



MULTICULTURAL TEKU

The international learning environment at Savonia UAS, Engineering Kuopio

Matthias Christian Schütt

**Development Project Report
May 2008**



JYVÄSKYLÄ UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
Teacher Education College

Author(s) SCHÜTT, Matthias Christian	Type of Publication Development project report	
	Pages 66 (44 +22)	Language English
	Confidential <input type="checkbox"/> Until _____	
Title MULTICULTURAL TEKU The international learning environment at Savonia UAS, Engineering Kuopio		
Degree Programme Teacher Education Collage		
Tutor(s) Irmeli Maunonen-Eskelinen		
Assigned by Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Engineering Kuopio		
Abstract <p>The objective of this paper is to investigate the situation of the foreign students at Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Engineering Kuopio. Students coming from different cultures face different kind of obstacles concerned to learning As well in their normal 'every day' life caused by e.g. social, economical or language reasons. What are these challenges they have to deal with? Key questions are how comfortable the foreign students feel in their study environment, how well are they integrated into school's network- and social environment. Besides the scientific approach to the subject of intercultural learning environment there will be also a discussion from both, the students and teachers side of general study related problems. The kernel of the empirical part is a questionnaire for the foreign students supported by interviews and free discussions with students and teachers. As a summary I try to find suggestion to address these cultural differences and the problems of the students when organizing the curriculum and implement the teaching.</p>		
Keywords intercultural learning environment, intercultural competence, foreign students, culture, cultural diversity, English as teaching language, TeKu, Savonia University of Applied Sciences		
Miscellaneous		

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. WHAT IS CULTURE?	3
2.1 THE CULTURE IN US.....	4
2.2 THE LAYERS OF CULTURE.....	6
2.3 FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSING CULTURE.....	8
2.3.1 <i>The five cultural dimensions</i>	9
2.4 DIVERSITY OF CULTURES.....	12
2.4.1 <i>Cross-cultural, trans-cultural, multicultural or intercultural?</i>	13
2.4.2 <i>Subculture</i>	13
2.4.3 <i>Cross-cultural and status barriers</i>	14
3. INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCES	15
3.1 CULTURE SHOCK AND EXPATRIATE FAILURE.....	16
3.2 HIGH AND LOW CONTEXT.....	18
3.3 LANGUAGE AND DISCOURSE.....	19
3.2.1 <i>Learning or Acquisition</i>	20
3.4 FINNS' INTERCULTURAL STYLE.....	21
4 TRAINING IN INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE	23
4.1 INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION	25
4.2 THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT	26
4.3 WHO IS INTERCULTURAL COMPETENT?	27
5. INTERCULTURAL COMPETENCE AT TEKU	29
5.1 OPPORTUNITIES.....	30
6. DISCUSSION OF PROBLEMS	31
6.1 LANGUAGE	32
6.2 MONEY	33
6.3 WHAT BOTHERS THE STUDENTS?	34
6.4 WHAT BOTHERS THE TEACHERS?.....	37
6.5 QUESTIONNAIRE FINDINGS.....	38
6.6 SUMMARY OF PROBLEMS	40
7. CONCLUSION	41
REFERENCES	43
APPENDIX A NATIONALITIES OF PRESENT FOREIGN STUDENTS AT TEKU (23.01.2008)	45
APPENDIX B GEERT HOFSTEDE™ CULTURAL DIMENSIONS COMPARE OF FINLAND WITH SOME INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS HOME CULTURES	46
APPENDIX C QUESTIONNAIRE RESULT	49
APPENDIX D ANSWER COMPARISON BETWEEN DIFFERENT CLASSES	55
APPENDIX E QUESTIONNAIRE ANSWERS - OPINIONS	58
APPENDIX F SURVEY ON FOREIGN DEGREE STUDENTS AT SAVONIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES, ENGINEERING KUOPIO	63

1. Introduction

The subject of multicultural study environments has been investigated many times and there are several publications, books, articles, etc. available. Still I was hoping, with the help of these publications, to narrow down the topic of intercultural differences in a study environment to the question, needs, hopes and wishes related to the particular group of international students at Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Engineering Kuopio.

Students face many difficulties when studying in a foreign country, especially if teaching language is as well foreign to them. Furthermore in the International Degree Programme at Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Engineering Kuopio English is used as *lingua franca*¹ which is different from the host countries mother tongue. Egege & Kutiehleh (2004 [on-line]) from the Student Learning Centre at Flinders University, Australia point out that -- research findings have revealed that the problems are much deeper than just language proficiency. Academics identify more extensive areas of conflict such as learning styles, participation, collaboration, independence, plagiarism and structured/non-structured learning. In particular, South-East Asian students are commonly stereotyped as passive, non-critical rote-learning students who do not engage in deep learning (Ballard, 1995; Mills, 1997). Even when the problems are identified as stemming from different learning styles and attitudes, these are seen as a reflection of different learning capacities and, hence, as a deficit that needs correcting by additional teaching strategies. (Egege & Kutiehleh 2004 [on-line].) Also the integration of foreign students into the local school environment and society is limited and they feel often isolated within their own community of foreign students or foreign people in general.

¹*lingua franca* – language used for communicating between the people of an area in which several languages are spoken. (Oxford Advanced Learners 1989)

Addressing these problems entail challenges for all parties involved. Students are expected to adapt to the host culture, whereas vice versa the school has to encounter the cultural differences of their students and offer them a comfortable study environment. Investigating these challenges and difficulties in studying and learning associated with the cultural differences of the students is the objective of this development project. Key questions are: how comfortable the foreign students feel in their studying environment, how well they are integrated in the school's social network and what is their financial situation? This has been a considerable problem in recent years with the result that many foreign students changed the school or broke up their studies. Additional general study related problems will be discussed from both, the students' and teachers' side. As a summary I try to find suggestion to address these cultural differences and the problems of the students when organizing the curriculum and implement the teaching.

The subject of study was limited to the students of the International Degree Programme in Information Technology at Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Engineering Kuopio (short TeKu [coming from tekniikka Kuopio]; which I will use further on to address the school). The actual study is carried out by involving the international students within a questionnaire as well by arbitrary interviews with students and teachers.

I myself have been studying the exact same International Degree Programme and also completed my teaching practice by teaching International Degree Programme students at TeKu. Therefore I believe that I am in an optimized position to carry out an objective study, although I have to admit that there is always the danger of a too personalized point of view, as if the same investigation would have been conducted by a complete outsider.

To get a better picture about the intercultural competence I will discuss some general ideas about intercultural environments together with their related problem, challenges and advantages.

2. What is Culture?

Every aspect in people's life, their behavior their way of thinking and acting can be narrowed down to their cultural roots, the environment and the way they grow up. Simply said, it can be assumed that everything comes down to culture; the characteristics, the differences and similarities according to the involved people.

Culture has a significant influence in the learning and teaching environment. The Educational environment itself can be defined as a culture or better – *subculture*. So perhaps the best would be to give some kind of definition of culture. There are many different definitions existing and it is not too bold to assume that we all have at least a glimpse what the word *culture* stands for. So I will just bring up the definitions of some professionally respected sources:

■ “The way of life of an entire society”

General definition, which includes codes of manners, dress, language, religion, rituals, norms of behaviour and systems of belief.

■ “Culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society”

by Sir Edward B. Tylor (perspective of social anthropology)

■ “...culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, and that it encompasses, in addition to art and literature, lifestyles, ways of living together, value systems, traditions and beliefs”. *UNESCO (2002)*

■ “The total, generally organised way of life, including values, norms, institutions, and artefacts, that is passed on from generation to generation by learning alone” *Dictionary of Modern Sociology*

These definitions above are influenced by anthropology, there are also definitions influenced by *psychology*, for example Hofstede (1994: 4-9; 9) defines culture as mental programs, “the software of the mind”, culture providing the software, or “the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another”. Martin and Nakayama (2000: 57) point out that in this way “culture becomes a collective experience because it is shared with people who live in and experience the same social environments. (Korhonen 2002: 38.)

2.1 The Culture in us

Clearly, the culture in which one person is living influences that person’s behavior, thinking, feeling, way of life and potential acting. These patterns are -- learned throughout their lifetime. Much of it has been acquired in early childhood, because at that time a person is most susceptible to learning and assimilating. As soon as certain patterns of thinking, feeling and acting have established themselves within a person’s mind, (s)he must unlearn these before being able to learn something different, and unlearning is more difficult than learning for the first time. (Hofstede 1997: 4.)

Hofstede (1997: 4) is calling these -- pattern of thinking feeling an acting *mental programs* or as the sub-title of his book ‘*Cultures and Organizations*’ goes: ‘*software of the mind*’. A person’s behavior is only partially predetermined by her or his mental programs: (s)he has a basic ability to deviate from them, and to react in ways which are new, creative, destructive, or unexpected. The sources of one’s mental programs lie within the social environments in which one grew up and collected one’s life experiences. The programming starts within the family; it continues within the neighborhood, at school, in youth groups, at the work place, and in the living community. (Hofstede 1997: 4.) Nevertheless the personality of a person is not just formed by the culture in which this person is living, also the *human nature*. Hofstede (1997: 5) states that -- human nature is what all human being have in common: it represents

the universal level in one's mental software. It is inherited with one's genes. The human ability to feel fear, anger, love, joy, sadness, the need to associate with others, to play and exercise oneself, the facility to observe the environment and to talk about it with other humans all belong to this level of mental programming. However, what one does with these feelings, how one expresses fear, joy, observations, and so on, is modified by culture. Human nature is not as 'human' as the term suggests, because certain aspects of it are shared with parts of the animal world.

Culture should be distinguished from human nature on one side and from an individual's personality on the other (see Figure 2.1), although exactly where the borders lie between human nature and culture, and between culture and personality, is a matter of discussion among social scientists. (Hofstede 1997: 4-5.)

Vice versa the personality and the human nature of a person, even more a group of persons influence the culture. This can be easily recognized if a person has been living in a different culture than its 'home'-culture and then introduce habits or gestures learned from the different culture into its own culture, which in turn are assimilated by the other members of the 'home'-culture. Susan Fries (2008 [on-line]), Assistant Professor in the *Département Langues et Formation Humaine at Institut National des Télécommunications* in Evry, France continues -- thus culture is learned through interaction, and shared by the people interacting. In this definition there is the suggestion of an ongoing process, of culture as a group creation rather than a solidified object (Fries 2008 [on-line]).

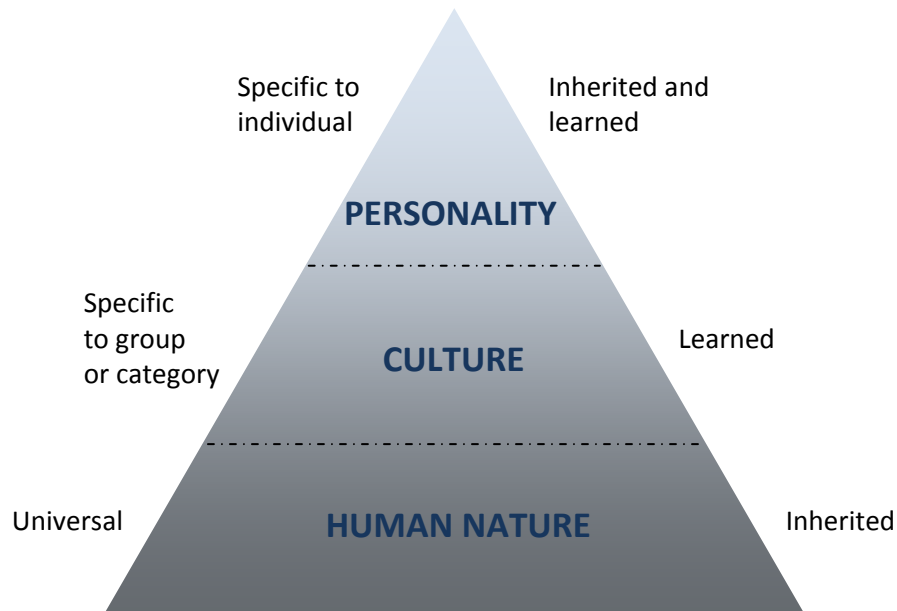


Figure 2.1 Three levels of uniqueness in human mental programming (Hofstede 1997: 6).

2.2 The Layers of Culture

As the definitions above describes, culture includes many different aspects; but the most important is, like Hofstede (1997: 5) states, that -- culture is learned, not inherited (Hofstede 1997: 5). The way can be unconscious like learning the mother language or intentionally like learning at school. According to Hofstede (1997: 5) -- culture is always a collective phenomenon, because it is at least partly shared with people who live or lived within the same social environment, which is where it was learned (Hofstede 1997: 5). The manifestations of the different cultural aspects are naturally quite different and play depending on the person or group and the culture in which this person or group is living a more or less important rule. These manifestations of culture can be conceptual defined in different layers. These layers, shown in Figure 2.2 according to Hofstede (1997: 5) -- are illustrated as the skins of an onion, indicating that symbols represent the most superficial and values the deepest manifestations of culture, with heroes and rituals in between (Hofstede 1997: 5).

Symbols are words, gestures, pictures or objects that carry a particular meaning which is only recognized by those who share the culture. The words in a language or jargon belong to this category, as do dress, hairstyles, Coca-Cola, flags, and status symbols. New symbols are easily developed and old ones disappear: symbols from one culture group are regularly copied by others. This is why symbols have been put into the outer, most superficial layer of Figure 2.2.

Heroes are persons, alive or dead, real or imaginary, who possess characteristics which highly prized in a culture, and who thus serve as models for behavior. Even fantasy or cartoon figures can server as cultural heroes.

Rituals are collective activities, technically superfluous in reaching desired ends, but which, within a culture, are considered as socially essential: they are therefore carried out for their own sake. Ways of greeting and paying respect to others, social and religious ceremonies are examples.

In Figure 2.2 symbols, heroes, and rituals have been subsumed under the term *practices*. As such, they are visible to an outside observer; their cultural meaning, however, is invisible and lies precisely and only in the way these practices are interpreted by the insiders.

The core of culture according to Figure 2.2 is formed by *values*. Values are broad tendencies to prefer certain states of affairs over others. Values are feelings with an arrow to it: they have a plus and a minus side. They deal with:

evil	versus	good
dirty	versus	clean
ugly	versus	beautiful
unnatural	versus	natural
abnormal	versus	normal
paradoxical	versus	logical
irrational	versus	rational

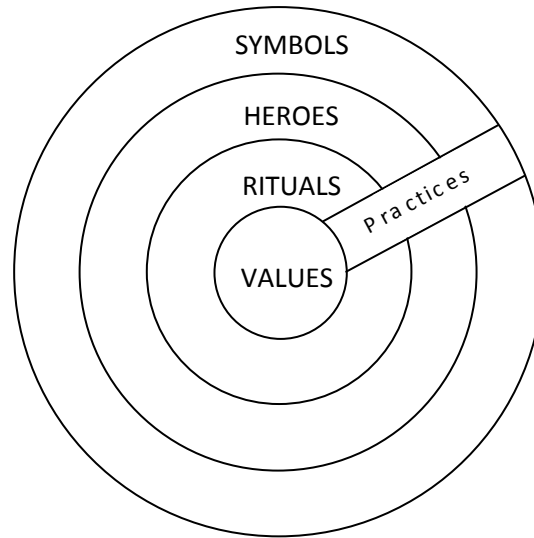


Figure 2.2 The ,onion diagram': manifestations of culture at different levels of depth (Hofstede 1997: 9).

Values are among the first things children learn –not consciously, but implicitly. Development psychologists believe that by the age of 10, most children have their basic value system firmly in place, and after that age, changes are difficult to make. Because they were acquired so early in our lives, many values remain unconscious to those who hold them. Therefore they cannot be discussed, nor can they be directly observed by outsiders. They can only be inferred from the way people act under various circumstances. (Hofstede 1997: 7-8.)

2.3 Framework for Assessing Culture

Now that we have definitions of culture, how do we distinguish the differences of diverse cultures in a scientific reproducible way? It is easy to say that in Asia people are more collectivistic as for example in Europe, or that Germans like beer and the English drink tea, or as Gregorio Billikopf (2007 [on-line]) from the University of California points out -- there are differences in approach as to what is considered polite and appropriate behavior both on and off the job. In some cultures "yes" means, "I hear you" more than "I agree." Length of pleasantries and greetings before getting down to business; level of tolerance for being around someone speaking a foreign (not-understood) language; politeness measured in terms of gal-

lantry or etiquette (e.g., standing up for a woman who approaches a table, yielding a seat on the bus to an older person, etc.); and manner of expected dress are all examples of possible cultural differences and traditions. (Billikopf 2007 [on-line].)

But these are all based on general knowledge or assumption. It is scientifically incorrect to compare different cultures based on this data. A better approach to evaluate cultural differences was developed by Geert Hofstede. He has found five dimensions of culture based on a conducted survey of national work related values of coworkers in a multinational company (IBM) in 1968 and 1972.

2.3.1 The five cultural dimensions

Originally the 5D model was developed for the business life but it is as well suitable for the education society. It gives a relative good picture about culture difference in general. Knowing this helps to understand the different ways of behavior.

Power distance index (PDI), that is the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally. This represents inequality (more versus less), but defined from below, not from above. It suggests that a society's level of inequality is endorsed by the followers as much as by the leaders. Power and inequality, of course, are extremely fundamental facts of any society and anybody with some international experience will be aware that 'all societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than others'.

Individualism (IDV) on the one side versus its opposite, **collectivism**, that is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups. On the individualist side we find societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after him/herself and his/her immediate family. On the collectivist side, we find societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, often extended families (with uncles, aunts and grandparents) which continue protecting them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. The word 'collectivism' in this sense has no political meaning: it refers to the group, not to the state. Again, the issue addressed by this dimension is an extremely fundamental one, regarding all societies in the world.

Masculinity (MAS) versus its opposite, **femininity** refers to the distribution of roles between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society to which a range of solutions are found. The IBM studies revealed that (a) women's values differ less among societies than men's values; (b) men's values from one country to another contain a dimension from very assertive and competitive and maximally different from women's values on the one side, to modest and caring and similar to women's values on the other. The assertive pole has been called 'masculine' and the modest, caring pole 'feminine'. The women in feminine countries have the same modest, caring values as the men; in the masculine countries they are somewhat assertive and competitive, but not as much as the men, so that these countries show a gap between men's values and women's values.

Uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) deals with a society's tolerance for uncertainty and ambiguity; it ultimately refers to man's search for Truth. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. Unstructured situations are novel, unknown, surprising, different from usual. Uncertainty avoiding cultures try to minimize the possibility of such situations by strict laws and rules, safety and security measures, and on the philosophical and religious level by a belief in absolute Truth; 'there can only be one Truth and we have it'. People in uncertainty avoiding countries are also more emotional, and motivated by inner nervous energy. The opposite type, uncertainty accepting cultures, are more tolerant of opinions different from what they are used to; they try to have as few rules as possible, and on the philosophical and religious level they are relativist and allow many currents to flow side by side. People within these cultures are more phlegmatic and contemplative, and not expected by their environment to express emotions.

Long-term orientation (LTO) versus **short-term orientation**: this fifth dimension was found in a study among students in 23 countries around the world, using a questionnaire designed by Chinese scholars it can be said to deal with Virtue regardless of Truth. Values associated with Long Term Orientation are thrift and perseverance; values associated with Short Term Orientation are respect for tradition, fulfilling social obligations, and protecting one's 'face'. Both the positively and the negatively rated values of this dimension are found in the teachings of Confucius, the most influential Chinese philosopher who lived around 500 B.C.; however, the dimension also applies to countries without a Confucian heritage.

Scores on the first four dimensions were obtained for 50 countries and 3 regions on the basis of the IBM study, and on the fifth dimension for 23 countries on the basis of student data collected by Bond. Power distance scores are high for Latin, Asian and African countries and smaller for Germanic countries. Individualism prevails in developed and Western countries, while Collectivism prevails in less developed and Eastern countries; Japan takes a middle position on this dimension. Masculinity is high in Japan, in some European countries like Germany, Austria and Switzerland, and moderately high in Anglo countries; it is low in Nordic countries and in the Netherlands and moderately low in some Latin and Asian countries like France, Spain and Thailand. Uncertainty avoidance scores are higher in Latin countries, in Japan, and in German speaking countries, lower in Anglo, Nordic, and Chinese culture countries. A Long Term Orientation is mostly found in East Asian countries, in particular in China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Japan, and South Korea. (Hofstede 2007 [on-line].)

Similar patterns can be observed also from the international students at Teku. For example East-Asian students tend to form more tight groups and have concentrated cooperation within. Students from Africa and Middle-East are more loosely but show much more respect towards authorities as Europeans, which are clearly much more individualistic. Appendix B shows a comparison of the cultural dimensions between Finland and some other countries from which the international students are originated. Still it is important to keep in mind that these comparisons are exceedingly general. As Billikopf (2007 [on-line]) is warning -- *it is good* to have an understanding about a culture's customs and ways. Aaron Pun, a Canadian ODCnet correspondent, wrote: "In studying cross cultural differences, we are not looking at individuals but a comparison of one ethnic group against others. Hence, we are comparing two bell curves and generalization cannot be avoided." Another correspondent explained the human need to categorize. True and true, but the danger comes when we act on some of these generalizations, especially when they are based on faulty observation. Acting on generalizations about such matters as eye contact, personal space, touch, and interest in participation can have serious negative consequences. (Billikopf 2007 [on-line].)

2.4 Diversity of Cultures

An understanding of other cultures is essential if we are to develop a more stable world and at the same time create national wealth

— Brian Burrows, *Futures Information Associates*

As the five dimensional model from Hofstede is displaying, culture comes in vast amount of diversities. No one can be expected to be an expert in cultures. In fact many people are unaware of their own culture in which they grow up. Fires (2008 [on-line]) -- they tend to assume that their group's way of thinking or acting is human nature. Hence their shock or anger when other people behave in ways they interpret as logical, unreasonable, or impolite. Before jumping to this conclusion, and placing the conflict or misunderstanding on an interpersonal level, it is often helpful to look at the situation from an intercultural point of view. (Fires 2008 [on-line]).

On the other hand we all have lots of things in common like passion for music or the ability for empathy toward other human beings. Fires (2008 [on-line]) continue that -- physical activities or sports may create a framework of rules and behavior in which other differences, including cultural ones, are less important. This argument can be made for certain profession. ... engineers from different countries understand each other through a shared code of engineering values and behavior. But to echo a statement many teachers have probably heard from students learning Business English, the hard part is when the engineers take a brake for lunch or dinner. (Fires 2008 [on-line].)

2.4.1 Cross-cultural, trans-cultural, multicultural or intercultural?

As the title above indicated there are several terms to describe diverse cultures. The term *intercultural* is the most often used. The prefix *inter-* is defined at Merriam-Webster (2008 [on-line]) as -- *between, among, in the midst, located between, carried on between, occurring between, shared by, existing between* (Merriam-Webster 2008 [on-line]).

What about the others? Do they mean the same or do they describe different concepts of culture types? In general they are not exactly the same but they all interact, overlap and influence each other.

Cross-cultural implies a comparison of some phenomenon across cultures (Gudykunst & Kim 1997: 19) -- that does not involve interaction, whereas the term *intercultural* focuses more on what is interactive. The term *trans-cultural* means "across cultures" (Chaney & Martin 1995: 248). (Retrieved from Korhonen 2002: 44.) The webpage of Canadian Heritage (2008 [on-line]) describes *multicultural* in the way that -- multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging. Acceptance gives ... a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to, and accepting of, diverse cultures (Canadian Heritage 2008 [on-line]).

2.4.2 Subculture

Cultures within cultures are called *microcultures* or *subcultures*. Microcultures are groups of people possessing characteristics that distinguish them from others within a *macroculture*. (Chaney & Martin 1995: 2-3; 10) Microcultures can also be called Subcultures (Korhonen 2002: 38). As already mentioned above the educational environment is a subculture, whereas the macroculture can be the country within the educational institution is placed. People can simultaneously belong to a number of cultural groups. Therefore everyone is already in his own way a multi-cultural being.

2.4.3 Cross-cultural and status barriers

Cross-cultural observations can easily be tainted and contaminated by other factors. Perceived status differences can create barriers between cultures and even within organizations. For instance, farm managers, instructors, and foreign volunteers (through universities, peace corps, farmer-to-farmer programs, etc.) may appear to have a status differential with those farm workers, students, and technical assistance recipients they are working with. A person with this status differential will have to show, by word and action, that she values the potential contributions of those she works with. Until this happens she will only obtain compliance but never commitment.

At times, then, it may appear that some workers or students, especially when there are social or ethnic differences, do not participate as easily. This is not because they do not have ideas to contribute, but rather, because they may need a little convincing that their ideas would be valued. Once this floodgate of ideas is opened, it will be difficult to stop it. In some sub-cultures, once a person has given an opinion, others are unlikely to contradict it. That is why some organizations ask their least senior employees to give an opinion first, as few will want to contradict the more senior employees. Setting up the discussion from the beginning as one where one desires to hear all sort of different opinions, can be very fruitful both in the workplace and in the classroom. (Billikopf 2007 [on-line].)

3. Intercultural Competences

Intercultural contact does not automatically breed mutual understanding. Rather, it confirms the groups involved in their own identities and prejudices. From viewpoint of one group, members of another are not perceived as individuals but in a stereotyped fashion...; stereotypes at best half-truths, but they are unavoidable and should be taken into account. Unfounded stereotypes can affect people's perceptions of actual events. On the other hand, if groups seek constructive interaction, even unfounded stereotypes may be helpful in getting communication started.

Intercultural encounters that forcibly expose individuals or groups to an alien cultural environment can be a source of heavy stress. Such "acculturative stress" affects, for example members of traditional cultures subject to modernization. Similar symptoms have been described for migrant workers and their families and for "expatriates", the common term for employees working and living temporarily abroad; in the latter case, such symptoms are called *culture shock*.

...our mental software contains basic values. These are acquired early in our lives, and they become so natural as to be unconscious. The conscious part of our mental software consists mainly of the symbols, heroes, and rituals. The foreigner who makes an effort can learn some of the symbols and rituals of the new environment (words to use, how to greet, when to bring presents), but he or she is unlikely to acquire the underlying values; the foreigner will judge the new culture by the old values and find it lacking. In a way, the visitor in a foreign culture returns to the mental state of an infant, in which he or she has to learn the simplest things over again. This leads to feelings of distress, of helplessness, and of hostility towards the new environment. Often the individual's physical function is affected. Expatriates (the common term for employees working and living temporarily abroad) and migrants have been found to have greater need for medical help shortly after their displacement than before or later. (Hofstede 2001: 424.) Most of the foreign students at TeKu did not recognized them

self's this phenomena, but this doesn't mean it is not happening. Often it is difficult to find the reasons for distress and physical unwell.

The nature of adaption problems depends on both the sending and the receiving culture. Members of host cultures receiving foreign visitors, sojourners, or migrants show psychological reactions that mirror those of the foreigners. They usually start with *curiosity* – the foreigner as are zoo animal. If the visitor stays and tries to function in the host culture, the second phase is *ethnocentrism* – evaluating the foreigner by the standards of the home culture and finding her or him lacking. The visitor will show bad manners, appear too rude or too polite, naive, dirty, and/or stupid. Ethnocentrism is to a population what egocentrism is to an individual: considering one's own little world the center of the universe. Some hosts never get past this ethnocentrism phase. If regularly exposed to foreign visitors, they may move into a third phase, polycentrism, the recognition that different kinds of people should be measured by different standards, and learn to understand the foreigner's behavior according to the foreigner standards. This is a mild form of bi- or multiculturality. (Hofstede 2001: 424.)

3.1 Culture Shock and Expatriate Failure

In their personal and family well-being expatriates often (but not always) report an “acculturation curve”, as shown in Figure 3.1. In this diagram, feelings (positive and negative) are plotted on the vertical axis and time is plotted on the horizontal. Phase 1 is a (usually short) period of *euphoria*: the honeymoon, the excitement of traveling and of seeing new lands. Phase 2 is the period of *culture shock*, when real life starts in the new environment... Phase 3, *acculturation*, sets in when the visitor has slowly learned to function under the new conditions, has adopted some of the local practices, finds increased self-confidence, and becomes integrated into a new social network. Phase 4 is the *stable state* of mind eventually reached. It may remain negative compared to home (4a) – for example, if the visitor continues feeling

an alien and discriminated against. It may be just as good as before (4b), in which case the visitor can be considered to be biculturally adapted, or it may even be better (4c). In the last case the visitor has “gone native” – he or she has become more Roman than the Romans. (Hostede 2001: 425-426.) A similar acculturation curve can be observed from the foreign students at TeKu; especially at the beginning of their studies.

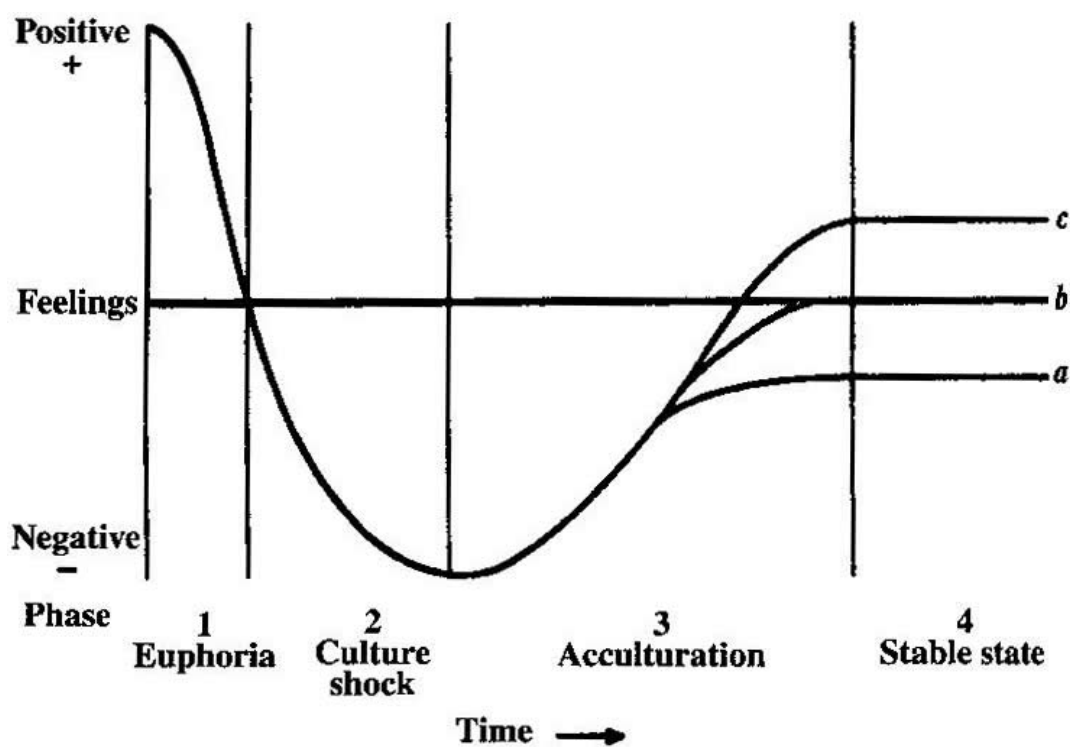


Figure 3.1 The acculturation curve (Hofstede 2001: 426).

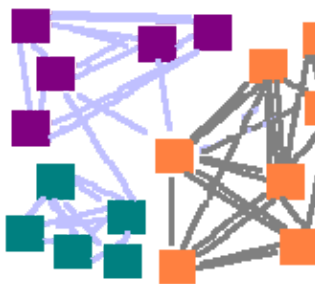
3.2 High and Low Context

The general terms "high context" and "low context" (popularized by Edward Hall) are used to describe broad-brush cultural differences between societies.

High context refers to societies or groups where people have close connections over a long period of time. Many aspects of cultural behavior are not made explicit because most members know what to do and what to think from years of interaction with each other.

Low context refers to societies where people tend to have many connections but of shorter duration or for some specific reason. In these societies, cultural behavior and beliefs may need to be spelled out explicitly so that those coming into the cultural environment know how to behave. (Beer 2004 [on-line].) Figures 3.2 and 3.3 depict the different network connection of high and low context environments.

High Context



- Less verbally explicit communication, less written/formal information
- More internalized understandings of what is communicated
- Multiple cross-cutting ties and intersections with others
- Long term relationships
- Strong boundaries - who is accepted as belonging vs. who is considered an "outsider"
- Knowledge is situational, relational.
- *Decisions and activities focus around personal face-to-face relationships, often around a central person who has authority.*

Figure 3.2 High Context Network (Beer 2004 [on-line]).

Low Context



- Rule oriented, people play by external rules
- More knowledge is codified, public, external, and accessible.
- Sequencing, separation -- of time, of space, of activities, of relationships
- More interpersonal connections of shorter duration
- Knowledge is more often transferable
- Task-centered. Decisions and activities focus around what needs to be done, division of responsibilities.

Figure 3.3 Low Context Network (Beer 2004 [on-line]).

While these terms are often useful in describing some aspects of a culture, one can never say a culture is "high" or "low" because societies all contain both modes. "High" and "low" are therefore less relevant as a description of a whole people, and more useful to describe and understand particular situations and environments.

Ways that High and Low Context Differ by mean of Cultural Knowledge

High: More knowledge is below the waterline -- implicit, patterns that are not fully conscious, hard to explain even if you are a member of that culture

Low: More knowledge is above the waterline -- explicit, consciously organized

(Beer 2004 [on-line].)

3.3 Language and Discourse

Language plays a crucial role in intercultural interactions. Even if English is the lingua franca used in industry and business globally, it does not exclude the need for other languages (cf. e.g. Prolang 2000). As Hoecklin (1995), for example, points out, the knowledge of the local language(s) helps understand the "hidden" aspects of the local culture(s). (Korhonen 2002: 103.) If one does not know the language of one's country of residence, one misses a lot of the subtleties of the culture and is forced to remain a relative outsider, caught in stereotyping. Language is a vehicle of our thoughts. (Hofstede 2001, 425.)

But language not just comes in form of oral expressions. Karen McGee, M.A. (2008 [on-line]) argues that -- In everyday conversation, spoken words are only one way to communicate. As little as 7 percent of a message may be expressed in words. The rest is through facial expression, voice tone, body gestures, and overall posture. When the verbal and nonverbal messages do not match up, people pay more attention to the nonverbal message. That's what is meant by the old saying, "A picture is worth a thousand words." It may be difficult to understand nonverbal messages because different cultures have different expectations about eye

contact, physical touch, body gestures, etc. A person's gender, age, position in society, level of acculturation, and individual preference can complicate communication even more. (McGee 2008 [on-line].)

3.2.1 Learning or Acquisition

Considering second, or foreign, language, *learning* is the product of formal instruction, i.e. education. It comprises a conscious process, which results in conscious knowledge about the language, for example grammar, lexis, and pronunciation. *Acquisition* is the product of a sub-conscious process similar to the process children undergo when they acquire their first native language. Acquisition requires meaningful interaction in the target language [and culture]. (Krashen 1987 according to Schuetz 2001)

It is often thought that successful second language acquisition is accompanied by second culture acquisition, i.e. linguistic competence is accompanied by [inter-]cultural competence. Libben and Lindner (1996; 2001), however, argue that there are differences both in the ways in which linguistic and cultural knowledge are organized and in the acquisition process: Language is a tightly interwoven cognitive system, an “integrated module”, whereas culture is a more loose association of elements (cf. the various versions of English and the cultures connected with them). In other words, boundaries of language are clearer than those of culture: Language is something you do; culture is who you are.

Libben and Lindner (1996; 2001) continue that in case of successful second language acquisition, two separate language systems are developed. In the case of second culture acquisition, instead of the development of a new system, the existing system involves an expansion, [cf. a change or perspective transformation; Mezirow 1991; Taylor 1994; Ibed 1997; Kealy & Protheroe 1996]. An individual cannot switch between cultural systems in the way (s)he can between languages in the midst of a conversation: An individual cannot maintain two [or more] cultures in the same cognitive space. This may result in stress, especially when considering, a

language like English that more than one national culture is connected with. Thus, one key to successful second culture acquisition would be successful stress reduction. (Ibid) (Korhonen 2002: 46-47.) It reflects Hofstede's acculturation curve in chapter 3.1. Thus it should be definitely taken into account when dealing with international students. They need to be given a certain time for "adaption". From the questionnaire and interviews I could see a pattern between some problems and the time since the students' arrival. Meaning that certain problems of first year students are reduced or even vanished after a period of time since their arrival. Usually around the time of their first Christmas in Finland many things are settled, especially the communication between the students. They have adjusted to the different styles of communicating.

3.4 Finns' Intercultural style

It seemed to me useful to include some information about the particular style of communicating in Finland. Most teachers at TeKu are Finnish natives, TeKu is located in Finland and the foreign students will have to interact in one way or another with Finnish people. Therefore they "must" get used to the Finnish style of communicating, or at least know about it. Of course they will find it out by experience but it might help preventing misunderstandings, if it is pointed out to people coming from different cultural backgrounds.

According to Barnlund (1998: 44), the term *communication style* refers to the topics people prefer to discuss, their favorite forms of interaction, and the depth of involvement they demand from each other. It includes the extent to which they rely on the same channels to convey information and extent to which they are tuned to the same level of meaning.

Hall (1984: 60; Ibid 199: 91-92) argues that no communication is totally independent of context, *context* referring to the information that surrounds an event and is therefore bound up with the meaning of that event (Korhonen 2002: 87). As described in chapter 3.2 -- Hall uses

the terms low-context and high context to refer to the amount of information, or meaning that is given in a specific context. In *low-context* communication meaning is best expressed through explicit verbal messages, whereas in *high-context* communication meaning is best expressed through the context and the nonverbal channels of the verbal message. Bennet (1998: 17; 20-21) calls low-context communication digital and linear, and high-context communication analogic and circular, or contextual.

The Finnish style of communicating contains both low- and high-context elements. Perceptions on Finns as communicators can be based on the image Finns have of themselves as communicators, or on the image foreigners have of Finns as communicators.

First of all, the concept of communication reticence, including shyness, has often been connected with Finnish communicators. Sallinen-Kuparinen (1986: 162-168), however, found out in her study that the level of Finnish communication reticence is not higher than that of people in other cultures. Instead, it varies along with the social context,... Sallinen-Kuparinen also found that Finns are less likely to initiate a conversation and to interrupt another speaker.

According to Lehtonen and Sajavaara (1985: 193-201), Finns speak when they have something to say, use observation when approaching new situations, respect privacy, appreciate what other people think, prefer listening to speaking, and have high tolerance of silence, i.e. they tolerate pauses both in and between turns of speaking. (Korhonen 2002: 87-88.)

4 Training in Intercultural Competence

The acquisition of intercultural communication abilities passes through three phases: awareness, knowledge, and skills.

Awareness is where it all starts: the recognition that one carries a particular mental software because of the way one was brought up, and that others who grew up in different environments carry different mental software for equally good reasons.

The awareness phase teaches participants to perceive people in their cultural context and to dig up the unconscious knowledge of their own mental programs.

New and additional *knowledge* should follow. If we are to interact with people in particular other cultures, there are things we have to know about these cultures. We should learn about their symbols, their heroes, and their values, we may at least get an intellectual grasp on where their values differ from ours.

Skills, finally, are based on awareness and knowledge, plus practice. We have to learn to understand the symbols of the other culture, recognize their heroes, practice their rituals, and experience the satisfaction of getting along in the new environment. (Hofstede 2001: 427-428.)

In Cui and Awa's opinion (1992: 311-314; 324-325, 312-314), for example, intercultural competence consist of cognitive, affective, and behavioral components. (See Figure 4.1) Cui and Awa continue to argue that cultural adaption emphasizes personality traits, whereas international job performance requires interpersonal skills. That is, cultural adaption and effective job performance are correlated. (Korhonen 2002: 32.)

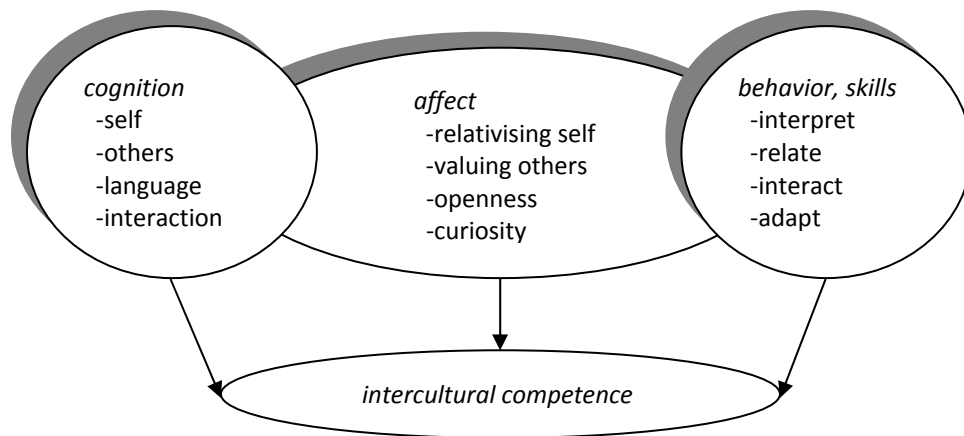


Figure 4.1 Intercultural competence as cognition, affect, and behavior (Adapted from Seelye 1997: 34) (Korhonen 2002: 33).

Hofstede (2001: 428) warns that -- Intercultural competence can be taught, but some students are more gifted than others. Persons with unduly inflated egos, low personal tolerance for uncertainty, histories of emotional instability, or known racist or extreme left- or right-wing political sympathies should be considered bad risks for training that, after all, assumes people's motivation and ability to gain some distance from their own cherished beliefs. (Hofstede 2001: 428.) Billikopf (2007 [on-line]) reconciles that -- as we interact with others of different cultures, there is no good substitute for receptiveness to interpersonal feedback, good observation skills, effective questions, and some horse sense. There is much to be gained by observing how people of the same culture interact with each other. Do not be afraid to ask questions as most people respond very positively to inquiries about their culture. Ask a variety of people so you can get a balanced view. (Billikopf 2007 [on-line].)

4.1 Intercultural Communication

As often stressed in literature, intercultural encounters are charged with communication difficulties. On the other hand, these encounters also seem to offer an *a priori* basis for community and, therefore, for communication. There is no need to overemphasize the misunderstandings connected with intercultural encounters, but, when necessary, people should be able to confront those misunderstandings and problems, and preferably to avoid them in advance. Intercultural communication should be seen as a meeting place where boundaries, identities, and meanings are continuously negotiated. As Gudykunst (1991) points out, all people have the responsibility to try to communicate effectively with all kinds of others.

Instead of short environmental briefings, both organizational and institutions of higher education should make better use what the theory of intercultural communication suggests and sponsor more comprehensive transformation-oriented training courses. Training must be self-directed, didactic-experiential, diverse, and long-term. Intercultural competence should be understood as a *tool of strategic thinking* and planning as well as a source of *competitive advantage* and *added value*. Developing intercultural competence is about developing the ability to be effective in life and career in general. In other words, the potential effects of intercultural training include creating more interculturally educated citizens to society. (Korhonen 2002: 177.) Fries (2008 [on-line]) has put it such as -- an intercultural approach ... goes beyond lists of "Dos and Don'ts" and does not purport to give students tricks or recipes they can apply whenever they communicate with people from a given culture (Fries 2008 [on-line]).

Blommaert (1995) points out that intercultural communication must be a critical discipline. In other words, the relationship between intercultural training and learning vs. the real world must be paid attention to. Culture being highly political, whose culture is and should be taught? Lehtonen (1995: 43) refers to the ethics of intercultural communication and asks, "Do we bear responsibility for teaching people how to persuade, how to make others change

their opinions, how to make them behave in the hoped-for manner or how to convert people to a new faith, ideology, value, or life-style?"

The function of intercultural training is to create *realistic expectations* about what is foreign. When people are aware of potential problems connected with interaction and cultural adaptation, they are more likely able to cope with these obstacles than if they are naive about them. Many people experienced in intercultural encounters agree that there is tolerance and forgiveness extended to culturally different others during initial interactions. A few mistakes will not usually sabotage future relationships, as long as people gain understanding through their mistakes and become increasingly sensitive to cultural diversity, and application of intercultural communication skills could provide great benefits. So far there has been little effort in this respect. (Korhonen 2002: 177.)

4.2 The Learning Environment

The Learning environment has its own culture within the society as stated in chapter 2.4.2. As it is the case in Teku the foreign students form an intercultural learning environment where (Egege & Kutiehleh 2004 [on-line]) -- we are to accept that there are significant enough differences in learning styles and attitudes between different cultural groups... Programs need to familiarize the student with the academic requirements of their institution while ensuring the student engages positively with the university without feeling that their own cultural and academic values are compromised. This is particularly challenging when it comes to teaching soothing like critical thinking.

Critical thinking is considered the most distinguishing feature separating University academic standards from Secondary Schools and the one academic area not overtly addressed at high school. It is clear that critical thinking is seen as a skill that is both objectively valuable and self-evidently useful. According to Angelo and Cross (1993, pp. 65-66). A critical thinking ap-

proach should be applied to “virtually all methods of inquiry practiced in the academic disciplines” and is a key goal of the liberal arts and general education courses. On the other hand, how can one do good science without using reasoning and logic or without using a critical thinking, problem solving approach? (Egege & Kutiehleh 2004 [on-line].)

4.3 Who is Intercultural Competent?

	Known to self	Unknown to self
Known to others	OPEN	BLIND
Unknown to others	HIDDEN	UNKNOWN

Figure 4.2 Johari window model; based on Ingham and Luft's Johari Window

Dealing with people from different cultures is for some people easier for some more difficult. As Hofstede stated (chapter 4) intercultural competence can be learned but the most important factors are the personal characteristics. People have their attitudes, feelings, thoughts etc. about them self's and others. Figure 4.2 shows *the Johari window model* for the relation between people, how they see themselves, the others and vice versa. The Johari Window model is a simple and useful tool for illustrating and improving self-awareness, and mutual understanding between individuals within a group. The Johari Window tool can also be used to assess and improve a group's relationship with other groups. (Chapman 2008 [on-line].) While dealing with people the characteristic traits of a person or group are changing constantly consciously and unconsciously, depending with whom they are in contact with. This arise challenges for both the teachers and the students on the personal and professional lev-

el. These (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation 1994: 9) -- challenges and demands for schools and teachers emerge from ... heightened expectations of schools, advances in research in teaching and learning and the need to manage classrooms that are ... diverse in terms of ethnic, linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation 1994: 9).

So what is expected from an intercultural competent person? Korhonen (2002: 32) utters that -- for effective functioning multicultural teams must use their cultural diversity to generate multiple perspectives, problem definitions, ideas, alternatives, and solutions. They must also learn to reach consensus and balance the simultaneous needs for creativity (divergence) with those of cohesion (convergence). (Korhonen 2002: 32.) Figure 4.3 depicts what is expected from a person with intercultural competence. It seems that being intercultural competent involves a lot of demands but one should keep in mind that (s)he do not have to master all aspect, rather is willing to learn and improve the different skills.

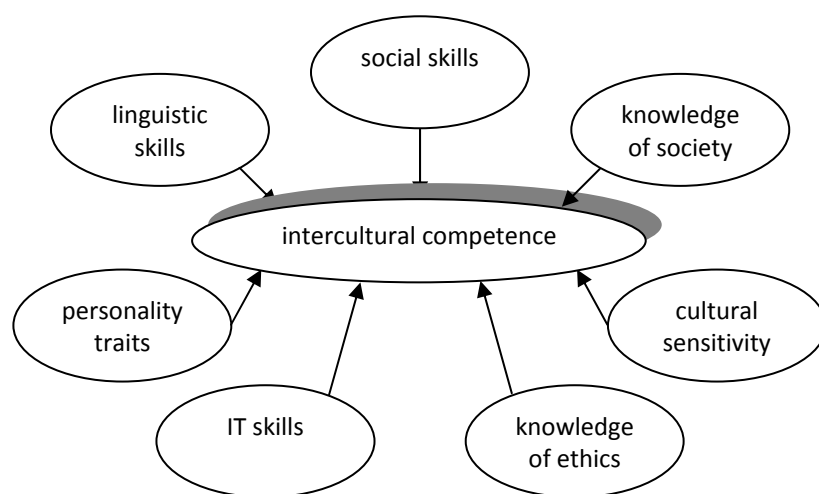


Figure 4.3 Intercultural competence: knowledge, skills, personality traits, and ethics (Adapted from Lehtonen 1998b: 60-62) (Korhonen 2002: 33).

5. Intercultural competence at TeKu

Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Engineering Kuopio (short TeKu) was one of first schools in Finland implementing an International Degree Programme instructed in English within their curriculum. The first Degree Programme: Bachelor of Engineering in Information Technology started on 15.08.1996. At this time TeKu offered three different specialization alternatives; Multimedia, Industrial Programming and Telecommunications Engineering. Since then TeKu has continuously worked on improvements for the Bachelor of Engineering in Information Technology Degree Programme. It has become more specialized, the specialization alternatives has been reduced to Telecommunications Engineering. In this way the school is able to offer more intensive and detailed education in this particular field. Furthermore in upcoming years the specialization will be even more concentrated. Starting from the study year 2008-2009 the school will introduce a Programme in Wireless Embedded Sensor Systems. This will be in compliance with the needs of regional companies working in this field and of course the increasing application of wireless technology.

The school was even rewarded in 2007 by the Ministry of Education for its good work in developing the education, especially the education in English. Still there needs to be work done to address the intercultural environment and improve the situation of the foreign students.

At the moment (23.01.2008) there are 65 international students at TeKu. Most of the students come from China and African countries. A complete list of the international students' home countries is shown in Appendix A. For the future, the wish is to have more Finnish and European students. This will have a positive impact on the learning environment and intercultural competences; both for teachers and students.

The main task of the school is to provide the students with sufficient knowledge in the area of ICT, to train their analytical, technical and problem solving skills. The study time is limited and it is not particular the teachers task to educate the students in intercultural competence. Without being offended it can be said that even teachers do not get enough trained and

therefore lack in intercultural competence. But is it possible to find a way to intensify the training of intercultural competence? Traditionally Technical Degree Programmes such as the Bachelor in Information Technology have not much courses in their curriculum which addresses the challenges of intercultural study and work environments. Students tend to get the impression that their competences just have to be in solving technical problems and international contacts are for the business students.

The Degree Programme itself is an international. The students will work most likely in international active companies or at least deal time to time with colleagues, costumers or business partners from different countries and cultures. Therefore it seems to be natural to take the problematic of intercultural competence stronger into account when designing the curriculum. Unfortunately to this particular importance of intercultural competence is paid little attention in TeKu. Just in recent years have been attempts to include intercultural education into the English lessons which will be more intensified in the upcoming years. But this is leaving the responsibility and main work of educating students' intercultural competence to the English teacher. Only little time can be reserved for it and it is isolated to the class room. Here could be done more. For example, this subject could be included into the 'Introduction to Higher Education Studies'. Perhaps other teachers could be involved too, it will train as well their intercultural competence. Having a complete team of intercultural competent teachers in an international study environment it is substantial and a key to a successful International Degree Programme.

5.1 Opportunities

Besides providing the Internal Degree Programme TeKu provides much more possibilities to the foreign students for education and training. For example it is organizing short courses, like Summer College, with international guest lectures. Additionally TeKu has increasingly (compared to last year 120% more) arranged summer trainee places for which the students

can receive grants. Finding proper trainee places has been a problem for the foreign students due to the language problem and little amount of local ICT companies.

Savonia University of Applied Sciences has numerous partner institutions all over the world and is constantly getting in contact with more schools in other countries. This gives the opportunity to the students at TeKu; also the foreign students, to study, work, or complete their final thesis abroad. Savonia UAS has several grants and financial aids available for the students, giving them the possibility to explore different countries and cultures. Also vice versa the cooperation with partner schools is working well. Many exchange students come to TeKu and stay even up to one year. Unfortunately many students especially from Asia and Africa face problem with visa and residence permission. The same situation is when the foreign students try to come to Kuopio to study. But this is a political problem and out of the schools hands.

6. Discussion of problems

The study was initiated to find out the obstacles foreign students experience concerning their studying and learning at TeKu, caused by cultural, social and economical differences as well language problems. In an environment where many people have to interact and work together, such as the school environment is, it is unavoidable that there will occur challenging situations, differences in opinion and problems. If the environment involves people from different cultural backgrounds, the problems are not necessary more, but most likely of different nature. Which problems are caused by cultural differences is often difficult or even impossible to distinguish. Therefore I decided, besides the conducted questionnaire, which is the main source of information; to ask students and teachers in general about problems, regardless of their nature. First I needed to find out what is disturbing. After all there might be a problem which no one disturbs so in turn it is actually not a problem.

6.1 Language

I decided to dedicate for the language problem an extra chapter, because it is one of the most urgent problems at the Pohjois-Savo region and thus in TeKu. For the process of integration, the most important is to give the students more possibilities to learn Finnish. As mentioned in chapter 3.3 it is extremely helpful to know the host country's native language in order not to feel too alienated. Many students expressed that they would feel more comfortable staying in Kuopio if they would have better ability to speak the Finnish language. (See Appendix E -2 and -3). Even so they appreciate the fact that a large population in Kuopio speaks English, which helps enormously to deal with the every day life situations, the foreign students want to get in closer contact with Finnish people; not just the ones who are willing and/or like to speak English. Furthermore the students from third and fourth year suggested that the weight of the Finnish language courses should be at the beginning of the studies, because at that time the interest on the Finnish language and the motivation is the highest. This is also in compliance with the acculturation curve (see Figure 3.1) in chapter 3.1. The ministry of education has recognized this problem as well, since it suggest in the education development plan (Koulutus ja tutkimus vuosina 2007–2012 Kehittämissuunnitelma) that there should be more possibilities for foreign students to study Finnish and even Swedish. Additional there is to mention there is an increasing deficit of workforce in Finland and therefore it is important that more foreign students will stay in Finland and contribute their skills to the Finnish society.

The ability to communicate in English is a condition to be accepted at the Degree Programme itself. Here are complains at both sides; the teachers- and the students side. Communication problems in general are natural phenomena because of the different origin of the students and their different dialects and ways of pronunciation. As mentioned already in chapter 3.2.1, the problematic of feebly understanding each others English decreases gradually. Students get used to the speaking styles of their student pearls and after the second or third period of the first study year the “problem” of communicating in English is “solved”. Interesting is to see (Appendix D-3) that students in the fourth year find that they English is rather satis-

fyng than good compared to the first and second year students. Perhaps it is related to their more critical point of view. Some students have considerable bad English and even problems to pass the compulsory communication course in English. A possible solution would be testing the oral English skills at the Entrance examination or conducting personal interviews.

The fact that there has come complains from students about teachers having a bad English cannot be ignored. But this seems to be are general problem in whole Finland. The ministry of education suggest in the same education development plan mentioned above (Koulutus ja tutkimus vuosina 2007–2012 Kehittämissuunnitelma) that language skills of teaching staff have to be sufficient for continuing teaching in a foreign language. The higher education institutions require from teachers who teach in a foreign language demonstration of mastering the teaching language by a language examination or another recognized way. TeKu is as well aware of this problem and has been already some time now sending during summer teachers to an intensive English speaking course in Great Britain. I like to mention that in my own experience it is actually not always a minus that some teachers are week in spoken English. Many students, as mentioned above, are them self's not perfect in English or have a different dialect. Therefore it makes it easier, in the sense that students do not need to be shy or embarrassed if they are not speaking fluent English. Some teachers are able to use this fact to create a more relaxed atmosphere in the class room.

6.2 Money

Studying the International Degree Programme at TeKu is without tuition fees. The possibility to study free of charge is probably the reason number one why students choose Finland and corollary TeKu as the place to study. Answers to the related question in Appendix C are reflecting this as well. Nevertheless many students find them self struggling financially. Especially in the first year students are disappointed because of the little amount of possibilities to support their living in Kuopio with work. An unfortunate result is that in the second year

classes are reduced up to 50%. Some students transfer to other institutions in the Helsinki area, some other intercept or even quit their studies. This has also an impact on the financial situation of the school since the funds are based on the successful and in-time completion of the Degree Programme.

What to do? One possibility to offer more blended courses by taking care that the quality of teaching will not suffer. More independent and outlying forms of learning could give the students the time to work in places far from the school. By asking students what they would suggest to other students when coming to TeKu, it came up that more money should be reserved (See Appendix E-5). Perhaps it might be useful to point out more intensive the living expenses in Finland in the application guide.

6.3 What bothers the students?

At first I interviewed the class speakers and tutors since they have usually a more general view of the problems. As it turned out there are not really cultural difference related problems between the students. The biggest problem is the feeling of isolation. Some students feel it stronger some less. The social live is reduced to a minimum. One student expressed that his daily path is from home to school and back home. Other than that there is little contact with the “outside” world. Students find it hard to get information of what is going on in the Town. Perhaps the main responsibility here lies by the student union. Appendix C reveals that more information in English should be given. Wishes has been made that the student union is providing more practical help for the foreign students, for example were to get help for legal matters. The student union could also organize more cultural activities such as sports events to bring people together. So far most events are student parties. One student described as “95% of the student meeting places are restaurants”, which are not the best way to get to know the Finnish students, since they are a cultural events that are really hard

to understand for a foreign person. Also unfortunate for a person with limited liquidity; it needs money.

The students felt that there is a good atmosphere in the class and they respect each other. To the question about group work came the answer that in principle student can work with anyone regardless of the cultural background. But of course if possible they prefer to work together with their friends or people from the same ethnic group. Group work in general is a good opportunity for the students to get to know each other. Interviews have revealed that at first students are uneasy to work in groups but later realized that it brought them closer together. I suggest that the teachers demand more group work already in the first study year and take care that students will work with students from different countries and more important that the groups will varied, meaning that the students will get the chance to work with different people.

From the tutors came complains that they are not well enough trained to deal with the problems of foreign students. They have to deal with a lot of “every day “-problems, like arranging flats, showing where the train station or the hospital is, as well as the explaining the health insurance system or where to get electricity, telephone, etc; even how to behave in “Finnish normal live situations”. All these questions are sometimes overwhelming and difficult to answer in a satisfying way. The training the tutors receive is meant for tutoring Finnish classes, which naturally have different problems as international classes. I know that there are institutions that have special tutor training for tutoring foreign students. I suggest that TeKu or the student union, which is responsible for the tutor training, could get in contact with these institutions.

The following problems are not caused by cultural differences between the students but I feel urged to mention them. After all the school wants to improve its services. Making it short; complains came that some teachers have limited teaching skills; in other words they have excellent professional knowledge but can not deliver it to the students effectively. Oth-

er more dramatic opinions are that some teachers seem to be very lazy, disinterested and give not sufficient support to the students. It has been said that the quality of teaching was better in the first years, where mainly basic studies are conducted. The specialized (perhaps important) studies were from lower quality. See Appendix D-4 for a comparison of the different classes and their opinions about selected education services. To the organization of the lessons came up suggestions, that some lessons were students work independent with very little interaction with the teacher or other students, could be easily organized as distance learning. I like to point out that in most courses a minimum attendance is not required. Students are not obligated to come to every lesson. They can decide freely how important the contact lessons are for them. Therefore given face-to-face lessons should be cognitive, interaction oriented and more as just a substitute for self-learning. Listening and learning is according to the questionnaire (Appendix C) the preferred learning style; however there has come the wish for more discussion of problems during the lesson. This would also support the critical thinking mentioned in chapter 4.2.

A quit interesting point is that too much flexibility was seen as a problem. This means, as an example, that teachers are willing to change the time table, or exam dates and times to the students' convenience. It is actually a good thing, having this kind off "hidden curriculum" in order to give the students more flexibility and more possibility to study subjects other than planned for them in the curriculum, and therefore addressing positively other problems of the students, such us they being able to complete their studies in shorter time or having more convenient times to work. But the problem is, that the time table for the class, which is actually supposed to study a certain subject, will be sometimes mixed up to such extent that it will become inconvenient to them. Teachers have expressed it as well as a problem, but in the end they are in charge to take care that the general study plan will not be mixed up too much and that the needs of the target group according the curriculum will come first.

6.4 What bothers the teachers?

Every story has two sides, also the problems in the study environment of TeKu. Again, remarks from the teachers confirm that the problems are not so much caused by cultural differences. Nevertheless they are disturbing problems. One big problem is plagiarism. Hereby is not meant wrong forms of citation or leaving out the source of some texts, rather the fact that some students seek, for example, reports from the internet and then try to deliver them to the teacher as their own work. To point out in which cultural groups this is more or less a problem is beyond this paper. Perhaps the reader has his own experiences. Addressing this problem is a time and work consuming unpleasant task. The best solution is to explain to the students what it is and what the consequences are. As written by Plagiarism.org: Learning Center (2008 [on-line]) -- students hurt more than just their instructors and the person from whom they steal. They also hurt themselves, because they fail to acquire the research, analytic, and writing skills that they would have learned by doing the assignment honestly. Finally, plagiarism also victimizes those classmates who have legitimately earned their grades and degrees, and who will be competing with the plagiarizer for school admissions and jobs. (Plagiarism.org: Learning Center 2008 [on-line].)

Another problem is that students come too late to the lessons. Perhaps it is related to the different definitions about punctuality. Other problems related to manners and behaviors are that students don't switch off their mobile phones or keep them in silent mode. It is understandable that sometimes people expecting important phone calls, but if a loud ring tune interrupts the ongoing lesson, it is very disturbing; also for the other students. This is clearly something what students have to respect, no matter what their cultural, professional or emotional backgrounds are. The same goes for the problem that some students go in and out the class room during the lesson as their like, talk too much, forget too often needed material or disobey the rules during exams. It is an ongoing list. My own observations showed that it is not so much a problem with European and in particular Finnish students. It could be in relation in the differences in Power Distance described by Hofstede In chapter 2.3.1. The highly respect towards authorities like the teacher is seen, in countries with a high Power

Distance Index is not expected in Finland. Certain self-discipline is missing and needs to be learned. After all, students in a higher educational institution need to understand the policies of the school, and there should be no excuse not to follow these rules and guidelines.

6.5 Questionnaire findings

Being the kernel of this project, the outcome of the questionnaire was from great interest. The questionnaire was conducted partly via pen and paper and partly electronically by e-mail. To reach as many as possible students I tried to give them these different options. The questions are mainly in form of multiple choices with a few, where the student's own opinion is asked (see Appendix E). To keep the answers anonymous I was not interested about the names of the students, just about their home countries. This was particularly important to find the patterns between cultural differences as described by Hofstede's five dimensional model (See chapter 2.3.1 and Appendix B).

Unfortunately only 30 (46%) from 65 international students participated on the questionnaire. The reasons remain unclear. Nonetheless the result can be seen as a representative outcome. Appendix C depicts the graphical outcome of the questionnaire and in Appendix E can be seen some opinioned answers. I decided to combine the results since the differences of the answers between the classes are little. Some differences (See Appendix D) are existing of course, which I will go into later in detail. In general I recognized a more critical view of the students in the third and fourth year and then the ones in the first or second year. I assume that the older students have experienced more courses and teaching styles in addition to the fact that they are clearer about their goals.

Some questions have been already answered above and there is no need for repetition. Students choose Finland as their study place because of the possibility to study in English and free of charge. TeKu they choose because of the subject. This shows that TeKu is going the

right way with the specialized Degree Programme. Students have a healthy pressure of success and are self motivated. It was pointed out that the way the studies are organized in Finland is very good. The relatively short course system with following exam gives a lot of flexibility, reduces the fear of failure and thus provides a relaxed study environment.

As already mentioned above, many students tend to move away from Kuopio during their studies. The majority of students answered the question '*Do you consider moving to another city to continue your studies?*' with 'yes' with the reason for better work opportunities, especially in the fourth year (See Appendix D-2). The next two questions are about the general satisfactory of the students. Again (See Appendix D-4, D-5) the third and fourth years students are more critical. I just like to point out that the library and the facilities of the school were very positively valued. Worthy of note was also to find out that the foreign students are mostly in contact with family member and other foreign students. It confirms the feeling of isolation earlier mentioned.

Surprisingly, most students expressed that they felt only a slightly culture shock. Perhaps the question was misunderstood, since the majority found it problematic to deal with the weather, the language difficulties and the culture. Appendix D 6-8 shows how these feelings are changing over the years. It also seems that the students feel them self's more intercultural competent due to their residence in Finland, even so they didn't receive a special education for it. Most important are anyhow the own experiences made.

6.6 Summary of problems

Problems

- foreign students feel isolated
- little possibility to find jobs
- not enough trainee places
- students don't have enough English skills
- teachers don't have enough English skills
- some students have financial problems
- students want more information in English
- students want more practical help
- groups are preferred within own culture circle
- students wish more discussions in lesson
- tutors need specialized training
- students want better services from student union
- More support from form teacher
- Some teachers have limited skills
- Sometimes timetables are too mixed
- missing discipline in class room (e. g. come too late, ringing mobile phone,)
- plagiarism

Possible solution

- ✓ offer more activities like sports to bring people in contact
- ✓ get in contact with local companies
- ✓ find more trainee places
- ✓ test English skills during entrance examination or conduct interview
- ✓ language training
- ✓ prepare before application, offer blended courses
- ✓ update information system
- ✓ provide more practical help and information
- ✓ teacher have to build groups and insist more on group work
- ✓ more interactive lessons
- ✓ training for tutoring foreign students
- ✓ student union should care more for foreign students
- ✓ provide more support and contact
- ✓ provide training
- ✓ take care that curriculum will be followed
- ✓ insist on order
- ✓ harder punishment

7. Conclusion

Conducting this survey has given me the opportunity to investigate a multicultural learning environment from different points of view, where students from really diverse cultures study together and try to have a normal (as far as possible) social life.

Problematic is their financial situation. Finnish language courses should be more intensified, which could help better integration and increased possibility for finding a job. The feeling of isolation, the foreign students' experience, is probably the biggest 'cultural' problem. Students find it difficult to get in contact with Finnish students and people. As above stated, more activities for the students could help. I like to point out that to exchange students are offered a lot of activities. Perhaps it would be possible to offer the same to the 'regular' foreign students.

Problems caused by the cultural diversity between the foreign students in the school environment are little. It can be repatriated to the fact that they are in the same situation. Still there are possibly some unrevealed issues which did not come during this study.

The theoretical part of this work is hopefully helpful to have a better picture of an intercultural learning environment. Perhaps this project will encourage students and teachers to deal in the future with upcoming challenges/problems openly and as Fires (2008 [on-line]) has put it -- from an intercultural point of view (Fires 2008 [on-line]). Important to mention is also that there are many extra services provided without involving the school board. An example is the preparation of lunch after normal lunch hours for Muslim students during Ramadan; a simple gesture towards integration and respect of other cultures.

This paper is not meant for giving advice rather to be an eye-opener that (Billikopf 2007 [on-line]) -- differences between cultures and peoples are real and can add richness (and humor) to the fabric of life (Billikopf 2007 [on-line]).

In short; the foreign students need to be self active and should not hesitate to ask when ever they need help or answers. The teachers should be open to suggestions, new learning and teaching methods. Important is that they explain clearly required rules and guidelines which in turn need to be followed; as well the curriculum. As for everyone, the best is to be open to new, unknown things and respect strange people and behavior, even if we do not understand them at first. There is always the possibility that we learn something useful from them. Fires (2008 [on-line]) believes, and I strongly agree with her, -- that there is more than one path to knowledge and truth, and that people who feel they have found the one good way are frightening, no matter which way they have found (Fires 2008 [on-line]).

References

BOOKS

- Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (1994). *Quality in Teaching*. Organisation for Economic co-operation and Development (OECD).
- Hofstede, Geert (1997). *Cultures and Organizations – Software of the mind*. McGraw-Hill.
- Hofstede, Geert (2001). *Culture’s Consequences – Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations*. Sage Publications.
- Korhonen, Kaisu (2002). *Intercultural Competence as Part of Professional Qualifications: A Training Experiment with Bachelor of Engineering Students*. University of Jyväskylä.
- Oxford University (1994). *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of current English*. Oxford University Press

WEB PAGES

- Beer, Jennifer E. (2004). High and Low Context:, *Culture at WORK*, April 21, 2004 [on-line].
<http://www.culture-at-work.com/highlow.html#Definitions>
- Billikopf Encina, Gregorio (2007). Cultural Differences? Or, are we really that different? *University of California*, December 17, 2007 [on-line].
- Business and Culture (2007). 5 Dimensions of National Culture, January 18, 2007[on-line]. <http://www.businessandculture.org/5D%20Model%20details.htm>
- Chapman, Alan (2008). Johari Window Model, January 4, 2008 [on-line].
<http://www.businessballs.com/johariwindowmodel.htm>
- Egege, Sandra & Kutieleh, Salah (2004). Critical Thinking: Teaching Foreign Notions to Foreign Students, *International Education Journal Vol 4, No 4, 2004*, July 27, 2004 [on-line, PDF].
<http://ehlt.flinders.edu.au/education/iej/articles/v4n4/Egege/paper.pdf>

Fries, Susan (2008) Cultural, Multicultural, Cross-cultural, Intercultural: A Moderator's Proposal, TESOL-France, February 18, 2008 [on-line, PDF].
<http://www.tesol-france.org/articles/fries.pdf>

Hofstede, Geert (2007). A summary of my ideas about national culture differences, November 19, 2007 [on-line].
<http://feweb.uvt.nl/center/hofstede/page3.htm>

Hofstede, Geert (2008). Geert Hofstede Cultural Dimensions, March 6, 2008 [on-line].
http://www.geert-hofstede.com/hofstede_dimensions.php

McGee, Karen; M.A. (2008). How Cultural Differences May Affect Student Performance, *SchwabLearning*, May 8, 2008 [on-line].
<http://www.schwablearning.org/articles.aspx?r=290>

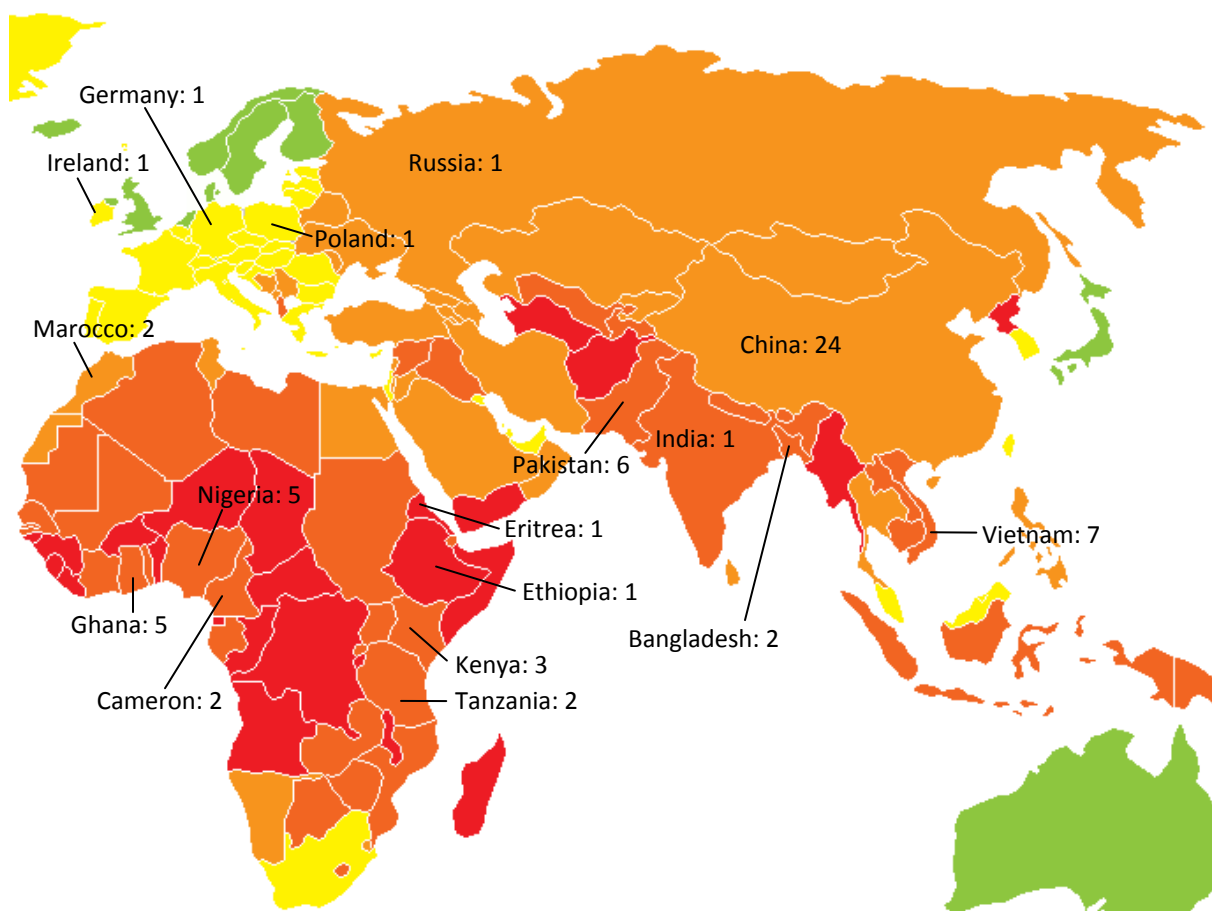
Merriam-Webster (2008). inter- - Definition from the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, March 6, 2008 [on-line].
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary>

Ministry of Education (2008). KOULUTUS JA TUTKIMUS VUOSINA 2007–2012 Kehittämissuunnitelma, May 6, 2008 [on-line, PDF].
http://www.minedu.fi/export/sites/default/OPM/Koulutus/koulutuspolitiikka/asiakirjat/kesu_2012_fi.pdf

Plagiarism.org : Learning Center (2008). Guidelines for Plagiarism Prevention, May 9, 2008 [on-line].
http://www.plagiarism.org/learning_center/preventing_guidlines.html

Appendix A Nationalities of present foreign students at TeKu (23.01.2008)

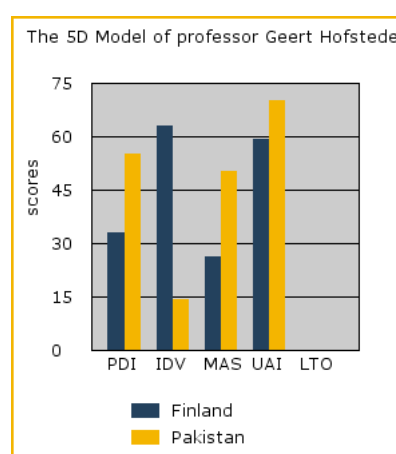
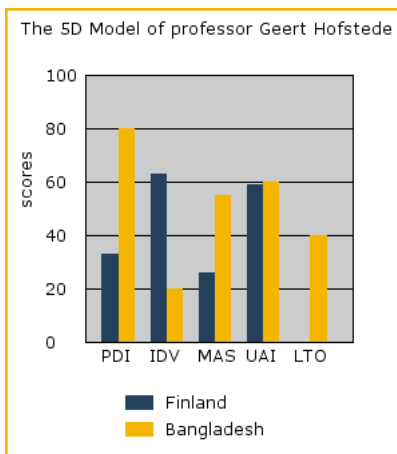
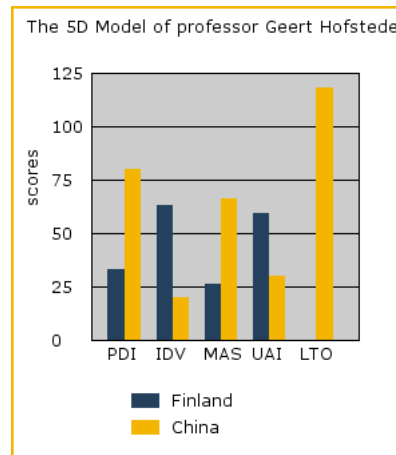
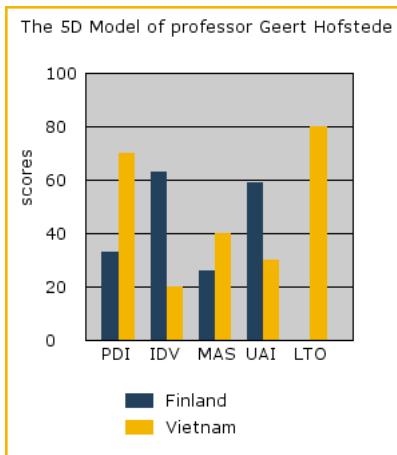
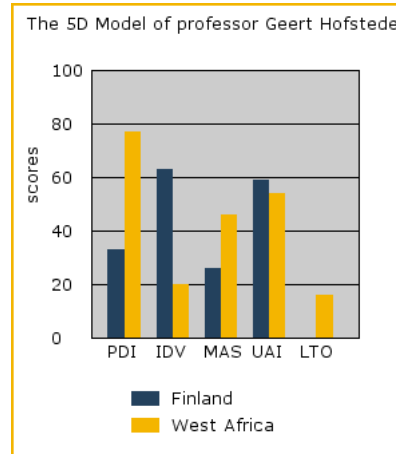
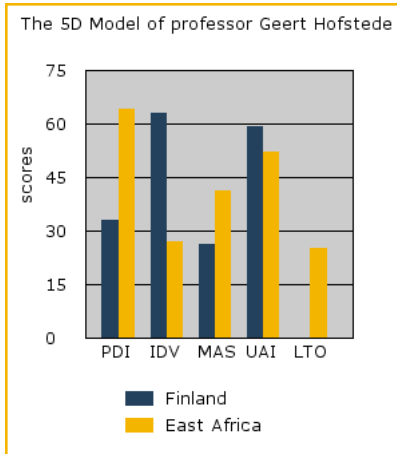
Country	Persons	Country	Persons
Bangladesh	2	Kenya	3
Cameroon	2	Marocco	2
China	24	Nigeria	5
Eritrea	1	Pakistan	6
Ethiopia	1	Poland	1
Germany	1	Russia	1
Ghana	5	Tanzania	2
India	1	Vietnam	7
Ireland	1		
		Total	65



Appendix B Geert Hofstede™ Cultural Dimensions Compare of Finland with some international students home cultures

PDI Power Distance Index
MAS Masculinity
LTO Long-Term Orientation

IDV Individualism
UAI Uncertainty Avoidance Index



(Hofstede 2008 [online])

Short explanation to Geert Hofstede's: Cultural Value Dimensions.

1. Power Distance

This dimension focuses on the nature of human relationship in terms of hierarchy.

Basic Traits of High / Low Power Distance

High power distance	Low power distance
Power / Authority are facts of life	Minimize social / class structures
Everyone has a specific place	No set hierarchy
Those in power emphasize position	Those in power minimize position
Respect for authority	Respect for individuality
Centralized authority	Decentralized authority

Some Consequences:

In High Power Distance cultures: obedience to authority (parent, boss, officials) is expected; language filled with power or hierarchy indicators; managers / teachers tend to be autocratic while subordinates expect direct supervision.

In Low Power Distance cultures, emphasis is on challenging decisions, expecting autonomy and independence.

2. Individualism / Collectivism

This dimension focuses on relationship between the individual and the group. Highly individualistic cultures believe individual is most important unit. They encourage:

- People taking care of themselves
- Making decisions based on individual needs
- "I" mentality
- Highly collectivistic cultures believe group is most important unit. They encourage:
 - Primary loyalty to group (nuclear family, extended family, caste, organization)
 - Decision-making based on what is best for the group.
 - Dependence on organization and institutions (Expectation that organization / institution / group will take care of individual)
- "We" mentality

Some Consequences:

- Individualistic cultures -- people speak out, question, confrontational, are direct
- Collectivistic -- people blend in, avoidance conflict, use intermediaries

3. Masculinity / Femininity

This dimension focuses on how extent to which a society stress achievement or nurture. Masculinity is seen to be the trait which emphasizes ambition, acquisition of wealth, and differentiated gender roles. Femininity is seen to be the traits which stress caring and nurturing behaviors, sexuality equality, environmental awareness, and more fluid gender roles.

Some consequences:

Masculine societies tend to see men as assertive and women as nurturing. Men tend to be competitive, visible, stress success, and vocation-oriented.

Feminine societies tend to have both men and women in nurturing roles and much less emphasis on assertiveness for either. Both men and women focus on cooperation, awareness of those who are in need, social accommodation is important.

4. Uncertainty Avoidance

This dimension focuses on how cultures adapt to changes and cope with uncertainty. Emphasis is on extent to which a culture feels threatened or is anxious about ambiguity.

Basic Traits of High / Low Uncertainty Avoidance

High Uncertainty Avoidance	Low Uncertainty Avoidance
Have more formal rules	Believe that the fewer rules the better
Prefer details, specific plans	Tolerate generalization
Less tolerant of deviant ideas	Tolerate deviance
Consensus seeking	Seek individual opinions
Minimize risk	Approve of risk taking
Ritualized / ceremonial	Avoid ritualization and ceremony
Belief in absolute truth / high expertise	Accept relativity of belief

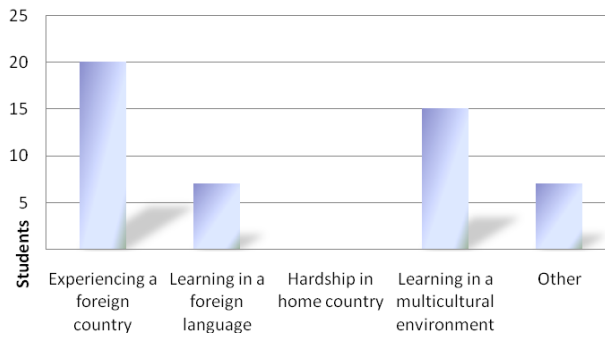
Some Consequences:

High Anxiety Avoidance cultures are more resistant to change, often characterized by more elaborate rituals / religious practices

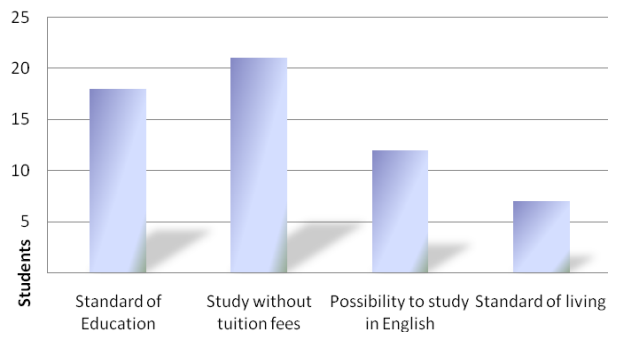
Low Anxiety Avoidance cultures tend to accept competition and conflict, tolerate dissent and deviance. (Business and Culture 2007 [on-line].)

Appendix C Questionnaire result

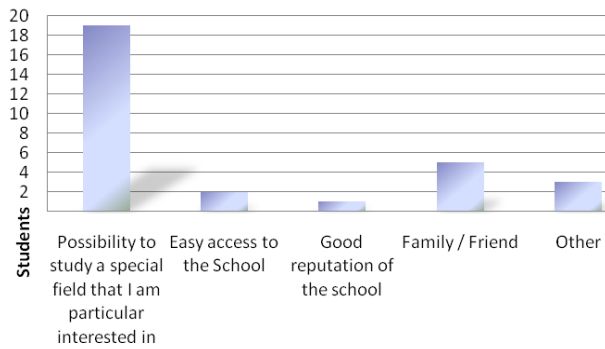
Why did you choose to study abroad?



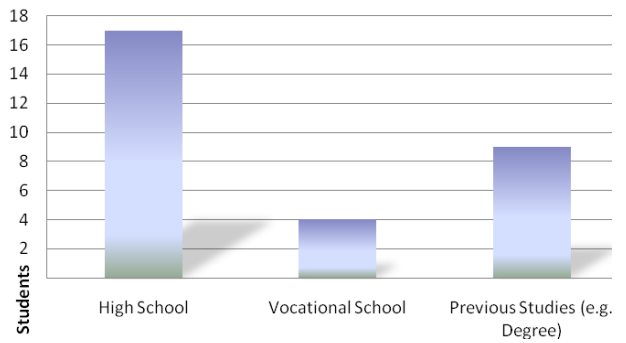
Why Finland?



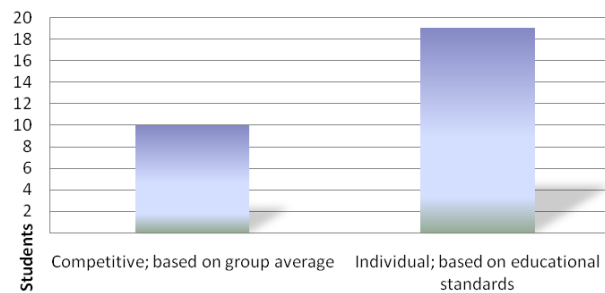
Why TeKu?



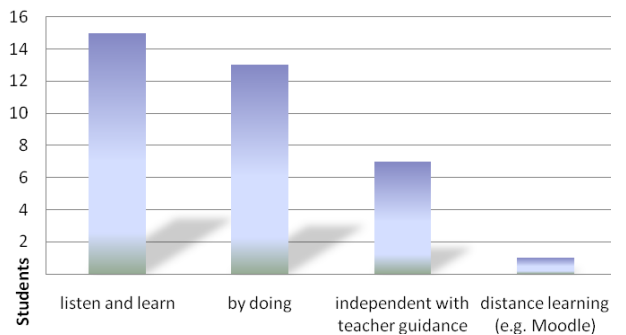
What is your educational background?



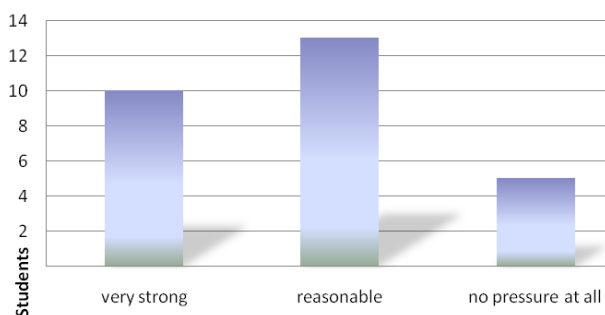
How were the assessment methods in your home country?



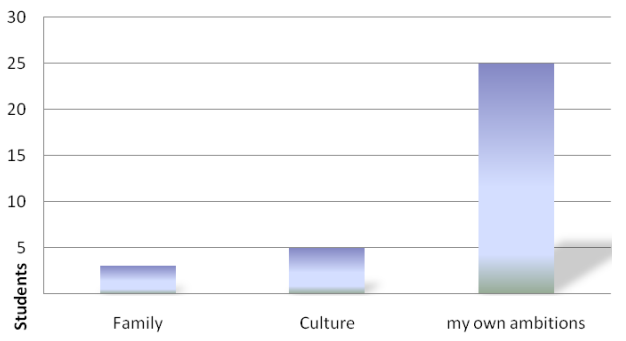
What learning style do you prefer?



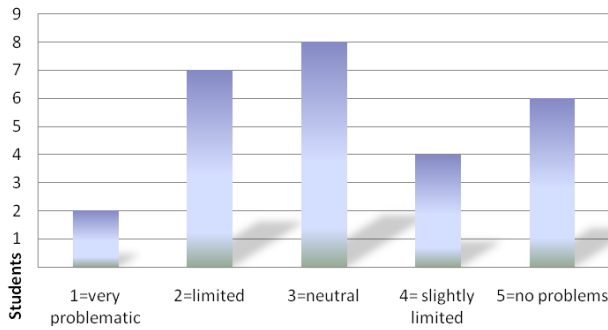
How strong is for you the pressure of success?



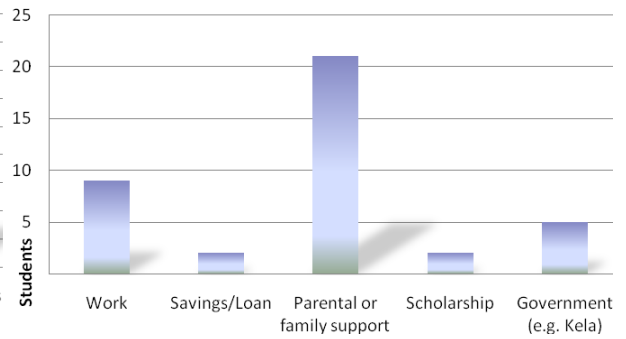
From where is the pressure mostly?



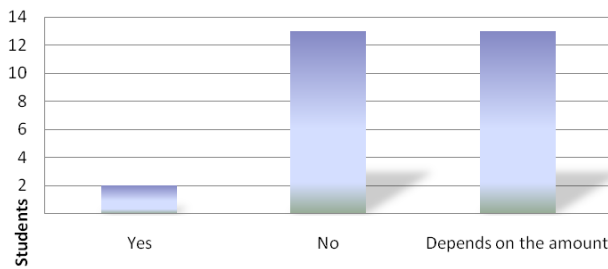
How is your financial situation?



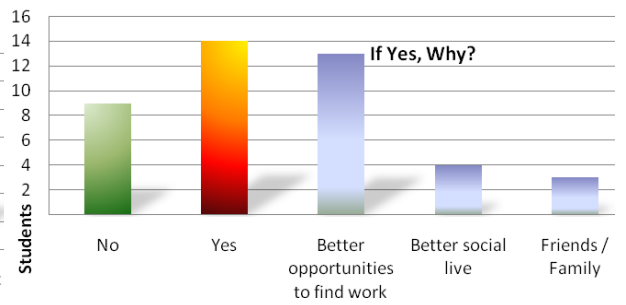
How do you finance your studies?



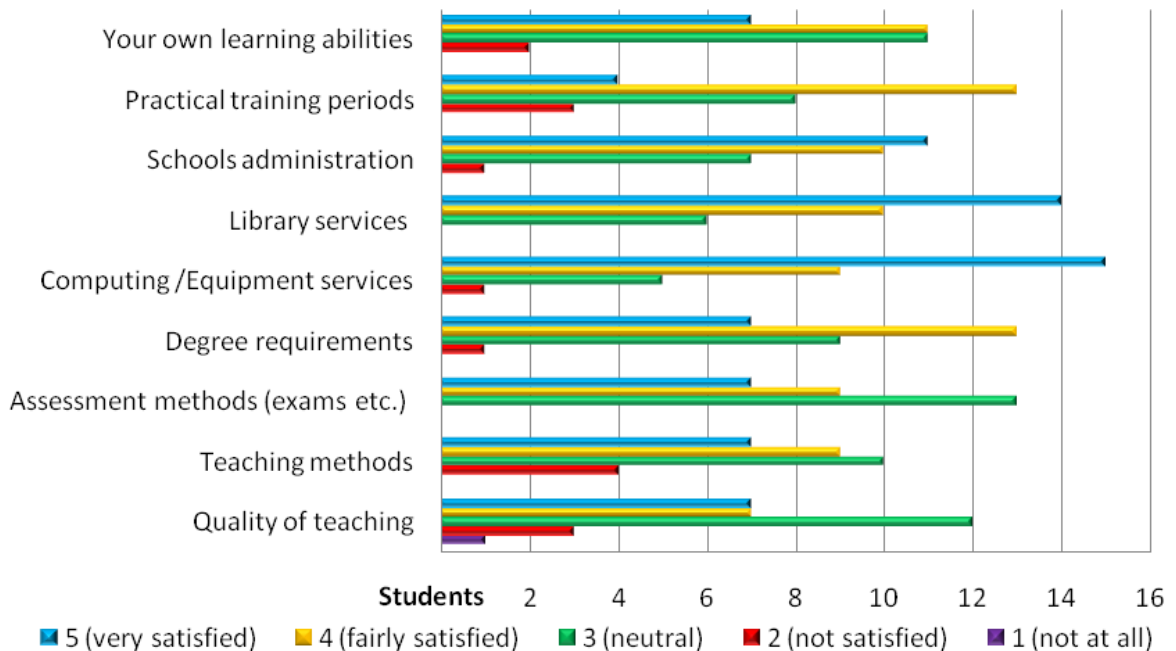
Would you be willing to continue your studies at your school if you had to pay tuition fees?



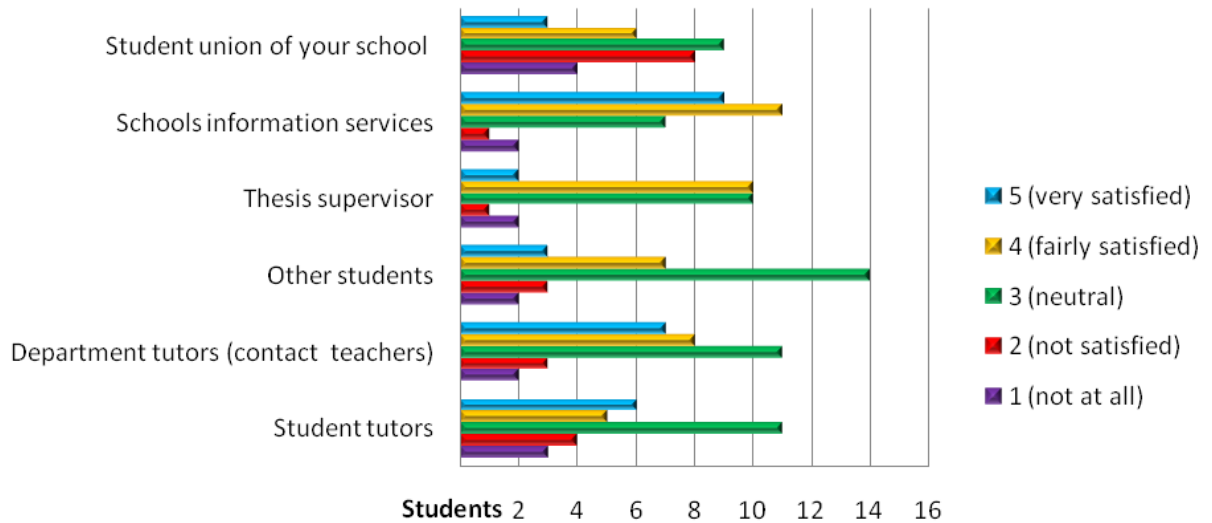
Do you consider moving to another city to continue your studies?



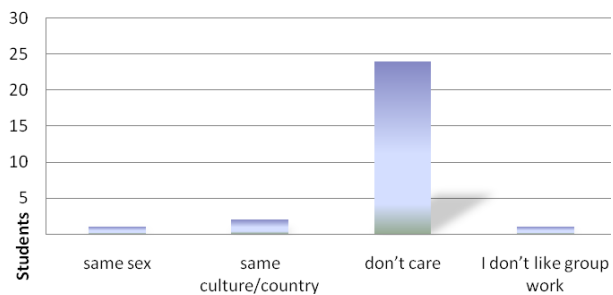
How satisfied are you with the following?



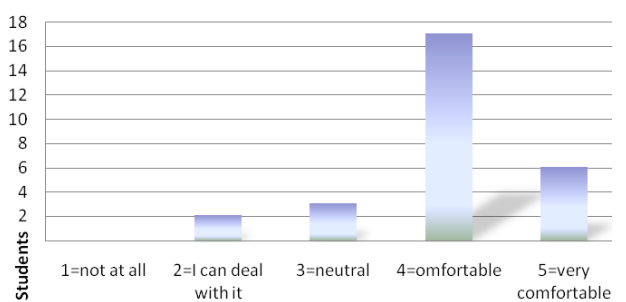
How satisfied are you with guidance received from the following?



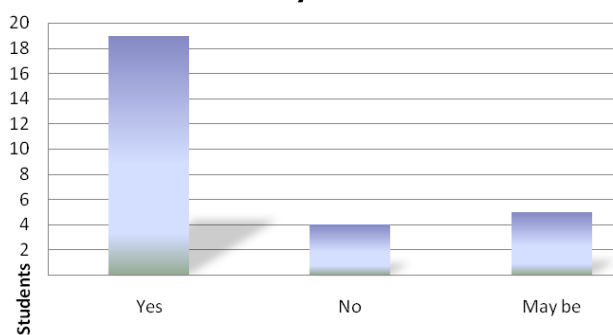
Do you work in a group rather with people from?



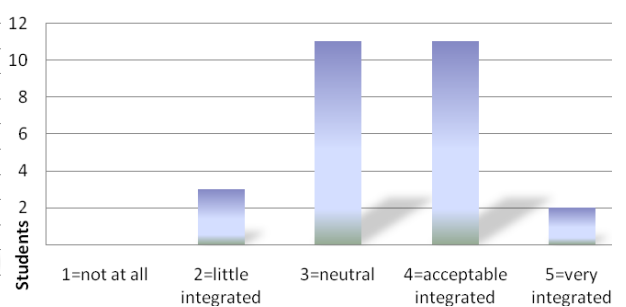
How comfortable do you feel in your class?



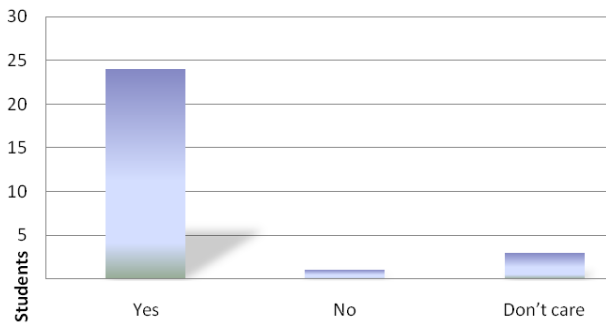
Would you like to learn more Finnish if offered by the school?



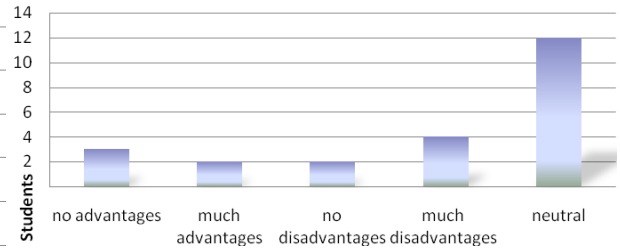
How well do you feel integrated into the school?



Would you like to have more information available in English about free time activities (e.g. student parties, sport activities, travel possibilities, city services, discounts)?

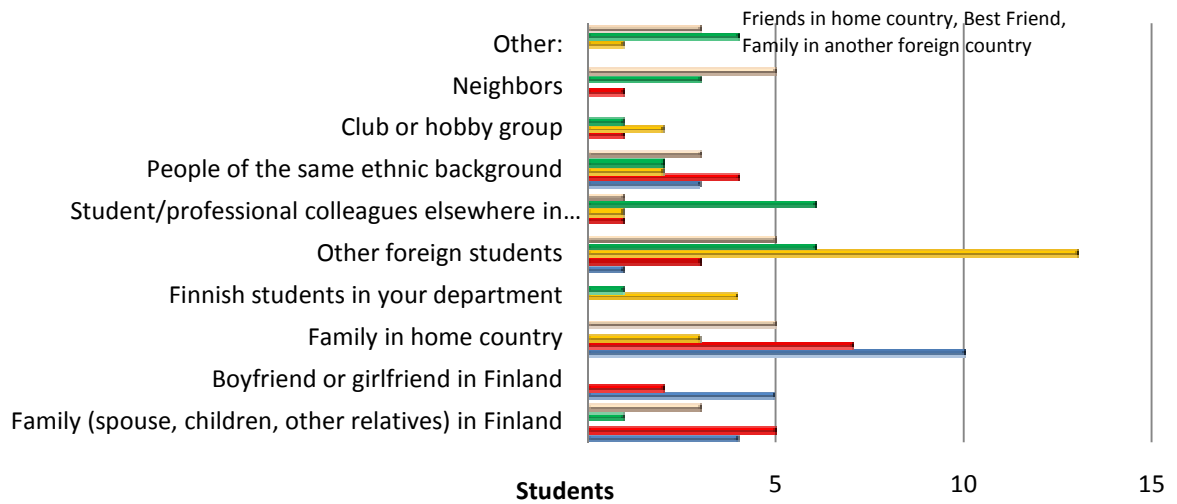


What advantages or Disadvantages have you personally experienced of being a foreigner?



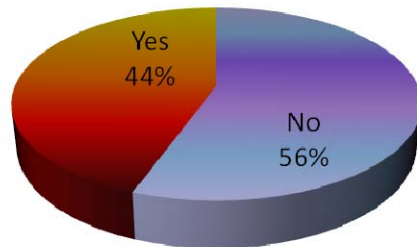
With whom are you most actively in contact with?

[Choose four (4) in the order of importance (1=most important)]

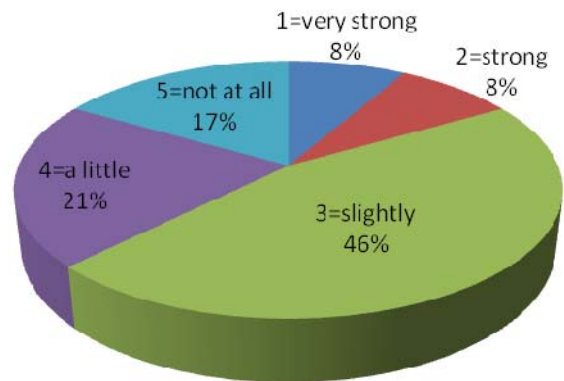


importance not specified | 4 3 2 1 (most important)

Has your motivation and plans for studying in Finland somehow changed during your stay here?



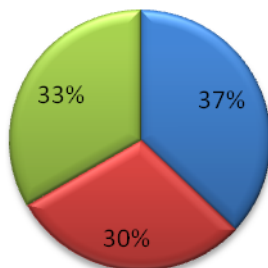
How did you experience the phenomenon of Culture shock?



How do you deal living in Kuopio/Finland regarding following?

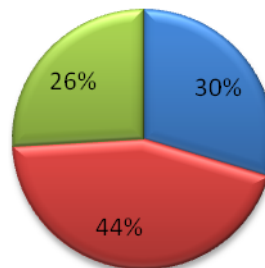
Weather

- it is difficult
- slightly difficult
- no problems



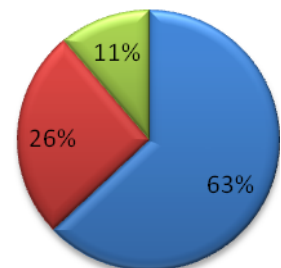
Language

- it is difficult
- slightly difficult
- no problems

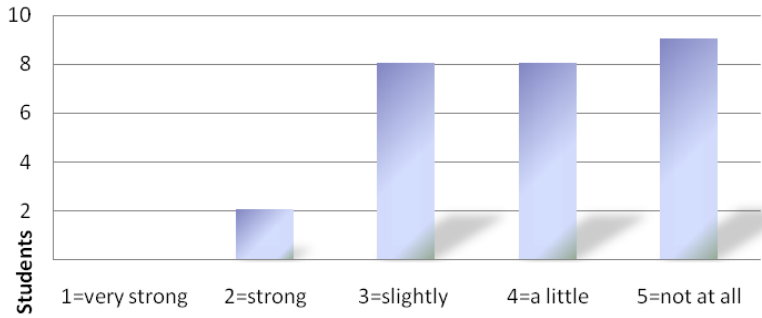


Culture

- it is difficult
- slightly difficult
- no problems

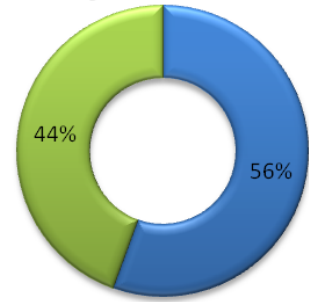


How has stereotyping or prejudice influenced your approach/judgment toward people from other cultures?

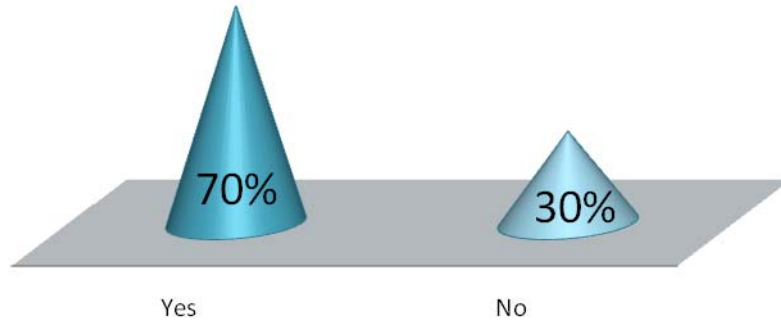


How has it changed?

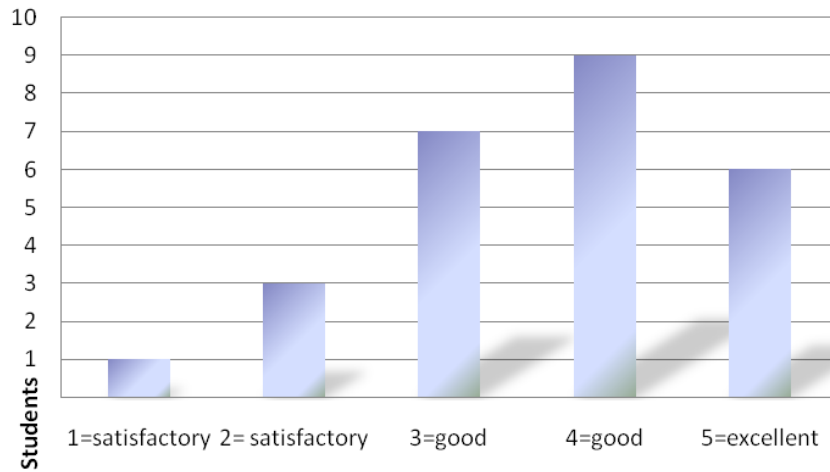
- Better; I am more open
- worse; my prejudices got confirmed
- no change



In your opinion have you become more “intercultural competent”?

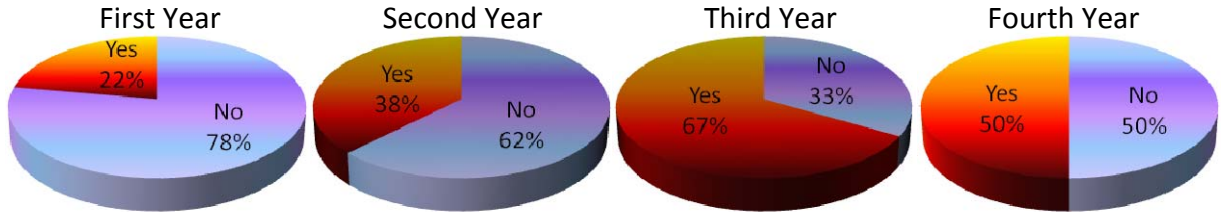


In your opinion, how is your English?

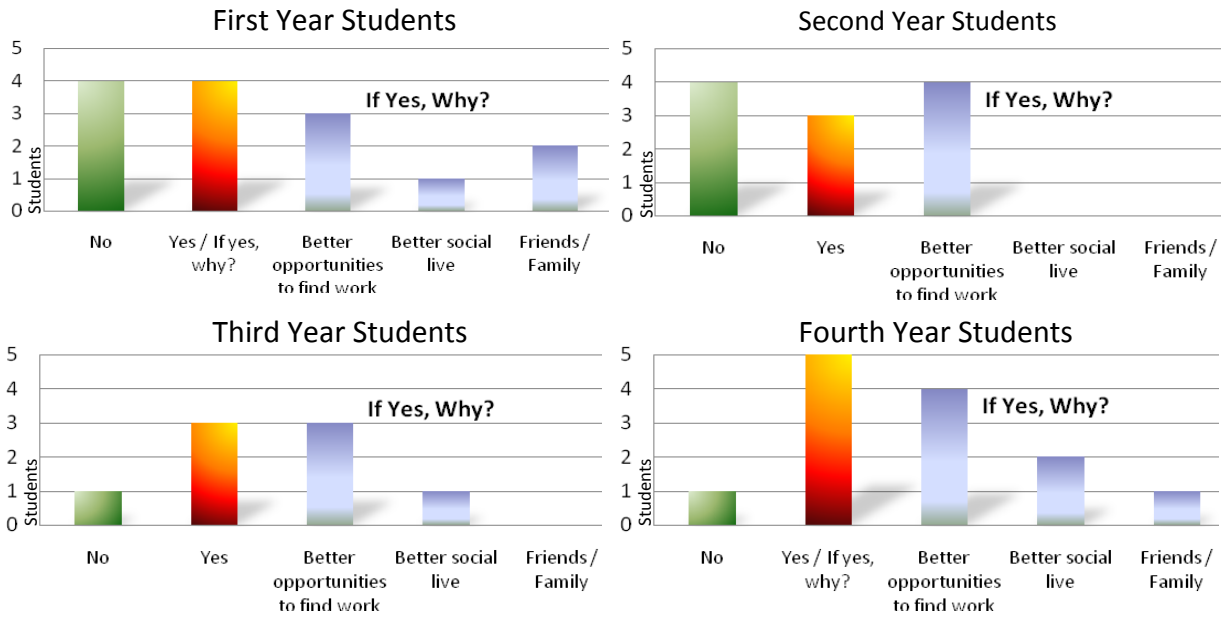


Appendix D Answer comparison between different classes

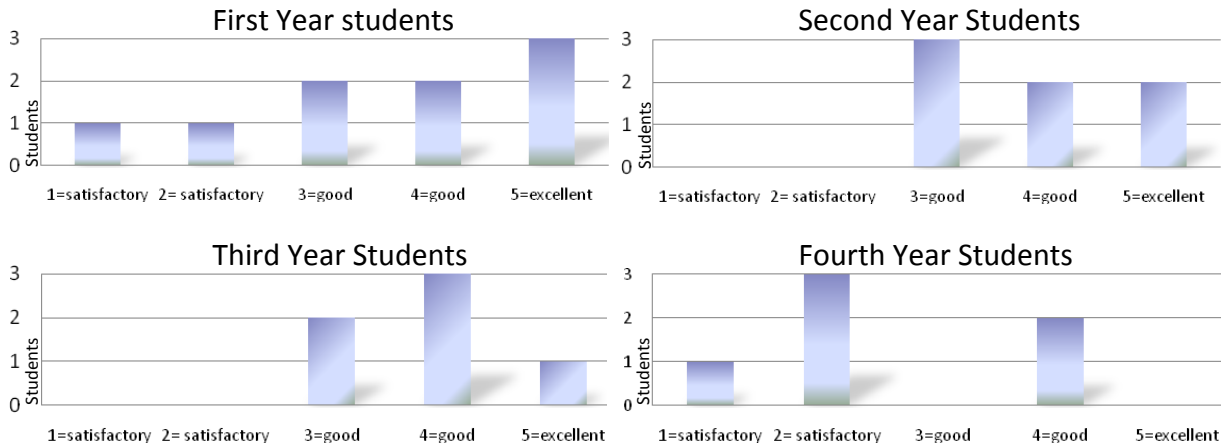
1 Has your motivation and plans for studying in Finland somehow changed during your stay here?



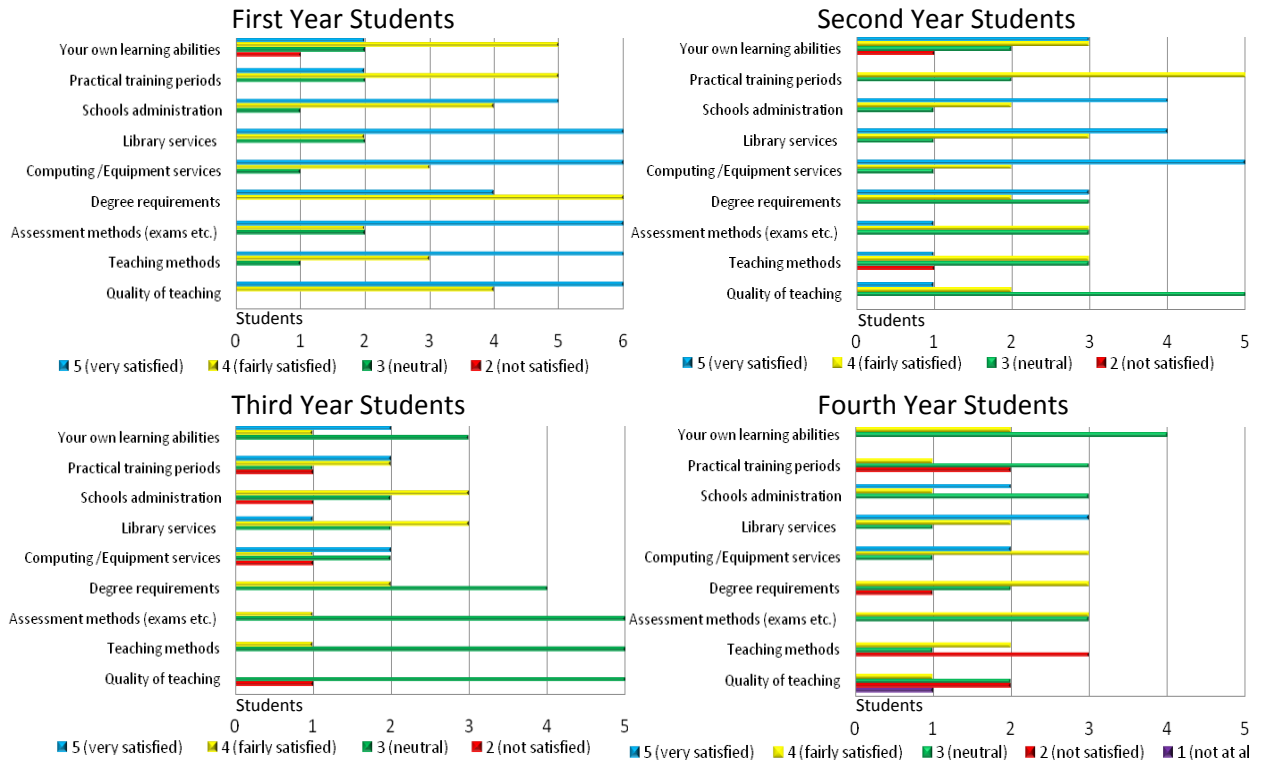
2 Do you consider moving to another city to continue your studies?



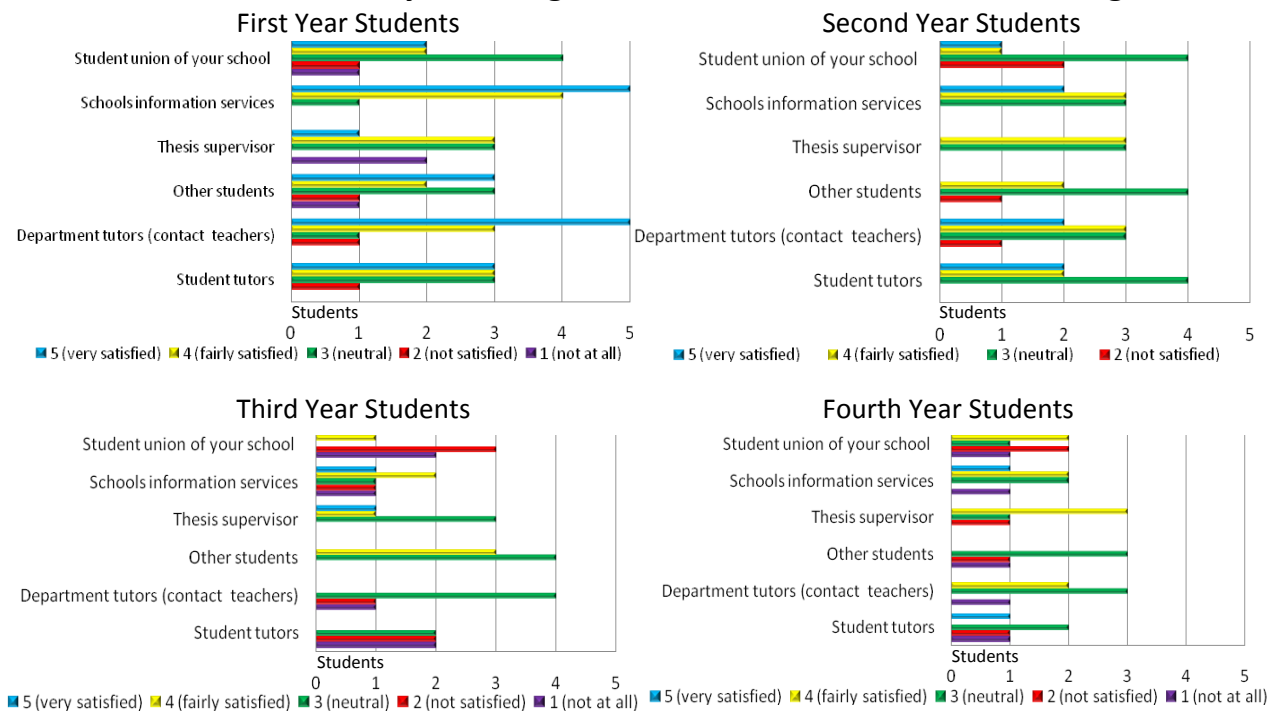
3 In your opinion, how is your English?



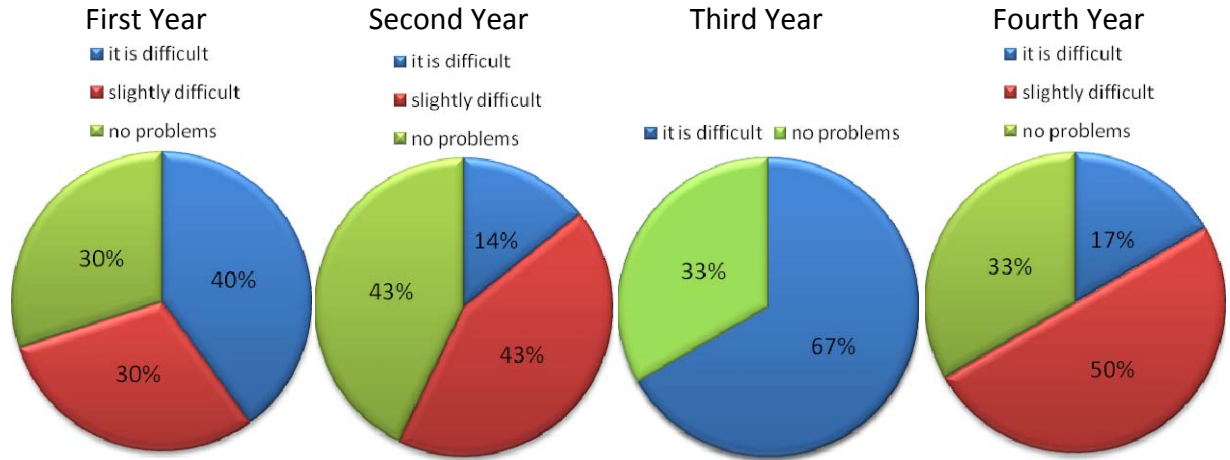
4 How satisfied are you with the following?



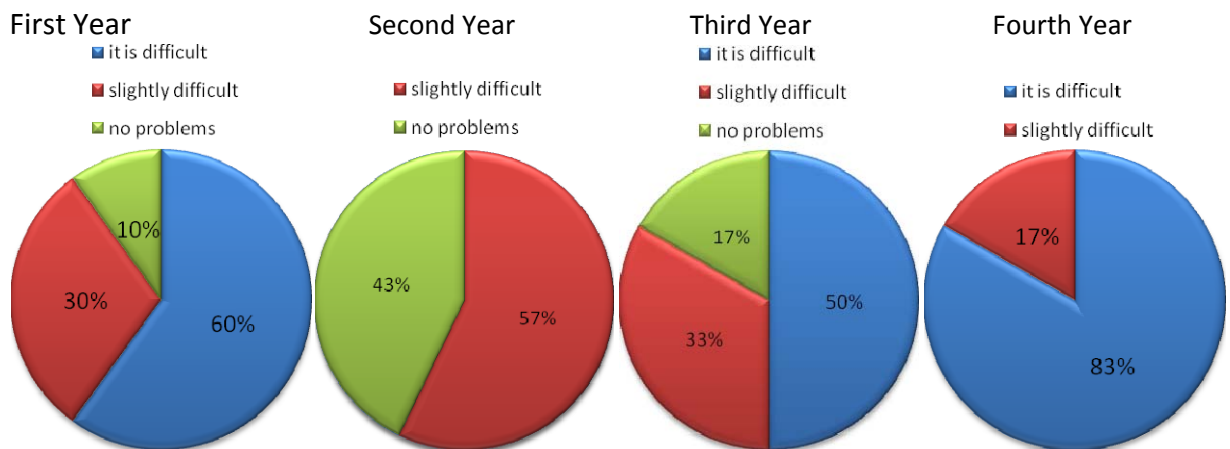
5 How satisfied are you with guidance received from the following?



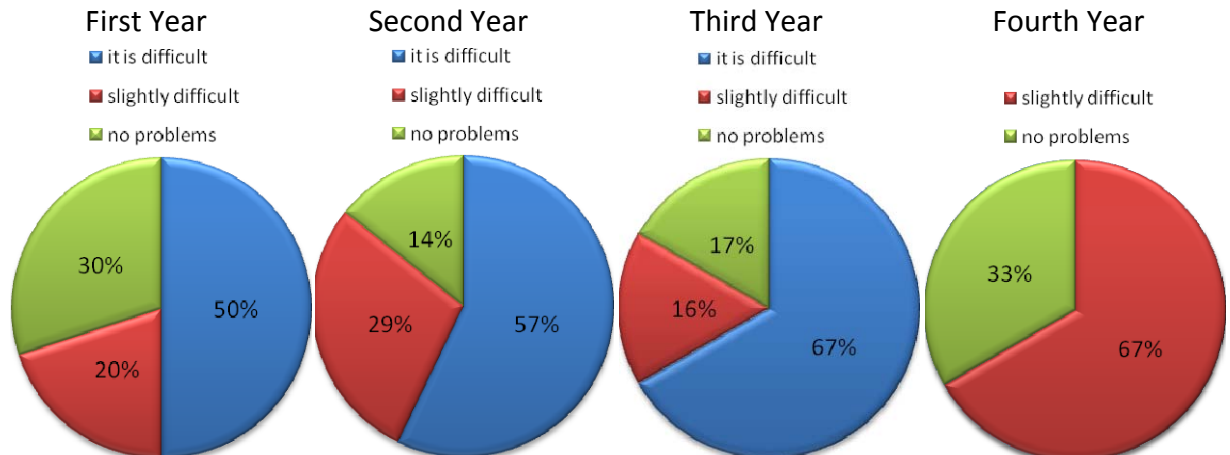
6 How do you deal living in Kuopio/Finland regarding to WEATHER



7 How do you deal living in Kuopio/Finland regarding to LANGUAGE



8 How do you deal living in Kuopio/Finland regarding to CULTURE



Appendix E Questionnaire answers - Opinions

1) Why TeKu (Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Engineering Kuopio)?

2.Year

- I like to live in Kuopio because it's not populated and also beautiful and not far from home

2) Has your motivation and plans for studying in Finland somehow changed during your stay here?

1.Year

- Language barrier in search for job

2.Year

- not enough jobs for foreign students
- would like to stay for the next term

3.Year

- due to a change in financial circumstances
- The standard is so low here I don't want to risk more studies here. I also want to earn some money for a while.

4.Year

- planning to move to bigger city
- There is a problem when it comes to choice of program to study because there are not many IT degree/master programs in English. And also the problem with finding master degree program in the universities with polytechnics certificate.
- At first I want to further my education after my graduation, now I also want but working is also a good choice.

3) What advantages or disadvantages have you personally experienced being a foreigner?

1.Year

- frequent discussion with friends and I feel very lonely
- language is difficult to learn and makes job seeking hard
- language barrier, free learning material
- Because of the language I don't have good contact with the natives, I cannot read newspapers, listen to the news, hence although I like Finland so much and I want to get at home in this country, it is hard to get this way

- Depends on different people I meet, I think some teachers are happy teaching foreign students so that make things easier. This is an advantage. This is not a disadvantage but I find Finnish culture funny somehow.
- learn Finnish culture and interact in other language
- Family & Friends

2.Year

- Sometimes people can be friendly and sometimes not, depends on the person, how much that person likes foreigners. But, personally I haven't gone through this kind of situations. (Not ever)
- Living skills and abilities have been improved
- Usually people speak English which is very helpful. Mostly they are kind to foreigners, but sometimes shy or even scared.

3.Year

- socially disintegrated
- no social advantages e.g. medical facilities, study allowances'
- social benefits, no jobs because of language problem
- difficult to find job, hard to integrate, people are cold
- the language is a problem but I get by

4.Year

- language difficulties
- You can learn some different kinds of culture, different style of thinking, living and so on. But sometimes I can not communicate to the local people well, because I cannot speak Finnish.

4) What do you miss most about your home country?

1.Year

- lively people to talk to and go out with, very nice weather, family, friends
- I miss people I love, family, friends, relatives, also my favorite food
- my parents and family members
- local meals, friends, cultural theatre
- interactions
- the warm weather, my family, friends and girlfriend

2.Year

- relatives, cousins and friends
- friends, food, family, culture
- food
- friends, family, parents

3.Year

- family, friends, climate
- family, friends, food
- people are more open and also the weather is more warm
- English, culture, the shops opening hours, the mountains, sea

4.Year

- family and friends
- my parents
- food, feeling of being home
- it is hard to get into the Finnish culture
- friends, food and life
- family and foods

5) How would you advise a friend planning to study at TeKu?

1.Year

- I will say that TeKu is good for study in information technology and teachers of TeKu are very cooperative.
- should learn Finnish very hard, or come with more money to Kuopio, because there is no work here; TeKu has very good teachers and facilities
- it is well equipped, has academic environment
- I would advise a friend planning to study at TeKu to apply for studies because it is a good school.
- He should prepare well, not thinking of getting a job.
- He should have a good background from high school and be focused.
- prepare well for the entrance exam, motivate yourself, even if there are boring periods, be organized
- I will tell him / her to prepare his / her mind about this place before coming to school.

2.Year

- it's a nice place to study
- by telling the standard of education and facility offered
- I don't know
- never thought about that
- prepare much financially, there are no jobs in Kuopio

3.Year

- make it your last choice
- about weather of this part of Finland

- do something else also, not just study, Finland is expensive
- choose other school if possible
- bring enough money with you , otherwise you will suffer
- Don't, if you really care about a good education in English go somewhere else.

4.Year

- No, I won't recommend them to study here. The teachers' quality is quite bad and only one study field to choose.
- Teku is a nice place to study because it has the facilities to make learning easier.
- I will also tell them to be strong in their minds.
- It depends, but the most important thing is to understand what the teacher is talking about, a spoken exchange of thoughts, opinions, and feelings to your teacher or classmates is very helpful to your understanding.
- Courses are not so competitive. Have to study more by themselves.
- good place for students, good teachers, good equipments
- Well, just to learn more on your own than depending on class teaching.

6) Feel free to write any comments, suggestion or question!

1.Year

- That are / is the administration of TeKu doing about job seeking for foreigner students, because is very difficult getting one here and that changes the minds of students to move out after their first year.
- I keep on looking up; God is looking down.
- If it is possible I would really like the school to provide Finnish language lessons to foreigners as optional studies up to advanced level so that we can communicate better.
- Well Kuopio is ok for lots of people to meet, but for me I like crowd, I like to see people around me. So this means life other school boring to me.
- I try to socialize but sometimes I feel limited and out of plan when I realize that (may be) I am the only on different color in the plan.
- It is very good to carry out this kind of questionnaire so to hear the international students voice and complaint.

3.Year

- thanks for survey
- more tutors for degree students, more information and activities which help foreign students to be integrated into school and Finnish society, more Finnish course, more optional courses
- I don't like that there is only one field which is in English.

- TeKu needs to get rid of some teachers and get its act together.

4. Year

- In my opinion, the school has a few bad teachers and their English is bad too. The way to improve this is: → Hire more qualified teacher with better English.
- There are several teachers with good knowledge and English and students should have more courses with them.
- Offer more selection for the major such as SW Eng. or some programming programs.
- Attract more Finnish students to the international degree and entrance students should be selected more carefully. Some freshmen are really dumb, stupid, without the motivation to study and always cheat in exam.
- I know TeKu is doing what it can to make our studies a success however; I will like to suggest that they do more get as much information as possible to us in English language.
- I think school may open more courses about languages, like Finnish, English, French and so on. More extracurricular activities is good for us to connect with the local students.

Appendix F SURVEY ON FOREIGN DEGREE STUDENTS AT SAVONIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES, ENGINEERING KUOPIO

Please answer the following question! All data will be handled confidential.

01) Home country? _____

02) Gender? Male Female

03) Why did you choose to study abroad?

Experiencing a foreign country Learning a foreign language Hardship in home country Other

04) Why Finland?

Standard of Education Study without tuition fees Possibility to study in English Standard of living

05) Why TeKu (Savonia University of Applied Sciences, Engineering Kuopio)?

Possibility to study a special field that I am particular interested in Easy access to the School
 Good reputation of the school Family / Friend Other // What? _____

07) What is your educational background?

High School Vocational School Previous Studies (e.g. Degree)

08) How were the assessment methods in your home country?

Competitive; based on group average Individual; based on educational standards

09) What learning style do you prefer?

listen and learn by doing independent with teacher guidance distance learning (e.g. Moodle)

10) How strong is for you the pressure of success? very strong reasonable no pressure at all

11) From where is the pressure mostly? Family Culture my own ambitions

12) How is your financial situation?

1=very problematic 2=limited 3=neutral 2= slightly limited 5=no problems

13) How do you finance your studies?

Scholarship Work Savings / Loan from a bank Parental or family support Other

14) Would you be willing to continue your studies at your school if you had to pay tuition fees?

Yes No Depends on the amount

15) Do you consider moving to another city to continue your studies?

No Yes **If yes, why?** Better opportunities to find (part time) work Better social live Friends / Family

16) How satisfied are you with the following? (1=not at all, 2=not satisfied, 3=neutral, 4=fairly satisfied, 5=very satisfied)

<u>Quality of teaching</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Teaching methods</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Assessment methods (exams etc.)</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Degree requirements</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Computing /Equipment services</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Library services</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Schools administration</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Practical training periods</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Your own learning abilities</u>	1	2	3	4	5

17) How satisfied are you with guidance received from the following? (1=not at all, 2=not satisfied, 3=neutral, 4=fairly satisfied, 5=very satisfied)

<u>Student tutors</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Department tutors (contact teachers)</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Other students</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Thesis supervisor</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Schools information services</u>	1	2	3	4	5
<u>Student union of your school</u>	1	2	3	4	5

18) Do you work in a group rather with people from?

- same sex same culture/country don't care I don't like group work

19) How comfortable do you feel in your class?

- 1=not at all 2=I can deal with it 3=neutral 4=slightly comfortable 5=very comfortable

20) How well do you feel integrated into the school?

- 1=not at all 2=little integrated 3=neutral 4=acceptable integrated 5=very integrated

21) Would you like to learn more Finnish if offered by the school?

- Yes No May be

22) Would you like to have more English information about free time activities (e.g. student parties, sport activities, travel possibilities, city services, discounts)?

- Yes No Don't care

23) With whom are you most actively in contact with? [Choose four (4) in the order of importance (1=most important)]

- __ Family (spouse, children, other relatives) in Finland
- __ Boyfriend or girlfriend in Finland
- __ Family in home country
- __ Finnish students in your department
- __ Other foreign students
- __ Student/professional colleagues elsewhere in Finland or some other country
- __ People of the same ethnic background
- __ Club or hobby group
- __ Neighbors
- __ Other: _____

24) Has your motivation and plans for studying in Finland somehow changed during your stay here?

- No Yes **If Yes, how?**

25) What advantages or Disadvantages have you personally experienced of being a foreigner?

no advantages

much advantages

no disadvantages

much disadvantages

neutral

What?

26) What do you miss most about your home country?

27) How would you advise a friend planning to study at TeKu?

28) Feel free to write any comments, suggestion or question!

Thank you very much for participating!