

Influence of culture and context on information behaviour and information literacy

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<http://vied.vn/en/for-students/universities/767-the-university-of-da-nang-university-of-foreign-language-studies-uflds.html>

The University of Da Nang, University of Foreign Language Studies (UFLS)

<http://www.vietnam-guide.com/maps/>

- Erasmus
- Internationalization
- Going globally
- Students from Asia



- **Culture**
- **Language (English in a non-English speaking country)**
- **Education system**
- **Attitudes towards information / communication**



- Not everything should be easily labelled as *cultural differences*

Confucianism

Asian values

Political environment

Collectivism

Power distance

Lack of citizenship involvement

Stereotypes (!)



WHAT I AM ADVOCATING FOR? (1/2)

- Work on cultural differences and efforts to understand them by educators
- Empowering the incoming Asian students with information literacy skills (critical thinking included!)
- Equipping them in strong information tools
- Presenting them information from evaluated sources that helps understand how the cultural differences are produced

WHAT I AM ADVOCATING FOR? (2/2)

This understanding will help them:

- ameliorate communication skills in EU universities
- deal better with the classroom behaviour of teachers and peers and with the discussed topics

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

- Expanded and updated in 2015 American Library Association's definition on information literacy as well as the CILIP's Information literacy definition (2018)
- Concepts of cultural literacy and Asia literacy suggested by Harry Irwin (1996)
- Three socio-cultural phenomena distinguishing South and Southeast Asia: Confucianism, Collectivism, and Large power distance

CONFUCIANISM



COLLECTIVISM





BỘ GIÁO DỤC VÀ ĐÀO TẠO
TẶNG
ĐƠN VỊ TIÊU BIỂU XUẤT SẮC
NĂM HỌC 2014 - 2015





LARGE POWER DISTANCE



- *Power distance* – a term used first by Geert Hofstede, a pioneer of cross-cultural psychology
- Power distance is one of the five culture dimensions* defined by Hofstede
- It is the way in which power is distributed and the extent to which the lower ranking individuals accept unequal distribution
- In Asia we observe inequality in power distribution; the majority of Asian countries are the large power distance ones

* The other four are: Individualism vs. Collectivism; Uncertainty avoidance; Masculinity vs. Femininity; Long-term orientation vs. Short-term orientation.



CULTURAL INFLUENCES ON INFORMATION LITERACY AND INFORMATION BEHAVIOR

- Cultural and linguistic differences can affect information literacy
- Asian students lack critical thinking skills
- They are expected to receive information passively and learn all information given and not selected one
- They do not use many sources while learning but usually limit to one

INFORMATION LITERACY IN MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT AND A NEW ROLE FOR ACADEMIC LIBRARIES

- All the factors discussed above should influence the construction of the strategy of information literacy education dedicated to Asian students coming at European universities
- A prior cultural knowledge is needed to make sense of certain situations or behaviors

ROLE OF THE LIBRARY

Librarians need to:

- **identify students' cultural background**
- **learn more about the cultures represented by the students**
- **learn more about the processes of students' analysis**
- **analyze students' work outcomes according to cultural models**



SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION

Teachers and Learners in Vietnam

- Confucianism
- Teacher- and exam-oriented education
- One way communication
- Problem with critical thinking and analytical skills

IL in Vietnamese University Libraries

- Lack of understanding the value of IL by faculty and administration
- Low recognition of the importance of academic librarians
- No collaboration between librarians and faculty
- No promotional initiatives

My Study at the University of Danang

- February - May 2017
- Sample: 353 respondents; students of International Studies Dept. (N=267) and English Studies Dept. (N=86)
- Questionnaire (12 open-ended and multiple choice questions)
- Semi-structured in-depth interviews (interview guide with 14 questions)

Results

- Libraries and librarians in students' opinion
- Role of teachers in shaping information skills
- Preparing for assessment & Knowledge sharing
- Use of social media

Conclusions - Recommendations

- Social media and Google
- Students' awareness towards IL
- Students' willingness to develop information skills
- Slow change in Vietnamese academia
- “Think locally, less formally”

My Study at the University of Warsaw

- **April 2018**
- **Sample: 17 respondents; PhD students, enrolled at the University of Warsaw**
- **Standardized, open-ended interviews**

Analysis & Results

- **Academic differences and similarities**
- **Teaching styles**
- **Learning styles**
- **Library experience**
- **Ways of access to information**

Academic Differences and Similarities

- **Learning is not exam-oriented**
- **Learning on your own**
- **No need of repetitive learning**
- **Many practical issues**

Teaching Styles

- A big difference
- You can (or even must) discuss with your teacher
- You are somehow obliged to express your counter-opinion
- **RISK:** teachers' prejudgments

Learning Styles

- **Learning on your own**
- **Not spending all week in the classroom**
- **Need to use a diversity of resources, and not a one handbook**
- **Focus on methodology**

Library Experience

- **Library as a good learning place**
- **Great infrastructure**
- **But too little and too complicated info in English**
- **Too little awareness about library collections**

Ways of Access to Information

- **Google (and why)**
- **Focus on print**
- **Plagiarism**

Conclusions

- ❑ **Need of raising cultural awareness, to establish a tailored IL program**
- ❑ **Do not compare Asian students to other international students, particularly “Erasmus” ones**
- ❑ **Teachers should make efforts to understand a cultural background of their students**
- ❑ **Librarians can help, but they must improve their English and communication skills**
- ❑ **Not about Vietnamese students only**

The New York Times

(online) 06/08/2018 *A Generation Grows Up in China Without Google, Facebook or Twitter*



“The Chinese apps have got everything,” said Shen Yanan, 28, who works in Baoding, China, and has no interest in politics.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/08/06/technology/china-generation-blocked-internet.html>



HAPPY NEW YEAR

YEAR OF THE PIG

My works on this topic

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