt trội so với nhân viên người Việt ở tất cả các giá trị văn hóa được đo. Điểm của giám đốc/quản lý người Việt cũng cao vượt trội so với nhân viên người Việt trừ giá trị: *tuân thủ giờ làm việc nhưng có lý do*. Thêm vào đó, 3 giá trị khác biệt lớn nhất giữa giám đốc/quản lý người Việt và giám đốc/quản lý người phương Tây, với thang điểm cao hơn cho giám đốc/quản lý người phương Tây là: *tuân thủ giờ làm việc một cách nghiêm ngặt*, *tuân thủ giờ làm việc nhưng có lý do* và *giữ thể diện*. Tác giả không tìm thấy sự khác biệt nào giữa nhân viên người Việt làm tại công ty nước ngoài và công ty Việt Nam. Thông qua thang điểm đánh giá, sự khác nhau được thấy rõ ràng hơn giữa nhân viên người Việt và giám đốc/quản lý người phương Tây so với giữa nhân viên người Việt và giám đốc/quản lý người Việt. Do đó, sự khác nhau giữa nhân viên người Việt và giám đốc/quản lý người phương Tây ở hai giá trị: *nhận thức về thời gian* và *giữ thể diện* là do sự khác nhau cả về văn hóa lẫn khác nhau về địa vị gây ra. Tóm lại, hai điểm khác nhau lớn nhất giữa nhân viên người Việt và giám đốc/quản lý người phương Tây là *nhận thức về thời gian* và *giữ thể diện* và kết quả này cũng nói lên đây là hai điểm khác biệt lớn nhất giữa người Việt Nam và người phương Tây. Kết quả này giúp cho chúng ta hiểu biết thêm về sự khác biệt nào là lớn nhất giữa hai nền văn hóa và giúp cho mọi người ý thức được sự khác biệt này đặc biệt là sinh viên sắp tốt nghiệp những người sẽ làm việc với người phương Tây trong tương lai. Kết quả này cũng nói lên tầm quan trọng của việc lồng ghép giảng dạy văn hóa với giảng dạy ngôn ngữ và qua đó chương trình đào tạo kỹ năng giao tiếp cho sinh viên sẽ chú trọng vào những khác biệt về văn hóa ở trên.

Chương 3: Nghiên cứu về những vấn đề trong giao tiếp nơi công sở giữa nhân viên người Việt và giám đốc/quản lý người phương Tây

Nghiên cứu này được thực hiện nhằm xác nhận lại kết quả của bản câu hỏi điều tra ở Chương 2. Trong nghiên cứu này, tác giả sẽ điều tra và phân tích sâu hơn những vấn đề giao tiếp đa văn hóa mà nhân viên người Việt và giám đốc/quản lý người phương Tây gặp phải; điều tra được thực hiện ngay tại những công ty đã làm bản câu hỏi điều tra. Tác giả tìm hiểu những vướng mắc mà nhân viên người Việt và giám đốc/quản lý người phương Tây gặp phải khi làm chung một môi trường làm việc. Kết quả điều tra sẽ giúp cải thiện mối quan hệ giao tiếp giữa giám đốc/quản lý người phương Tây và nhân viên người Việt tại các công ty này cũng như cung cấp thông tin cho các giảng viên ở bậc Đại Học điều chỉnh chương trình đào tạo về phát triển kỹ năng giao tiếp đa văn hóa nơi công sở cho các sinh viên sắp ra trường. Hai câu hỏi điều tra của nghiên cứu này là:

1. Nhân viên người Việt tại công ty nước ngoài và công ty liên doanh tại Việt Nam cảm nhận thế nào về giao tiếp nơi công sở?
2. Giám đốc/quản lý người phương Tây tại công ty nước ngoài và công ty liên doanh tại Việt Nam cảm nhận thế nào về giao tiếp nơi công sở?

Trong nghiên cứu này, phỏng vấn bán cấu trúc (semi-structured interviews) được sử dụng để tìm hiểu những vấn đề mà người làm việc đến từ hai nền văn hóa khác nhau gặp phải trong môi trường làm việc đa văn hóa. Phỏng vấn được thiết kế với rất nhiều câu hỏi chi tiết và theo chủ đề. Các câu hỏi này bao gồm 2 câu hỏi mở đầu, 1 câu hỏi chính và 4 câu hỏi phụ tiếp theo. Tất cả các câu hỏi đều được thiết kế để giúp các ứng viên nói về trải nghiệm của họ bao gồm (1) *những điều họ thích khi làm việc tại công ty đó* (2) *ý kiến của họ về giao tiếp đa văn hóa nơi công sở* (3) *những vấn đề họ gặp phải trong suốt quá trình giao tiếp, họ đã làm gì và như thế nào để vượt qua khó khăn đó* và (4) *mong đợi của họ đối với đồng nghiệp khác văn hóa*. Một danh sách các chủ đề cũng được sử dụng để giúp ứng viên nói về những vấn đề mà họ không đề cập đến trong suốt buổi phỏng vấn. Thông tin thu thập được sau tất cả các buổi phỏng vấn sẽ được phân tích cho từng ứng viên và sau đó là so sánh giữa các ứng viên với nhau. 6 giá trị văn hóa được lựa chọn từ nghiên cứu đầu tiên được sử dụng để phân tích dữ liệu thu được từ các buổi phỏng vấn: (1) *nhận thức về thời gian* (2) *tham gia vào quá trình quyết định công việc của cấp trên* (3) *sự cởi mở trong mối quan hệ với cấp trên* (4) *sự giữ thể diện* (5) *trách nhiệm với công việc* (6) *xu hướng chú trọng vào sự thể hiện trong công việc*. Bài phỏng vấn của mỗi ứng viên bao gồm tất cả những đoạn hội thoại được phân tích theo 6 giá trị văn hóa trên. Sau đó, từ mỗi trường hợp, hai trường hợp tượng trưng được rút trích, một cho nhân viên và một cho cấp quản lý/giám đốc. Cuối cùng, những trường hợp đại diện đã rút trích được tóm tắt vào một bảng phân tích thể hiện sự khác nhau giữa giám đốc/quản lý và nhân viên ở 6 giá trị văn hóa trên. Tác giả sử dụng phân tích so sánh các trường hợp vì cách phân tích này giúp kết hợp các trường hợp lại với nhau và tìm ra điểm chung nhất về các vấn đề trong giao tiếp mà ứng viên gặp phải.

Kết quả phỏng vấn cho thấy quan điểm của nhân viên và giám đốc/quản lý bổ sung cho nhau; qua đó, sự khác nhau trong giao tiếp của cả hai bên gây ra bởi sự khác nhau về văn hóa và chênh lệch về địa vị. Theo ý kiến của giám đốc/quản lý người phương Tây, họ gặp rất nhiều vấn đề với nhân viên bao gồm (1) *thiếu sự truyền đạt thông tin từ nhân viên* và (2) *thiếu sự tự giác trong hoàn thành công việc và động cơ để phát triển nghề nghiệp của nhân viên*. Các ứng viên người phương Tây phản nản rằng họ gặp rất nhiều vấn đề rắc rối khi làm việc với người Việt, những vấn đề mà họ không gặp khi làm việc với người cùng văn hóa. Trái lại, ứng viên người Việt ít nói về rắc rối mà họ gặp phải khi làm việc với người phương Tây và những điểm tiêu cực

trong quá trình giao tiếp nơi công sở cũng ít được đề cập đến. Họ phần lớn khẳng định rằng họ có một mối quan hệ tốt với cấp trên. Do đó, dường như có sự trái ngược trong cảm nhận giữa các ứng viên đến từ hai nền văn hóa khác nhau.

Kết quả của nghiên cứu này giúp tìm ra những vấn đề trong giao tiếp giữa giám đốc/quản lý người phương Tây và nhân viên người Việt, cũng là một nhân tố quan trọng giúp cải thiện vấn đề giao tiếp ở các công ty chi nhánh nước ngoài và công ty liên doanh. Kết quả này cũng khẳng định kết quả từ bản câu hỏi điều tra là chính xác; qua đó, *nhận thức về thời gian* và *sự giữ thể diện* là hai giá trị văn hóa gây ra khó khăn trong giao tiếp và mối quan hệ giữa giám đốc/quản lý người phương Tây và nhân viên người Việt.

Chương 4: Nghiên cứu thực nghiệm xem xét hiệu quả của việc giảng dạy các tình huống rắc rối nơi công sở đến kỹ năng giao tiếp đa văn hóa của sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh

Chương 4 thảo luận câu hỏi nghiên cứu thứ 3 trong quyền luận văn này. Mục tiêu của nghiên cứu này là xem xét tác dụng của việc giảng dạy các tình huống giao tiếp nơi công sở đến năng lực giao tiếp đa văn hóa của sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh. Nghiên cứu này sẽ trả lời câu hỏi: *“Việc giảng dạy các tình huống giao tiếp bất ngờ nơi công sở có giúp cải thiện nhận thức giao tiếp đa văn hóa của sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh?”* Các tình huống giao tiếp bất ngờ là những tình huống mà người giao tiếp thấy rắc rối và khó xử. Tình huống bất ngờ là những sự kiện xung đột giữa các đối tượng giao tiếp trong đó nhiều hành vi không mong đợi diễn ra. Flanagan (1954, trang 327) định nghĩa phương pháp sử dụng các tình huống bất ngờ này là “một quá trình thu thập những hành vi cần quan sát và từ đó tìm ra những giải pháp hữu hiệu để giải quyết xung đột và lập ra những nhân tố tâm lý học cơ bản”. Mục tiêu của việc sử dụng các tình huống này là phát triển khả năng nhìn nhận vấn đề của một người từ quan điểm của các nền văn hóa khác nhau. Tình huống bất ngờ dường như là một phương pháp hiệu quả để nâng cao nhận thức đa văn hóa bởi vì các tình huống này chú trọng vào sự khác nhau và sự xung đột trên khía cạnh văn hóa và giúp cho người học suy nghĩ một cách lập luận và phân tích về những tình huống đưa ra.

Nghiên cứu này được thiết kế theo dạng thực nghiệm với hai nhóm sinh viên, một nhóm thử nghiệm và một nhóm không thử nghiệm, với bài kiểm tra đầu vào và kiểm tra đầu ra. Nghiên cứu thực nghiệm này nhằm xem xét hiệu quả của việc giảng dạy các tình huống bất ngờ đối với nhận thức đa văn hóa của sinh viên. Nhóm nghiên cứu thực nghiệm và nhóm không thực nghiệm là sinh viên chuyên ngành kỹ thuật cùng được giảng dạy chương trình như nhau dành cho sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh. Chương trình thực nghiệm là chương trình giảng dạy 10 tình huống bất ngờ nơi công sở được lồng ghép vào chương trình giảng dạy chính quy. Sinh viên ở cả hai nhóm thực nghiệm và không thực nghiệm đều phải làm bài kiểm tra đầu vào và kiểm tra đầu ra.

Các ứng viên tham gia nghiên cứu này là 322 sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh năm thứ hai Đại Học ở 6 lớp chuyên ngành kỹ thuật (trong đó có 131 sinh viên nữ). Các ứng viên ở cùng độ tuổi như nhau là 19 tuổi. Những sinh viên này được lựa chọn ngẫu nhiên vào nhóm thực nghiệm (gồm 4 nhóm với 234 sinh viên) và nhóm không thực nghiệm (gồm 2 nhóm với 88 sinh viên).

Dữ liệu được thu thập qua bản trả lời của sinh viên. Theo thứ tự, trong bản trả lời này có phần đầu tiên là hướng dẫn sinh viên làm bài, tiếp theo là tình huống bất ngờ nơi công sở với một đoạn hội thoại giữa các nhân vật và một bảng câu hỏi với 4 câu hỏi về tình huống đưa ra. Sinh

viên được yêu cầu đọc tình huống trong 5 phút và sau đó sinh viên sẽ thảo luận theo cặp trong 20 phút về tình huống để đưa ra cách giải quyết vấn đề trong tình huống. Tiếp theo, sinh viên sẽ tự viết ra câu trả lời cho 4 câu hỏi trong bảng câu hỏi. 4 câu hỏi này được thiết kế tương ứng với 3 kỹ năng: (1) *sự hiểu biết của sinh viên về tình huống đưa ra* (câu hỏi số 1); (2) *sự hiểu biết của sinh viên về vấn đề xung đột trong tình huống* (câu hỏi số 2) và (3) *nhận thức của sinh viên về việc giao tiếp thế nào là hiệu quả trong văn hóa phương Tây hoặc văn hóa phương Đông (Việt Nam)* (câu hỏi số 3 và số 4). 3 câu hỏi kỹ năng này được thể hiện theo mức độ khó tăng dần đòi hỏi sự phân tích từ mức độ cơ bản cho đến kỹ năng lập luận cao hơn từ sinh viên.

Để xem xét hiệu quả của các tình huống bất ngờ đối với nhận thức trong giao tiếp đa văn hóa của sinh viên, tác giả sử dụng phân tích đa biến với điều kiện thực nghiệm (gồm nhóm thực nghiệm và không thực nghiệm) là biến không phụ thuộc, 3 kỹ năng nhận thức đa văn hóa ở bài kiểm tra đầu ra là biến phụ thuộc, 3 kỹ năng nhận thức đa văn hóa ở bài kiểm tra đầu vào là hiệp biến.

Kết quả từ phân tích đa biến cho thấy có sự khác nhau rõ rệt giữa nhóm sinh viên được thực nghiệm và nhóm sinh viên không thực nghiệm ở bài kiểm tra đầu ra về nhận thức trong giao tiếp đa văn hóa. Theo kết quả, sinh viên từ nhóm được thực nghiệm đạt được số điểm cao hơn nhiều về nhận thức trong giao tiếp đa văn hóa so với nhóm sinh viên không được thực nghiệm. Kết quả từ phân tích giữa các biến cho thấy nhóm được thực nghiệm vượt trội hơn hẳn về 3 kỹ năng về nhận thức trong giao tiếp đa văn hóa so với nhóm không được thực nghiệm. Trong những kỹ năng này, điểm khác biệt lớn nhất giữa nhóm thực nghiệm và nhóm không thực nghiệm là kỹ năng số 3, (3) *nhận thức của sinh viên về việc giao tiếp thế nào là hiệu quả trong văn hóa phương Tây hoặc văn hóa phương Đông (Việt Nam)*. Ở hai kỹ năng còn lại: (1) *sự hiểu biết của sinh viên về tình huống đưa ra* và (2) *sự hiểu biết của sinh viên về vấn đề xung đột trong tình huống* vẫn có sự khác biệt giữa hai nhóm được nghiên cứu nhưng sự khác biệt này nhỏ hơn so với kỹ năng số 3. Nghiên cứu này cho thấy việc giảng dạy các tình huống bất ngờ nơi công sở với sinh viên làm việc theo cặp giúp nâng cao kỹ năng giao tiếp đa văn hóa cho sinh viên và là nền tảng cho những chương trình đào tạo kỹ năng đa văn hóa tiếp theo.

Chương 5: Nghiên cứu thực nghiệm xem xét sâu hơn hiệu quả của việc giảng dạy các tình huống rắc rối nơi công sở đến kỹ năng giao tiếp đa văn hóa của sinh viên

Chương này cung cấp thông tin rõ hơn về hiệu quả của việc giảng dạy các tình huống nơi công sở. Mục tiêu của nghiên cứu này là phát triển kỹ năng giao tiếp đa văn hóa cho sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh thông qua 10 tình huống giao tiếp bất ngờ nơi công sở. Tác giả sẽ trả lời các câu hỏi sau trong nghiên cứu này:

1. *Những hiệu quả của việc giảng dạy các tình huống giao tiếp bất ngờ nơi công sở đối với nhận thức trong giao tiếp đa văn hóa của sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh là gì?*
2. *Hiệu quả của việc giảng dạy này có khác nhau đối với các nhóm sinh viên có khả năng khác nhau không?*
3. *Sinh viên không chuyên tiếng Anh sẽ phát triển kỹ năng nhận thức này như thế nào trong suốt khóa học?*
4. *Những sinh viên có khả năng khác nhau có sẽ có kết quả về điểm khác nhau như thế nào đối với các tình huống khác nhau?*

Nghiên cứu này sẽ phân tích sâu hơn hiệu quả của việc giảng dạy 10 tình huống bất ngờ nơi công sở và giữa các nhóm sinh viên có khả năng khác nhau bao gồm: sinh viên trung bình, khá và giỏi.

Cách thiết kế bài giảng, các ứng viên và cách thu thập dữ liệu ở nghiên cứu này giống như nghiên cứu trước đó ở chương 4. Để xem xét hiệu quả của các tình huống bất ngờ đối với nhận thức trong giao tiếp đa văn hóa của sinh viên, tác giả sử dụng phân tích đa biến với điều kiện thực nghiệm (gồm nhóm thực nghiệm và không thực nghiệm) là biến không phụ thuộc, 3 kỹ năng nhận thức đa văn hóa ở bài kiểm tra đầu ra là biến phụ thuộc, 3 kỹ năng nhận thức đa văn hóa ở bài kiểm tra đầu vào là hiệp biến. Tiếp theo, tác giả cũng thực hiện phân tích đa biến trên điểm bài kiểm tra đầu vào để phân loại sinh viên theo các nhóm khác nhau. Sau phân tích này, 3 nhóm sinh viên với khả năng khác nhau là: sinh viên trung bình, khá và giỏi được lựa chọn. Để trả lời câu hỏi nghiên cứu số 3, điểm ban đầu của sinh viên trên 10 tình huống được phân tích trên đồ thị, cho cả điểm tổng và điểm từng kỹ năng của sinh viên. Để trả lời câu hỏi nghiên cứu số 4, tác giả lặp lại phân tích được sử dụng để trả lời câu hỏi nghiên cứu số 2, nhưng nay thực hiện trên điểm tổng và điểm từng kỹ năng của từng tình huống.

Kết quả cho thấy sinh viên ở nhóm thực nghiệm phát triển kỹ năng nhận thức trong giao tiếp đa văn hóa tốt hơn nhiều so với nhóm không thực nghiệm. Sự khác biệt này thể hiện rõ ở 3 kỹ năng nhận thức trong giao tiếp đa văn hóa bao gồm: (1) *sự hiểu biết của sinh viên về tình huống đưa ra*, (2) *sự hiểu biết của sinh viên về vấn đề xung đột trong tình huống* và (3) *nhận thức của sinh viên về việc giao tiếp thế nào là hiệu quả trong văn hóa phương Tây hoặc văn hóa phương Đông (Việt Nam)*. Qua đó có thể kết luận là việc giảng dạy các tình huống bất ngờ nơi công sở cơ bản có thể nâng cao nhận thức trong giao tiếp đa văn hóa cho sinh viên. Kết quả từ phân tích đa biến ở bài kiểm tra đầu ra cho 3 nhóm sinh viên có khả năng khác nhau cho thấy chương trình giảng dạy thực nghiệm đặc biệt có tác dụng với nhóm sinh viên trung bình và khá. Thêm vào đó, kết quả cũng cho thấy sự phát triển kỹ năng nhận thức trong giao tiếp đa văn hóa của sinh viên trong suốt khóa học dao động khá lớn được thể hiện qua điểm của sinh viên ở tất cả các tình huống khác nhau. Cuối cùng, tác giả cũng phân tích sự khác nhau của 3 nhóm sinh viên ở tất cả các tình huống khác nhau và kết quả cho thấy sự khác biệt chỉ tìm thấy ở một vài kỹ năng ở 3 trong tổng số 10 tình huống được thực nghiệm. Điều này có nghĩa là sự phát triển kỹ năng nhận thức trong giao tiếp đa văn hóa của sinh viên khá là ổn định trong suốt quá trình giảng dạy các tình huống bất ngờ nơi công sở mặc dù sự phát triển này được thấy rõ hơn ở sinh viên trung bình và khá. Theo đó có thể kết luận là các tình huống giao tiếp bất ngờ nơi công sở là một phương pháp hiệu quả để nâng cao kỹ năng nhận thức trong giao tiếp đa văn hóa của sinh viên và chương trình giảng dạy thực nghiệm dường như có hiệu quả cho sinh viên có nhận thức ban đầu ở mức trung bình khá hơn các sinh viên khác.

Chương 6: Thảo luận và Kết luận chung

Chương này tóm tắt lại 4 nghiên cứu ở trên, thảo luận về phương pháp và kết quả của từng nghiên cứu. Thêm nữa, tác giả cũng đưa ra đề nghị cho các nghiên cứu tiếp theo.

Kết quả từ hai nghiên cứu đầu tiên chứng minh rằng chương trình đào tạo đa văn hóa rất cần thiết cho việc giảng dạy sinh viên ở bậc đại học. Mặc dù vẫn còn những hạn chế, việc sử dụng bản câu hỏi điều tra và phỏng vấn ở nghiên cứu số 1 và số 2 được xem là phương pháp phù hợp để thu thập dữ liệu. Tuy nhiên, các nghiên cứu tiếp theo có thể dùng thêm phương pháp quan sát để lấy thêm thông tin về môi trường làm việc đa văn hóa. Một nghiên cứu thực nghiệm với các tình huống giao tiếp nơi công sở được thực hiện để xem xét hiệu quả của việc giảng dạy các

tình huống nơi công sở đến kỹ năng giao tiếp đa văn hóa của sinh viên ở bậc đại học. Khác với những nghiên cứu trước đây sử dụng các tình huống này với câu hỏi đóng (câu hỏi trắc nghiệm) (Bochner & Coulon, 1997; Collins & Pierterse, 2007; Cushner, 1989), các nghiên cứu thực nghiệm trong quyền luận văn này (nghiên cứu 3 và 4) sử dụng các tình huống với câu hỏi mở và qua đó thấy được hiệu quả của phương pháp này đến kỹ năng giao tiếp và suy nghĩ lập luận của sinh viên. Những tình huống này có thể giúp cho sinh viên có thể tìm ra phương pháp phù hợp để ứng phó với các tình huống thật sau đó. Tuy nhiên trong các nghiên cứu tiếp theo, tác giả đề nghị có sự kết hợp hoặc thay đổi giữa các phương pháp giảng dạy kỹ năng văn hóa khác với phương pháp này nhằm giúp đạt được hiệu quả tốt hơn cho bài giảng.

Sự khác nhau về văn hóa có thể đem lại nhiều vấn đề nơi công sở nếu không có sự chuẩn bị tốt. Khoảng cách về văn hóa không chỉ đem lại bất lợi mà còn đem lại lợi ích. Trên thực tế, các công ty đa quốc gia có thể tận dụng được những lợi ích này nếu họ biết cách điều khiển sự khác nhau này (Hasan, Mehmet & Demet, 2014). Dự án nghiên cứu này được thực hiện để đáp ứng nhu cầu phát triển toàn cầu hóa của nền kinh tế Đồng Bằng Sông Cửu Long và thành phố Hồ Chí Minh tại Việt Nam. Việc điều tra về văn hóa nơi công sở và hoạt động của các công ty chi nhánh nước ngoài và liên doanh trong khu vực trên là một thuận lợi cho việc đào tạo kỹ năng giao tiếp đa văn hóa cho người học tiếng Anh. Với thông tin thu thập được từ nghiên cứu ở quyền luận văn này, tác giả mong muốn đóng góp thêm cho các nghiên cứu về kỹ năng giao tiếp đa văn hóa bằng cách đưa ra các tiêu chuẩn để thiết kế chương trình đào tạo kỹ năng giao tiếp đa văn hóa không chỉ cho đào tạo ở bậc đại học mà còn cho các chương trình đào tạo nhân viên và các cấp quản lý.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Questionnaire survey (Chapter 2)

Employees' Questionnaire

Instructions: Please use black or blue pen or use pencil (do not use fluorescent pen). Mark clearly the bubble of your choice.



Correction: cross out the wrong answer, fill in the right bubble, and place an arrow to indicate the correct answer.



This questionnaire aims at clarifying your **PREFERENCES** of the organization's and your employers' policies. The purpose of the questionnaire is to shed light on the cultural distance in terms of sense of time, low and high-context cultural orientation, power distance and value orientations between Western and Vietnamese culture in work places. The outcomes of the study will be beneficial to new graduate educators since they can employ the knowledge to produce culturally well-equipped workforce to meet the needs of the Western employers in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam. The information will be kept **CONFIDENTIAL** and will be used for **RESEARCH PURPOSES** only. There is no right or wrong answer. Please read and consider the following statements carefully before answering.

A. Think of real situations in your company. Indicate your PREFERENCES for the following statements. Fill in the bullet that is most appropriate to your case.

	Not at all	Not really	Somewhat	Quite a lot	Very much
1. Being part of the decision-making process of my employers/higher managers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. Completing my assignments on schedule.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. Attending the meetings on time.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. being consulted before the employers/higher managers' decisions are made	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. being well-informed about the organization's strategies that affect management decisions	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. being in time for work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. getting the opportunity to express disagreements with my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. getting the opportunity to express my viewpoints to my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. keeping certain distance from my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. getting instructions to do my work from my	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

employers/higher managers

11. being consulted by my employers/higher managers in all work aspects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. being ordered by my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. talking freely to my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. expressing significant respect to my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. asking my employers'/higher managers' for their opinions in all work aspects	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. that I am kept clearly informed by my employers/higher managers on what's going on in the company	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. keeping flexible deadlines to finish my assigned work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. asking my employers/higher managers for help when solving a problem	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. having the possibility to ask for clarifications from my higher managers/employers if needed.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. expressing my viewpoints freely to my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. expressing my feelings in a straightforward manner with my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. avoiding disagreements with my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
23. withdrawing my point of view instead of encountering my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. explaining my opinions to my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. sticking to my opinions when I disagree with my employers/ higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. agreeing with my employers/higher managers in case of a conflict.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. receiving feedback on my personal performance from my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. having the opportunity to get training and professional development.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

29. asking for an extension of a deadline.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. criticizing my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31. being kept responsible for the quality of the work that I produce	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32. being late for meetings at work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
33. encountering my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
34. leaving the office earlier than the appointed time	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
35. that my work is controlled.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36. being assigned tasks out of my job functions when it is necessary	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
37. apologizing to my employers/higher managers after a conflict	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
38. being late for work	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
39. receiving direct criticism from my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
40. asking for a deadline extension if I have good reasons.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
41. proposing different ideas to my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
42. Opposing with my employers/higher managers when discussing an issue.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
43. explaining my opinions to my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
44. being assigned a huge amount of work when it is necessary	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
45. Renewing the deadline after the first extension .	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
46. leaving the office earlier than the appointed time when I have good reasons.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
47. that my work is controlled for accuracy and quality	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
48. communicating directly to their employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

B. Think of real situations in your company. Indicate how important you think the following statements are by filling in the bullet that is most appropriate to your case.

	Not important at all	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
49. My ideas for changes are taken into consideration by my employers/higher managers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
50. Sound policies for people who are not contributing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
51. Promotion on the basis of my actual contribution	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
52. Small distance of wages between me and my employers/higher managers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
53. Higher management showing their favoritism for some specific people in the organization.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
54. Funds available for trying out new ideas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
55. Adequate time to explore and develop new ideas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
56. My new ideas are given a try.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
57. My innovative ideas are given support by employers and higher managers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
58. Fair policies for promotion and advancement in my organization	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
59. I am supported by my employers/higher managers to explore alternative approaches to problems.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Please fill in the following part about yourself

1. **How old are you?:**

☐ less than 18

☐ 18-29

☐ 30-39

☐ 40-49

☐ 50 or older
2. **Sex:**

Male ☐

Female ☐
3.
 - a. **Where were you born?**

☐ Vietnam

- ☐ Other Asian countries
☐ Western countries (USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, European countries)
☐ Other
- b. Where was your mother born?** ☐ Vietnam
☐ Other Asian countries
☐ Western countries (USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, European countries)
☐ Other
- c. Where was your father born?** ☐ Vietnam
☐ Other Asian countries
☐ Western countries (USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, European countries)
☐ Other
- 4. Years of working in Vietnam:**
☐ 1-2 years ☐ 5 years ☐ more than 5 years
☐ 10 years ☐ more than 10 years ☐ more than 20 years
- 5. Years of working with non-Vietnamese employers:**
☐ 1-2 years ☐ 5 years ☐ more than 5 years
☐ 10 years ☐ more than 10 years ☐ more than 20 years
- 6. How large is your organization?**
☐ Micro (< 10 employees)
☐ Small (< 50 employees)
☐ Medium-sized (< 250 employees)
☐ Large (> 250 employees)
- 7. Highest degree:**
☐ Elementary ☐ Secondary ☐ Vocational
☐ College/University ☐ Other (please specify) _____
- 8. Are you a native speaker of English?** ☐ Yes ☐ No
 (If the answer is “Yes”, please skip number 9)
- 9. The following four items ask you about your ability to:**
- | | Not at all | Not so good | Average | Good | Very good |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| a. Understand English | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| b. Speak English | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| c. Read English | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
| d. Write English | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ | ☐ |
- 10. Are you a native speaker of Vietnamese?** Yes ☐ No ☐
 (If the answer is “Yes”, please skip number 11)
- 11. The following four items ask you about your ability to:**

	Not at all	Not so good	Average	good	Very good
a. Understand Vietnamese	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Speak Vietnamese	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Read Vietnamese	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Write Vietnamese	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Employers' Questionnaire

Instructions: Please use black or blue pen or use pencil (do not use fluorescent pen). Mark clearly the bubble of your choice.



Correction: cross out the wrong answer, fill in the right bubble, and place an arrow to indicate the correct answer.



This questionnaire aims at clarifying your expectation of your employees' possible activities within your organization. The purpose of the questionnaire is to shed light on the cultural distance in terms of sense of time, low and high-context cultural orientation, power distance and value orientations between Western and Vietnamese culture in work places. The outcomes of the study will be beneficial to new graduate educators since they can employ the knowledge to produce culturally well-equipped workforce to meet the needs of the Western employers in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in Vietnam. The information will be kept **CONFIDENTIAL (all the information you provided will not be revealed to anyone outside the research group)** and will be used for **RESEARCH PURPOSES** only. There is no right or wrong answer. Please read and consider the following statements carefully before answering.

A. Think of real situations in your company. Indicate your EXPECTATION from your employees about the following (possible) activities. Fill in the bullet that is most appropriate to your case.

	Not at all	Not really	Somewhat	Quite a lot	Very much
1. I expect that my employees keep a deadline to finish their assigned work.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
2. I allow my employees to be late for meetings at work with a good reason.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
3. I expect that my employees can handle direct criticism from employers/higher managers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
4. I allow my employees to leave the office earlier than the appointed time if they have good reasons.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
5. I allow my employees to renew the deadline after their first extension.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
6. I expect my employees to attend the meetings on time.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. I allow my employees to express their disagreements with their employers/higher	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

managers in making important decisions.

8. I expect that my employees do assigned tasks out of their job functions if necessary.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. I expect that my employees talk freely to employers/higher managers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. I expect that my employees stay in the office until the appointed time.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. I allow my employees to ask for a deadline extension if they have good reasons.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
12. I expect of my employees that they take part in the decision-making process of higher management.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. I allow my employees to be late for work with a good reason.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. I allow my employees to know about the organization's strategies that affect management decisions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. I expect that my employees give advice to the employers'/higher managers before decisions are made.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. I expect my employees to complete their assignments on schedule.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. I expect my employees to express their viewpoints to their employers/higher managers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. I expect my employees to keep certain distance towards their employers/higher managers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. I expect that my employees are satisfied with getting instructions to do their work from their employers/higher managers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. I allow my employees to take part in the decision-making process of higher management.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. I expect that my employees are satisfied with being ordered by their employers/higher	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

managers.

22. I expect that my employees are in time for work. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

23. I expect that my employees express significant respect to their employers/higher managers. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

24. I expect that my employees ask for opinions in all work aspects from employers/higher managers. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

25. I allow my employees to be clearly informed by their employers/higher managers about what is going on in the company. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

26. I expect that my employees are satisfied with being consulted in all work aspects by their employers/higher managers. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

27. I expect that my employees are willing to handle a huge amount of work if necessary. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

28. I expect my employees to communicate directly to their employers/higher managers. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

29. I expect that my employees ask their employers/higher managers for help when solving a problem. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

30. I expect that my employees are willing to offer advice to higher management. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

31. I expect that my employees ask for clarifications from higher management if needed. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

32. I expect that my employees express their viewpoints freely to their employers/higher managers. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

33. I expect that my employees express their feelings in a straightforward manner to their employers/higher managers. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

34. I expect my employees to show their agreement with higher management. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

35. I expect that my employees withdraw their point of view instead of encountering with their employers/higher managers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
36. I expect my employees to explain their opinions to their employers/higher managers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
37. I allow that my employees stick to their opinions when their employers/higher managers have different opinions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
38. I expect that my employees agree with their employers/higher managers in case of a conflict.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
39. I expect that my employees are open to communicate with employers/higher managers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
40. I allow my employees to ask for an extension of a deadline.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
41. I expect that my employees' work is controlled for accuracy and quality.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
42. I allow my employees to propose different ideas to their employers/higher managers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
43. I allow my employees to oppose their employers/higher managers when discussing an issue.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
44. I allow my employees to explain their opinions to their employers/higher managers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
45. I expect that my employees apologize to their employers/higher managers after a conflict.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
46. I expect that my employees are open for feedback from employers/higher managers on their work performance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
47. I expect my employees to have a positive attitude towards training and professional development in their field.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
48. I expect that my employees feel	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

responsible for the quality of their work.

49. I expect that employees' work is controlled in accordance with the organization's policies. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

50. I allow my employees to criticize their employers/higher managers. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

B. Think of real situations in your company. Indicate how IMPORTANT you think the following items are by filling in the bullet that is most appropriate to your case.

	Not important at all	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important
51. Employees' ideas for changes are taken into consideration.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
52. Sound policies for people who are not contributing in the organization.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
53. Promotion on the basis of employees' actual contribution.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
54. Small distance of wages between employees and higher management.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
55. Higher management showing their favoritism for some specific people in the organization.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
56. Funds available for trying out new ideas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
57. Adequate time to explore and develop new ideas.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
58. Employees' new ideas are given a try.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
59. Fair policies for promotion and advancement for all employees.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
60. Employees with innovative	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

ideas are given support.

61. Employees are supported to explore alternative approaches to problems.

☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

Please fill in the following part about yourself

1. **How old are you?:** ☐ less than 18 ☐ 18-29
☐ 30-39 ☐ 40-49
☐ 50 or older
2. **Sex:** Male ☐ Female ☐
3. **Job status:** ☐ CEO (Chief Executive Officer) ☐ Middle manager
☐ Deputy CEO ☐ First-line manager
☐ Senior manager ☐ Supervisor
4. **Years of working in Vietnam:**
☐ 1-2 years ☐ 5 years ☐ more than 5 years
☐ 10 years ☐ more than 10 years ☐ more than 20 years
5. **How large is your organization?**
☐ Micro (< 10 employees)
☐ Small (< 50 employees)
☐ Medium-sized (< 250 employees)
☐ Large (> 250 employees)
6. **Highest degree:**
☐ Elementary ☐ Secondary ☐ Vocational
☐ College/University ☐ Other (please specify) _____
7. **Are you a native speaker of English?** ☐ Yes ☐ No
 (If the answer is “Yes”, please skip number 9)
8. **The following four items ask you about your ability to:**

	Not at all	Not so good	Average	Good	Very good
a. Understand English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Speak English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Read English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
d. Write English	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

9. The following four items ask you about your ability to:

	Not at all	Not so good	Average	Good	Very good
a. Understand Vietnamese	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
b. Speak Vietnamese	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
c. Read Vietnamese	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

d. Write Vietnamese



Appendix 2

Interview questions (Chapter 3)

The information will be kept **CONFIDENTIAL** (all of the information you provided will not be revealed to anyone outside the research group) and will be used for **RESEARCH PURPOSES** only.

Introduction questions:

1. What is your name?
2. What is the most interesting thing you have found while working in this organization and with Vietnamese employees/Western employers (managers)?

Main question:

1. How do you think about communication between you and your employees/Western employers (managers)?

Follow – up questions:

1. Can you describe some events or incidents?
2. Can you give me some examples?
3. What did you do?
4. What were your expectations of your Vietnamese employees/Western employers (managers)?
5. Did you experience any consequences?

Checklist of topics (for the interviewer only)

1. How do you think about keeping the deadline?
2. How do you think about being on time for work or meetings?
3. How do you think about your participation in higher managers' decision-making/your employees' participation in higher managers' decision-making- e.g., how often, in what situations, the degree of involvement?
4. How do you think about the higher managers' and the organization's policies?
5. How do you think about the relationship between you and your higher managers/your employees?
6. How do you think about the policies for work performance and innovation in your organization?

Appendix 3

Specifications of 10 critical incident tasks and Pre-test and Posttest (Chapter 4 and 5)

Task 1

Read the following scenario and the guiding questions. Then discuss with your partner the background of the scenario and analyze it by answering the guiding questions together. You have 5 minutes to read the scenario and 20 minutes to discuss. After that, fill in the answer sheet individually in 15 minutes and use what you have discussed with your friend (see an example in the answer sheet) (Sinh viên nên dùng tiếng Anh để trả lời câu hỏi nhưng trong trường hợp sinh viên không thể viết câu trả lời bằng tiếng Anh, sinh viên có thể dùng tiếng Việt để trả lời. Sinh viên có thể dùng cả tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt trong 1 câu trả lời)

Linh and Helen are teammates under Roger Morin (their manager), who unexpectedly called a short morning meeting with his team at 8:00am. Linh, who is just arriving now at 8:15, missed the meeting and is unaware even that there was a meeting. Helen manages to catch Linh as she is arriving and the two speak while Helen brings her up to speed on what happened.

Linh: Good morning, Helen. What beautiful day!

Helen: Good morning, Linh. Um, please, can we speak together for a moment?

Linh: Of course. Is something wrong?

Helen: Maybe.

Linh: Okay... well let's go have a coffee and talk...

Helen: Everyone on the team is supposed to be on time.

Linh: What do you mean? I am on time.

Helen: The boss called a short meeting at 8 o'clock. You missed it.

Linh: What? Why he didn't let us know yesterday?

Helen: Maybe he thought it was not necessary.

Linh: I had so much trouble with my kids this morning. Anyway, it's only 8:15 and you're out of meeting, maybe it wasn't that important (Sighs). We didn't micro-manage so much. I suppose I have to go and explain the whole situation to him. But he really should have let us know before.

Helen: Okay. It's up to you. Um... I must get back to work now. See you later

Guiding questions:

1. Shortly summarize the scenario

2. What are the miscommunicated points?

- What did Helen mean when she said: "Everyone in the team is supposed to be on time"?
- Why did Linh say: "What do you mean? I am on time."
- Why did Linh say that she had had troubles with her kids and she missed her country.....? Was it an explanation for her tardiness?
- When Helen said: "It's up to you", what do you think about her feeling at that time?
- If you were Linh, would you go to the manager and report the problem?

3. How would you think Helen should behave considering Linh's cultural background?

4. How would you think Linh should behave considering Helen's cultural background?

1. Short summary of the scenario	
2. What are the	

miscommunicated points? (summarize what you discussed for question number 2)	
3. How would you think Linh should behave considering Helen's cultural background?	
4. How would you think Helen should behave considering Linh's cultural background?	

Task 2

Read the following scenario and the guiding questions. Then discuss with your partner the background of the scenario and analyze it by answering the guiding questions together. You have 5 minutes to read the scenario and 20 minutes to discuss. After that, fill in the answer sheet individually in 15 minutes and use what you have discussed with your friend (see an example in the answer sheet) (Sinh viên nên dùng tiếng Anh để trả lời câu hỏi nhưng trong trường hợp sinh viên không thể viết câu trả lời bằng tiếng Anh, sinh viên có thể dùng tiếng Việt để trả lời. Sinh viên có thể dùng cả tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt trong 1 câu trả lời)

Rebecca – one of the managers of United Technologies – works with Minh, the manager of one of United Technologies branches for customer service outsourcing in Vietnam. She is talking on the phone to him to discuss about giving training for the customer service representatives.

Rebecca: We really need to get all of the customer service representatives trained on our new process in the next two weeks. Can you get this done?

Minh: That timeline is pretty aggressive. Do you think it's possible?

Rebecca: I think it will require some creativity and hard work, but I think we can get it done with two or three days to spare

Minh: Ok.

Rebecca: Now that our business is settled, how is everything else?

Minh: All's well, although the heavy monsoons this year are causing a lot of delays getting around the city.

Two weeks later

Minh: We've pulled all of our resources and I'm happy to say that 60% of the customer service representatives are now trained in the new process. The remaining 40% will complete the training in the next two weeks.

Rebecca: Only 60%? I thought we agreed that they all would be trained by now!

Minh: Yes . The monsoon is now over so the rest of the training should go quickly.

Rebecca: This training is critical to our results. Please get it done as soon as possible.

Minh: I am certain that it will be done in the next two weeks....

Guiding questions:

1. Shortly summarize the scenario

2. What are the miscommunicated points?

- Did Minh agree to the initial timeline requested by Rebecca?
- Why did Minh mention the monsoons?

- What might Rebecca be thinking about Minh when she said: “Only 60%? I thought we agreed that they all would be trained by now!”?
 - What might Minh be thinking about Rebecca when he said: “I am certain that it will be done in the next two weeks....”?
3. How would you think Rebecca should behave considering Minh’s cultural background?
 4. How would you think Minh should behave considering Rebecca’s cultural background?

1. Short summary of the scenario	
2. What are the miscommunicated points? (summarize what you discussed for question number 2)	
3. How would you think Minh should behave considering Rebecca’s cultural background?	
4. How would you think Rebecca should behave considering Minh’s cultural background?	

Task 3

Read the following scenario and the guiding questions. Then discuss with your partner the background of the scenario and analyze it by answering the guiding questions together. You have 5 minutes to read the scenario and 20 minutes to discuss. After that, fill in the answer sheet individually in 15 minutes and use what you have discussed with your friend (see an example in the answer sheet) (Sinh viên nên dùng tiếng Anh để trả lời câu hỏi nhưng trong trường hợp sinh viên không thể viết câu trả lời bằng tiếng Anh, sinh viên có thể dùng tiếng Việt để trả lời. Sinh viên có thể dùng cả tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt trong 1 câu trả lời)

The company is running an internal mentorship program. George, as part of his own professional development, has agreed to be a mentor to Bo. Here George is using a prior performance review of Bo’s to start this discussion around Bo’s participation in meetings for one of their mentoring meetings. He has already given Bo a book of idioms for ESL learners to study.

George (boss): Well, as you can see, Bo, we’re generally very satisfied with your work here. Punctuality, reliability, productivity, the quality of your work – all top notch. But we are concerned about the degree of your participation, especially during meetings. I know you were having problems with some slang phrases and words. How’s that Book of Idioms working for you?

Bo (employee): Yes. The book is good. Thank you for giving it to me. I study it every night, and it helps me understand a lot. For example, yesterday during the meeting, Simon asked me for a “ballpark figure,” and I know what it meant because I studied it in the book.

George (boss): That’s great... so, tell me, what else do you need?

- Bo (employee):** Umm, in my country, people are different in meetings than here. If somebody don't agree with something, he might not say anything. But silence doesn't always mean he has nothing to say. Sometimes the people who say nothing have the best ideas. Chinese people always say: "A wise head makes a closed mouth."
- George (boss):** (Chuckles) They do, do they? Well Bo you've obviously noticed that you are expected to speak up here. So why not just speak up when you have something to say? Just spit it out!
- Bo (employee):** Old habits die hard. Also, when language is already a problem, it's even harder to speak up.
- George (boss):** And what else?
- Bo (employee):** I don't want to be disrespectful and interrupt the meeting to ask when I don't understand something.
- George (boss):** Yeah, that might not work so well. So tell me Bo, what do you suggest we do then?
- Bo (employee):** Well, maybe you should say to the people who are running the meetings to ask each person for their thoughts?

Guiding questions:

1. **Shortly summarize the scenario.**
2. **What are the miscommunicated points?**
 - What do you think about George's feelings when he said: "They do, do they? Well Bo you've obviously noticed that you are expected to speak up here. So why not just speak up when you have something to say? Just spit it out!"?
 - What does Bo mean when he said: "Old habits die hard. Also, when language is already a problem, it's even harder to speak up I don't want to be disrespectful and interrupt the meeting to ask when I don't understand something"?
3. **How would you think George should behave considering Bo's cultural background?**
4. **How would you think Bo should behave considering George's cultural background?**

1. Short summary of the scenario	
2. What are the miscommunicated points? (summarize what you discussed for question number 2)	
3. How would you think George should behave considering Bo's cultural background?	
4. How would you think Bo should behave considering George's cultural background?	

Task 4

Read the following scenario and the guiding questions. Then discuss with your partner the background of the scenario and analyze it by answering the guiding questions together. You have 5 minutes to read the scenario and 20 minutes to discuss. After that, fill in the answer sheet individually in 15 minutes and use what you have discussed with your friend (see an example in the answer sheet) (Sinh viên nên dùng tiếng Anh để trả lời câu hỏi nhưng trong trường hợp sinh viên không thể viết câu trả lời bằng tiếng Anh, sinh viên có thể dùng tiếng Việt để trả lời. Sinh viên có thể dùng cả tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt trong 1 câu trả lời)

In the following exchange, Mr. Hutchinson is the head of Information Technology within his organization. Mr. Wong is lead computer programmer. Mr. Wong was born and raised in Malaysia, a high-context culture. The two are discussing when Mr. Wong will put a computer program into production. Note that Mr. Hutchinson's speech is direct and to the point while Mr. Wong's is indirect and subtle.

Mr. Hutchinson: The program looks good and passed the test run with only minor errors. When do you think you can put it into production? I don't see any production schedule here. The changes need to go into the system by the end of the month. Is that possible? When do you want to go with this?

Mr. Wong: Maybe I should review the requirements.

Mr. Hutchinson: The errors were minor. Quality Control needs to know when it will go into production. Let's set the production date now. Just tell me when you'll fix the errors. I'll tell Quality Control.

Mr. Wong: Perhaps I can e-mail you an estimate. I'll talk to the team.

Mr. Hutchinson: Couldn't you just tell me when you'll have them fixed? Here, it's no big deal. (Hands Mr. Wong the program) Don't they seem like easy fixes?

Mr. Wong: (Looks at the program but says nothing—as if not hearing Mr. Hutchinson's suggestion)

Mr. Hutchinson: Mr. Wong? Just give me a date.

Mr. Wong: Yes. Whenever you prefer is fine. (Hands the program back to Mr. Hutchinson)

Mr. Hutchinson: I don't need this. (Hands it back to Mr. Wong) Well, it's got to go in by the first of next month. OK?

Mr. Wong: Yes, that is fine.

Guiding questions:

1. Shortly summarize the scenario

2. What are the miscommunicated points?

- Why does Mr. Wong said: "Perhaps I can e-mail you an estimate. I'll talk to the team"? Why cannot he choose a date?
- Does Mr. Hutchinson recognize that Mr. Wong cannot set a date for the program production? Why or why not?

3. How would you think Mr. Hutchinson should behave considering Mr. Wong's cultural background?

4. How would you think Mr. Wong should behave considering Mr. Hutchinson's cultural background?

1. Short summary of the scenario	
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2. What are the miscommunicated points? (summarize what you discussed for question number 2)	
3. How would you think Mr. Hutchinson should behave considering Mr. Wong's cultural background?	
4. How would you think Mr. Wong should behave considering Mr. Hutchinson's cultural background?	

Task 5

Read the following scenario and the guiding questions. Then discuss with your partner the background of the scenario and analyze it by answering the guiding questions together. You have 5 minutes to read the scenario and 20 minutes to discuss. After that, fill in the answer sheet individually in 15 minutes and use what you have discussed with your friend (see an example in the answer sheet) *(Sinh viên nên dùng tiếng Anh để trả lời câu hỏi nhưng trong trường hợp sinh viên không thể viết câu trả lời bằng tiếng Anh, sinh viên có thể dùng tiếng Việt để trả lời. Sinh viên có thể dùng cả tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt trong 1 câu trả lời)*

Monika (senior manager), Peter (boss) and Homa (employee) are talking about the release of a new software. The boss and manager want it to be done by December 1st because December 15th is quite close to Christmas holiday. Homa, an employee, said that she can finish at that time but still told the manager and the boss that the Valley Software will arrive in November and that she also has another personal thing which is her daughter is going to get married at the end of November.

Monika (senior manager): Well, let's see! Today is October 15th. Homa, we need the new CAM software packet drawn out by December 15th.

Peter (boss): Actually, it would be better if we could do it by December 1st due to the holidays. Is this Ok with you, Homa?

Homa (employee) (nod her head) Yes, I understand.

Monika (senior manager): Are there any other business priorities?

Homa (employee): No, not at this time. The valley software will be here in November and my daughter is going to get married at the end of the month.

Peter (boss): Isn't that some holiday?

Homa (employee): Yes

Monika (senior manager): Who is coming in November?

Homa (employee): (keep silent and confused)

Guiding questions:

1. Shortly summarize the scenario

2. What are the miscommunicated points?

- Do Monika and Peter understand why Homa mentioned "the coming of Valley software in November and her daughter's wedding"
- Will Homa finish her assignment by December 1st (based on what she said)?

- Why did Monika ask: "Who is coming in November?"
- 3. How would you think Monika and Peter should behave considering Homa's cultural background?
- 4. How would you think Homa should behave considering Monika's and Peter's cultural background?

1. Short summary of the scenario	
2. What are the miscommunicated points? (summarize what you discussed for question number 2)	
3. How would you think Homa should behave considering Peter's and Monika's cultural background?	
4. How would you think Peter and Monika should behave considering Homa's cultural background?	

Task 6

Read the following scenario and the guiding questions. Then discuss with your partner the background of the scenario and analyze it by answering the guiding questions together. You have 5 minutes to read the scenario and 20 minutes to discuss. After that, fill in the answer sheet individually in 15 minutes and use what you have discussed with your friend (see an example in the answer sheet) (Sinh viên nên dùng tiếng Anh để trả lời câu hỏi nhưng trong trường hợp sinh viên không thể viết câu trả lời bằng tiếng Anh, sinh viên có thể dùng tiếng Việt để trả lời. Sinh viên có thể dùng cả tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt trong 1 câu trả lời)

Roger Brown, marketing vice president for a Seattle-based lumber company, was making a sales presentation to a plywood wholesaler in Tokyo. Roger had just proposed what he considered to be a fair price for a large shipment of first-quality plywood. Much to his amazement, the three Japanese executives did not respond immediately but rather sat across the table with their hands folded and their eyes cast downward, saying nothing. Fifteen seconds passed, then thirty, and still no response. Finally, Roger became so exasperated that he said with a good deal of irritation in his voice, "Would you like for me to repeat the offer?" From that point onward, the talks were stalled, and Roger never did successfully negotiate a contract for plywood.

Guiding questions:

1. Shortly summarize the scenario.
2. What are the miscommunicated points?
 - Why do the 3 Japanese executives keep silent? Do they agree with the proposal (offer)?
 - Why do Roger become angry?
3. How would you think Roger should behave considering 3 Japanese executives' cultural background?
4. How would you think 3 Japanese executives should behave considering Roger's cultural background?

1. Short summary of the scenario	
2. What are the miscommunicated points? (summarize what you discussed for question number 2)	
3. How would you think Roger should behave considering 3 Japanese executives' cultural background?	
4. How would you think the 3 Japanese executives should behave considering Roger's cultural background?	

Task 7

Read the following scenario and the guiding questions. Then discuss with your partner the background of the scenario and analyze it by answering the guiding questions together. You have 5 minutes to read the scenario and 20 minutes to discuss. After that, fill in the answer sheet individually in 15 minutes and use what you have discussed with your friend (see an example in the answer sheet) (Sinh viên nên dùng tiếng Anh để trả lời câu hỏi nhưng trong trường hợp sinh viên không thể viết câu trả lời bằng tiếng Anh, sinh viên có thể dùng tiếng Việt để trả lời. Sinh viên có thể dùng cả tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt trong 1 câu trả lời)

Based in Cleveland, Ohio, Jim has been managing a software development team in Pune for the past two years. He has been working closely with Aruna, the Indian team leader, to develop a new networking program. While Jim has over 25 years of experience in software development, Aruna knows the program inside and out. While reviewing his work from the previous week, Jim discovers that he made a mistake in the programming code. He notices that Aruna corrected his error, but wonders why Aruna did not bring it to his attention so that he could avoid delays and keep from making the same mistake in the future.

Jim (manager): Hi Aruna, I have just reviewed the program and found out that I had made a mistake in the programming code. However, you already corrected it and did not talk to me about that mistake!

Aruna (team leader): Well, I thought that was a minor thing and I did not want to bother you with unimportant things.

Jim (manager): Ok, that's fine but please tell me next time if there is something wrong happening even when it is trivial. Well, I thought for the mistake I made, it was quite serious to take into consideration.

Aruna (team leader): Oh, yes. I will definitely tell you (sigh)

1. Shortly summarize the scenario

2. What are the miscommunicated points?

- If you were Aruna, would you inform Jim about the mistake?
- Do you think that Aruna will keep her promise to tell the manager about any problems coming up?

3. How would you think Aruna should behave considering Jim's cultural background?

4. How would you think Jim should behave considering Aruna's cultural background?

1. Short summary of the scenario	
2. What are the miscommunicated points? (summarize what you discussed for question number 2)	
3. How would you think Aruna should behave considering Jim's cultural background?	
4. How would you think Jim should behave considering Aruna's cultural background?	

Task 8

Read the following scenario and the guiding questions. Then discuss with your partner the background of the scenario and analyze it by answering the guiding questions together. You have 5 minutes to read the scenario and 20 minutes to discuss. After that, fill in the answer sheet individually in 15 minutes and use what you have discussed with your friend (see an example in the answer sheet) (Sinh viên nên dùng tiếng Anh để trả lời câu hỏi nhưng trong trường hợp sinh viên không thể viết câu trả lời bằng tiếng Anh, sinh viên có thể dùng tiếng Việt để trả lời. Sinh viên có thể dùng cả tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt trong 1 câu trả lời)

Mai, a Vietnamese sale employee, is talking to her boss, Lucy from England about the upcoming sale event. Her boss, Lucy asks Mai to add more pictures for the event; then Mai does not get the point completely but is hesitant to confirm her boss' idea, which makes her get into trouble later.

Mai (employee): I have finished the plan for the upcoming event. Can you have a look at it and give me your comments?

Lucy (boss): Well done! It seems to be an alluring (interesting) event but I need more pictures or photos for it!

Mai (employee): Ah, well..... I'll do it.

Lucy (boss): Great! Make it!

1 week later

Lucy (boss): Let show the pictures you made when I talk!

Mai (employee): Oh, I do not understand what you mean? The event does not start yet. I am going to take photos when it begins

Lucy (boss): What??? You think that I can be there like a monkey, talking and dancing without any images....

Mai (employee): Oh, I am terribly sorry. There are still some minutes left. I'll do it right now (sigh)

Guiding questions:

1. Shortly summarize the scenario

2. What are the miscommunicated points?

- If you were Mai, would you ask your boss again to clarify things?
- If you were Lucy, would you speak loudly to Mai in public place?

3. How would you think Mai should behave considering Lucy's cultural background?

4. How would you think Lucy should behave considering Mai's cultural background?

1. Short summary of the scenario	
2. What are the miscommunicated points? (summarize what you discussed for question number 2)	
3. How would you think Mai should behave considering Lucy's cultural background?	
4. How would you think Lucy should behave considering Mai's cultural background?	

Task 9

Read the following scenario and the guiding questions. Then discuss with your partner the background of the scenario and analyze it by answering the guiding questions together. You have 5 minutes to read the scenario and 20 minutes to discuss. After that, fill in the answer sheet individually in 15 minutes and use what you have discussed with your friend (see an example in the answer sheet) (Sinh viên nên dùng tiếng Anh để trả lời câu hỏi nhưng trong trường hợp sinh viên không thể viết câu trả lời bằng tiếng Anh, sinh viên có thể dùng tiếng Việt để trả lời. Sinh viên có thể dùng cả tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt trong 1 câu trả lời)

Mr. Paul Anderson is the international sales representative for his computer equipment company. His most recent trip takes him to China, where he is scheduled to meet with his Chinese counterpart. Mr. Paul and his training team arrived in China 3 days ago for the scheduled appointment with Mr. Chin, his Chinese counterpart. Mr. Chin has not yet met with Mr. Paul and his team. Finally, a call to Mr. Paul's hotel room indicates that Mr. Chin is prepared to meet with Mr. Paul. When Mr. Paul arrives at the location, he is asked to wait outside Mr. Chin's office. Finally, after several hours, Mr. Paul is called in to meet Mr. Chin.

Mr. Paul: Ah, Mr. Chin, it's so good to finally see you. Gosh, I've been waiting for days. Did you forget our appointment?

Mr. Chin: Hello, Mr. Paul, please sit down. Everything is fine?

Mr. Paul: Actually, no (Mr. Chin's phone rings)the problem is

Mr. Chin: Excuse me (takes the phone and speaks in Chinese. After several minutes, he concludes the phone conversation). Yes, noweverything is fine?

Mr. Paul: Well actually, I've got a small problem. You see, the computer equipment you ordered (a staff person enters the room and hands Mr. Chin something to sign)

Mr. Chin: Oh, excuse me. (signs the document). Yes, now, everything is fine?

Mr. Paul: As I was saying all the computer equipment you ordered is just sitting on a ship in the dock. I need your help in getting it unloaded. I mean, it's been there for 2 weeks!

Mr. Chin: Hmm, I see There is no problem

Mr. Paul: Well, if it sits in the heat much longer, it could be damaged. Could I get you to sign a work order to have it unloaded by Friday?

Mr. Chin: There is no need for that. The job will get done.

Mr. Paul: Well, could we set up some kind of deadline? You see, I have a staff of people here waiting to train your people on the equipment. I need to let them know when it will be

ready. How about this Friday? Could we do it then? My people are here now, and they're waiting to begin training.

Mr. Chin: There is no great rush. We have lived for many generations without this equipment. We can wait a few more weeks. If necessary, this is not a problem (Two men enter the room and continue the conversation)

Guiding questions:

1. **Shortly summarize the scenario**
2. **What are the miscommunicated points?**
 - Does Mr. Paul feel annoyed when he has been kept waiting for a long time to meet Mr. Chin?
 - Why does Mr. Paul keep asking Mr. Chin to sign the work order?
 - Why does Mr. Chin say: "There is no great rush". Do you think that Mr. Chin will sign the contract?
3. **How would you think Mr. Paul should behave considering Mr. Chin's cultural background?**
4. **How would you think Mr. Chin should behave considering Mr. Paul's cultural background?**

1. Short summary of the scenario	
2. What are the miscommunicated points? (summarize what you discussed for question number 2)	
3. How would you think Mr. Paul should behave considering Mr. Chin's cultural background?	
4. How would you think Mr. Chin should behave considering Mr. Paul's cultural background?	

Task 10

Read the following scenario and the guiding questions. Then discuss with your partner the background of the scenario and analyze it by answering the guiding questions together. You have 5 minutes to read the scenario and 20 minutes to discuss. After that, fill in the answer sheet individually in 15 minutes and use what you have discussed with your friend (see an example in the answer sheet) (Sinh viên nên dùng tiếng Anh để trả lời câu hỏi nhưng trong trường hợp sinh viên không thể viết câu trả lời bằng tiếng Anh, sinh viên có thể dùng tiếng Việt để trả lời. Sinh viên có thể dùng cả tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt trong 1 câu trả lời)

Tom Forrest, an up-and-coming executive for a U.S. electronics company, was sent to Japan to work out the details of a joint venture with a Japanese electronics firm. During the first several weeks, Tom felt that the negotiations (đàm phán) were proceeding better than he had expected. He found that he had very cordial (thân thiện) working relationships with the team of Japanese executives, and they had in fact agreed on the major policies and strategies governing the new joint venture. During the third week of negotiations, Tom was present at a meeting held to review their progress. The meeting was chaired by the president of the Japanese firm, Mr. Hayakawa, a man in his mid-forties, who had recently taken over the presidency from his

eighty-two-year-old grandfather. The new president, who had been involved in most of the negotiations during the preceding weeks, seemed to Tom to be one of the strongest advocates (người ủng hộ) of the plan that had been developed to date. Also attending the meeting was Hayakawa's grandfather, the recently retired president. After the plans had been discussed in some details, the old past president proceeded to give a long speech about how some of the features of this plan violated (vi phạm) the traditional practices on which the company had been founded. Much to Tom's amazement, Hayakawa did nothing to explain or defend the policies and strategies that they had taken weeks to develop. Feeling extremely frustrated (angry), Tom then gave a fairly strongly argued defense of the plan. To Tom's further amazement, no one else in the meeting spoke up in defense of the plan. The tension in the air was quite heavy, and the meeting ended shortly thereafter. Within days the Japanese firm completely terminated (ended) the negotiations on the joint venture.

Guiding questions:

1. Shortly summarize the scenario
2. What are the miscommunicated points?
 - Why do all people keep silent in the meeting and do not defense the plan? Is the way Japanese people behaving in the meeting appropriate?
 - How could you help Tom better understand the situation?
3. How would you think Tom should behave considering the Japanese culture?
4. How would you think Hayakawa should behave considering Tom's culture?

1. Short summary of the scenario	
2. What are the miscommunicated points? (summarize what you discussed for question number 2)	
3. How would you think Tom should behave considering the Japanese cultural background?	
4. How would you think Hayakawa should behave considering Tom's cultural background?	

Pretest

Read the following scenario and the guiding questions. Then discuss with your partner the background of the scenario and analyze it by answering the guiding questions together. You have 5 minutes to read the scenario and 20 minutes to discuss. After that, fill in the answer sheet individually in 15 minutes and use what you have discussed with your friend (see an example in the answer sheet). (Thí sinh nên dùng tiếng Anh để trả lời câu hỏi nhưng trong trường hợp thí sinh không thể viết câu trả lời bằng tiếng Anh, thí sinh có thể dùng tiếng Việt để trả lời. Thí sinh có thể dùng cả tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt trong 1 câu trả lời)

Sarah is talking to Trinh about the meeting of the sales team. Sarah wants to conduct (tiến hành) the meeting tomorrow morning but Trinh says that she might not attend the meeting because her daughter has a flu and she is going to take her daughter to the doctor tomorrow morning.

SARAH (manager): I am hoping we could have that meeting of the sales team tomorrow morning.

TRINH (employee): Actually, my daughter has some kind of flu and I am going to take her to the doctor tomorrow morning.

SARAH (manager): I see. Well, let me check with Bob and see if he can sit in for you. Shouldn't be any problem. I'll let you know.

TRINH (employee): Yes, but if Bob cannot do that, is it better to move the meeting?

SARAH (manager): The meeting must happen anyway with you or with Bob.

TRINH (employee): Ok, I understand (sigh)

Guiding questions

1. Summarize shortly the scenario (tóm tắt ngắn gọn tình huống ở trên)
2. What are the miscommunicated points? (vấn đề giao tiếp văn hóa gặp phải trong tình huống trên là gì?)
3. How would you think Trinh should behave considering Sarah's cultural background? (Theo ý kiến của bạn, Trinh nên cư xử như thế nào cho hợp với văn hóa của Sarah?)
4. How would you think Sarah should behave considering Trinh's cultural background? (Theo ý kiến của bạn, Sarah nên cư xử như thế nào cho hợp với văn hóa của Trinh?)

2. Short summary of the scenario	
2. What are the miscommunicated points? (summarize what you discussed for question number 2)	
3. How would you think Trinh should behave considering Sarah's cultural background?	
4. How would you think Sarah should behave considering Trinh's cultural background?	

EXAMPLE

Harold (an American middle manager) is talking to Trung (a Vietnamese middle manager) about human recruitment (tuyển nhân sự) of the company. In this scenario (tình huống), Michael is their boss.

HAROLD: I was wondering if we could hire two temporary people (tạm thời thuê 2 nhân sự) for the next month, to get through this peak period (giai đoạn cao điểm)?

TRUNG: I think we'll have to.

HAROLD: I could speak to personnel (phòng nhân sự) today.

TRUNG: Did you mention (đề cập) this to Michael?

HAROLD: The boss? I didn't want to bother (làm phiền) him. He's got his hands full with those buyers from Japan. Besides, it's your division (quyền). He'll agree to anything you say.

TRUNG: Well, I'm sure he'll approve (agree) but

HAROLD: I think it'll be fine. Then I'll call Miss Garcia in personnel.

3. Short summary of the scenario	Harold is talking to Trung about recruiting new people (tuyển nhân sự mới) for the company. Trung agrees with the idea but asks Harold to talk this idea to the
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	boss, Michael, for his approval (agreement) first. Harold thinks that asking for the boss's agreement is a waste of time because this matter is within Trung's decision and that the boss will surely agree with this opinion if Trung agrees. Then Harold finally concludes that he is going to call the personnel department without talking to Michael.
2. What are the miscommunicated points? (summarize what you discussed for question number 2)	Trung expects Harold to talk to the boss for his approval first although it is just a kind of informing but showing respect to the superior (cấp trên) Harold thinks that it is not necessary to do that because as he mentions, Michael is quite busy now with the Japanese buyers and this matter is within Trung's decision. In order to get the job done, it is not important to inform this to Michael.
3. How would you think Trung should behave considering Harold's cultural background?	In Harold's culture (American culture) , the chain of command (respecting the hierarchy) (tôn trọng thứ bậc) is not so important as getting the job done. In order to have efficient work relationships, it is often necessary to bypass the hierarchical line (bỏ qua tôn ti trật tự). In this case, Trung should consider that the boss is an American. In order to get the job done faster, it is ok not to inform him and he can understand the situation.
4. How would you think Harold should behave considering Trung's cultural background?	In Trung's culture (Vietnamese culture) , the boss has authority (quyền lực) and talking the situation to him is an expression of respect for and deference (tôn kính) to authority (cấp trên). It may all be highly symbolic (hình thức), but symbols are more real in some cultures than the others. So, if the boss were Vietnamese, it would be wiser that Harold should inform him first in order to avoid later conflict (xung đột về sau).

Final Test

Read the following scenario and the guiding questions. Then discuss with your partner the background of the scenario and analyze it by answering the guiding questions together. You have 5 minutes to read the scenario and 20 minutes to discuss. After that, fill in the answer sheet individually in 15 minutes and use what you have discussed with your friend (see an example in the answer sheet). (Thí sinh nên dùng tiếng Anh để trả lời câu hỏi nhưng trong trường hợp thí sinh không thể viết câu trả lời bằng tiếng Anh, thí sinh có thể dùng tiếng Việt để trả lời. Thí sinh có thể dùng cả tiếng Anh và tiếng Việt trong 1 câu trả lời)

Cheng has just joined the Shanghai office of a New York based multinational company. As part of his training, he will be spending 3 months in the US, but has already been assigned (được phân vào) to a team with members in New York, Shanghai and Bangalore. Sarah, the New York based project manager, has scheduled (sắp xếp) a teleconference meeting (cuộc họp qua điện thoại) for Tuesday. Cheng will be traveling to Beijing to get his US visa over the meeting time. Here's their conversation...

SARAH (manager): Can we do the teleconference tomorrow, 7 pm for you, or should we wait until you get back?

CHENG (employee): Better if we can wait, but I can do it if you like – if it's necessary.

SARAH (manager): Do you want to postpone (hoãn lại) it? Tell me, yes or no?

CHENG (employee): Well

Guiding questions

1. Shortly summarize the scenario (tóm tắt ngắn gọn tình huống ở trên)

2. What are the miscommunicated points? (vấn đề giao tiếp văn hóa gặp phải trong tình huống trên là gì?)
3. How would you think Cheng should behave considering Sarah's cultural background? (Theo ý kiến của bạn, Cheng nên cư xử như thế nào cho hợp với văn hóa của Sarah?)
4. How would you think Sarah should behave considering Cheng's cultural background? (Theo ý kiến của bạn, Sarah nên cư xử như thế nào cho hợp với văn hóa của Cheng?)

1. Short summary of the scenario	
2. What are the miscommunicated points? (summarize what you discussed for question number 2)	
3. How would you think Cheng should behave considering Sarah's cultural background?	
4. How would you think Sarah should behave considering Cheng's cultural background?	

EXAMPLE

Harold (an American middle manager) is talking to Trung (a Vietnamese middle manager) about human recruitment (tuyển nhân sự) of the company. In this scenario (tình huống), Michael is their boss.

HAROLD: I was wondering if we could hire two temporary people (tạm thời thuê 2 nhân sự) for the next month, to get through this peak period (giai đoạn cao điểm)?

TRUNG: I think we'll have to.

HAROLD: I could speak to personnel (phòng nhân sự) today.

TRUNG: Did you mention (đề cập) this to Michael?

HAROLD: The boss? I didn't want to bother (làm phiền) him. He's got his hands full with those buyers from Japan. Besides, it's your division (quyền). He'll agree to anything you say.

TRUNG: Well, I'm sure he'll approve (agree) but

HAROLD: I think it'll be fine. Then I'll call Miss Garcia in personnel.

4. Short summary of the scenario	Harold is talking to Trung about recruiting new people (tuyển nhân sự mới) for the company. Trung agrees with the idea but asks Harold to talk this idea to the boss, Michael, for his approval (agreement) first. Harold thinks that asking for the boss's agreement is a waste of time because this matter is within Trung's decision and that the boss will surely agree with this opinion if Trung agrees. Then Harold finally concludes that he is going to call the personnel department without talking to Michael.
2. What are the miscommunicated points? (summarize what you discussed for question number 2)	Trung expects Harold to talk to the boss for his approval first although it is just a kind of informing but showing respect to the superior (cấp trên) Harold thinks that it is not necessary to do that because as he mentions, Michael is quite busy now with the Japanese buyers and this matter is within Trung's decision. In order to get the job done, it is not important to inform this to Michael.
3. How would you think Trung should	In Harold's culture (American culture) , the chain of command (respecting the hierarchy) (tôn trọng thứ bậc) is not so important as getting the job done. In

behave considering Harold's cultural background?	order to have efficient work relationships, it is often necessary to bypass the hierarchical line (bỏ qua tôn ti trật tự). In this case, Trung should consider that the boss is an American. In order to get the job done faster, it is ok not to inform him and he can understand the situation.
4. How would you think Harold should behave considering Trung's cultural background?	In Trung's culture (Vietnamese culture) , the boss has authority (quyền lực) and talking the situation to him is an expression of respect for and deference (tôn kính) to authority (cấp trên). It may all be highly symbolic (hình thức), but symbols are more real in some cultures than the others. So, if the boss were Vietnamese, it would be wiser that Harold should inform him first in order to avoid later conflict (xung đột về sau).

Appendix 4

Intercultural Booklets (Chapter 4 and 5)

1. Sarah, A. and Lenina, S. (2008). *Critical Incidents for Intercultural Communication: An Interactive Tool for Developing Awareness, Knowledge and Skills*. Norquest College Intercultural Education Programs.
2. Norquest College (2015). *Critical Incidents for Intercultural Communication in the Workplace: Scene-by-Scene Breakdowns*. Centre for Innovation and Development.
3. Gary, P. F. (2002). *The Cultural Dimension of International Business*. The United States of America: Pearson Education, Inc.
4. James, W. N. (2015). *Intercultural Communication: A Contextual Approach*. The United States of America: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Appendix 5
Grading Criteria (Chapter 4 and 5)

Questions	Criteria				
	Level 1 (0.5 mark)	Level 2 (1.0 mark)	Level 3 (1.5 mark)	Level 4 (2.0 mark)	Level 5 (2.5 mark)
Question number 1: Understanding of the scenario	No understanding of the scenario.	Little understanding of the scenario (limited understanding of the scenario background).	Partly understand the scenario background.	Nearly complete understanding of the scenario.	Complete understanding of the scenario.
Question number 2: Understanding of the miscommunicated points (Cultural Knowledge)	The students cannot identify the scenario's miscommunicated points; they show no understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of a culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.	The students have difficulty in figuring out what the problem is, showing very little understanding of the scenario's miscommunicated points; they demonstrate surface understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of a culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.	The students partly identify the scenario's miscommunicated points; they demonstrate partial understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of a culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.	The students nearly show complete understanding of the scenario's miscommunicated points; they demonstrate adequate understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of a culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.	The students show complete understanding of the scenario's miscommunicated points; they demonstrate sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of a culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.
Question number 3 and 4: Having the	The students cannot offer any suggestions to the	The students show no understanding of	The learners can at least give partly appropriate	The students can offer appropriate suggestions;	The students can offer appropriate

ability to suggest solutions in regard to intercultural communication appropriateness (Skills)	problem; they demonstrate no understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication and are unable to negotiate shared understanding solutions or solutions compatible with the character's cultural perspectives .	they no they can identify some cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication and they are aware that misunderstandings can occur based on those differences but still unable to negotiate shared understanding solutions or solutions compatible with the character's cultural perspectives .	solutions to the problem; suggestions; they recognize and participate in cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication and begin to partly negotiate shared understanding solutions or solutions compatible with the character's cultural perspectives based on those differences.	they recognize and participate in cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication and negotiate appropriately shared understanding solutions or solutions compatible with the character's cultural perspectives based on those differences.	suggestions; they articulate a complex understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g., demonstrating understanding of the degree to which people use physical contact while communicating in different cultures or use direct/ indirect and explicit/ implicit meanings) and are able to skillfully negotiate shared understanding solutions or solutions compatible with the character's cultural perspectives based on those differences.
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Note: In case the learners did not write down their answer or left blank, they would get 0 mark for the questions.

**PUBLICATIONS, CURRICULUM VITAE,
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS, LIST OF ICLON
PHD DISSERTATIONS**

Publications and presentations

Scientific publications

Tran, T. T. Q., Admiraal, W. & Saab, N. (2017). Cultural distance in the workplace: Differences in work-related attitudes between Vietnamese employees and Western employers. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 12(10), 91-110. Doi: 10.5539/ijbm.v12n10p91.

Tran, T. T. Q., Admiraal, W. & Saab, N. (under review). Communicating across cultures: Western employers and Vietnamese employees in international workplaces in Vietnam.

Tran, T. T. Q., Admiraal, W. & Saab, N. (accepted). Effects of critical incident tasks on the intercultural competence of English Non-majors. *Intercultural Education*

Tran, T. T. Q., Admiraal, W. & Saab, N. (under review). Effects of critical incident tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication.

Paper Presentations

Tran, T. T. Q., Admiraal, W. & Saab, N. (2015, November). Impact of cultural distance on communication at the workplace and its consequences for intercultural communication education. Roundtable presentation at The European Association for Practitioner Research on Improving Learning Conference (EAPRIL), 24 – 27 November, Luxembourg.

Tran, T. T. Q., Admiraal, W. & Saab, N. (2017, August). Effects of critical incident tasks on the intercultural competence of English Non-majors. Poster presentation at European Conference on Educational Research Conference (ECER), 22 – 25 August, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Tran, T. T. Q., Admiraal, W. & Saab, N. (2017, November). Effects of critical incident tasks on students' awareness of intercultural communication. Roundtable presentation at The European Association for Practitioner Research on Improving Learning Conference (EAPRIL), November 28 – December 1, Hameenlinna, Finland.

Tran, T. T. Q., Admiraal, W. & Saab, N. (2017, April). Enhancing students' communication skills through incorporating cultures into the English classrooms. Paper presentation during ICO National Spring School, 20 – 21 April, Utrecht, the Netherlands.

Tran, T. T. Q., Admiraal, W. & Saab, N. (2018, February). Cultural distance in the workplace: Differences in work-related attitudes between Vietnamese employees and Western employers. Poster presentation at Academy of Human Resource Development Conference (AHRD), 14 – 17 February, Richmond, Virginia, The United States.

Curriculum Vitae

Tran Thien Quynh Tran was born on January 13th, 1983 in Can Tho city, the Mekong Delta, Vietnam and grew up in the same area. She finished her secondary education in 2001 at Chau Van Liem High School, Can Tho city and obtained a Bachelor's Degree in English Linguistics at Can Tho University, Vietnam afterwards. After her graduation, she worked as a lecturer and academic assistant at Vietnamese American Training College in Can Tho city from 2005 to 2007. Thereafter, she left the previous job and obtained another job, working as an English lecturer at Can Tho University of Technology (formerly called Can Tho In-service Training University) from 2007 to 2014. She had been teaching all subjects relevant to English language for English-major and non-major students. In 2011, she earned her Master Degree in Principles and Methods in English Language Education at Can Tho University, Vietnam. Since then, she had been searching for possible fellowships to pursue further education abroad. In 2014, she received a scholarship from the Netherlands Fellowship Program (Nuffic) and started her Ph.D study at ICLON, Leiden University. In her doctoral research, she examined the impact of cultural differences on communication and relationship between Western and Vietnamese professionals in foreign subsidiaries and joint-ventures in the South of Vietnam. Based on this examination, an intercultural lesson incorporated into the English Language Teaching classrooms was formulated in order to enhance the undergraduates' communication skills so that they could work effectively with the Western higher managers in their future jobs. During her Ph.D study, she attended master classes provided by ICO, the Dutch Interuniversity Centre for Educational Research, including classes on Teaching and Teacher Education, Domain Specific Instruction in Schools and Professional Domains, Introductory Course, and Qualitative Research. She has presented her research work to various audiences, encompassing ICO National Spring School and several International Conferences (Eapril, Ecer, AHRD).

Acknowledgements

First of all, I extend my deep sense of gratitude to my promoter, Professor Doctor Wilfried Admiraal and my supervisor, Doctor Nadira Saab. Two of you gave me the golden opportunity to come to The Netherlands and have been guiding me to carry out this project. Without your warm support, I could not smoothly come to this successful end. I also want to say thank you to the Doctorate Committee, who gave lots of constructive feedback to improve the quality of my dissertation.

Next, I owe my thanks to the Icloners. During four years of doing my Ph.d, I was living in your warm support and encouragement, specifically to you, Loes De Jong, my lovely paranymp. All the wonderful moments we shared will be with me throughout my lifetime. Thank you so much again for adding joyfulness to my social and academic life in the Netherlands.

I cannot help expressing my thankfulness to Doctor Dương Thái Công, my rector at Can Tho University of Technology. Without his agreement and orientation, my chances to come to the Netherlands would be unrealistic. I also want to express my thankfulness to Mr. Huỳnh Trung Tín, my former teacher at Can Tho University and chị Phương Nam, my co-supervisor in Vietnam. Two of you gave me an opportunity to come to the Netherlands since the day you wrote the reference letters for me and you also provided me a lot of useful stories before my departure to the Netherlands. Additionally, many thanks are sent to my beloved colleagues in the English Department, at Can Tho University of Technology, especially to chị Nguyệt, who unconditionally helped me to collect data and offered constructive feedback to the format of the second study.

I owe my gratefulness to my sponsor, Nuffic and all the scholarship coordinators, who have been giving me lots of advice and quick administrative and financial help so that I could function well and finish the project on schedule.

I owe my appreciation to the participants of this project, the higher managers/employers and the employees in foreign and Vietnamese companies, all the people and parties assisting me to collect questionnaire and interview data and the students from four classes of Technical Engineering at Can Tho University of Technology.

I express my sincere appreciation to my parents and my husband, who are always by my side during my education in the Netherlands. Particularly, I owe my gratitude to you for taking care of my daughter throughout my absence. I could understand your difficulties in taking care of a young child without her mother. I wish to say thank you to all my relatives and friends in Vietnam, who emotionally and financially supported me through many channels of social media during the four years of my professional development.

I send my huge thanks to my friends in Europe and in the Netherlands, the Vietnamese Community in Delft. I never feel lonely and isolated, especially during the cold and harsh periods of the winter because I have been surrounded by all exciting activities with all of you. I specifically send my gratitude to Jia, Olga, em Yến Vũ, em Hằng and em Thanh Tịnh; you made me feel like I am still at home by celebrating every year's birthday with you. I will keep in my heart all the time being with you.

Finally, in a short moment of recording all of my memories, I could not name and say thank you to all the family members, friends and colleagues who might be always silently beside me during this challenging journey. All of you, though could not be named in this short text due to my present poor memory, will always be in my heart for your contributions to make my study trip successful, meaningful and unforgettable.

List of PhD Dissertations

ICLON Leiden University Graduate School of Teaching

- Hoeflaak, A. (1994). *Decoderen en interpreteren: een onderzoek naar het gebruik van strategieën bij het beluisteren van Franse nieuwsteksten.*
- Verhoeven, P. (1997). *Tekstbegrip in het onderwijs klassieke talen.*
- Meijer, P. C. (1999). *Teachers' practical knowledge: Teaching reading comprehension in secondary education.*
- Zanting, A. (2001). *Mining the mentor's mind: The elicitation of mentor teachers' practical knowledge by prospective teachers.*
- Uhlenbeck, A. M. (2002). *The development of an assessment procedure for beginning teachers of English as a foreign language.*
- Oolbekink-Marchand, H.W. (2006). *Teachers' perspectives on self-regulated learning: An exploratory study in secondary and university education.*
- Henze-Rietveld, F. A. (2006). *Science teachers' knowledge development in the context of educational innovation.*
- Mansvelder-Longayroux, D. D. (2006). *The learning portfolio as a tool for stimulating reflection by student teachers.*
- Meirink, J.A. (2007). *Individual teacher learning in a context of collaboration in teams.*
- Nijveldt, M.J. (2008). *Validity in teacher assessment: An exploration of the judgement processes of assessors.*
- Bakker, M.E.J. (2008). *Design and evaluation of video portfolios: Reliability, generalizability, and validity of an authentic performance assessment for teachers.*
- Oonk, W. (2009). *Theory-enriched practical knowledge in mathematics teacher education.*
- Visser-Wijnveen, G.J. (2009). *The research-teaching nexus in the humanities: Variations among academics.*
- Van der Rijst, R.M. (2009). *The research-teaching nexus in the sciences: Scientific research dispositions and teaching practice.*
- Platteel, T.L. (2010). *Knowledge development of secondary school L1 teachers on concept-context rich education in an action-research setting.*
- Kessels, C.C. (2010). *The influence of induction programs on beginning teachers' well-being and professional development.*
- Min-Leliveld, M.J. (2011). *Supporting medical teachers' learning: Redesigning a program using characteristics of effective instructional development.*
- Dobber, M. (2011). *Collaboration in groups during teacher education.*
- Wongsopawiro, D. (2012). *Examining science teachers pedagogical content knowledge in the context of a professional development program.*
- Belo, N.A.H. (2013). *Engaging students in the study of physics: An investigation of physics teachers' belief systems about teaching and learning physics.*
- De Jong, R.J. (2013). *Student teachers' practical knowledge, discipline strategies, and the teacher-class relationship.*

- Verberg, C.P.M. (2013). *The characteristics of a negotiated assessment procedure to promote teacher learning.*
- Van Kan, C.A. (2013). *Teachers' interpretations of their classroom interactions in terms of their pupils' best interest: A perspective from continental European pedagogy.*
- Dam, M. (2014). *Making educational reforms practical for teachers: Using a modular, success-oriented approach to make a context-based educational reform practical for implementation in Dutch biology education.*
- Hu, Y. (2014). *The role of research in university teaching: A comparison of Chinese and Dutch teachers.*
- Vink, C.C. (2014). *Mapping for meaning: Using concept maps to integrate clinical and basic sciences in medical education.*
- De Hei, M.S.A. (2016). *Collaborative learning in higher education: design, implementation and evaluation of group learning activities.*
- Louws, M.L. (2016). *Professional learning: what teachers want to learn.*
- Moses, I. (2017). *Student-teachers' commitment to teaching.*
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