Developing Cross-Cultural Communication Competencies as Strategic Intelligence for the 21st Century

A Case of Applied Higher Education Research on Teaching and Assessment Criteria Based on a Public Communication Master Course

Ulrike Pölzl-Hobusch, Gudrun Reimerth
OUTLINE

• Teacher Collaboration
• Cross Cultural Communication Competencies as Strategic Intelligence
• Course setup
• Collaboration merits and outputs
• Student feedback
• Further research outlook – 21st century skills for business students
JOINT COURSES – COLLABORATION

• Provide communication majors with a learning environment fit to cope with the exigencies of globalization and intercultural reach of business administration/public relations departments in organizations today
• Provision for better learning outcomes was a strong argument
• Strategy focus on setting students up for success and enabling them to develop skills based on clear learning goals and scales alongside practical application and practice
• Joint lectures enabled hands-on experiences in meeting simulations collaboratively developed for this course
• Joint criteria for holistic assessment
JOINT COURSES – BLENDED LEARNING TOOLS

- Moodle
- Slack
- Google Docs
- Google+
- Hangouts
CROSS-CULTURAL COMMUNICATION
COMPETENCIES AS STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE (SI)

- Extensive application of theoretical concepts
- Constructive cultural stereotyping
- A cultural mindset
- Framing of messages in culturally constructive ways
- Overcoming cultural differences
- Pacing and leading
- Intercultural leadership qualities
- High command of diplomatic language
- Efficiently making a point, taking turns, politely giving opinion, disagreeing
- Communicating spontaneously, producing long stretches of speech without pauses and fairly even tempo to avoid being a strain for the listener
- Making very few errors (grammar, pronunciation) impeding communication
- Clear expression
- Contributing to the outcome of a discussion by showing active listening skills
STRUCTURE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE COURSES

Inter- and intracultural Communication (IIC)
- Introduction
- HO culture
- HO theory

Presentations, meetings and negotiations
- Lecture 1
- Lecture 2
- HO video conf

Timeline:
- March
  - Lecture 1
- April
  - Lecture 2
- May
  - Lecture 3
- June
  - Video conf
  - HO meeting simulation
  - Meeting simulation
  - Discourse & Publishing
- July
  - Online Assignment 1
  - Online Assignment 2
  - Online Assignment 3
  - Online Assignment 4
COLLABORATION MERITS AND OUTPUT (1)

- Increased societal value of developing joint courses, combining content and task oriented outcomes
- Time and effort in planning are rewarded with more reflective and deeper engagement of participants, leading to a more profound understanding and higher personal involvement – crucial for high competencies in intercultural/cross-cultural communication management
COLLABORATION MERITS AND OUTPUT (2)

• Highly complex structure and tasks with room for personal interests of participants in combination with explicit but not strict guidelines for task development, uncertainty and risk – preconditions of modern society – could be managed in a way that proved satisfactory for teachers and participants alike.

• The rubrics present a working approach to teaching and assessment

• More publicly noticed publications by students, who were actively contributing to a remarkable output, not only for their personal learning biography but to the common good, could be fostered.
(1) Student A, COM15:
“I was absolutely thrilled that my team and I came up with the Western Balkans Summit Conference, which turned out to be a highly interesting topic to prepare for. Concerning the final exam, the video-conference definitely helped me to get more familiar with the English-meeting-situation once again and to gain more confidence. I also warmly welcomed this opportunity to practice the meeting-related phrases as I do not have the chance to practice business-related English in everyday life. I also liked the peer feedback; it was useful as always and I also had the feeling I could help my fellow student with giving feedback to her.”

(2) Student B, COM15:
“The course was based on the experiences of the students, on the interchange of Slack, on the impressions of experts and a good dose of theoretical models. Hofstede, Nonaka, and Gudykunst gave us an insight into their view of things, encouraged the discourse, allowed connections to the present day, and reaped criticism.”
FURTHER RESEARCH OUTLOOK

Source: enGauge 21st Century Skills
AUTHORS

Ulrike Poelzl-Hobusch holds an MA-equivalent degree in EFL and German (KF University Graz). After 14 years in adult education, including in-company training and a teaching assistantship at Williams College, Mass., USA, she is currently teaching at the Institutes of International Management and Journalism and PR at FH JOANNEUM, with a main focus on public speaking, cross-cultural communication and meetings & negotiations.

Mag. Ulrike Pölzl-Hobusch, FH JOANNEUM, Institute of International Management, ulrike.poelzl-hobusch@fh-joanneum.at

Gudrun Reimerth is lecturer PR at the Institute for Journalism and PR, University of Applied Sciences FH JOANNEUM in Graz, Austria. She graduated in Germanic Languages and Literature, Linguistics, Political Science and Communication at the University of Vienna and the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana and has worked in Public Relations before teaching.

Mag. Gudrun Reimerth, M.A., FH JOANNEUM, Institute of Journalism and PR, gudrun.reimerth@fh-joanneum.at, @reimerth