Achieving Cultural Competence in Vietnamese EFL Classes: A Case Study from an Intercultural Communicative Competence Perspective

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STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University's Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968**.**

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ABSTRACT

The process of teaching and learning foreign languages in the era of globalisation aims to equip students with intercultural awareness and intercultural communicative competence (ICC) (Sercu, Carmen, Garcia, & Castro, 2004). This goal is being conceptualised as a new requirement that teachers should promote among their students through the inclusion of intercultural knowledge, skills and attitudes in foreign language education (Byram, 1993b). To achieve this goal, culture must be addressed as a core component in language programs and integrated with the teaching of linguistic elements. In Vietnam, the common goal for English language study noted in Decision No 1400/QĐ-TTg on 30 September, 2008, emphasises the training of young Vietnamese citizens to become communicative and intercultural English users. This objective of English language teaching requires Vietnamese English teachers to provide students with opportunities to achieve cultural competence alongside linguistic competence. This study looks at the teaching of culture in the contemporary context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teaching at the Vietnamese tertiary level, examining the presentation of culture in the official teaching materials and the teaching practices in terms of the ways and the extent to which they infuse culture into EFL lessons.

This study adopted a qualitative case study approach, and was conducted in two phases: Phase 1 (Document Collection and Analysis) and Phase 2 (Teachers' Interviews, Classroom Observations and Field notes). I employed various strategies to collect the data: document analysis, one-on-one interviews, individual interviews for member checking, classroom observations and field notes. The case study research revealed two key findings: the gap between how the cultural content is presented in Vietnamese tertiary English textbooks and the conceptualisations of cultural competence from an ICC perspective; and the gap between the Vietnamese tertiary EFL teachers' teaching practices and the development of students' ICC. The shortcomings of the textbook content and the teachers' tendency to limit the teaching of culture influenced Vietnamese English students' development of ICC. This study provides a framework for the teaching of culture in the Vietnamese context, which will help teachers and policy makers improve English language teaching, with the aim of achieving the intercultural goals of language study in our globalised community.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ASEAN:	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASEM:	Asia-Europe Meeting
ALTE:	Association of Language Testers in Europe
APEC:	Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation
CEFR:	Common European Framework of Reference
CEFRL:	Common European Framework of Reference for Languages
CLT:	Communicative Language Teaching
C1:	Learners' native culture
C2:	Target culture
EF EPI:	Education First English Proficiency Index
EFL:	English as a Foreign Language
ESL:	English as a Second Language
ESL/EFL:	English as a Second Language/English as a Foreign Language
ESP:	English for Specific Purposes
ICC:	Intercultural Communicative Competence
ICT:	Information and Communication Technologies
IELTS:	International English Testing System
GE:	General English
L1:	Learners' first language
L2:	Target or second language
MOET:	Ministry of Education and Training
TOFEL:	Test of English as a Foreign Language
UK:	United Kingdom
ULIS-VNU:	University of Languages and International Studies – Vietnam National University
USA:	United States of America
WTO:	World Trade Organization

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