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Project-Based Assessment in Teaching Intercultural Communication Competence for Foreign Language Students in Higher Education: A Case Study

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Abstract: As a part of learning process, project-based assessment (PBA) is determined to be a potential approach in higher education evaluation that focuses on developing the important objectives related to critical thinking, team working and problems solving skills. The aim of the paper is to find out students' reflection and teachers' beliefs towards using this project-based assessment method in teaching Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC). To collect the data, a project-based assessment design was applied for 124 English major students at B University in the 9 weeks ICC course. This project was implemented from the beginning of the course, and at the end of the course, learners' products were performed with specific activities regarding culture knowledge competition, online cultural community activities, talent performance, situational judgment ability, and eloquence skills. In addition, a set of questionnaires were delivered to the participants, plus the interviews with 36 teachers who have taught culture-related subjects from the universities in Vietnam, Thailand and Malaysia. The findings revealed that although there were certain challenges, using project-based assessment in teaching culture had satisfactory effects on students' intercultural competence, problem- solving skills, critical thinking, and learning motivation.

Keywords: *Intercultural communication competence, project-based assessment, culture, communication, teaching innovation.*

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Introduction

Internationalization efforts in higher education have offered more opportunities for students to explore and approach the global knowledge, but also posed challenges in international communication which is placed on a prior position to educate in academic institutions. With the emergence of worldwide shared culture, ICC has been identified as an indispensable component in achieving the international communication goal and soon become an essential learning outcome in higher education (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2011). Accordingly, Tran and Seepho (2015) asserted that the ICC is one of the most vital skills for people in the 21st century to survive in the multicultural communication context.

From the insights of learning theory, instructors found it imperative to make a syllabus reform in which authentic assessment measures should be undertaken, which not only makes learning culture more stimulating, but also develops the ability to use knowledge in real-world settings and enhances fundamental skills (Chu et al., 2011; Lawrence, 1997; Meyer, 2000). Moreover, stemming from the experience of applying traditional assessment in particular contexts in which cheating is still existing as a common negative behavior, it is believed that instructors need to make the necessary changes to bring testing into public to ensure the fair evaluation (Alkharusi, 2008; Bateman, 2002).

In order to support the academic and intercultural communication goal in higher education context to be successfully implemented, the author strongly recommended project-based assessment approach as an alternative for the paper-based assessment in which students can mature their knowledge, uphold skills and nourish the professional needs. This paper focuses on examining perceptions of foreign language learners towards the feasibility and utility of assessment in learning ICC subject and investigating synchronous solutions to difficulties they coped with in both ICC learning and assessment. Two research questions are revealed as following:

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1. What is students' evaluation on the effectiveness and feasibility of project- based assessment of ICC?
2. What are teachers' beliefs on synchronous solutions to the challenges learners and teachers encountered in ICC learning, teaching and assessment practice?

Literature Review

Intercultural communication competence

Depending on the determination of the scope and the aim, the concept is reflected in a variety of definitions. Central to this perception, ICC is considered as "individual's ability to communicate and interact across cultural boundaries" (Byram, 1997, p.7). Particularly, ICC demonstrates the willingness in involving in the other cultures and the ability to understand each other (Sercu et al., 2005). Accordingly, in order to communicate successfully in the other cultures, it is essential to have a self-awareness and critical thinking (Bennett, 2009, p.122).

As with the concept mentioned above, Byram (1997) comprises three components: knowledge, attitudes and skills, which are expanded to: attitudes; knowledge; skills of interpreting and relating; skills of discovery and interaction; critical cultural awareness. In addition, ICC is determined to be an evaluation tool of relationship quality, covering the criteria of cultural understanding and intercultural communication competence (Canale & Swain, 1980). This perception was derived from the ground of the research by Meyer (2000), who defined ICC as a mixture of social and communicative skills, including: empathy, conflict-solving ability collaboration, flexibility, foreign language awareness, discussion styles, speech speeds, interpretation, difficulty- handling techniques, cultural self-reflection and tolerance of ambiguity.

Assessment

Drawn from various research, assessment is determined as a substantial stimulant that identifies, gathers, interprets learning results and process, besides, provides feedbacks and comments for students to realize their weaknesses and make appropriate improvement (Gipps, 1999; Hamano, 2008; Harrison, 1992; Ruben, 1976; Sercu et al., 2005). Lockwood et al. (2017) mentioned the purposes of assessment including not to sort students or give criticism, but to improve education or not teaching to the test, but testing what are taught (Black & Wiliam, 1998; Gipps et al., 2000).

There have been various ways of classification in assessment based on different criteria in which the types identified based on purpose are the most common, including: Formative assessment (provides feedback and comments during learning process); Summative assessment (occurs after finishing learning process); Diagnostic assessment (checks the students' knowledge and capacities before learning); Authentic assessment (includes task-based performance with a specific rubric); Performance assessment (students perform or produce something to reveal their specific skills and competence) (Clarke, 2001). Meanwhile, Jana Bennett (2017) mentioned 2 types of assessment, comprising: assessment of learning (evaluate students' achievement at the end of the unit) and assessment for learning (measure students' knowledge and skills during the learning and teaching process). This paper will focus on project-based assessment as an integration between assessments of learning or summative assessment, authentic assessment, and performance assessment. To ensure an effective assessment, Carless and Bound (2018) proposed three principles as following: stimulating productive learning practices; engaging students actively in the activities and performance with peers and providing feedback timely. Whatever form the assessment takes, there is no object to its primary role: supporting learning.

Intercultural communicative competence assessment

In the context of integrating teaching culture into higher education curriculum, it is crucial to create a set of "valid and reliable measures of ICC" (Griffith et al., 2016, p. 2). Although various frameworks are established in the different contexts, it must be ensured that the ICC assessment instruments cover the dimensions of ICC comprising metacognitive, cognitive, behavioral, and motivational domains (Deardorff & Arasaratnam, 2017; Earley & Ang, 2003). On the premise of significance, PBA is believed to respond to the densities of ICC better than traditional assessment. In particular, this type of assessment can make more motivation for students (Alkharusi, 2008), can increase time for practice and performance, and can qualify teaching (Riggan & Olah, 2011), and can respond to the components of ICC regarding content, knowledge and skills, education levels (Sadler, 1998).

Given that assessment is assumed to comprise particular threshold levels, ICC needs a particular assessment setting relevant to learning objectives for different teaching situations (Byram, 1997). Currently, there are some common ICC assessment items which have the outstanding advantages, making a contribution to ICC learning process in term of various data including: Likert-scale items based on a 4-point Likert scale to rate intercultural communication effectiveness by Ruben's (1976) on the premise of aspects of Byram (1997)'s ICC; Multiple-Choice Items; Implicit Association Tests and Q-Sort Methodology (Greenwald et al., 2009) and Q-sort (to rank ordering of subjective concepts); Situational Judgment Tests; Simulation-Based Measurement (Harrison, 1992).

Project-based learning and assessment

As an important stage of PBL, project-based assessment is a kind of evaluation activity in which students create authentic products and tasks to check knowledge and skills in various manners: Oral presentation and written products (Lawrence, 1997; Wrigley, 1998).

In term of enhancing students' autonomy, the fact that project-based learning was implemented in English as a Second Language (ESL) education identifies student-centered principle in teaching approach (Hedge, 1993); as a premier instruction form to activate students' autonomy in learning (Chang & Lee, 2010; Gerber et al., 2001); to exhilarate the capability of active and self-regulated learning of students (Achilles & Hoover, 1996) and to vitalize the student-centered learning method in which students play the primary role and contribute the core value to the learning objectives (Shih et al. 2010). One more benefit of applying PBA in classroom is to enhance interpersonal interactions and collaboration amongst participants (David, 2008). Krajcik et al. (1998) asserted that students who partake in PBA method would be stimulated to cooperate with the group members to discuss the topics and make the appropriate decision (Johnson et al., 1994; Johnson & Johnson, 1987). In the light of developing skills, it is believed that project-based assessment is an evaluation form in which students participate in authentic tasks and appeal their skills: problem solving, data collection, discussion, presentation (Chu et al. 2011; Johnson & Holubec, 1994; Howard, 2002; Koh et al., 2010;) and linguistic communication skills into solving the real-world problems (Beckett, 1999; Krajcik et al., 1999; Polman, 2000; Wolk, 1994)

Nevertheless, in foreign language learning contexts, there have been the argumentative views by English-language learners on the effectiveness of PBL activities toward English-language improvement (Beckett & Slater, 2005). PBA is highly valued as a powerful pedagogical tool to foster language skill (Stoller, 1997) by integrating teaching and communication activities with each other (Fried-Booth, 2002); "long-term interest in the target-culture". (Cullen & Sato, 2000, p. 4). Also, Savignon and Sysoyev (2002) showed a consensus on the success of applying PBA in teaching socio-cultural knowledge in a communicative foreign language classroom (Bateman's, 2002). A variety of studies shed light on integrating inter-culture into English language teaching (Wang, 2005) and revealed that Project-based Learning can make a contribution to enriching students' intercultural knowledge and enhancing communicative competence.

Methodology

A mixed research model was implemented to analyze the collected data (Creswell, 2007). Gathered from students' responses to the questionnaires and interviews through emails (online answer), answer sheets (offline answers) and recordings (for interviews), the data were analyzed by means of both qualitative and quantitative approaches. An inductive approach was required to analyze the qualitative data. Meanwhile, the deductive approach was used for quantitative data. The research comprises the mixed type of data, thus both inductive and deductive approaches of analysis were applied. The quantitative data was analyzed, using descriptive statistics with the assistance of the IBM SPSS 25.0 software. Particularly, frequency descriptive tool was applied to analyze the demographic information of the participants.

Participants

The study involved 124 English majoring students, from 19 to 21 years old and 36 teachers of EFL ranging in age from 30 to 40 years at Universities in Viet Nam, Thailand and Malaysia in the survey to collect data. These students of which there were 88 females and 36 males were joining the ICC class lasting 9 weeks (with 45 periods) from March to May, 2019 in English department at B university. They took part in this course of ICC after completing three general English courses 1, 2, 3 and an advanced English course consisting of all skills such as listening, speaking, reading and writing. Thirty-six teachers from universities with 4 ones from Thailand, 3 ones from Malaysia had the experience of teaching ICC from 2 to 4 courses. The writer used Cochran's formula with the margin of error ± 5% to regulate the sample populations. 124 participants were selected basing on judgment sampling method.

Data collection instruments

In order to collect data, the researcher conducted a set of instruments including assessment project, questionnaires, and interviews. Assessment project was informed to students at the beginning of the course and accomplished during the ICC course. Students had to both learn and prepare for the project because it was considered as compulsory test in learning process. The project was composed of assessment activities that evaluate IC knowledge, group working skills, team involvement, communication skills, and project management ability. This project was adapted from the assessment framework by Richard L. Griffith et al. (2016) to be compatible with the particular teaching context.

Semi-structured questionnaires based on five- point Likert's scale was delivered to English students after accomplishing the assessment activities of the course. The questionnaires were delivered to gain students' evaluation towards project- based assessment in learning ICC subject. In this study, the researchers provided two questionnaires with 31 items and 5 open questions.

After finishing the course, students and teachers exposed their perspectives and reflections on how to use project-based assessment in learning process by joining the interviews with their teacher. Also, other teachers revealed the opinions on helping English major students improve ICC assessment practice. After expressing their opinions, they scored the effectiveness of using PBA, basing on 5-point scale, in comparisons with the traditional one.

The researcher employed the printed copies of the questionnaire to conduct the survey, then distributed the survey to willing participants via face-to-face meeting. The data were also collected from the survey that was administrated online through Google Forms and Gmail (for students who had not attended the class and for foreign teachers because it was hard to gather them together at a certain time). The interviews were carried out in the meetings or through phone calls, Zalo, or Facetime in the appropriate time.

Procedure

During the course, the teacher addressed the knowledge in the textbook by summarizing the main theoretical points for students to acquire, and then asked students to research more knowledge and information from the other resources. Students were also required to do the first written progress test to check what they had achieved from unit 1 to unit 4 (of 8 units) in which theory and examples were presented and clarified. At the end of the course teachers released a second test that was in assessment format of a short-time competition with 6 rounds to measure the cultural knowledge and skills of students. Each class with 30, 31, 31 and 32 students respectively were divided into 5 groups of 6 or 7 members who were coached by a mentor who had been chosen before based on his or her outstanding culture understanding. During students' performance, the teacher gave them scores and feedbacks. After finishing the test, students took time to participate in the survey.

Round 1: Culture knowledge competition

Each team gave a set of 5 theoretical questions to the other teams to answer with one score for each right answer. The knowledge and topics in the questions covers the content of the subject ICC including surface culture: history, culture, international affairs, current events, and hidden culture such as norm, belief, prejudice, cultural shock, cultural biases. Like an academic game-show, the teams competed simultaneously to answer questions, battling against the time and their competitors. The winning team was the people who got the highest overall score of the first round.

Round 2: Community cultural project

In recognition of the importance of exchanging culture, each class had to design a page on social network Facebook, on which students uploaded the videos, images or information related to culture they were studying about. Students also held the activities such as quizzes, competition for the most amazing video/ impressive photo of week, or talk shows to attract the participants. The cultural performances, exhibitions, unique culture of countries were introduced in the community cultural festivals. Students had to prepare the understanding and information on cultural elements. This round was being implemented from the beginning of the course.

Round 3: Performance "Culture Got Talents"

In the talent competition, each team had an opportunity to show off their talents, ranging from singing, dancing, fashion shows, cuisine shows, magic, stunts, variety to other genres, the content of which is relevant to the culture of a country or intercultural situation. Each team made an effort to impress the panel of judges (three teachers) with the interesting and diverse performances.

Round 4: Presentation "Best movie"

The participants as the real actors and actresses played roles in movies related to the intercultural situations such as the story of a person who first travelled to a country, the experience of a man in the first visit to his new girl friends' family, the story of a man flirting and dating a new girl from the other country, or the story about the first meeting of the families in law…which had been recorded before. With the unfortunate situations and consequences, many movies got the high approvals from teachers and received the best scores.

Round 5: Situational judgment tests

Each team posed a hypothetical cultural situation in the form of a questions or role- plays and asked the competitors to find the appropriate solutions to cultural problems mentioned. Behavioral questions or situational questions demanded not only personal experiences, culture knowledge, but also problem-solving skills to react promptly and give reasonable answers after a one-minute discussion. The question could be inferred from a video, a movie or a play in which participants take roles and perform the situation with the questions such as "What should the man have done in the situation to avoid the misunderstanding, cultural shock, prejudice, barrier?". The other teams took their turns to give judicious solutions to the questions.

Round 6: Eloquence -"The Importance of ICC"

In this round, each team appointed one speaker to present their speech about the topic -"The Importance of ICC: challenges and solutions". They had 3 minutes to express their views.

The evaluation was based on the rubrics that were provided and assessed by the instructor.

Table 1. Rubrics for the assessment

Score / Criteria	Unsatisfactory (1) 1 - 5	Developing (2) 5.5 - 7	Satisfactory (3) 7.5 - 8.5	Exemplary (4) 9-10
Diversity of Knowledge	Little diversity of knowledge	Limited knowledge	Inclusive knowledge	Diverse knowledge
Information accuracy	False Information	Limited true information	True information	Updated true information
Situation Authenticity	Unreal situations	Quite real situations	Situations Relevant to real life	Real situations
Aligned to curriculum goals	Few outcomes meeting the standards	Some qualified outcomes	Qualified outcomes	Desired outcomes
Language proficiency	Bad	Quite good	Good	Excellent
Solving-problem ability	Lack of logic and vague solutions	Clear solutions	Appropriate solutions	Analyzing, evaluating and creating great solutions
Group working skills	Bad/ lack of solidarity	Work together	Work together effectively	Collaborate effectively and create good products
Student-centered	unhelpful and meaningless to study	A bit helpful and meaningful to study	Quite Helpful and meaningful to study	Helpful and meaningful to study
Fun and interesting	Boring	Not boring	Quite fun and interesting	Very fun and interesting
Creativity	Imitative	Not imitative	Creative	Distinctive products
Performance	Bad	Quite good	Good	Excellent

Data collection and analysis

A reliability analysis was conducted as the first phase of the data analysis process. The Cronbach's alpha value 0.83 (>0.7) indicated that this scale has a reliability (Tavşancıl, 2002) to continue treating the other data in the next steps (Ozkip, 2009). All items had the factor loading >0.7 from exploratory factor analysis (EFA), meeting the minimum threshold value of .70 (Hair et al., 2017). In addition, Cronbach's alpha, the Average Variance Explain (AVE) and Composite Reliability tests for each construct were undertaken with the value 0.43> 0 .50 and 0.87> 0 .70 respectively (Hair et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2010). These findings made a good unidimensional validity for variables to ensure the proper data treatment for the research questions. To address the first theme "Students' Evaluation towards using Project-based Assessment in learning ICC", the writer utilized descriptive analyzing tool to calculate mean and standard deviation values, using Likert's scale: (1.0 - 1.79) strong disagreement, (1.8 - 2.59) disagreement, (2.6 -3.39) neutral, (3.4 - 4.19) agreement, and (4.2 - 5.0) strong agreement. In addition, in order to investigate the correlations between each effect of PBA and overall evaluation towards effectiveness of PBA in learning ICC, the author applied linear regression. In the aim of comparing the effectiveness of project-based assessment and traditional assessment approach, paired-Samples T Test was used. The linear regression was also performed again to identify the correlations between barrier factors that have impacts on applying PBA in culture classroom and the feasibility of implementing PBA in classroom. Finally, the quality research was implemented with the in-depth interviews to inquire into the solutions to help teachers and students overcome the current encounters. The researcher and another teacher were employed as moderators to ensure the positive responses. The interviews were conducted for a variety of people from different countries. Also, the research is done from multiple perspectives and across larger numbers of samples to make the data more reliable. All measurements are fitting to all assumptions of analyzing techniques.

Findings

Students' Evaluation towards using Project-based Assessment in learning ICC

Students' Evaluation towards effects of Project-based Assessment

To discover and examine students' perspectives on the benefits of ICC project- based assessment activities, a questionnaire with 19 items and an open question was provided to the students. The items were designed and evaluated basing on 5- point Likert scale of agreement. The table 2 shows the data collected from the questionnaire. A

great number of the participants (M=4.08) were in strong favour of the benefits of ICC which help students to enhance collaboration and interaction among students, whereas fewer students (M<4.0) strongly approved making students more interested in the subject and rising students' creativity. A high proportion of participants (M>4.1) absolutely agree with the idea that ICC would help students to promote critical thinking skills, reinforce students' reflective practice, broaden students' culture awareness and enhance collaboration and interaction among

students with M>4.0. In contrast, ranking the first in the number of students disagreeing is "upsurging students' aestheticism" with M=2.93 (SD= 0.829). With respect to the point of developing skills, a high proportion of students (M>3.9) expressed their agreement. Regarding the significance of motivation, few participants were strongly opposed to the mentioned benefits. However, the number of people believing in the fairness of assessment is not high with about haft of answers for neutral idea.

In order to investigate the correlations between each effect of PBA and overall evaluation towards effectiveness of PBA in learning ICC, the author applied linear regression test. ANOVA test with Sig. value of F is below 0.05, which indicates that the variables are valid and applicable for linear regression model.

Table 2. Students' evaluation towards effects of project-based assessment

Model	Coefficients						Sig.	Collinearity	
			Unstandardized Coefficients		Std. Coeff.			Collinearity Statistics	
	Mean	Std. Dev.	B	Std. Error	Beta	t		Tolerance	VIF
Total evaluation towards effectiveness of PBA toward learning ICC			-0,514	0,283		-1,818	0,072		
Improving students' language proficiency	3,87	0,879							
Enhancing students' communication skills	3,97	0,893	0,085	0,074	0,108	1,951	0,025	0,96	1,063
Developing students' problem-solving skills	3,95	0,839	0,144	0,068	0,172	2,13	0,036	0,964	1,035
Promoting critical thinking skills	4,11	0,797	0,076	0,081	0,086	2,237	0,035	0,836	1,234
Reinforcing students' reflective practice	4,27	0,857							
Broadening students' culture awareness	4,31	0,754	0,007	0,062	0,008	5,116	0,008	0,887	1,161
Boosting students' ICC	3,9	0,902	0,03	0,041	0,039	2,003	0,046	0,877	1,256
Making positive changes in attitudes to other cultures	3,88	0,909	0,181	0,061	0,235	2,951	0,004	0,981	936
Inspiring cohesion and global unit spirit	3,45	0,708	0,215	0,051	0,217	1,983	0,049	0,85	1,243
Improving group-working skills through teams	3,97	0,798	0,071	0,055	0,081	2,282	0,034	0,808	1,318
Increasing self-evaluation and assessment ability	3,83	0,714	0,007	0,073	0,007	0,775	0,44	0,875	1,15
Giving students more motivation to participate in assessment activities	4,08	0,693							
Enhancing collaboration and interaction among students	4,08	0,784	0,021	0,066	0,023	2,312	0,048	0,96	1,062
Making students more confident	3,94	0,833	0,047	0,06	0,055	0,09	0,928	0,965	1,035
Upsurging students' aestheticism	2.93	0,829							
Rising students' creativity	3,88	0,773	0,091	0,076	0,101	2,111	0,029	0,798	1,5013
Ensuring the fair and objective results	3,98	0,679							
Creating an exciting beneficial playground for students	3,98	0,667	0,049	0,056	0,046	2,069	0,037	0,877	1,056
Making students more interested in the subject	3,81	0,792	0,114	0,052	0,129	2,214	0,029	0,981	1,536

1.0 – 1.79 very low; 1.8 – 2.59 low, 2.6 – 3.39 neutral; 3.4 – _4.19 high; 4.2 – 5.0 very high

As can be seen from the table 2, given that some Sig values of t are above 0.05, six items pertaining to improving students' language proficiency, reinforcing students' reflective practice, increasing self-evaluation and assessment ability, giving students more motivation to participate in assessment activities, making students more confident, upsurging students' aestheticism and ensuring the fair and objective results are excluded from the linear regression model. Consequently, the correlation between the effects is implemented among the independent variables left. Sig of t expresses that the regression coefficient of the variables is <0.05, so these independent variables have explanatory meaning for the dependent variable, none of them are excluded from the model. Coefficients ViF of the variables are less than 2, so no multicollinearity occurs. Moreover, because Beta regression coefficients are higher than 0.0, all the independent variables have the one-way impact on the dependent variable. Based on the Beta values, it can be seen that broadening students' culture awareness has the greatest impact on effectiveness of BPA towards learning ICC while enhancing collaboration and interaction among students is evaluated the least impact. Developing students' problem-solving skills, promoting critical thinking skills, improving group-working skills through teams and creating an exciting beneficial playground for students are the independents having the similar impacts on the dependents value with B around 0.03

Students' evaluation towards the effectiveness of project-based assessment compared to traditional assessment approach (TAA)

Obviously, after having completed two separate compulsory tests in the ICC course that were assigned to students in the middle and at the end of the course, students could evaluate their weakness and strength. More specific, they were required to give scores to clarify their satisfaction on effectiveness of using project-based assessment and traditional test in learning ICC subject. The students revealed their evaluation on two approaches by giving the scores that accomplished based on five- Likert scale.

Table 3. Students' satisfaction on project-based assessment compared to traditional assessment approach

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Project-based Assessment	3,92	124	0,894	0,082
	Traditional assessment approach	2,77	124	0,847	0,077

Project-based Assessment stands at a high ratio with M=3.92 and Std. Deviation =0.894, meanwhile the traditional approach follows at a lower rate with 2.77 and Std. Deviation =0.847 . This illustrated that the participants placed their beliefs on the new measure rather than the written form in making learning ICC feasible. In the other way, given the significant benefits, there is a higher evaluation on project-based assessment approach rather than the traditional one in teaching and learning ICC.

Table 4. Effectiveness of project-based assessment compared to traditional assessment approach

	Paired Differences							
				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper	t	df	
Pair 1 TAA – PBA	-,861	1,471	,123	-1,103	-,619	-7,027	123	,000

With the score students got from written test and Project-based test, a paired-samples T- test was conducted to compare the academic achievement or effectiveness of the two tests.

As can be seen from the table (Sig. (2-tailed) = 0.000 < α = 0.05), it means that results reject the hypothesis that PBA and TAA have the same impact on the effectiveness of learning ICC. Obviously, there is a difference in the effectiveness of assessment approaches amongst participants with the difference between 1.103 and 0.619. The data illustrates that PBA makes a positive improvement for students in ICC course in comparisons with the traditional assessment approach. For the samples T-test, Cohen's d is determined by calculating the mean difference between the control and experimental group. Because the two groups have similar standard deviations and are of the same size, the appropriate effect size measure is Cohen's d. To investigate the differences are small, medium or large, effect size measure Cohen's D- is calculated based on the formula and interpreted based on Cohen's D's interpretation table. Given that Cohen's D stays at 1.145>0.8, this indicates that the effect for the effectiveness of project-based assessment compared to traditional assessment approach is large. It came to conclusion that with the interference of new method in teaching ICC, the academic achievement was significantly improved.

Teachers' beliefs to the solutions to barriers in teaching ICC and implementing project-based assessment

Barrier factors effecting the feasibility of implementing project-based assessment in learning ICC

Anova test with Sig. value of F is below 0.05, which indicates that the variables are valid and appliable for linear regression model. There are 2 independent valuables taken out from the regression model with Sig of t.>0.05. In general, most of the listed factors in the table challenge Project-based Assessment in teaching ICC. As glimpsed from the Beta values, instructors' teaching method, lack of appropriate project- learning design and curriculum and conflict between teaching and assessing methods are the most difficult problems having impact on the overall evaluation of impact towards PBA.

Table 5. Challenges teachers encountered in teaching and assessing ICC

ANOVA						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	33,550	12	2,796	31,684	,000
	Residual	9,442	107	,088		
	Total	42,992	119			

Model	Coefficients						
	Unstandardized Coefficients		Std. Coeff.			Collinearity Statistics	
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.	Tolerance	VIF
Feasibility levels of implementing PBA	-,294	,219		-1,345	,181		
Learning habits	,032	,039	,047	4,824	,003	,875	1,443
Learning and teaching environment	,127	,047	,141	4,698	,008	,950	1,152
Lack of appropriate project- learning design and curriculum	,113	,038	,191	4,801	,004	,825	1,523
Assessment tools	,098	,040	,154	4,466	,015	,787	1,602
Instructors' teaching method	,160	,051	,182	4,636	,010	,876	1,450
Learning Rules (for performing tasks and practice)	,101	,048	,152	3,921	,036	,866	1,475
Learners' attitude and autonomy	,048	,054	,066	3,898	,031	,970	1,125
Collaboration (between T&T; S&T)	,053	,045	,076	3,186	,038	,830	1,032
Conflict between knowledge and Outcomes	,109	,043	,156	4,559	,012	,853	1,590
Conflict between teaching and assessing methods	,102	,039	,139	5,113	,002	,942	1,212

The majority of people filling out the questionnaires and answering the open questions exhibited their assent to the constraint "instructor's teaching method" because the subject ICC is quite challenging with the long and complex materials to understand. Moreover, this is also a realistic subject requiring practice, so teachers play important role in instructing them, creating the meaningful lessons to improve students' skill and knowledge. Explaining the barriers in "syllabus and design" as well as "teaching and assessing", most of participants manifested that these encounters bring about the problems in achieving the objectives of the subject. One of the reasons is that there is no consensus between the content of teaching and the product of assessment. While the content of the lesson focuses on the theory, the outcomes of assessment rest with practice. Therefore, it is imperative to have a synchronous solution in Teaching and Practicing PBA.

Synchronous solutions in Teaching and Practicing PBA

From the data collected from the interviews, to successfully implement PBA, teachers had synchronous solutions from learning, teaching to assessing ICC. The teaching approaches have to be in accordance to the criteria of evaluation and the assessment practice has to conform to learning objectives.

Strategies to enhance intercultural awareness for students. It should be noted that ICC is a subject with the aim of investigating how people from different cultures interact and modify their communication to be compatible with the particular context. In the other words, its goal is to help students involve themselves in intercultural situations to become competent communicators. Consequently, the teachers recommended that students should gain good intercultural knowledge and apply the theory into practice appropriately (Mr. W., Ms. M., Miss. H. A.). Mrs. T. indicated "Knowledge is like material to make a cake. Without material, there is no cake". This viewpoint emphasized on the significant importance of the culture knowledge in communication. Students should deeply inquire into the cultural information from diverse resources such as books, newspapers, internet, brochures…, then exchange them with their peers, foreign experts on Zoom or e-learning web Apps and check their knowledge on the quiz webs, such as https://globalquiz.org/. Especially, when majoring in any language, students have to discover the features of the target culture consisting of surface and hidden culture. Mrs. Hoang revealed that students should be encouraged to engage in online virtual trips outside classroom through webs to broaden culture awareness. Knowing more knowledge is to avoid misunderstanding and misinterpretation in communication, and is the vital ground to become competent communicators.

Strategies to reinforce intercultural competence for students. It is clear that a meaningful experience is imperative in improving ICC. Only when people participate in the real context, they have opportunities to interact, train, and challenge their ability. Through intercultural communication practice, they get more experience and skills to improve intercultural competence. "Taking the trips or traveling abroad is the best recommendation for students to enhance their ICC. However, in the current context, it is impossible to make travelling abroad come true, so students and teacher should make effort to create the substitution for cultural practice in a dynamic ICC-learning environment with the video recordings and roleplays through which students were involved in real cultural situations" (Mrs. L.). Moreover, "Students should join in the teams, clubs or academic breaks, holiday camps to know more about the other cultures and together implement a plan, or a project about culture." Mrs. Huong suggested. Also, Mrs. G. appreciated the option that students should watch the movies, clips or recordings relevant to the culture topics that they can learn from and imitate the behavior and customs in the target country. Understanding, interpreting and communicating in various cultures can help people have appropriate behaviors.

Strategies to improve students' skills. Related to the content of the end-course assessment, students are in need of various skills such as solving-problem skills, presentation skills, communication skills and critical thinking skills. In order to enhance solving-problem and critical thinking skills, teachers should have students engage in hypothetical

intercultural problems in which the learner apply the knowledge they had learned to propose the solutions (Mrs. H, Mr. W). Mr. T suggested that instructors provide cases from a video or clip and inquire them "What will you do to minimize the misunderstanding/cultural shock/prejudice in this case?". These prompts can provoke the initiatives from students and show their critical thinking skills, creativeness, and solving-problem skills.

Strategies to boost students' motivation. In terms of boosting students' motivation in learning and ICC assessment, the teacher can modify the content of each lessons to make it more practical and diverse with visual aids such as clips, advertisements, films (Mr. H; Mrs H.A., Mrs. H.O. and Ms. S.). Also, students can automatically pre-read the lessons at home as a preparation before class time, then spend most of time doing exercises and practicing situations at school. This approach was applied with purpose of shortening time for learning theory and increasing time for presenting tasks, inquiry and assessment at class. Practice time can be changed into competitions or games to inspire students to think about the topic and create the new ideas. Mrs. Hoang said "Instructors should ask students to record the tasks and performance, then present in class, and provoke the enquiry from the other students, assess and make reflection on what they learn from classmates". Moreover, frequent participation in extra-curriculum activities is also placed in prior position "Learners should actively participate in intercultural or international extracurricular activities such as cultural exchanges, talk shows, session seminars, workshops, student exchange programs, short-term study abroad, " (Mrs. H.U and Mr. K.). Especially, Mrs. H. expressed the approval for PBA thanks to its fairness "In comparisons with the written test, I think this assessment guarantees the equality and fairness because the assessment was implemented in public with the witnesses of everyone and evaluated by a group of three teachers".

Discussion

As exposed in the findings, the participants revealed their evaluation and perspectives toward using project-based assessment in classroom. Obviously, there is a consensus that this pedagogical innovation made a lot of positive changes in respect to learning and assessment. Implementing PBA in teaching brought about the apparent effects in improving attitudes, motivation as well as developing skills (Savin-Baden, 2007; Simbolon, 2016). Given the prominent benefits, the students were engaged in PBA and got more interested in the ICC subject. The improvement in learning outcomes were highly appreciated and supported by students (Capraro & Jones, 2013). As a result of the changes, they had a practical view on the goal of learning ICC comprised knowledge, skills, attitudes and competence that go beyond the common knowledge. The findings are in accordance with the criteria by Bryam (1997) mentioned in ICC assessment. Besides, PBA helps students reinforce cultural knowledge, improve ICC, and boost soft skills. This result is coincided with the investigation by Anderson & Lawton (2011), Bloom et al. (1956), Chu et al. (2011), and Johnson et al. (1994).

Thus, it is imperative to diversify pedagogical practices and modify syllabus or textbooks in align with the changes in perception, characteristics of learners and educational context. The curricula should be built to meet the learner's needs that coincide knowledge, skills with the requirements of intercultural communication competence in international context.

On the premise of effect of PBA (Cheng & Szeto, 2016; Nicolson et al., 2017), the participants raised their voice for the approval of practice-based test compared with the traditional form- written test although it still has the limits and disadvantages. The enactment of PBA for the purpose of pedagogical innovation teaching brought about substantial changes in their teaching and students' learning. In particular, a variety of assessment practices were implemented in their classes for pedagogical diversity rather than the predominance of exam-oriented practice. It can be said that PBA shed a light on debatable reform in higher education regarding innovative initiatives in teaching, learning, and assessment (Hamono, 2008; Nguyen, 2014). Also, it is crucial for educators, researchers and policy makers to take the drastic measures to remove, reform or alter the out-of-date teaching approaches, orienting students to more practical outcomes.

Moreover, the study made an emphasis on the role of teachers as inspirators for the community-oriented learning. As with the concept of ICC, teachers realized a significant feature of the subject that bears intercultural or global value. This means that teacher plays a vital role in encouraging students to get a community involvement in the long-term learning process. PBA is the first trials that help students approach the gate of integral world community. Emergent from the attribute of PBA is collaboration with the substantial elements such as team working skill, negotiation skills or presentation skills. Through this experience, students have more opportunities to challenge themselves in cooperating with the others, even the competitors in order to build a constructive working environment.

Conclusion

To clarify students and teachers' perspectives on applying BPA in ICC subject. The quantitative and qualitative research method was based on the questionnaires with the questions adapted from the assessment framework by Griffith et al. (2016) to be compatible with Viet Nam teaching context and in-depth interviews. The findings demonstrated that the participants acknowledged the significance of PBA in learning and enhancing ICC with a wide range of significant effects. In the premise of students' opinions, there is a noticeable distinction in effectiveness between BPA and

traditional approach. Hence, there is a feasibility for BPA rather than the written one with a belief that this assessment made the dramatic changes in their learning such as reinforcing the cultural knowledge, improving ICC, boosting soft skills and conducted a big inspiration with the helpfulness and fun.

Recorded from the interviews, the constraints and challenges were exposed. These barriers were deprived from external factors appropriate project- learning design and curriculum, instructors' teaching method, learners' attitude and autonomy, collaboration, conflict between teaching and assessing methods, to the internal features like the lack of autonomy, passion, soft skills, language proficiency, and frequent involvement in real contexts. As a result, teacher revealed their attitudes and opinions towards tackling the problems. It is imperative to recommend the suitable strategies for teaching and learning ICC. Some suggestions were mentioned for students, for instance, taking part in the culture clubs or teams to share and exchange the culture information, joining virtual field trips, participating in real trip or summer camps to learn. The recommendations were also given to teachers such as creating more real situations for students to solve, making the lessons more fun and realistic by videos, movies and roles plays and exchanging cultures with the native speakers through video calls, Zoom, virtual classroom. The data and conclusions emerged from the research may be against a number of studies regarding the teaching and learning ICC in various contexts. The controversial nature of the subject alone would have been a huge cause for further research.

Recommendations

The changes in linguistic theory and educational pedagogy have recently been made to be compatible with the global academic context in which Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) is identified as an imperative requirement. As a result, there have been a great number of pedagogical approaches recommended to enhance ICC for students in which project-based learning is determined as an effective way that focuses on developing the important skills related to critical thinking, team working and problems solving skills that the 21st century learners need to achieve. Through this study, it is obvious that students showed their high evaluation towards the effects of Project-based Assessment due to a wide range of significant benefits the approach brings about. Besides, BPA in learning culture had the positive impacts on students' academic achievement in comparisons with the traditional assessment. It is necessary for teachers to explore an appropriate assessment approach in teaching culture to meet the requirement of global communication and fit the curriculum. PBA is a valuable experience teacher can consider to use in teaching process. To successfully implement BPA, teachers had the synchronous solutions to learning, teaching and assessing. It is imperative to integrate cultural education into EFL and get students involved in the intercultural communication activities in learning process. In addition, teachers should have the practical measures to test and assess intercultural knowledge and competence appropriately which are in align with the content of curriculum. This evaluation also requires a flexible classroom management, serious disciplines and clear instructions from the beginning of the course.

Limitations

The paper shed light into innovation in teaching and assessing culture in higher education, however, the paper only focused a case study in a university. So, the further studies should expand the research objects and the scope of the study to obtain more desirable results. Hopefully, in future, there will be more research on the particular activities in ICC assessment.

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