A STUDY ON THE DIPLOMATIC ACADEMY OF VIETNAM GRADUATES' EXPERIENCES IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION: A NEEDS ANALYSIS

NGUYEN THI THANH HANG

A THESIS SUBMITTED
FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN
ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING
MA-ELT

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Name	Ms. Hang Thi Thanh Nguyen
Advisor	Dr. Katarzyna Ancuta
Academic Year	August 2009

The Graduate School of Assumption University has approved this final report of the twelve-credit course, ET 7000 Thesis, submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts (ELT/ELL)

Approval Committee:

_____
(Dr. Katarzyna Ancuta)
Advisor

_____
(Assoc.Prof. Chaleosri Pibuchol)
External Examiner

_____
(Prof. Dr. Joseph Foley)
Chairman

PLAGIARISM STATEMENT

Statement: I certify that all the material in this study which is not my own work has been identified and acknowledged, and that no material is included for which a degree has already been conferred upon me.

Date: 10 August 2009

Nguyen Thi Thanh Hang

(Signed)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABSTRACT

The needs of learners are always the concern of any training programs. Assessing their needs, deciding on the solutions to meet these needs and applying adjustments to the existing program are of great importance for the quality of training. In this study, the researcher focuses on evaluating the intercultural communication needs of English learners who graduated from the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (DAV). The aim of the study is to improve the English teaching as a Second Language at the DAV in order to meet the requirements of the intercultural workplace.

The research data were collected through interviews with 50 graduates who work in various intercultural settings. A lot of insightful information was gained from these graduates' experiences in intercultural communication, which led to important findings in this study.

The significant findings show that dealing with intercultural communication is a crucial job-related issue for the DAV graduates. They are likely to face problems with (a) verbal language; (b) nonverbal language; and (c) different cultures. Therefore, they have to develop their own strategies to overcome these difficulties when working with foreigners. Based on their responses, the DAV English program seems to focus mainly on academic English (English for Diplomacy and Politics) and pay little attention to practical English. As a result, the program was evaluated not to prepare them with enough knowledge and skills to successfully

overcome problems in intercultural communication. According to the needs analysis, the graduates' following needs should be considered:

1. Needs to learn not only English for Diplomacy and Politics but also English for Economics, Cultures, Law in order to perform in a variety of job positions.

2. Needs to be exposed to not only British/ American accents but accents spoken by Asians, Africans and Europeans in order to reduce problems in intercultural communication.

3. Needs to learn practical English such as daily conversation, idioms, presentation and negotiation skills in order to react more flexibly with intercultural communication.

4. Needs to learn about different cultures and factors that can affect intercultural communication in order to better prepare themselves for working in an intercultural working environment.

In order to meet these needs, implications for the DAV English program have been discussed for a proposed syllabus on intercultural communication to teach undergraduates.

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Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background of the study with an introduction to the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam where the research is undertaken. It also includes the objectives, research question, methodology, definitions of terms and the organization of this thesis.

1.1 Background of the study

Intercultural communication and intercultural communicative competence have become important issues in political, economic, cultural and social management due to the globalization that offers more chance for cultures to interact with one another. Many authors (e.g., Hall, 1990; Lustig & Koester, 1996; Hofstede, 1997; Jandt, 2004, 2007; Klopf & McCroskey, 2007) have published books on intercultural communication with focus on cultural differences as the main factor that influences intercultural interactions.

In addition, the spreading of English as an international language also contributes greatly to facilitating intercultural communication. Therefore, teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or as an International Language (EIL) should pay attention to cultural information (Ortuno, 1991; Alptekin, 1993; Coffey, 1999; Martinez-Gibson, 1998; McKay, 2000; Nguyen, 2007). This is because communication is an interrelationship between language and its people and if cultural information is not taught as a part of communicative competence, complete communication cannot happen.

With the emergence of English as the chief medium of international communication in Vietnam, there is both need and desire for proficiency in English to communicate with people from other countries. Nguyen (2007) stresses that teaching intercultural communicative competence in English may well be among the most significant future undertakings in Vietnam. However, English language teaching in Vietnam seems to follow the traditional method that focuses on linguistic competence but rarely pays attention to intercultural communication competence. In fact, many Vietnamese students (and some teachers) still view language only as "a communication tool – a method humans use to indicate the objects and ideas of their physical and social world" (Bennett 1997: 16). Languages, therefore, are considered sets of words tied together by rules, and learning a foreign or second language is frequently understood as a simple process of substituting words and rules to get the same meaning with a different tool. This kind of thinking, according to Bennett (1997: 16), can lead to becoming a "fluent fool" – "someone who speaks a language well but does not understand the social or philosophical content of that language" (basic beliefs and values).

Due to this perception of English teaching and learning, Vietnamese graduates of English language may master English in terms of its grammar, lexis, or phonology, but have many problems in intercultural or cross-cultural communication, which can be defined as face-to-face interaction of people from different countries (using English as a means of communication), when they join the workplace. This seems also the case of the graduates of the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (DAV) who were trained to work in multicultural working environments as translators, interpreters, editors, researchers, lecturers in different

offices of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as for foreign-service offices, international organizations (NGOs) or mass media offices. Though dealing with intercultural communication is a crucially important part of their job, no courses in the DAV English program seem to have provided them with knowledge about intercultural communication. Therefore, problems related to intercultural communication at work may easily happen. This is a mismatch between teaching/learning English and the use of language in daily life.

Such reality has brought a question how to develop EFL learners' intercultural communicative competence in order to fill the gap between the way English is taught and its real use for the learners. This study is an attempt to examine the DAV graduates' experiences in intercultural communication at their workplace in order to find out their needs in using English. Hopefully, the information gained will also help facilitate the design of the intercultural communication syllabus for the undergraduate English program at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam.

1.2 The Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam

The research study is undertaken at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (DAV), which was upgraded from the Institute for International Relations in 2008. Based on the Decision No. 82/2008/QD-TTg of June 23rd 2008 signed by the Prime Minister, the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam has the functions of conducting strategic study on international relations, foreign policy and teaching under-graduate through post-graduate programs, as well as training foreign-service officers. The concrete functions of the Academy are:

- training students and in-service officers about international relations, foreign policy, diplomacy and foreign languages to work for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other foreign-service ministries,

- conducting research into world affairs, international relations as well as national defense, economics and cultural issues,

- undertaking the research activities for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs,

- reviewing the diplomatic activities of the Party and the State,

- participating in the publicity work for foreign affairs,

(Source: The Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam's website: http://www.hocvienngoaigiao.org.vn)

The students at the DAV are required to complete a four-year program in order to obtain a BA degree. English is attached with great importance throughout their four-year undergraduate program. Beside English, they have to choose a major: International Economics, International Politics, or International Law.

The English Language Teaching scene at the DAV: As English is a compulsory language taught at the DAV, the functions of the Faculty of English are to teach Basic English and English for Specific Purposes to all students.

The old English program: Before the academic year 2006/2007, the same English program was taught to students of all three majors in two phases. In the first two years, students were taught general English, characterized by the four integrated skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing and oral presentation skills. The last two years concentrated on English for International Relations,

which included radio and television listening comprehension, ESP reading comprehension and translation.

The new programs for different majors: Beginning with the academic year 2007/2008, the English program has been changed. Instead of choosing a major in their third school year, students are selected into different majors from the first year based on their career orientation, which are International Economics, International Law and International Politics, respectively. They are expected to learn different English programs matching their different majors. This is a 4-year program, in which students will learn Phonetics, Grammar, American-British Literature, American-British Cultures, and English for Specific Purposes based on the major they choose, together with translation and interpretation.

Regarding the integration of cultures in ELT at the Academy, the new English program includes a subject on American and British cultures and literature with the aim to help students better understand the English language. Students are supposed to acquire general knowledge about the two nations such as history, geography, culture, and politics through the information contained in books or literary works. The subject, however, may only offer students some knowledge of America and Britain, which reflects the perception of English as American/ British English, not English as an International Language. What seems to be missing is an intercultural communication course that can improve students' intercultural communicative competence when dealing with English-speaking people from various nations. This may partially contribute to the DAV graduates' problems in intercultural communication at work. In this study, the subjects were

not taught this subject in their old program. Therefore, the researcher will not focus on studying the usefulness of the new subjects for the DAV students.

1.3 Rationale of the study

The researcher's focus on the DAV graduates' experiences in intercultural communication results from her personal interest and experience. As a graduate and a full-time English teacher at the Diplomatic Academy, she has a thorough understanding of how English is taught there. After graduation, she worked as an interpreter for UNDP, where she had many opportunities to cross-culturally communicate with foreigners. Moreover, her present experience of studying in the MA ELT program in Bangkok has also helped her understand intercultural communication better. Though her English is good, she has experienced many problems in understanding English-speaking people from different countries such as China, Burma, Finland or America. However, such problems may be overcome with the understanding of different cultures through an intercultural communication course. Hence, this research aims to study the needs analysis for intercultural communication – the first step for the researcher to design a syllabus on intercultural communication at the DAV.

The researcher believes that providing the DAV's undergraduates with intercultural awareness when learning English can help them gain more confidence and achieve success in intercultural communication, which is even more important when performing at work. As diplomatic students, they should be aware of the characteristics a diplomat needs to have, including cultural knowledge. These characteristics were stated by Ton Nu Thi Ninh (2008), the

former Deputy Chairwoman of the National Assembly's Foreign Affairs Committee, who has been well known in Vietnam and the world as an outstanding Vietnamese diplomat.

In fact, the diplomacy nowadays is far different from 30 years ago. There are many 'diplomacy channels', from government to non-government channels, national assembly to associations. Previously, you could still take the job of a diplomat even if you did not understand laws or economics. However, nowadays, you cannot become the good diplomat if you do not have this knowledge. <u>A modern diplomat also needs to understand the culture of his own country and of the world.</u>

The other reason for the researcher to carry out this study is to contribute her ideas and concern to the debate on intercultural communication in the Vietnamese setting, given the fact that the issue, intercultural communication, seems not to have received enough attention from teachers and researchers in Vietnam, let alone the students. Hopefully, more studies will be carried out and teaching intercultural communication will be stressed in the English programs of every university in the nation with the aim to improve learners' intercultural competence.

1.4 Objectives of the study

The main aim of this thesis is to study the DAV graduates' experiences in their job-related intercultural communication in order to find out their needs for intercultural communicative competence when learning English. By studying common intercultural communication problems that they face and reasons for

those breakdowns, the researcher can also find out the graduates' suggestions for improving DAV students' ability to deal with intercultural communication in their future jobs.

Therefore, the main issues covered in this study are:

- experiences that the DAV graduates often meet in their job-related intercultural communication,

- reasons why they face these experiences and how they overcome these experiences,

- graduates' suggestions on what should be taught at the DAV to improve undergraduate intercultural communicative competence.

1.5 Research question

In this study, the author will address only one research question:

What intercultural communication experiences do graduates of the Diplomatic Academy have in their work place?

1.6 Definition of Terms

- **Needs analysis**: is a systematic process of gathering information about the DAV graduates' needs for intercultural communicative competence to solve their experiences in intercultural communication, interpreting the information, and then making suggestions based on the interpretation in order to meet the needs.

- **Intercultural communication experiences:** refer to the situations, problems that the DAV's graduates have got when performing their jobs in intercultural communication.

- **Problems in intercultural communication** are understood as the factors that hinder understanding among intercultural communicators.

- **Culture** is defined in this study as a learned set of shared perceptions about beliefs, values, and norms, which affect the behaviors of a relatively large group of people.

- **Communication** is understood in this study as a symbolic process in which people create shared meanings.

- **Intercultural communication,** in this study, refers to face-to-face interaction among people of diverse cultures. A successful intercultural communication requires intercultural communicative competence and cultural fluency.

  - **Intercultural communicative competence** is the ability to negotiate cultural meanings and to execute appropriately effective communication behaviors that recognize the interactants' multiple identities in a specific environment (Guo-Ming and William 1996: 358-359, cited in Jandt 2007).

  - **Cultural fluency** is the appropriate application of respect, empathy, flexibility, patience, interest, curiosity, openness, the willingness to suspend judgment, tolerance for ambiguity, and sense of humor (Inoue 2007).

1.7 Organization of the thesis

This thesis comprises five chapters. The first chapter introduces the background, the aims and significance of the study. A brief description about the DAV, where the research project is conducted, is also provided.

The second chapter presents a review of various theoretical issues that are relevant to the study.

Chapter three describes the methodologies that are adopted in the study. It also provides information about the research subjects and clarifies the research instruments employed in the data acquisition for the study.

Chapter four showcases the analysis and interpretation of the findings arising from the compilations of data amassed from the research. In this chapter, the research question is answered.

Chapter five summarizes the findings of the research. This chapter also highlights the limitations of the research as faced by the researcher so that when further research is undertaken, these identified pitfalls are avoided.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has given a brief overview of the study including the background, the research context, rationale, objectives and the research question to be answered. The next chapter will provide some of the theoretical underpinning of the study.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses the theoretical issues related to needs analysis, and the key term of the study, intercultural communication, such as culture and communication, definition of intercultural communication, its elements, its significance, barriers to intercultural communication and strategies to become good intercultural communicators. The needs for intercultural communication training in ELT will also be discussed at the end of this chapter.

2.1 Needs analysis

This study is an attempt to understand needs analysis for English used in job-related intercultural settings through an investigation on the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam graduates' experiences. It is very important to explore some theoretical issues about needs analysis so that the researcher can choose a suitable method to conduct one.

According to Allison (2000), needs analysis is the process of identifying and evaluating needs in a community or other defined population of people. The author sees the identification of needs as a process of describing "problems" of a target population and possible solutions to these problems and a need has been described as:

• A gap between "what is" and "what should be"

• "A gap between real and ideal that is both acknowledged by community values and potentially amenable to change"

• May be different from such related concepts as wants ("something people are willing to pay for") or demands ("something people are willing to march for")

Needs analysis is also perceived as a systematic process of gathering information about learners' needs and preferences, interpreting the information, and then making course decisions based on the interpretation in order to meet the needs (Nguyen 2006:13). Needs analysis focuses on the future, or what should be done, rather than on what was done, as is the focus of most program evaluations. In order to carry out a needs analysis, there should be a collection of both objective information (relating to the learners' biographical data, learning purposes, and language proficiency) and subjective information, such as the learner's attitudes, preferences, wants and expectations.

There are a variety of instruments to investigate needs from various informants. Graves (2000: 98) suggests several ways to collect data in needs analysis including questionnaires, interviews, grids, charts, lists, writing activities, group discussion and ranking activities. These activities explicitly ask learners to reflects on and assess their learning on a regular basis throughout the course.

For the purpose of this study, a study on the DAV graduates' experiences in intercultural communication will help identify the problems they face in intercultural communication and the possible solutions to such problems. In addition, the study will answer whether what these graduates learnt at university matched what they really need to work in intercultural environment. In this study,

a needs analysis will be conducted based on the theory of Allison (2000) as following:
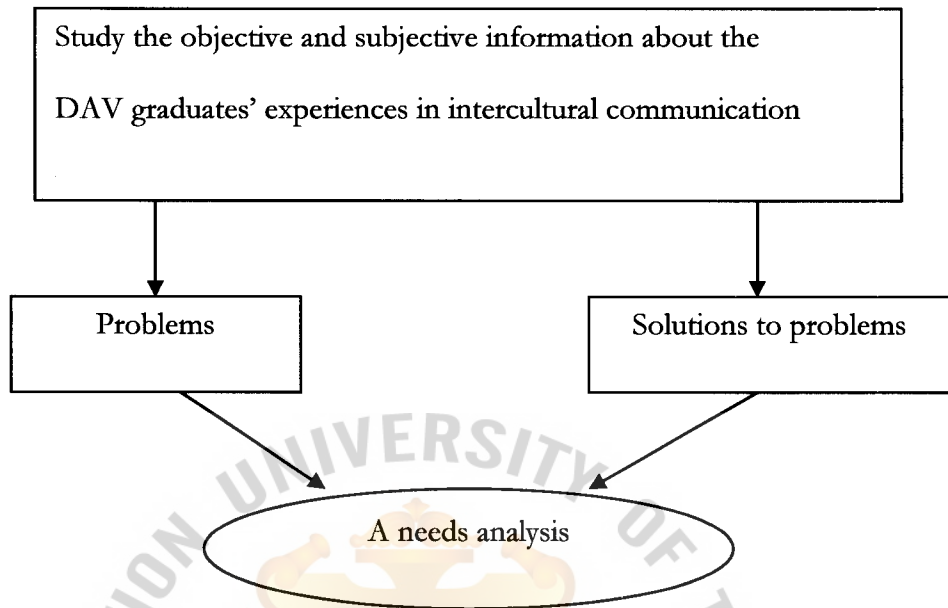
Figure 2.1: Procedures for a needs analysis

In order to better clarify needs analysis, the following part will be devoted to give a clear explanation about the key term of this study: Intercultural Communication.

2.2 Intercultural Communication

This part will present important issues about intercultural communication including:

- Definition of intercultural communication

- Needs to study intercultural communication

- Barriers for intercultural communication

- Strategies to be a good intercultural communicator

- Needs for intercultural training in ELT

2.2.1 Definition of Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication can be defined differently depending on the way culture and communication are defined. Damen (1987: 23) sees it as "acts of communication undertaken by *individuals* identified with groups exhibiting intergroup variation in shared social and cultural patterns". In Lustig and Koester's words (2003: 49-51), however, it is a "symbolic process in which *people from different cultures* create shared meanings" that occurs "when large and important cultural differences create dissimilar interpretations and expectations about how to communicate competently." These two definitions show that intercultural communication can happen between individuals or between "groups of diverse cultural identifications" (Jandt 2004: 4) with different perceptions of communicative behaviors and differences in interpretations.

In this study, the research will only focus on intercultural communication as the interaction between individuals. It seems that Jandt's definition (2007: 36) of intercultural communication as "face-to-face interaction among people of diverse cultures" is the most relevant to the topic of this study. Nevertheless, in order to visualize the term "intercultural communication" better we may refer to Samovar & Porter (2003: 11) who define three cultural elements that potentially affect situations in which people from different backgrounds come together: *perception, verbal processes, and nonverbal processes.*

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Intercultural communication

1. *Perception* (thinking/ behavioral styles)	2. *Verbal processes* (language use)	3. *Nonverbal processes* (body language, use of time/space)
- cultural values - worldview - social organizations		- kinesics - proxemics - chronemics - haptics
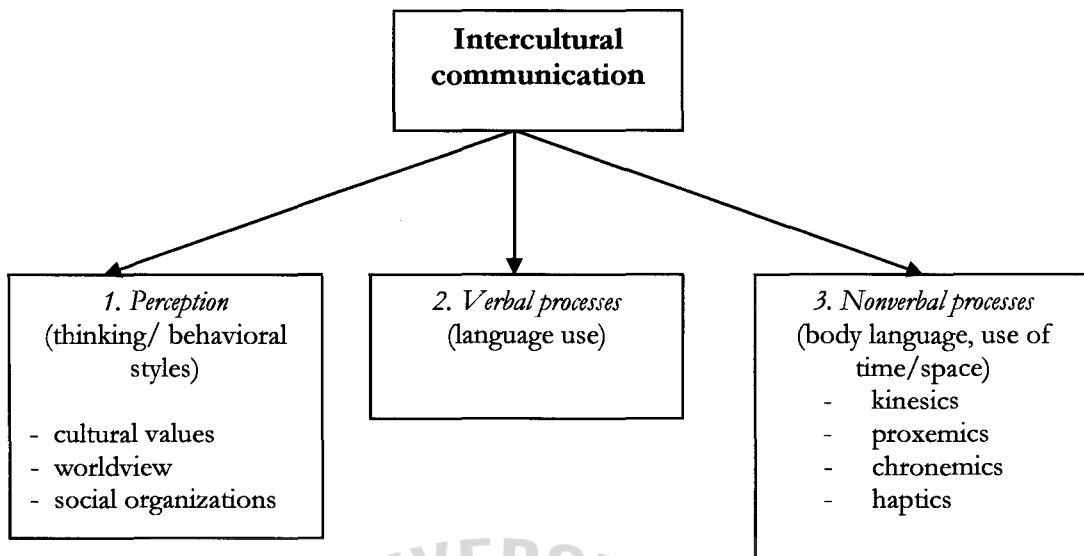
Figure 2.2: Elements of intercultural communication

First, *perception*, as in Singer (1989: 9, cited in Samovar & Porter 2003: 11), "is the process by which an individual selects, evaluates, and organizes stimuli from the external world" to form meaningful internal experiences and is affected by:

- cultural values: a learned organization of rules for making choices and for resolving conflicts. They define what is good and bad, right and wrong, true or false, positive or negative, and the like (Samovar & Porter 2003: 12)

- worldview (religion) is a factor in forming one's perception. It is a culture's orientation toward such thing as God, nature, life, death, the universe and philosophical issues concerned with life and being. In intercultural communication, according to Pennington (1985: 32, cited in Samovar & Porter 2003: 13), if one understands a culture's worldview, reasonable accuracy can be attained in predicting behaviors and motivations.

- social organizations are the family, state and its history which help build one's cultural values, ideals and behaviors.

The second element of intercultural communication, *verbal processes,* refers to the use of language in communication, not only as a form of preserving culture but also as a means of sharing culture. Language is an organized, conventional and learned symbolic system which is used to present experiences. However, the meaning of a symbol or a word differs between cultures. Thus when communicating in English, misunderstanding may easily occur. Moreover, Jandt (2007: 155) highlights that language can become a barrier to communication when these unique aspects interfere with translation due to the lack of equivalences in vocabulary, idioms, grammar and syntax, experiences and concepts. However, most authors, such as Klopf & McCroskey (2007), Lustig & Koester (1996), Jandt (2007) tend to focus on the intercultural communication inside the United States and do not mention the language problems when people from other countries communicate with each other in English namely language ability, unfamiliarity with spoken English, or colloquialisms. From the author's own experience, one of the obstacles that most Vietnamese graduates face when communicating with foreigners is that they do not understand the spoken English with slang words or expressions that no course-books or textbooks teach them.

The final element of intercultural communication is *nonverbal processes* (or nonverbal language) which can be further narrowed down to include proxemics (the use of personal space in a communication), kinesics (gesture, body movement, facial expressions and eye contact), chronemics (the use of time), and haptics (the use of touch), silence, paralanguage (Jandt 2007: 104-113).

- <u>Kinesics</u> is behaviors such as gestures, body movements, facial expressions, and eye contact. Certain facial expressions such as smiles are universal, but many gestures are not. What may be an innocent gesture in one culture may be insulting in another. In the United States, maintaining eye contact is usual, so trying to avoid eye contact in a conversation may be seen as being dishonest. However, in Vietnam, avoiding making eye contact can be a sign of respect.

- <u>Proxemics</u> is the way people use fixed space and personal space. Cultures vary in such things, as how the living space is arranged and how close people stand together.

- <u>Chronemics</u> is how people perceive and use time. It also includes ideas about politeness that are related to time, such as whether or not people can be late for an appointment.

- <u>Haptics</u> is communicating by touch. Touch can communicate a wide variety of messages, depending on the kind of touch and the context. Different societies have different norms for touching.

- <u>Silence</u> can be used to communicate a lot of different meanings that often depend on culture. It can communicate agreement, apathy, awe, confusion, contemplation, disagreement, embarrassment, obligation, regret, respect or others. Asian cultures value silence more than Western ones.

- <u>Paralanguage</u> refers to sounds and other nonverbal elements that can be produced by the mouth and voice. Sounds like laughter, "uh", "um", how loud/ softly, high/ low we speak can change the meaning of what we say.

(Jandt 2007: 119-120)

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The above part has provided an overview on intercultural communication, an interesting but complicated phenomenon that increasingly influences every aspect of human's life. A question to ask is why it is so important.

2.2.2 Needs to study Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication "takes place across a broad range of situations, from high-level government negotiations to hailing taxis while on vacation in another country" (Scollon, cited in Eli Hinkel 1999:182). Many intercultural situations are mentioned by Klopf & McCroskey (2007: 4) such as:

University students studying overseas
Business people working overseas
Diplomats and embassy workers assigned to foreign countries
Language interpreters working with foreign people
Technical assistance personnel working overseas for a government agency
Workers in organized groups such as the Red Cross and church organization
Military personnel stationed overseas
Researchers working in foreign cultures
Tourists
Emigrants moving from country to country
Ethnic groups forced to move within their country
Students participating in exchange program that mix ethnic groups

Table 2.1: Major intercultural contact (Klopf and Mc Croskey 2007: 4)

Therefore, intercultural communication becomes crucial for understanding communication among people when cultural identifications affect message use. It

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is important for each individual, no matter whether s/he is a diplomat, businessman, student, military, researcher, or tourist, to achieve success in their careers and lives. Many researchers (Hall, 1959; Samovar & Porter, 1972; Harms, 1973; Lugstig & Koester, 1996; Klopf & McCroskey, 2007; Jandt, 2007) have highlighted the need to study intercultural communication. With a good understanding of intercultural communication, people can avoid problems when communicating interculturally. Such barriers are going to be analyzed in the following part

2.2.3 Barriers for Intercultural Communication

Breakdowns can easily occur in any intercultural communication due to different perspectives and culture's norms. Barna (1997, cited in Jandt 2007: 71) points out six barriers for intercultural communication, including *anxiety, assuming similarities instead of differences, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice, nonverbal misinterpretations* and *language problems.*

Anxiety is the feeling of nervousness when communicators focus so much on their own emotions that they do not pay attention to what other people are telling them, thus affecting ability to communicate their ideas to others. This can be seen as stress in intercultural encounters when people have to communicate in a foreign language and face violated expectations (Snow 2004: 66-67). It means that what they expect to happen is not similar to the things that happen in real situations. Another mistake that people often make is to *assume similarities* and ignore the differences between their culture and other cultures. People frequently tend to judge another culture by their own culture's standards (*ethnocentrism*) and

believe that their culture is better than others. They may also assume that their behaviors are right, or correct, and find it hard to accept different behaviors. This prevents them from having an open-minded attitude of cultural relativity and can lead to a culture shock. Culture shock, according to Klopf & McCroskey (2007: 248), refers to physical or emotional discomfort experienced by those adjusting to a new environment. In communication, culture shock can happen when people fail to communicate in the manner they do in their own culture, thus leading to the collapse of normal interpersonal interactions. Feelings of frustration, hopelessness and loss of control increase because they have not developed coping strategies to deal with the ambiguousness they confront.

Similarly, *stereotyping and prejudice* can have a serious effect on judging behaviors and lead to discrimination. Stereotyping is a personal assumption that someone has certain qualities (good or bad) because they belong to one specific group. Prejudice is a feeling of strong dislike for or expressing suspicion toward people who belong to a certain group, race, religion or sexual orientation.

Verbal and nonverbal language can also be a barrier for communication. Nonverbal communication refers to communicative behaviors and events that do not involve spoken or written language (verbal language), when the information transferred to the listeners is not conveyed by words, but through body movements, facial expressions, postures, speaking time, vocal volume, and voice quality. Although similarities exist in nonverbal behaviors across cultures, the meaning of almost all of such behaviors differs from culture to culture. Becoming aware of nonverbal communication may help people comprehend the differences.

Finally, in terms of verbal language, people who communicate in English as their second language often have language problems in expressing their thoughts or in translation due to the lack of equivalences in vocabulary, idioms, experiences, grammar and concepts.

These six barriers can be categorized into three main parts of intercultural communication:

1. Barriers in terms of perception: *anxiety, assuming similarities instead of differences, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice*

2. Barriers in terms of verbal processes

3. Barriers in terms of non-verbal processes

Hong and Petraki (2009) investigated the problems that Chinese students faced in intercultural communication based on a study at an Australian university. They found out that low language proficiency was the most common reason given for that difficulty. "Culture shock" was quoted as the second most common problem. The third equally important group of problems that received the same scores was the students' lack of motivation in communicating and lack of knowledge about the topic. Nonverbal communication also constituted a significant reason for the students' difficulties.

As Lustig & Koester (1996: 315) point out, lack of knowledge, motivation and skill is one obstacle to intercultural communication. Though no one can completely overcome the obstacles to intercultural communication that naturally exist, the requisite knowledge, motivation and skill can certainly help to minimize the negative effects of prejudice and discrimination.

It's worth finding out how to overcome the problems in intercultural communication. According to Chen et al. (1996), when people of two different cultures interact, they need to have cultural fluency, which is the appropriate application of respect, empathy, flexibility, patience, interest, curiosity, openness, the willingness to suspend judgment, tolerance for ambiguity, and sense of humor. Therefore, understanding cultural backgrounds of people from different cultures, according to Samovar and Porter (2003: 6-7), is essential for each individual to be successful in social and professional lives. To achieve effective intercultural communication, people should develop intercultural competence.

2.2.4 Strategies to be a good intercultural communicator

There are different views on how to become a good intercultural communicator. Kim (2005, cited in Jandt 2007:44) stresses the importance of having intercultural communication competence. Inoue (2007), on the other hand, mentions the importance of cultural fluency.

2.2.4.1. Intercultural communication competence

According to Y. Y. Kim (2005, cited in Jandt 2007:44), intercultural *communicative competence refers to one's skill in facilitating successful* intercultural communication outcomes in terms of satisfaction and other positive assessments of the interaction and the interaction partner. In the other words, intercultural communication competence is "the ability to negotiate cultural meanings and to execute appropriately effective communication behaviors that recognize the interactants' multiple identities in a specific environment" (Guo-

Ming and William 1996, cited in Jandt 2007:45). This means intercultural communicators interact effectively and appropriately with one another to achieve their own goals and respect the cultural identities of their partners.

The term is defined more clearly by Klopf and McCroskey (2007: 9). In their opinion, intercultural communicative competence "involves the knowledge, motivation, and skills to interact effectively and appropriately with members of different cultures".

- *Knowledge* refers to the awareness or understanding of the requisite information and actions that are necessary to be interculturally competent, such as information about the people being talked to, the rules governing the social circumstances of the talking, awareness of the speaking context, and behaviors of the individuals involved.

- *Motivation* concerns the drives, wants, needs, and desires of the communicators as they interact together: What do they want? Why? Do they have fears, anxieties, dislikes, prejudices that could affect the desire to communicate? Do they feel negative or positive about the situation?

- *Skills* allude to the speaking behaviors that can be used by the communicators to be effective and to be appropriate to the situation, and are goal-oriented.

2.2.4.2 Cultural fluency

In order to be a good intercultural communicator, Inoue (2007) stresses the essence of having "cultural fluency" that includes:

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- *tolerance of ambiguity*: the ability to accept lack of clarity and to be able to deal with ambiguous situations constructively

- *behavior flexibility*: the ability to adapt one's own behavior to different requirements/ situations

- *knowledge discovery*: the ability to acquire new knowledge in real-time communication

- *communicative awareness*: the ability to use communicative conventions of people from other cultural backgrounds and to modify one's own forms of expression correspondingly

- *respect for otherness*: curiosity and openness, as well as a readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own culture

- *empathy*: the ability to understand intuitively what other people think and how they feel in given situations.

No matter which term is used, intercultural communicative competence or cultural fluency, the message is the same. A successful intercultural communicator should have respect, empathy and openness to other people despite cultural differences in behaviors and thinking styles. In order to do that, they need to have enough knowledge and understanding of their own culture and others.

For ELF learners, learning English should go together with learning intercultural issues so that they could avoid breakdowns when communicating in English with foreigners. As a result, the issue of intercultural communicative competence in ELT has received a lot of attention.

2.2.5 Needs for intercultural training in ELT

Many scholars (Kramsch 1998, Seelye 1997, Brown 1996, Bennett 1997) have discussed the close language-culture relationship and pointed out that it is impossible to learn the language without learning its cultural dimension. Samovar and Porter (2003:8) list several characteristics of culture. One of them is "Culture

is not innate, it is learned", which means culture can be taught and learnt in the language class.

The idea of teaching target cultures, such as British and American was the focus of ELT decades ago. However, understanding only target cultures is not enough to become a successful communicator, given the fact that English has now become an international language. What is needed is not only the understanding of the native cultures but the cultures of any other countries that may use English for one purpose or another. Alptekin (2002:57) questions the validity of the pedagogic model based on the native speaker-based notion of communicative competence. With its standardized native speaker norms, the model is found to be "utopian, unrealistic, and constraining" in relation to English as an international language. It is utopian not only because native speakership is a linguistic myth, but also because it portrays a monolithic perception of the native speaker's language and culture, by referring chiefly to mainstream ways of thinking and behaving. It is unrealistic because it fails to reflect the lingua franca status of English. It is constraining in that it circumscribes both teachers' and learners' autonomy by associating the concept of authenticity with the social milieu of the native speaker.

Smith (1976: 6) asserts that as English is an international language, its learners do not need to internalize the culture norms of native speakers of the language; the ownerships of an international language becomes "de-nationalized"; and the educational goal of learning it is to enable learners to communicate their ideas and culture to others. Learners of EFL should be able to do the following:

- communicate in languages other than one's own native tongue;

- gain knowledge of other cultures;

- acquire information and connect with other academic disciplines;

- develop insight into one's own language and culture; and

- be able to participate in multilingual communities and global society.

(The National Foreign Language standards Committee in the USA, Preliminary

Report, National Standards, Nov 1994, cited in Chittipatanakulchai 2004: 6)

In addition, the insights gained by research in intercultural communication have made English teachers aware of the cultural dimensions of language as social interaction.

> While literature and 'high' culture waned in importance, the small "c" culture of attitudes and mind-sets, lifestyles and interactional styles became crucially important to successful communication in EFL. Success in business transactions and diplomatic negotiations is not dependent on grammar alone; one has to know how to say what to whom at the right time in the right place. (Kramsch 2001: 204-205)

In terms of language syllabus design, one of the important goals in the current and future trends is "language and cultural awareness" (Breen 2001: 158), which shows the significance of the cultural dimension of language.

> Learners will reflect upon an awareness of the role and nature of language and of culture in everyday life so that they may understand the diversity of the world around them and act upon it in judicious ways

To sum up, requirements for EFL learners are to use the language effectively in communicating with other cultures. To achieve the above goals, Fantini (1999: 37) claims that a combination of foreign language education should go together with the emerging field of *intercultural competence*. Intercultural competence is

not only the ability to understand the culture of others but also to learn to understand one's own culture and find out how others perceive it. Intercultural competence then should be highlighted as an important element in the EFL classroom and be regarded as an integral part of the learning process.

2.3 Conclusion

This chapter has focused on theoretical underpinnings regarding needs analysis and intercultural communication. Many issues related to intercultural communication have been reviewed, namely culture and communication, intercultural communication, barriers for intercultural communication and intercultural training in ELT. The next chapter will present the methodology employed for this research.

Chapter 3: METHODOLOGY

This chapter discusses the research design and methodology that will be adopted for the study. It provides details on the research design including: restatement of the research question, description of the research context, the subjects, the instruments for data collection, and the procedures used for data collection and analysis.

3.1 Restatement of the research question

As stated in chapter One, this study aims at answering the following question:

What intercultural communication experiences do graduates of the Diplomatic Academy have in their work place?

3.2 Description of the research context

With the aim to investigate the experiences in intercultural communication that the DAV graduates meet at their workplace, a brief introduction of the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam has been included at the very beginning of this thesis. The following part will provide more information about the research context of intercultural workplace where these graduates are performing their jobs.

Pursuing the open policy to the world, Vietnam has expanded its diplomatic, economic and cultural relations with many countries. By the year 2009, the nation has established diplomatic relations with nearly 170 countries, trade relations with 165 countries, and attracted foreign investment from more

than 70 countries and territories (http://www.vietnamembassy-usa.org/learn_about_vietnam/history/). In 2008, the top countries and territories investing in Vietnam were Malaysia, China, Japan, Singapore, Brunei, Canada, Thailand, Sip, Korea, the United States, Sweden, the United Kingdom, Demark and France (http://www.vietpartners.com/statistic-fdi.htm). Therefore, the need to communicate with foreign partners increases not only in the workplace but also in daily life. Until now, English has been considered the most popular tool of communication among Vietnamese people and foreign partners at work.

The research on intercultural communication experiences of the DAV graduates may provide some interesting information about intercultural communication context in Vietnam. Such information is expected to help the researcher evaluate what should be taught at the DAV in order to help her students better perform in their future intercultural working environment.

3. 3 Subjects

The subjects of the study are 50 graduates from the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam.

In July each year, around 150 students (who study English) graduate from the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam and join the workplace. With their strengths in English and their job-orientation, these graduates tend to outweigh graduates from other universities to be selected for foreign-service positions. Around 10 - 15% of the best students are selected to work for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The rest will find jobs in other organizations, companies, ministries that often

require the skills to work in a multi-cultural environment such as UNDP, NGOs, the mass media centers and international banks.

In this study, 50 graduates were chosen to be interviewed about their intercultural communication experiences at their workplace. In order to have a wide range of information, the author selected those working for different environments including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (including the teaching staff at the DAV), other ministries, foreign enterprises and international organizations. The interviewees vary in ages and work experience. They are either working in Vietnam or abroad. Both their objective information (gender, jobs, and common foreign contacts) and subjective information (problems, expectations, and suggestions) will be included for data analysis.

3.4 Method of data collection

In this part, the researcher will introduce the instruments and procedures for data collection.

3.4.1 Instruments for data collection

Collecting credible data is a tough task, and one method of data collection is not inherently better than another (O'Leary 2004: 150). Using interviews is a common way to collect data, as well as to gain knowledge about individuals.

Due to the characteristics of the data collected for the study on "graduates' intercultural communication experiences at the workplace", the researcher selected *semi-structured interviews* as her research instrument. There are some reasons for using this instrument in qualitative analysis. First, the researcher can

"attain highly personalized data" (Gray 2004: 214, cited in Kajornboon 2009) in order to understand different experiences that diplomatic graduates have in their intercultural communication. Second, as Kajornboon (2009) states, semi-structured interview follows a guideline of themes, issues and questions to be covered but also offers flexibility for the interviewer to change the order of the questions or raise additional questions depending on the direction of the interview. Therefore, the interviewer is free to conduct the conversation as she thinks fit, to ask the questions she deems appropriate in the words she considers best, to give explanation and ask for clarification if the answer is not clear, to prompt the respondent to elucidate if necessary and to establish her own style of conversation. Note taking or tape recording documents the interview.

To collect data, the researcher will carry out online semi-structured interviews and face-to-face ones. Most of the interviews (40/50) will be done online and the rest 10 will be done face-to-face. This is due to the fact that the chosen graduates are working in different parts of Vietnam and the world, and conducting online interviews seems to be faster and more convenient to overcome the distance obstacle. Online interviews will be documented and face-to-face interviews will be recorded with the permission of the interviewees. The interviewees could choose to speak in either Vietnamese or English at their most convenience in order to express themselves easily. The same list of questions will be used in both types of interviews. However, additional questions can be added at any time to obtain more data. Finally, some selected interviews will be transcribed and documented in English language to put in the Appendices.

The interviews will aim at eliciting information about:

- experiences that the graduates encounter in their intercultural communication,

- possible sources of their problems faced in intercultural communication,

- their strategies of dealing with these problems,

- their suggestions about the English program taught at the DAV to help students better prepare for work-related intercultural communication.

3.4.2 Procedures for data collection

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        ┌──────────────────┐
        │ Design interview │
        │    questions     │
        └────────┬─────────┘
                 ↓
        ┌──────────────────┐
        │ Pilot interviews to│
        │ review the questions│
        └──┬────────────┬──┘
           ↓            ↓
┌────────────────────┐  ┌──────────────────────┐
│ 40 online interviews│  │ 10 face-to-face interviews│
│(using Yahoo Messenger tool,│  │      (recorded)       │
│    documented)     │  │                      │
└────────────────────┘  └──────────────────────┘
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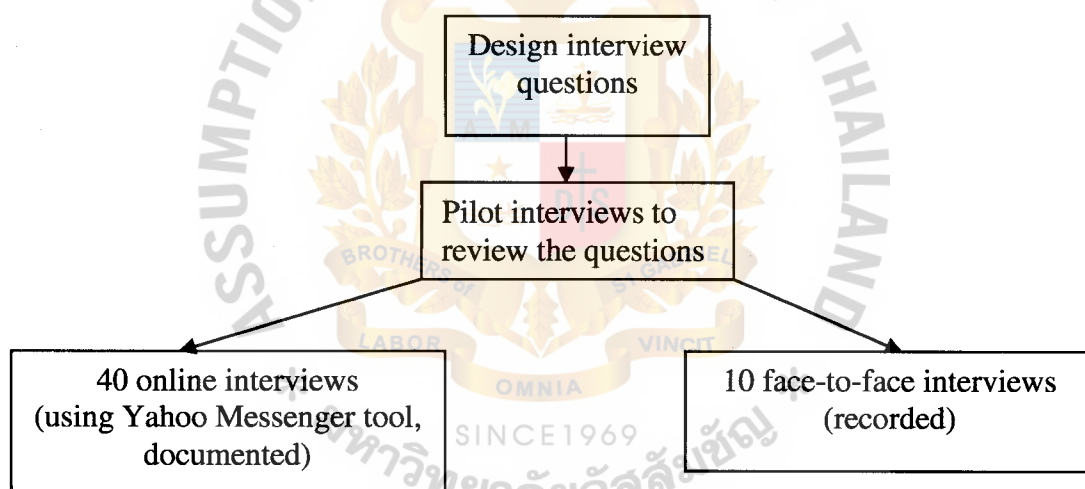
Figure 3.1: Procedure for data collection

As shown in Figure 3.1, the procedures of data collection will be carried out in three steps. First, the researcher will design a list of interview questions. Then, pilot interviews with five graduates will be conducted to check if the questions are clear or not in order to produce better ones. When doing the pilot interviews, the researcher will interview the graduates in English.

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When the questions and the way to carry out the interviews are finalized, the researcher will start to collect data by using online interviews because it is easier to approach target graduates by the internet. Face-to-face interviews will be conducted later as it will take more time and preparation to arrange for each interview.

3.5 Procedures for data analysis

The acquired data will be analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively. The procedures can be illustrated in the following chart:
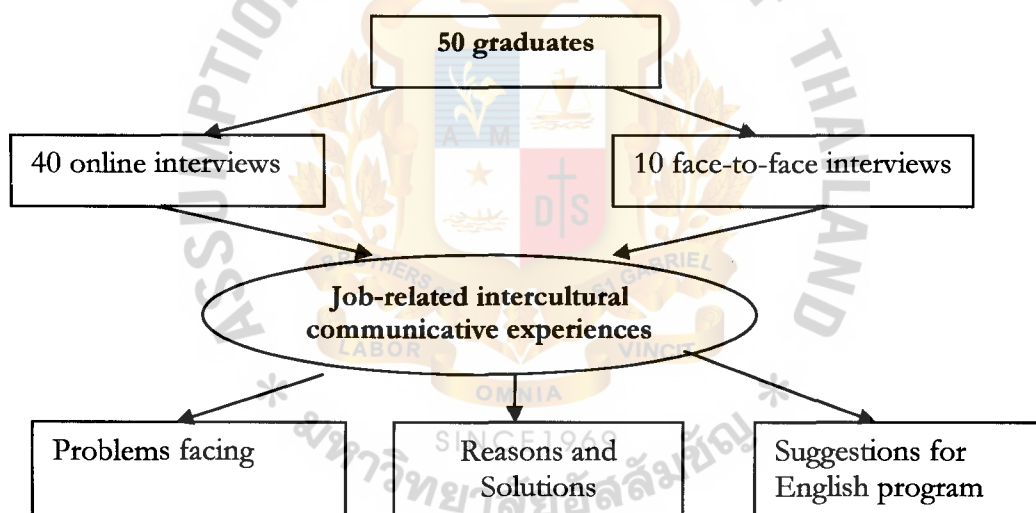
Figure 3.2: Procedures for data analysis

Responses from the target graduates will be inserted into Excel Program, and then listed and categorized into groups that cover: problems in intercultural communication, sources of intercultural communication difficulties and suggestions for improving students' intercultural communication competence.

The researcher will use quantitative analysis to find out:

- the most common problems that the target subjects face in their intercultural communication

- their reasons for those problems

- their suggestions for main things to be taught in an intercultural communication course at the DAV

In addition, qualitative analysis were used to interpret the experiences those graduates have in their workplace. The data will be analyzed and the findings will be interpreted and discussed to seek answers to the research question.

Chapter 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents both a qualitative and quantitative analysis of the data collected from the 50 interviews in order to seek answers to the research question:

What intercultural communication experiences do graduates of the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam have in their workplace?

The chapter will be divided into six sections. The first section (4.1) contains an analysis of the graduates' general information regarding intercultural communication. The second section (4.2) includes their intercultural communication problems at the workplace. The next section (4.3) presents their strategies in intercultural communication. Sections (4.4) and (4.5) convey the evaluation on the DAV English program and their suggestion for the program respectively. Finally, the research question will be answered in section 4.6.

4.1 General information about the interviewees

Question 1: Can you briefly introduce yourself? (name, age, occupation, working organization)
Question 2: How often do you communicate with English-speaking foreigners?
Question 3: Which nationalities are they?

The first three questions studied general information about the 50 graduates of the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam in order to better understand the background of the research subjects. The following part presents some important background about their gender, occupations, work experience, frequency of using English, as well as the most common foreign contacts that they deal with at their workplace.
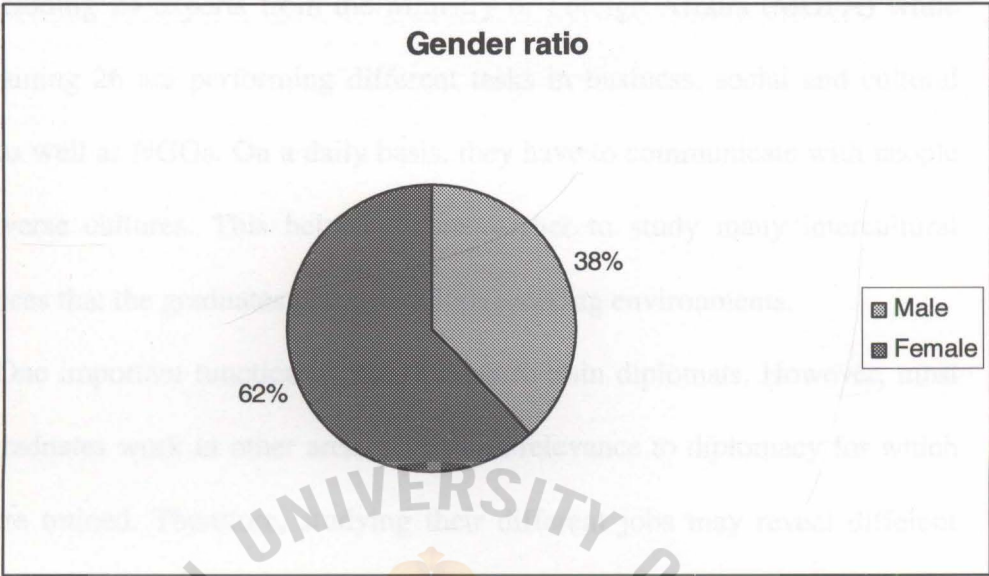
Figure 4.1: Gender ratio of the interviewees

Among the 50 interviewees, there are 19 males and 31 females. By chance, the percentage of males and females interviewed also presents the actual gender ratio at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, where the number of female students outweighs the number of males.

4.1.2 Fields of work
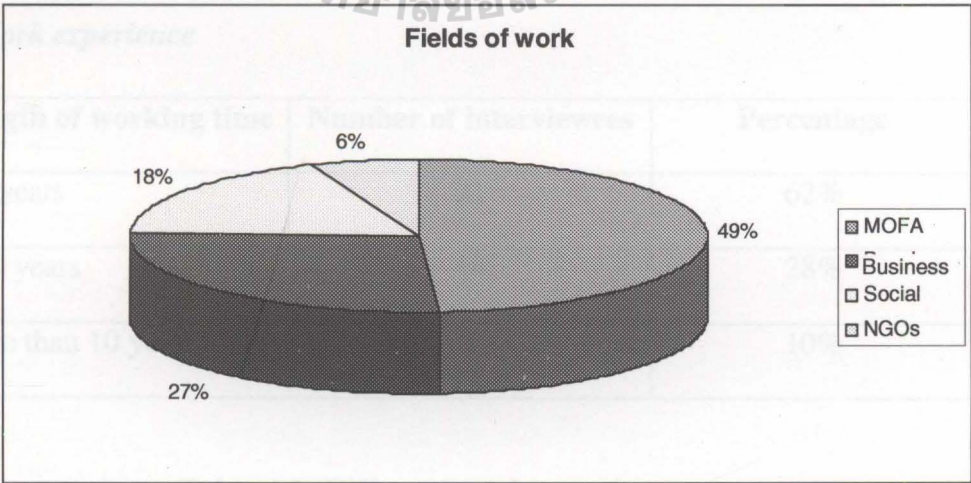
Figure 4.2: Fields of work

From the interviews it was found that the target subjects are working in various areas including 24 experts from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) while the remaining 26 are performing different tasks in business, social and cultural sectors as well as NGOs. On a daily basis, they have to communicate with people from diverse cultures. This helped the researcher to study many intercultural experiences that the graduates have in various working environments.

One important function of the DAV is to train diplomats. However, most of the graduates work in other areas with little relevance to diplomacy for which they were trained. Therefore, studying their different jobs may reveal different problems that these graduates face in intercultural communication due to the mismatch of their learning and their real work requirement. Regarding those graduates who work in the diplomatic areas (the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), understanding their intercultural communicative problems would also be very helpful when seeking their intercultural communication needs. In short, the needs of all the graduates in intercultural communication will be considered in this study with a thorough study of the 50 selected subjects.

4.1.3 Work experience

Length of working time	Number of interviewees	Percentage
1-5 years	31	62%
5-10 years	14	28%
More than 10 years	5	10%

Table 4.1: Different work experience

With the aim to examine how the experienced and inexperienced graduates differ in dealing with intercultural communication, the researcher carried out interviews with people with different work experience. The number of new graduates with 1-5 years of work is 31/50 interviewees. Fourteen interviewees have 5-10 years of working experience and the remaining five have more than 10 years of work experience at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and in other business sectors.

The reason that the research approached a large number of people with less experience (62%) is due to the belief that it is more important to talk to people with less experience, straight after their graduation because they are the ones who will most likely have more problems. The more experience they have the more they depend on their own learning, not on what they have learnt at the university.

4.1.4 Frequency of using English at work

Frequency of using English	Number of graduates	Percentage
Everyday	35	70%
A few times a week	15	30%
Rarely/ Never	0	

Table 4.2 Frequency of using English

Question 2 studied the frequency with which the interviewees communicate in English at their workplace. The data collected reveals that English is the common means of communication at the workplace - 35/50 interviewees responded they used English everyday. The others used English a few times a week. The information may well indicate that all the interviewees used English at their workplace and they all involved in intercultural communication. As a result, most

of them showed confidence when answering the researcher's questions in English language rather than in Vietnamese. [1]

4.1.5 Frequent foreign contacts at work

Until now, the English program at the DAV has been concentrating on teaching British/ American English as "standard English". In order to find out whether the interviewees have frequent contacts with English-speaking foreigners from America and Britain who speak the "standard English" that were taught at the university, Question 3 examined the nationalities of people that the 50 graduates most frequently communicated with.
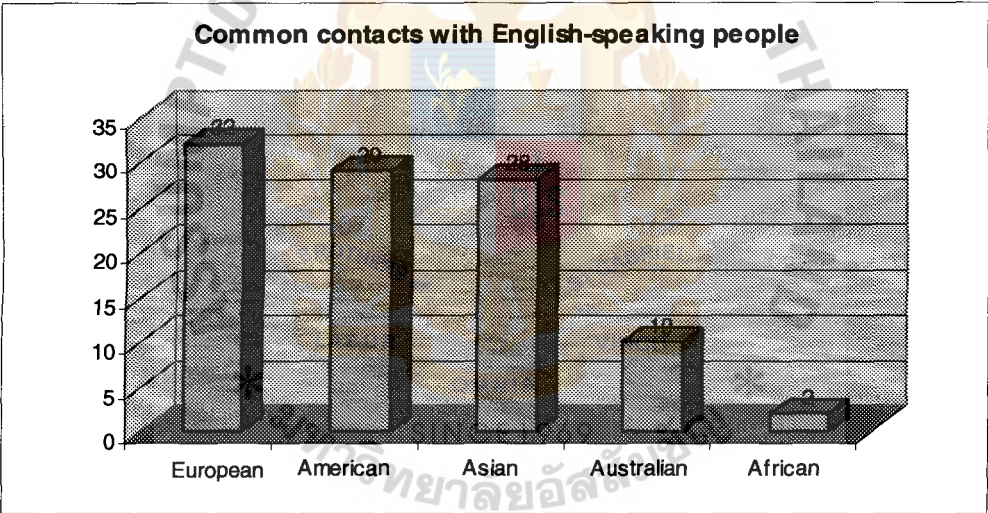
Figure 4.3: Frequent foreign contacts

Figure 4.3 presents the nationalities that the interviewees reported to have the most common contacts with. According to the quantitative analysis, the descending list is European (32/50) (including 15 graduates who recorded their usual contacts with British people), American[2] (29/50), Asian (28/50), Australian

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[1] Whenever the interview was in English, the original spelling was kept in this thesis.
[2] American here refers to people from the continent of America.

(10/50) and African (2/50). It is not surprising to see that most of the 50 graduates often communicate with the Americans (the US) and the British. However, there seem to be more and more working contacts with people from Asia, Europe, Africa and other parts of the American continent. Therefore, the statistics reflect that all the interviewees had exposure to a variety of Englishes, not only to British or American English that were taught at the university. Typically, the English spoken by the Asians and Africans are not easily understood. This may also raise the concern of the problems that these graduates faced in intercultural communication due to different Englishes and cultures.

4.2 Intercultural communication problems in the workplace

Question 4: What problems do you often face when communicating with them in English? (*In terms of language, nonverbal language and different cultures*)

Question 4 examined the problems the interviewees encountered when communicating with foreigners in English. The difficulties were categorized into three areas: verbal language, nonverbal language and different cultures.

Problems	Graduates	Percentage
Verbal language (35/50) - Expression/ Vocabulary - Pronunciation/ Accents	G2, G4, G5, G6, G7, G8, G9, G11, G13, G14, G15, G16, G18, G19, G21, G22, G23, G26, G27, G28, G31, G32, G33, G35, G36, G37, G40, G41, G42, G45, G46, G47, G48, G50, G51,	70%
Non-verbal language	G12, G16, G38, G43, G44, G50	12%
Different cultures (25/50)	G3, G5, G11, G17, G19, G20, G21, G22, G25, G26, G29, G31, G33, G34, G35, G36, G38, G41, G42, G43, G46, G47, G48, G50	48%

Table 4.3: Intercultural communication problems in the workplace

As seen in Table 4.3, 70% and 48% of the graduates described their problems regarding verbal language (in terms of expression, vocabulary, pronunciation and accents) and different cultures respectively. Surprisingly, only 12% of the interviewees reported difficulties with non-verbal language in their intercultural communication.

The following parts will give a detailed analysis of each of the intercultural communication drawbacks faced by the target subjects.

4.2.1 Verbal language

4.2.1.1 Problems regarding expression and vocabulary

With regard to verbal language, 21 interviewees (G2, G4, G6, G7, G8, G13, G16, G17, G18, G21, G22, G35, G36, G40, G41, G42, G45, G46, G47, G50, G51) firstly explained their problems with expression and vocabulary. They seemed to find it hard to show their opinions and ideas due to their lack of vocabulary, accurate word choice, or knowledge of the topics involved in the communication. Some graduates reported their habit of using Vietnamese-English translation when they could not express things in an English way. They also expressed their difficulties in understanding idioms or colloquialisms that people used. This is supported by Jandt (2007: 155) who highlights the language as a barrier to communication when these unique aspects interfere with translation due to lack of equivalences in vocabulary, idioms, grammar and syntax, experiences and concepts.

G2: I have difficulty in expressing ideas in English
G4: I think I am not very good at expressing myself due to the poor vocabulary

G6: I get problems in expressing my ideas to my friends. Due to Vietnamese culture, it makes the conversation sounds unfamiliar to EU students.

G7: The use of words is one of my difficulties.

G8: It is rather hard to fully express what I want to say in English.

G13: Different kinds of Englishes (accents) such as Australian English, Indian English, American - British English. Difficulties in choosing and using accurate words to express in certain cases.

G16: I think the vocabulary is a problem to me. I often try to translate from Vietnamese to English, I don't think in English. That's why sometimes, if I can't find the correlative words, I looked very puzzled.

G18: I have problems with expressions, using accurate words

G21: I usually have problems in understanding when native English speakers use slangs, or talk about things which owe their existence to their cultures.

G22: Sometimes I forget some words and try to explain to them by body language

G35: in term of Local & Aussie slang, Australian is likely to use slang or Aussie language anytime and anywhere. It was bits strange at the very first time we communicate.

G36: I often face problems due to lack of words to express my ideas.

G40: They speak too fast and use idioms

G42: I get difficulties in finding out the words to express my ideas, and I can not understand everything they say in my interview

G45: It is due to my Vietnamese- English translation, so I used the incorrect word and caused misunderstanding.

G46: When communicating with a single person, there is no problems but in a groups, people use slangs and speak very fast so I don't understand.

G47: I have difficulties in expressing my ideas sometimes, especially when explaining to tourists about our History.

G50: If I want to speak fast with them, I can not find words to express my ideas easily. I also find it hard to maintain a conversation with them.

G51: I got problems with using specific terms of my major. Sometimes I can not find out the exact words. Or, when they speak local English, I can not catch them well

Table 4.4: Graduates' difficulties regarding expression and vocabulary

4.2.1.2 Problems regarding pronunciation and accents

Pronunciation and different accents are other drawbacks that were confirmed by

22 of the interviewees (G5, G6, G7, G8, G9, G11, G12, G13, G14, G19, G21,

G23, G26, G28, G31, G32, G33, G35, G37, G40, G41, G49).

G7: Normally people from Asia countries speak English with such different accents that I sometimes find it difficult to catch what they are saying.

G8: The most difficult thing is to pronounce words and phrases correctly, as what I've learnt in school and university is sometimes out-of-date.

G9: Misunderstanding due to the accent in their pronunciation

G11: I usually encounter problems of fluency, speed and pronunciation either in speaking or listening

G14: Wide range of accents which are difficult to listen

G19: Different accents (Middle East, South East people have very difficult and fast pronunciation). When interpreting, I have to be familiar with their accents

G21: I also find it difficult to understand non-British accents, such as American, Canadian or Indian English.

G23: The most frequent problem is that our foreign contacts do not speak British or American English, despite the fact that English is an official language for most of them. This presents the most serious obstacles as our English training in Vietnam only deals with "standard" English.

G28: My only problem is mis-pronunciation. I did not use to pay much attention to the stress of words. I have started changing my bad habit recently after attending an English course in Brussels, but you know, it dies hard and I should have been aware of it earlier.

G31: you know, ppl that are not native speakers, it not always easy to understand them immediately because of their pronunciation. It's not clear and their tone makes it even more difficult

G32: With strangers, I find it difficult to understand their accents, ideas.

G33: I find it hard to understand people from India due to their accent.

G35: Pronunciation& vocabulary: I have just found that English is so different among countries in terms of vocab and pronunciation. Australian prefers British-English and there are so many words. This is more obvious when come to the daily life English spoken

G37: Sometimes their accents made me confused.

G40: Their tones are different, especially people who are not native English speakers, the tones are affected by their own languages, such as French or Indonesian.

G41: international students (many of them from English-speaking countries like England, Canada, Australia and others are mainly from non-English speaking countries in Asia and Eastern Europe)

G49: In terms of language, I think different accents is one problem in understanding (eg. Korean, Japanese accents)

Table 4.5: Graduates' difficulties regarding pronunciation and accents

Many interviewees mentioned that either their inaccurate pronunciation or the strange pronunciation of other communicators could hinder mutual understanding in communication, or even cause misunderstanding. They also found it difficult to understand different accents of English-speaking people from different countries, especially from Asia like Japan, Korea, India and the Middle East. Though different terms were used, such as pronunciation, tones, accents, it seems that

these graduates share the same difficulty with understanding different English accents.

4.2.2 Nonverbal language

The following table will provide information about some problems that the interviewees found with their non-verbal behaviors in intercultural communication. According to Jandt (2007: 104-113), *nonverbal processes* (or nonverbal language) can be further narrowed down to include proxemics (the use of personal space in a communication), kinesics (gesture, body movement, facial expressions and eye contact), chronemics (the use of time), and haptics (the use of touch), silence and paralanguage.

G12: different ways to express (American man invited me to the church, after the father finished blessing, he *gave me his hand* but I did not understand his intention. I was confused but later he explained to do it just as a symbol of solidarity after the blessing. Also, American, European men *have late breakfast, have fast lunch and they work late* so when working with them, this information is important to arrange their working schedule.

G16: People from Muslim countries are not easy going like Westerners, so sometimes when u say hello, you *can not shake hands to them.*

G33: Indian people are different from Europeans in term of time. They often come late for appointments so it can cause inconvenient working with them.

G38: Many of them are Chinese-Indonesian so they also have cultural characters. For example, *when squeezing lemon, we shouldn't through the peel away or when opening beer, we have to use correct hand position.* Otherwise, people are considered bad people.

G44: In terms of English, I don't have problems in communicating with my professors, or friends. However, in terms of culture, there are many things that I have to adapt when studying in Korea, such as the people's position in a conversation. In Korea, like Japan, people *distinguish clearly the status between Professors and students, boss and employees.* Therefore, when communicating with them, I have to be aware of this.

G50: cultural issue is one of the drawback. When I worked for an American project, I was asked to call a taxi for the American experts. I told them that the taxi was

coming immediately, it meant the taxi was coming. However, they thought the taxi was already there for them. Then I had to explain that it was coming in the next 10 minutes.

Table 4.6: Graduates' difficulties regarding nonverbal language

In terms of nonverbal language, G12, G16, G38 and G44 faced problems with kinesics, or the use of gesture, body movement, and facial expression. The nonverbal issue that G44 described as different "status between professors and students, boss and employees" can be understood as the problems with using proxemics (the use of personal space in a communication) because in such countries as Japan and Korea, there are strict rules about this. Finally, G12, G33 and G50 mentioned their difficulties concerned with chronemics (the use of time). Lack of knowledge about different perception of chronemics may easily cause drawbacks in communication.

In the researcher's opinion, most of the interviewees did not recognize their problems with nonverbal language because they all tried to express their ideas and understand other communicators through verbal language, rather than nonverbal language. Thus, they might not be aware of the nonverbal factors in their communication. Besides, when foreigners work in Vietnam, they tend to adjust their own non-verbal language in order to suit the communicative context in the local country, which reduces the risk of misunderstanding. Nonverbal language, therefore, may be an obstacle for those graduates working or learning in other countries that do not share the same nonverbal codes with the Vietnamese ones. Another reason that can be considered is that the researcher did not clarify all aspects of nonverbal communication but only defined it as gesture, body

language, touching, kissing in her interviews, which may have led to the graduates' unclear perception about "non-verbal language".

4.2.3 Cultural differences/ Perception

As Singer (1989: 9, cited in Samovar & Porter 2003: 11) points out, people have different perception depending on their cultural values in each society, their religion, or family and state background. The researcher considered different perception in terms of different cultures of the communicators in intercultural communication. This factor was claimed to be one of the major problems that the interviewees coped with in their intercultural workplace. 50% of the graduates interviewed mentioned their difficulties with cultural issues. As interpreted from the qualitative data collected from the 50 interviews, the problems concerned with different cultures were listed in the following table.

Problems	Graduates
1. Lack of common subjects of interest	G5: (When communicating with foreigners), we seem to lack common subjects of interests G41: I encountered lack of shared/ inter-subjective knowledge at a different culture.
2. Different ways to express thinking and feeling (intentions can be misunderstood)	G10: different ways to express thinking and feeling G31: I find it difficult to communicate with people from different cultures, we have to speak differently G35: My lecturers, schoolmates and friends have different background of knowledge and different perception of political/economic/cultural system so that I reckon we sometimes hardly understand 100% the serious topics. G36: Different culture leads to differences in delivering
3. Culture in communication (things should not be done in a communication with certain	G19: Different in communicative cultures (eg. Indian) so it is important to avoid their taboos.

cultures)	G22: Culture in communication such as when we go to eat, the fee should be shared, not 1 person pay for both like in Vietnamese culture. Moreover, don't ask them about their age, marriage status, religion. G38: I have problems with cultures. Indonesians are Muslim so they have many things different from Vietnamese (eg, not eating pork). Many of them are Chinese-Indonesian so they also have cultural characters. G42: Sometimes, I talk to them before or after my interviews about topics like families, children,,, but I had an experience that the topic is not the interest of many foreigners due to cultures. But for Vietnamese people, it is a way to show care and share with them. G47: Different cultures of my guests can be an other source of difficulties. For example, people from Islam countries, the topics for communication should be carefully chosen, never talk about pork.
4. Culture-related concepts and ideas which owe their existence to certain cultures	G26: When I worked as interpreter for a Leader of Ministry, he told a humorous story to imply something, I translated the story but due to different culture background, the partner did not really understand what the boss said. G48: As I don't understand their culture, I sometimes choose the wrong topics to talk about. However, they are very tolerant and often show me if I do something wrong. Another time, I received a French friend and I took him to eat dog meat. That was a terrible shock for him
5. Different hobbies	G46: Some Americans are very talkative and friendly and I can not join their activities like drinking. In short, we have different ways, different cultures.

Table 4.7: Intercultural communication problems related to different cultures

As listed in the above chart, communication could be broken due to lack of

common subjects of interest, misunderstanding due to different perceptions or

different rules in communicative culture (things that should/should not be done in

a communication with certain cultures). Also, some interviewees encountered problems in intercultural communication when they talked about culture-related concepts and ideas that owed their existence to certain cultures. This may well emphasize that not only verbal language (English) is the significant element here, understanding different cultures is another crucial one to avoid breakdowns in intercultural communication.

4.2.4 Intercultural communication problems regarding work experience

In this part, the researcher would like to examine different problems that people with different years of work experience encountered in intercultural communication. The researcher assumed that the people with less experience would have more difficulties than experienced ones.

Working years	Common intercultural communication problems
New graduates (1-5 working years)	Vocabulary/ Expression Pronunciation/ Accents Culture
Experienced graduates (5-10 working years)	Culture Accents
Very experienced graduates (>10 working years)	Accurate way of expression Culture

Table 4.8: Work experience and intercultural communication problems

When comparing the problems that the experienced and new graduates faced in their intercultural communication, it was found that people with 1-5 years of work experience often faced difficulties with word choice (vocabulary) to express their ideas, their inaccurate pronunciation and understanding of different accents. This

might be due to the fact that they have to adapt to real English-speaking environment with much difference from the academic one taught at the university, despite the fact that their English can be good. Besides, due to Vietnamese culture, they tend to be modest and then blame themselves if misunderstanding happens no matter whether it is because of their fault or not. Also, they are not confident and often passive when speaking with foreigners.

Meanwhile, people with 5-10 years of work experience tend to be more confident about their pronunciation and expression, but still have problems with different cultures and accents in intercultural communication. It can be understood that the more people interact with foreigners, the more they improve themselves and thus increase their confidence. However, in order to understand other cultures and get familiar with many English-speaking accents, it seems to take a long time for these graduates.

Finally, the graduates with a lot of work experience in intercultural settings only described their difficulties with choosing an accurate way of expression (especially in diplomatic events) and cultural issues in intercultural communication. It was shared that as they were considered to be "experienced diplomats", there was no tolerance for careless expression in communication or underestimating cultural issues. Hence, they should be very careful with these two problems. Regarding pronunciation and different accents, these graduates seemed to overcome such problems easily thanks to their various experiences in dealing with intercultural communication.

In short, this information may well indicate that with more time spent working in intercultural environment, people can overcome their difficulties when

dealing with pronunciation/accents and vocabulary. However, they seem to become more aware of cultural issues as an important factor of a successful communication.

4.3 Strategies in intercultural communication

Question 5: How do you usually solve the problems?

Question 5 aimed at examining the strategies that the interviewees used to solve their problems in intercultural communication. The researcher wanted to know how the graduates self-improved their skills to deal with intercultural communication and meet their needs. It was felt that the strategies they use can be good suggestions for the undergraduates at the DAV to overcome problems in intercultural communication.

Problems	Strategies
A. *Verbal language* G2, G4, G5, G6, G7, G8, G9, G11, G13, G14, G15, G16, G18, G19, G21, G22, G23, G26, G27, G28, G31, G32, G33, G35, G36, G37, G40, G41, G42, G45, G46, G47, G48, G50, G51,	G7, G9, G10, G11: Practice pronunciation/ Accents (Presentation skill) with friends, videos, G4, G5: learn how to speak from the foreigners G16: I smile, and try my best to express by synonyms, or find another way to express what I mean (using long phrase, or to describe the words). Sometimes I use body language, find the situation that can help listener imagine what I'm talking about. G21: it's very hard to solve problems in understanding non-British accents as it requires a lot of time to get used to them. I don't think I have enough time to do it within my one year in the UK. Similarly I know I won't be able to pick up a lot slangs during my stay here. For me, learning a proper English is enough for such a short period of time. G23: We deal with the problem of non-British or non-

		American accents by listening to radios and TV programs. English users there are more diverse.
		G27: By all means, paraphrasing, using body language, picturing.
		G28: Open the dictionary and check the pronunciation of every single word.
		G31: I try to improve my pronunciation, speak clearly and confidently. I also ask questions if I do not understand my partner. Sometimes asking questions help to overcome misunderstanding
		G32: I try to learn English, speak more to improve my speaking skill. I watch movies, read news in English to learn the way to express my ideas in English, not just like translating from Vietnamese into English.
		G35: Practicing more often and self correct my pronunciation. Try more often communications with native-English speakers to enrich my vocabulary, including general vocabulary in different English speaking countries.
		G36: I often try my best to express myself in the most understandable and simple way.
		G40: I must learn more about the meanings of idioms, no other choice. For listening skill, I practice by listening to the radio, audio with speeches by professors or officials posted on internet.
		G41: Being patient and willing to ask for repetition and explanation, or sometimes simply ignoring. Using nonverbal language such as facial expressions or body gestures.
		G42: In term of language, I often try to replace words if I can not remember the exact words I want to say, or use body language to help. In a interview, I just catch the main ideas and keep the interview continue even I can not catch all the things my interviewee talks.
		G45: With misunderstanding situations, I explain my ideas and my intentions to make them understand. I also learn to be careful with word choice.
		G51: Ask them to clarify their ideas. I have to keep learning English of my major to enrich my vocabulary.
B.	*Nonverbal*	Not mentioned

language	
C. ***Cultural differences*** G3, G5, G11, G12, G16, G17, G19, G20, G21, G22, G25, G26, G29, G31, G33, G34, G35, G36, G38, G41, G42, G43, G44, G46, G47, G48, G50	G12: I try to adapt to the situations, and find the solution to each case. I think it is also important to understand our own culture in order to understand other cultures such as their behaviors, topics of communication. G16: I also learn to be careful in cultural issue. It's best to do little research on the culture of the people I'm talking with. Find out any taboo, any problems so that I can avoid being embarrassed. G17: whatever and whenever I want to strike up conversations on culture with them. G20: Ask the foreigner about their cultures. G21: For the problems involving cultural differences, I usually try to sort out by learning more about other cultures through the internet or friends themselves. G22: Just be friendly and explain what I really think to them if there is any misunderstanding. Explain that I don't really know about that and say sorry if it really a problem to them. G26: try to update knowledge G29: I often read books or materials about other cultures. I think it is important to know general knowledge about other people, other countries in order to understand them, and therefore better communicate with them. G33: I also learn from my boss and colleagues about their experiences working with foreigners (cultures, things should/not do when working with them). G34: I try to ask close colleagues about the best way to properly tackle the problems. For example, I ask my Singaporean Co-manager who closely works with me and is the one I know well, about how to tackle the problems with Singaporeans. G35: Get involved in different social and cultural activities in the University and daily life. G38: I have to learn from my colleagues and read cultural books to understand my partners. G42: For my job, I learn through working and books such as books to teach how to communicate with people, understand

| | other cultures and things like that.

G44: Luckily, I read books, stories and watch movies about Korea a lot, so I learn about them. Stories and movies are good sources to learn about a country's culture and people. So, I don't have problems communicating with them.

G46: Well, if there are strange things happen, I just try to understand their behaviors. I am also interested in reading materials about Vietnamese cultures and American one. I learn how foreigners feel about Vietnam so I can understand them. When it is necessary, I can explain to them things they want to know about our culture. It is important to know our culture too.

G47: I work in the hotel section, so I have to learn about communication and culture. I also read books, novels, stories and I know quite a lot about other countries. This knowledge helps me to work with people from different nations.

G48: I say sorry if I do sth wrong. I know because I am young so they can forgive my mistake. However, I learn to be careful other times.

G50: I attended English classes with American teachers. I had more chance to communicate with them and my teachers often told stories about cultural issues, their experiences working before, the differences between British English and American English. I think I become more confident in communicating with foreigners now. |
|---|---|

Table 4.9: Strategies to overcome problems in intercultural communication [3]

4.3.1 In terms of verbal language

In order to overcome verbal difficulties, a variety of solutions were used by the respondents. Some graduates (G4, G5, G7, G9, G10, G11, G23, G28, G31, G32, G35) chose to practice their pronunciation/ accents with friends by watching videos or learnt how to speak from foreigners. Others (G16, G36, 41, G45) explained their strategies included using simple words, asking for repetition and

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[3] The statements in this table have been kept in their original form as in the interviews.

using body language to express themselves (G42, G51). In general, the interviewees proved active in improving their weaknesses.

4.3.2 In terms of non-verbal language

As shown in Table 4.9, none of the graduates mentioned their strategies to solve problems with nonverbal language. This could be understood in two ways. Firstly, as only a few of them were aware of their nonverbal elements in intercultural communication, they did not develop their skills to deal with this problem. Secondly, nonverbal language is actually one part of culture. Therefore, the graduates may include their strategies for solving nonverbal drawbacks in their strategies for dealing with cultural differences mentioned in the following section.

4.3.2 In terms of cultural differences

The majority of people (G14, G31, G36, G37, G41, G49, G51) who reported their difficulties in cultural issues used their communicative strategies to overcome misunderstanding, such as asking questions to clarify ideas. Many others (G16, G18, G22, G24, G33, G39, G45, G46, G48) chose to learn about other cultures to understand their behaviors, topics of interest, things to avoid. G17, G21, G43, G50 used the strategies to talk with foreigners/ friends about cultural issues or learn from the internet. At the same time, G29, G32, G38, G42, G44, G46, G47 reported to learn about other cultures by reading books, materials or watching videos and films. Though their strategies are different, they all partially developed their "skill in facilitating successful intercultural communication outcomes" (Y. Y. Kim 2005, cited in Jandt 2007: 44). In details, they paid attention to enriching their knowledge about other cultures, showing motivation in learning about other

people and also mastering their skills in dealing with different situations. It could be understood that these graduates had very good communicative strategies such as:

- to deal with ambiguous situations

- to adapt their own behavior to different situations

- to acquire new knowledge in real-time communication

- to respect other cultures and understand different thinking

4.4 Evaluation on the DAV English program

> Question 6: Do you think that the English program at the DAV taught you how to deal with these problems in Intercultural communication? Why? Why not?

The first five interview questions have provided the researcher with the 50 graduates' real intercultural communication experiences. As a teacher who wishes to help her students succeed in their intercultural communication, the researcher chose to ask question 6 in order to get feedback from the graduates on the English program taught at the DAV. Such feedback could serve as a springboard for future program modification and adaptation to offer students better training.

The program is good	Reasons	Graduates	Percentage
Yes (8)	- Good teachers to share experiences, chances to practice. - Good foundational English skills and professional background.	G2, G5, G9, G10, G27, G28, G37, G40	17%
Partly (17)	Have foreign teachers to practice communication with	G7, G8, G13, G14, G20, G15,	33%

	but the program still focuses too much on academic training and Diplomacy.	G16, G26, G29, G35, G36, G39, G42, G46, G47, G49, G51	
No (20)	Only teach Academic English, not so practical	G4, G6, G11, G12, G13, G14, G23, G24, G30, G31, G32, G33, G34, G38, G41, G43, G44, G45, G48, G50	40%
No ideas (5)			10%

Table 4.10: Graduates' evaluation on the DAV English program

Being asked whether the DAV English program helped provide students with good skills to overcome difficulties in intercultural communication, the interviewees shared different opinions. As seen in the table above, 17% of the interviewees considered the English program to be good and said it helped them confidently communicate in an intercultural environment. This was because they had good teachers (both Vietnamese and foreign ones) to share experiences with, and had chances to practice English. The graduates gained foundational English skills and professional background from the program that were found useful in their jobs. Meanwhile, 33% of the respondents reported that the program partially helped them to become confident in intercultural communication. It was helpful because they had a chance to study with foreign teachers and the program did provide them with Basic English to use in their workplace. However, the program was believed to be academic and diplomatic-training oriented, therefore paying little attention to practical English for daily use.

The majority of the answers (40%) showed the program did not help graduates in intercultural communication given the reason that the program only

focused on teaching academic English, especially politics, not practical English used daily. They did not have enough time in the class to practice speaking skills, or correct wrong pronunciation. Also, they were taught only British and American English, so they found other accents difficult to understand. Some respondents mentioned the lack of attention to teach communicative cultures in the program that they found necessary to become successful in intercultural communication.

5% of the graduates did not give their opinions about the program because they graduated a long time ago. The program they learnt in and the current one are very different. Therefore they could not evaluate the effectiveness of the DAV English program now.

Interestingly, some interviewees shared their ideas that in order to overcome problems in intercultural communication, the program at the university could not teach students everything but they had to practice in their real environment. Gradually, they could gain enough knowledge and skills to successfully communicate with foreigners. This opinion was right to some extent, however many ELT researchers (Kramsch 1998, Seelye 1997, Brown 1996, Bennett 1997) had claimed the usefulness of teaching cultural issues in English classes in order to help students gain intercultural competence. The researcher believed that if students were taught intercultural knowledge at the university, they could save more time to adapt to the intercultural environment. With knowledge and experience, there would be more opportunities for career success.

In sum, half of the interviewees evaluated the program to be good or partially good in helping them overcome difficulties in intercultural communication due to the good teaching of teachers. However, 40% of the

subjects claimed that the program only provided them with academic English (especially English for Politics), therefore failed to teach intercultural communication.

4.5 Suggestions for the DAV English program

Question 7: What do you think the program should teach in order to help students more successful in communicating with foreigners?

In this section, with Question 7, the researcher aims at finding out the solutions to fill the gap between how English is taught at the DAV and how it is used by learners. The graduates' answers may reveal what they think is an important factor for intercultural communication and what they need to learn to be successful in job-related intercultural communication. Hopefully, the data can offer a good solution to meet these graduates' needs in intercultural communication. At the same time, the data can be used to create an intercultural communication syllabus for the DAV undergraduates.

Graduates' suggestions	Verbal language	Culture
G2: The program should be added more official outdoor activities with foreigner's attendance so that the students can practice more what they are taught in class.	X	
G4: Instead of using books and materials that are ready composed, the program should sometimes teach students about other countries' culture, updating the situations in countries and exchange ideas so that students can not only upgrade their knowledge but also they understand other countries while still improving their English.		X
G5: Speaking is also a difficulty. Many of us find it hard to communicate with foreigners. Having native English teachers	X	

is a good idea. DAV could try something else, e.g. organizing intercultural English practicing camps.		
G6: Change the way of teaching, in stead of teaching English, we should teach things in English. Psychology, Culture, international history (and so on) will be much more attractive if they are taught in English. The student would have to work harder. Just imagine how much you can learn (in term of English) after a course in sociology taught in English? One important but funny problem is how to pronounce in an American or English manner? The above solution will surely equips students with new words. We should further provide them with videos where experts showing them how to pronounce every single syllables. That will also helps.	X	
G8: The program should give more lessons in speaking and listening, or hold field trips in which students have chances to meet foreigners and practice their English, or organize extra-curriculum activities like English-spoken film screenings.	X	
G9: Increase more communication, dialogue lessons	X	
G12: The program should provide English of various subjects, teach students how to use the language in reality., increase the teaching of Presentation skill, making argument, teach English to suit the needs of new diplomats (not only in politics but economics and others)	X	
G13: Should teach students to learn their own culture and others. Teach them how to use correct English in diplomatic situations; advise them to read more, listen more to TV or Radio; learn to remember correct Pronouns, eg. city, name, place....		X
G14 (G22): give them more opportunities to practice, ideally with the native speaker	X	
G15: I think we should have more speaking and listening lessons, in which provides the tips of how to overcome problems we may have in conversations with foreigners. Also, we should have classes on intercultural diversity, classes on differences btw American and British English, classes on slang, etc.		X
G17: first and foremost, it should remind all the students of DAV of being "young diplomats" and the fact that three pillars of diplomacy are politics, economy and culture. Thus, the role of understanding and using culture is just as crucial as the others. With these awareness, the program should point out the culprit of cross-cultural communication which is how		X

to show our RESPECT to other cultures.		
G18: I think it is important to teach students negotiation skills. Negotiation should not be understood as a political term but it should be understood in daily basic as the compromise among individuals to reach an agreement, like between husband and wife, boss and employee. Negotiation skill helps each of us to achieve our goal in life and at work and help to maintain good relationships. That should be taught for the students.	X	
G20: focus more on literature, culture and other fields which enhance the background for understanding cultures and lifestyle of the foreign countries.		X
G21: I think the program should put a bigger emphasis on practical English, apart from academic English that they have done very well, to help students communicate better with native English speakers.	X	
G23: The program should concentrate more on English skills in real-life areas such as negotiations, networking, politicking or business management. The students should be encouraged to self-study using the internet, TV program, radios and accumulating experiences through engaging with English users in a working environment. They should also participate in DAV diplomatic activities as these are golden opportunities that no other training centers in Vietnam can offer.	X	
G24: It is not about the program. It is about the environment, so I can not suggest appropriate program! Yet I have one suggestion to improve the situation: Encourage the students to go out more, travel more, be willing to communicate more, that is more important rather than just thinking of a good program in school!	X	
G25: the English program at the DAV is good in the way that it gives you a lot of academic words, and it helps u to become a good diplomat using technical terms. However, students can read and write perfectly but not speaking. The DAV solved these problems by having American teachers to teach them all skills. They combine Vietnamese teachers and foreign teachers so it is good.	X	
G29: It is very necessary to teach students be active in learning and using the language. Also, the program should help to increase students' confidence in maintaining a communication by teaching about communicative culture.		X
G30: I think it is good if we know about the culture of other countries using English. Besides, students should be taught		X

daily English, not just academic English used in Politics.		
G33: More lessons on communicative skills, not just only presentation skill but how to maintain a conversation, how to communicate with people from totally different cultures. I also think a course on Intercultural communication would help students more confident in talking with foreigners, and working with them later.		X
G34: It should teach about differences from one culture to another and effective ways to overcome the differences.		X
G35: - Break the class into small groups of students and offer them more chance to discuss different topics. Everyone should be involved and raise their own opinion, no matter what it is or no matter 'right or wrong'. Have each of group shows/ makes a presentation on their discussion. Help students to be familiar with academic/formal English and informal English as well as knowing whether they should use which style. For the academic purpose, students should be well trained with proposal, report writing, project planning and presentation, which would be very helpful for them later in the job or further studies.	X	
G36 : I think the programs are good enough. It depends on the students to practice outside what they learn. That is the best way, in my opinion, to develop further one's skills. Practice and more practice.	X	
G37: I got a lot of experience from learning English with IIR. I think to help students more successful in communicating with foreigners, may the program provided with a more facilitated multimedia room for BBC, CNN listening, as well as movies and CDs for practicing (as the library of British Council). Through this one, students can have self-study and advance their learning.	X	
G38: there should be a balance between academic English and daily English. Students should be guided to learn what in order to be successful at their future job (eg. Intercultural communication, report writing skill, presentation skill,)		X
G39: More native speakers - Exchange programs with other foreign universities - Introducing courses on "Intercultural Communication"		X
G40: Students need more time to practice the speaking skill, this should be taught by foreigners.		X

- The book should be edited or written by DAV teachers, usually update the newly born words or phrases. - The content of the lessons should be approached to some of Vietnamese situations related to economic, political or cultural fields. Of course, the articles or lessons should be written by foreigners, if so, students would be more interested in reading or listening. It will be perfect if the lessons reach the real and practical issues of Vietnam and open the questions for students to discuss.		
G41: Suggestions: - More samples of authentic English conversations to be introduced (Although during the first and second year of the program students are introduced with sample conversations, most of the time they are exposed to news or stories from the radio, which turn out to be at odd in real life conversations) - More practice with American accents. Most of listening materials are British English, which is somehow different from American and other "Englishes". While it is necessary to teach standard English, the program may incorporate different English accents into the lessons so that students at least have some ideas about the variety. - More idioms and more time for real practice.	X	
G42: It is a good idea to teach intercultural communication at the DAV, showing students awareness and encourage them to learn, to improve their communicative skills right at university level. If we understand ourselves, and others we can easily work in intercultural setting.		X
G43: English is a means of communication so it is important to teach them good English (pronunciation, presentation skill, writing). But when working with foreigners, the more we understand their styles, the faster we can catch up with our job. I think students can be taught to understand different accents, not just English or American English, so that they can react better when working with people from various countries.	X	
G44: Teach students more daily English, and English used at work such as presentation skill, business letters, communicative culture. I also think a good intercultural communication course can help them with basic knowledge, which is important for work. Teachers can share real experiences, stories, advices of the people who faced intercultural situations to aware the students of using English in a multi-cultural setting.	X	X

G46: Apart from general and academic English, daily English should be added. A course on Intercultural communication can help students. especially the weak ones overcome barriers in communication. So, I think it can be a good suggestion to teach this course.		X
G47: More chance for students to speak English to be flexible and natural in communicating with people. Show them common mistakes that Vietnameses often have when communicating with English-speaking foreigners.		X
G48: I think communicative skill is an important skill at the workplace. From my own experience many of my friends are not confident when communicating with foreigner. There should be more time to practice and if possible, the teachers give us guidance about things we need to prepare to work in an intercultural setting.		X
G49: Teach students communicative skill, skills to work in intercultural communication such as problem-resolution, organizational skill.		X
G50: There should be more outdoor activities with foreign teachers so that students can have chance practicing with them	X	
G51: organize activities so that every student has to speak and communicate. Help them to overcome the fear when talking with foreigners. Provide them more about intercultural communication skill.	X	

Table 4.11: Suggestions for the English program [4]

Interpreting from the answers listed in Table 4.6, the feedback from the 50 interviewees focused on improving students' verbal language (speaking skill) and cultural knowledge (understanding other cultures). According to the respondents, students should have more opportunities to be exposed to intercultural communication, such as learning with foreign teachers, participating in cross-cultural events and practicing their communicative skills in real situations. It can be understood that without real practice it is very difficult to improve intercultural

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[4] The English extracted in this table was originally used by the interviewees

competence just by studying at the university. However, some graduates suggested that teachers should teach more practical English, daily conversation, idioms. At the same time, teaching other cultures and intercultural communication was also highlighted by some interviewees. In short, to be successful in intercultural communication, both language proficiency and cultural fluency should be emphasized in the teaching program.

The suggestions for the English program from target subjects provided a lot of useful information for the researcher. First, it helped her to understand these graduates' needs in intercultural communication based on their real experienced at work. Secondly, it encouraged the changes and adaptation in the DAV English program to better prepare students for their future career. Thirdly, teachers themselves, due to lack of experience in various jobs may not be well-aware of the needs that their students have to meet in a multi-cultural working environment. The experiences learnt from the target subjects may well help them to improve their teaching methods and cultural knowledge to become a more practical facilitator.

4.6 Conclusions

This section summarizes the findings arising from the data presented and being analyzed in the previous sections, and examines them with reference to the research question. This research aims at answering the following question:

What intercultural communication experiences do graduates of the Diplomatic Academy have in their work place?

Firstly, with regard to intercultural communication, all of the 50 graduates approached in the interviews seem to have great needs to master their intercultural communicative skills because dealing with intercultural communication is a crucial part of their job – one key to their career success. Their intercultural communication contacts vary but they reported to have common contacts with Europeans, Americans, Asians and Australians with various accents and different ways of using English. However, what they learnt at the university focused on only British and American English, not other kinds of Englishes.

Secondly, the findings from the research reveal that most of the subjects faced intercultural communication problems in terms of verbal language, different cultures and nonverbal language. In detail, 70% of them encountered verbal language barriers given the fact that people use different accents/ pronunciation and expressing ideas or using accurate words to make people understand is sometimes not easy at all. In addition, 48% reported difficulties concerned with cultural differences, which means different perceptions of people who do not share the same religion, worldview and background. Finally, 12% of the target subjects felt challenged with nonverbal language drawbacks. In fact, nonverbal language can be one part of cultural differences because different cultures formulate different nonverbal codes with their various meanings. However, to make people more aware of this element in intercultural communication, the researcher categorized it as a separate factor.

Thirdly, information collected from the research study also reflected the graduates' experience in overcoming their intercultural communication problems. It can be considered the personal strategies, such as self-studying to improve their

communicative skills including language skills, as well as their cultural skills. The data may well indicate that these people become more aware of the importance of not only language fluency but also cultural fluency to be successful in multicultural communication. This is congruent with Kim (2005, cited in Jandt 2007:44) and Inoue (2007) in chapter 2, section 2.4.

Fourthly, based on their real work experience, the target subjects showed their evaluation of the English program they learnt in the DAV in terms of its usefulness to help students in intercultural communication. The answers revealed a mismatch between the English taught and the English used in reality with only 17% of the interviewees' good evaluation. 33% of them found it partially helpful compared with 40% who claimed its ignorance in providing intercultural communication knowledge.

Finally, the graduates' suggestions about improving the teaching of intercultural communication in the English program have offered the researcher a lot of interesting ideas on what and how to teach English in order to help learners become more successful in intercultural communication.

In short, the needs analysis on the DAV graduates' intercultural communication has not only provided the researcher with information about the needs of learners but also with suggestions to develop a syllabus on intercultural communication to be taught at the DAV. According to the analysis, these graduates' needs in intercultural communication can be described as following:

1. Needs to learn not only English for Diplomacy and Politics but also English for Economics, Cultures and Law in order to perform in a variety of job positions.

2. Needs to be exposed not only to British/ American accents but to accents spoken by the Asians, Africans and Europeans in order to reduce problems in intercultural communication.

3. Needs to learn practical English such as daily conversation, idioms, presentation and negotiation skills in order to react more flexibly in intercultural communication.

4. Needs to learn about different cultures and factors that can affect intercultural communication in order to better prepare themselves for working in an intercultural working environment.

Chapter 5: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter summarizes the findings of the study and presents some pedagogical implications. It also discusses the limitations of the study and puts forth several recommendations for further research.

5.1. Summary of the main findings

The research project has highlighted a number of aspects pertaining to the DAV graduates' intercultural communication experiences at their workplace.

Firstly, the majority of the DAV graduates work in an intercultural environment and dealing with intercultural communication is an important part of their jobs. In intercultural communication, they have to be exposed to a variety of English-speaking people, not only American or British.

Secondly, most of them reported to have difficulties in intercultural communication in terms of verbal language and cultures. 35/50 graduates faced verbal difficulties (different accents, vocabulary, expression), 25/50 graduates experienced problems with different cultures and 6/50 of them reported facing difficulties with nonverbal language. According to most of their opinions, the English program taught at the DAV focused on academic English and English for Politics and paid little attention to teaching daily English, useful idioms or cultural issues that help them overcome drawbacks in intercultural communication. Some others evaluated the program to be good enough to help them with intercultural communication. In their opinion, it depended on each individual to self-improve their English in order to fit the intercultural setting.

Thirdly, the graduates shared their different strategies to deal with problems faced in intercultural communication. This may well offer good suggestions for those who are concerned about dealing with intercultural communication, especially the undergraduates. On the one hand, they had to master their English language such as enriching their vocabulary, correcting their pronunciation and getting used to different accents. They also emphasized the active reactions of the communicators to clarify their ideas or asking questions when facing problems with understanding. On the other hand, learning about different cultures was also highlighted to avoid breakdowns in communication. The learning can be carried out through books, newspapers, online materials, colleagues, foreign friends, etc.

Finally, as suggested by the graduates, the English program should pay more attention to the real needs of its learners. Instead of academic English or English for political purposes, daily English should also be highlighted. Teaching English is not simply teaching the language but should be changed to teaching skills through English including presentation skills, negotiation skills, job-related writing skills (reports, business letters, CV) and other specific areas. The graduates also recommended offering students more chance to deal with foreign contacts such as learning with foreign teachers, organizing more exchange programs or outdoor activities to expose students to real situations. The teachers should limit their teaching but increase their inspiration to encourage self-learning and creative exploration. Students can learn by themselves taking advantage of the internet or other modern devices with the guidance of the teachers. Many ideas

were shared about teaching intercultural communication for students in order to provide them with knowledge and skills to work in a diversified community.

5.2. Implications for the DAV English Program: an intercultural communication syllabus at the DAV

Based partially on the findings of this small-scale research and partially on the literature review, a number of pedagogical implications can be put forward.

First, there should be an adaptation in the English program taught at the DAV in the way that it should focus on teaching practical English for real communication. Instead of teaching only British or American English as "standard English", a variety of Englishes should be taught to make students get used to different accents and use of English as a second language so that they feel confident when communicating with any English-speaking people of any countries and regions.

Secondly, in order to be successful in intercultural communication, it is important to provide students with knowledge about intercultural communication by designing a syllabus on the issue. The objectives of such a syllabus, as Hofstede (1997: 230-231) mentions, include:

- raising learners' awareness about intercultural communication

- providing learners with knowledge about cultures, symbols, rituals, values, etc. that influence intercultural communication

- motivating learners to apply their awareness and knowledge in real situations to master their intercultural communicative skills.

In other words, a number of researchers (Brislin et al, 1986; Gudykunst & Nishida, 1989; Martin 1994, Brislin & Yoshida, 1994, cited in Nguyen 2007) suggest the need to address three areas of cognition, affect and behavior.

- *Cognitive or intercultural awareness* refers to self-awareness of one's own personal cultural identity and understanding how cultures vary.

- *Affective or intercultural sensitivity* refers to acknowledgement and respect toward cultural differences.

- *Behavioral or intercultural adroitness* means the ability to behave effectively in intercultural communication, including message skills, knowledge of appropriate self-disclosure, behavioral flexibility, interaction management, and social skill.

In addition, suggestions made by the graduates also revealed some good ways to teach and learn intercultural communication such as through reading, discussion, travelling, cultural exchange programs, etc. These recommendations, to some extent, are similar to those studied by intercultural communication scholars applied to different levels of intercultural communicative competence.

Firstly, to support cognition *(intercultural awareness)* Nguyen (2007) suggests introducing specific knowledge such as history, geography, politics and economics to facilitate students' confidence in cross-cultural communication. Another way to help learners become aware of culture-specific cognition is by understanding "the dos and don'ts to a particular culture", which may reduce risks of taking or giving offense in intercultural communication. Moreover, as culture is too big a topic to be taught, teachers can introduce major differences in fundamental cultural patterns of attitude and behaviors such as the high and low-

context cultures, individual and collective cultures. Once the students have some perception in their mind, they can discover other cultures themselves.

Cognition is the first level of intercultural communication competence that focuses on knowledge and awareness to help students recognize the differences between their culture and that of others, then reduce anxiety, stereotyping and prejudice toward other cultures. Proper reading, listening materials and lectures with vivid stories in combination with follow-up activities such as discussion, analyzing, comparison and contrast will be useful to encourage cultural learning (Bennett 1997). Students can reflect on their own culture and then see how it differs from other cultures. This brings a lot of interesting explorations about cultures.

At the second level (affect), students are supposed to manage their anxiety, confront their biases and prejudices about other cultures, then become more open-minded in accepting different viewpoints and behaviors of different people from different cultural backgrounds. Nguyen (2007) and Seelye (1997) suggest such activities as *case studies, discussions, simulations, role-play and cultural assimilation games* of critical incidents to invite chances for students to engage themselves and experience varied emotional reactions arising during intercultural communication. In details, *cultural simulation* consists of a brief description of critical incidents of cross-cultural behaviors that are often misunderstood by students. The incident is described and followed with multiple choice explanations for students to choose the correct one. It develops critical thinking and interpretation skills of students at both cognitive and affective levels. *Discussion* can be used at any appropriate time, or be combined with other

activities so that students can share personal opinions about different cultural behaviors. *Role-plays* allow students to put themselves in the shoes of others and experience the emotions in different situations. In my opinion, the teacher should create good cross-cultural situations that students find familiar with their lives to make meaningful role-plays. Moreover, *cultural simulation games* aim at creating cultural shock experiences in order to increase the awareness of cross-cultural problems. In the book *New Ways to Teach Culture*, Fantini (1997) suggests many games to teach culture in the language classroom to acknowledge the three dimensions of intercultural communication competence (cognition, affect and behavior). It is a good source for teachers who want some fun learning in their classrooms to motivate and engage their students' participation.

The third level, behavior, shows the students' an "ability to be flexible and resourceful in actually carrying out what he/ she is capable of in the cognitive and affective dimensions" (Kim, 1991: 269). This refers to an ability to discover, interpret, relate and adapt to the requirements posed by different contexts. It also means students have enough skill to overcome intercultural communication barriers including *anxiety, assuming similarities instead of differences, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice, nonverbal misinterpretations and language problems*. However, intercultural communicative competence can be best gained when students actually put themselves in real practice. Inviting foreign guests to come and talk with students about cultures can be an idea. Besides, the teacher can encourage students to interview foreigners who they can approach to explore some cultural points. Also, the teacher may ask his/her students to write journals reflecting their opinion on any cultural behaviors that

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they see in their own culture or others. Using literature is also a good way to provoke cultural concern and enjoyment as well.

In short, as Cortazzi & Lixian (1999:217) point out, developing intercultural communicative competence is one part of developing cultural awareness, being aware of members of another cultural group: their behavior, their expectations, their perspectives and values. It also means attempting to understand their reasons for their actions and beliefs. Therefore, an intercultural communication syllabus should be carefully designed to fulfill this goal of teaching.

5.3. Limitations and Suggestions for further research

Although this research has produced a number of insightful outcomes, some limitations remain.

Firstly, this study is limited in scope to 50 interviewees working in an intercultural environment. Hence, no firm generations can be made from the findings. Research on a larger sample of students is needed to substantiate the findings of the present study.

Secondly, the researcher used only one instrument tool (interview) for data collection including 40 online interviews and 10 face-to-face interviews. When being interviewed, the respondents may have been busy or not in the mood to answer the questions, so the data collected might not be as valid as expected. Besides, it took a lot of time for data collection, as well as data analysis when the researcher had to work with a large amount of information both quantitatively and

qualitatively. It is suggested for other researches to use other data instruments that can extract more substantial information and save time to analyze the data.

Thirdly, the research study focuses on the graduates as the only source of needs analysis to suggest a new curriculum to be taught at the DAV. However, it may be better to approach the undergraduates, as well as the graduates' employers to further understand the needs for intercultural communication.

One other limitation is that the study could not investigate in depth each kind of the difficulties that graduates encounter in intercultural communication (verbal language, nonverbal language and different perception) and their solutions to each problem. Actually the graduates sometimes could not give clear information about their strategies, but just the general ideas. Further research therefore is needed to draw a more detailed picture of the specific problems the graduates have in their intercultural communication.

Despite all the limitations mentioned, the results of the present study have given a lot of useful information and motivated the researcher to design an intercultural communication syllabus. With further research in the field, the researcher believes the Vietnamese learners in general and the DAV students in particular may benefit and improve their intercultural communicative competence when learning English.

5.4. Conclusions

This study has presented a needs analysis on the DAV graduates' intercultural communication. The study has been done with the main purpose of suggesting a syllabus on intercultural communication at the DAV that promotes the students'

intercultural communicative competence and helps them better prepare for the future career. Based on the results of the study, the researcher has presented some practical suggestions for the teaching of intercultural communication at the DAV, including objectives and ways to teach intercultural communication. In the specific context of the DAV, it should be possible to follow up the implications suggested and discussed in this study. Finally, it is hoped that the study will prove useful to those concerned with helping students tackle difficulties in intercultural communication since the results of this study may be used as a basis for practical suggestions for teaching intercultural communication not only to the DAV students but also students from other universities in Vietnam.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Questions for DAV Graduates

The seven interview questions aim at seeking clear and in-depth answers to the research question: *"What intercultural communication experiences do graduates of the Diplomatic Academy have in their work place?"*

The interview, either online interview or face-to-fact one, is divided into 2 parts:

Part 1: Introduction

The interviewer makes a brief introduction about herself and the purpose of the interview. She should make sure that confidentially will be upheld and the interview will be documented/ recorded. Then, the interviewee will talk about his/ her intercultural communicative experiences.

Part 2: Interview Questions

1. Can you briefly introduce yourself? (name, age, occupation, working organization) [5]

2. How often do you communicate with English-speaking foreigners?

3. Which nationalities are they?

4. What problems do you often face when communicating with them in English? (*in terms of language, nonverbal language and different cultures*). Can you share any situations that you have met dealing with such problems as misunderstanding/ culture shock due to different cultures?

5. How do you usually solve the problems?

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[5] The interviewers' names will not be shown in the transcripts included in the Appendices.

6. Do you think that the English program at the DAV taught you how to deal with these problems in Intercultural communication? Why? Why not?

7. What do you think the program should teach in order to help students more successful in communicating with foreigners?

Appendix B: Interview with G16
(Original Transcript – Online Interview)

Interviewer: Morning!

Graduate: Hi, hardworking mother!

Interviewer: Hihi, I have to. Thanks for your time doing this interview. I know you are going to have class, so I will start now.

Graduate: Hihi, yes. I am ready.

Interviewer: Can you briefly introduce yourself?

Graduate: My full name is N. B. C., 23. I am Lecturer, Department of International Politics & Diplomacy - Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam,

Interviewer: How often do you communicate with English-speaking foreigners?

Graduate: Not very often. But I always to speak more with English-speaking foreigners to practice my speaking skill.

Interviewer: Which nationalities are they?

Graduate: They can be my colleges at the university, who are voluntary teachers from the USA, Canada, etc. They can be delegations from other countries around South East Asian, who participated in forums, or competitions. I had an opportunity to represent Vietnam in ASEAN Logics, which is a competition for ASEAN young people. I reckoned that young people from those countries, such as Singapore or Malaysia, are very good at English. They can be customers, who hired me to interpret at fairs, or conference. Their nationalities varied from Asian to European.

Interviewer: Good. So, what problems do you often face when communicating with them in English? (in terms of language, nonverbal language and different cultures). Can you share any situations that you have met dealing with such problems as misunderstanding/ cultural shock due to different cultures?

Graduate: I think the vocabulary is a problem to me. I often try to translate from Vietnamese to English, I don't think in English. That's why sometimes, if I can find the correlative words, I looked very puzzled. Moreover, I'm scared of making mistakes, so it prevents me from being confidence to communicate with foreigners. People from Muslim countries are not easy going like Westerners, so sometimes when u say hello, you can not shake hands to them.

Interviewer: I see. How do you usually solve your problems?

Graduate: I smile, and try my best to express by synonyms, or find another way to express what I mean (using long phrase, or to describe the words)
Sometimes I use body language, find the situation that can help listener imagine what I'm talking about. I also learn to be careful in cultural issue. It's best to do little research on the culture of the people I'm talking with. Find out any taboo, any problems so that I can avoid being embarrassed. Most of all, I learn to believe in myself, confident and sincere to the listeners

Interviewer: Very good strategies. I just wonder about one issue. Do you think that the English program at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (used to be IIR) taught you how to deal with these problems in Intercultural communication? Why? Why not?

Graduate: English Programs at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam is quite adequate to equip us with basic and major language skill. But it's lack of practical lessons to help us deal with real problem in life when we talk with English-speaking foreigners.

Interviewer: Yes. In your opinion, what the program should teach in order to help students more successful in communicating with foreigners?

Graduate: I think we should have more speaking and listening lessons, in which provides the tips of how to overcome problems we may have in conversations with foreigners. Also, we should have classes on intercultural diversity, classes on differences btw American and British English, classes on slang, etc.

Interviewer: Thanks so much. I find your information very supportive to my topic.

Graduate: You are welcome.

Interviewer: Can I use your information to write my thesis?

Graduate: of course. It's my pleasure.

Interviewer: Thanks

Appendix C: Interview with G23
(Original Transcript – Online Interview)

Interviewer: hi, thank you for your time for me today

Graduate: Ok, but don't ask me difficult questions. hihi

Interviewer: Just very short and simple ones, I think.

Graduate: Just kidding!

Interviewer: Well, so can I start now, busy man?

Graduate: Haha, ok

Interviewer: Can you briefly introduce yourself?

Graduate: I am N. D. N, 31, a researcher at DAV, currently doing my PhD in politics at the Australian Defense Force Academy in Canberra. I joined the DAV (then IIR) in 2001 and have been involving in research and education activities with the organization. I am specialized in track-two diplomatic work, which is an important function of the DAV.

Interviewer: Very informative. How often do you communicate with English-speaking foreigners?

Graduate: Although Vietnamese is the main working language in our organization, we can't avoid using English in our everyday activities. Most of the research documents are written in the English language. We network with foreign embassies in Hanoi, research institutions around the world and are often sent abroad to attend conferences.

Interviewer: I see. Which nationalities of the people you communicate with, most commonly?

Graduate: The DAV works intensively with ASEAN nationals as track-two diplomacy has been thriving in the Southeast Asian region. Besides, the DAV has a good connection with contacts well beyond the ASEAN region, especially in China and Japan.

Interviewer: Yes, so I just wonder what problems you often face when communicating with them in English? (in terms of language, nonverbal language and different cultures). Can you share any situations that you have met dealing with such problems as misunderstanding/ cultural shock due to different cultures?

Graduate: The most frequent problem is that our foreign contacts do not speak British or American English, despite the fact that English is an official language

for most of them. This presents the most serious obstacles as our English training in Vietnam only deals with "standard" English. It is really a shock for fresh graduates when they contact foreigners at the beginning of their jobs.

Interviewer: I agree. How do you usually solve the problems?

Graduate: We deal with the problem of non-British or non-American accents by listening to radios and TV programs. English users there are more diverse.

Interviewer: Now, more difficult question. Hihi.

Graduate: Really?

Interviewer: Do you think that the English program at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (used to be IIR) taught you how to deal with these problems in Intercultural communication? Why? Why not?

Graduate: The students are mostly unprepared for an intercultural environment. They lack practical training and real-life experience. I think the program focuses too much on translation, the usefulness of which is rather doubtful.

Interviewer: So, what do you think the program should teach in order to help students more successful in communicating with foreigners?

Graduate: The program should concentrate more on English skills in real-life areas such as negotiations, networking, politicking or business management. The students should be encouraged to self-study using the internet, TV program, radios and accumulating experiences through engaging with English users in a working environment. They should also participate in DAV diplomatic activities as these are golden opportunities that no other training centers in Vietnam can offer.

Interviewer: Very good suggestions. Thank you very much. Now, will I use your answers to support my thesis argument?

Graduate: Well, do you think they help?

Interviewer: Of course.

Graduate: Sure, you can use them.

Interviewer: Thanks a lot.

Graduate: Good luck, my friend!

Interviewer: Thank you to spend your time for this interview appointment. As I already sent email to you to mention my reason for choosing you as my interviewee and the purpose of my research study. Now are you ready to answer some of my questions?

Graduate: Yes. I am very busy these days but now I am free to talk.

Interviewer: First, can you briefly introduce yourself such as your name, age, occupation, working organization?

Graduate: My name is P. T. T. H. I am 29 and I am a Reporter/ Editor for Hanoimoi Daily Newspaper. However, I am currently a Master student of Media & Communications, Swinburne University of Technology, Melbourne, Australia

Interviewer: Yes, I see. It is a great chance to know your intercultural communication. So, how often do you communicate with English-speaking foreigners?

Graduate: Daily, both in academic & ordinary environment because now I am overseas.

Interviewer: Which nationalities are they?

Graduate: Well, most of them are Australian (80%). Besides, I communicate with people such New Zealand, American, Italian, Taiwanese, Chinese, Thai, Israeli, Palestinian, Brazilian, Columbian, Russian & some other international students group from Africa, South Pacific Islands, Middle East countries.

Interviewer: Oh, you can list a lot of nationalities. Very interesting. I just wonder what problems you often face when communicating with them in English, in terms of language, nonverbal language and different cultures.

Graduate: Yes, good question. I think I encounter quite many problems. For example, in term of different culture & background knowledge, my lecturers, schoolmates and friends have different background of knowledge and different perception of political/economic/cultural system so that I reckon we sometimes hardly understand 100% the serious topics.

- In term of Local & Aussie slang: Australian is likely to use slang or Aussie language anytime and anywhere. It was bits strange at the very first time we communicate.

- Pronunciation& vocabulary is also a drawback. I have just found that English is so different among countries in terms of vocab and pronunciation. Australian

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prefers British-English and there are so many words. This is more obvious when come to the daily life English spoken.

Interviewer: Very nice to know about things you have shared. I think you acknowledge very well your situation.

Graduate: Well, I am a journalist, so I often observe and study things around.

Interviewer: Yes, I can see that. And how do you usually solve such problems?

Graduate: Yeah, first practicing more often and self correct my pronunciation. You know, I also try more often communications with native-English speakers to enrich my vocab, including general vocab in different English speaking countries. Besides, I often introduce some extra highlights on different backgrounds before go into the main presentations or discussions in academic environment. One more thing, I like getting involved in different social and cultural activities in the Uni and daily life.

Interviewer: Very good strategies. I think I will learn from you too.

Graduate: Thank you.

Interviewer: You have a lot of experiences in intercultural communication. So, do you think that the English program at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (used to be IIR) taught you how to deal with these problems in Intercultural communication? Why? Why not?

Graduate: Partly yes. We did have studied very well English for academic purpose, for formal and office environment. However, practical English as well as other working skills should be paid more attention to.

Interviewer: What do you think the program should teach in order to help students more successful in communicating with foreigners?

Graduate: Just some ideas I think can be useful for the students. Teachers should:

-   Break the class into small groups of students and offer them more chance to discuss different topics
-   Everyone should be involved and raise their own opinion, no matter what it is or no matter 'right or wrong'
-   Have each of group shows/ makes a presentation on their discussion
-   Help students to be familiar with academic/formal English and informal English as well as knowing whether they should use which style.
-   For the academic purpose, students should be well trained with proposal, report writing, project planning and presentation, which would be very helpful for them later in the job or further studies.

Interviewer: How about teaching intercultural communication?

Graduate: Yes, it is necessary. I think students should have more understanding about other cultures, how to deal with people of different countries with different characters. They can learn by themselves by reading books or searching the internet. Yet, the teachers should guide them because they may not know what they will deal with in their workplace later on, an intercultural environment.

Interviewer: Thank you for your very information answers. I would like to use this information to support my thesis writing. Can I do that?

Graduate: Welcome. If you need further help, you can always contact me.

Interviewer: Thanks so much. Good night.

Graduate: Good night

Interviewer: Hi, thank for arranging an appointment with me for my interview.

Graduate: My pleasure. How is your thesis now?

Interviewer: I am still collecting data. It takes quite a long time to arrange interviews like this.

Graduate: I see. But I think you can do it well.

Interviewer: Thank you. Can I start now?

Graduate: Yes.

Interviewer: You have known the topic and purpose of my research study. Now, I will have several questions to understand your intercultural communication experience. But first, can you briefly introduce yourself: name, age, occupation, working organization?

Graduate: My name is V. N, 31 years old. I am staff of the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam, MOFA. However, I am postgraduate student in the US now.

Interviewer: How often do you communicate with English-speaking foreigners?

Graduate: On daily basis.

Interviewer: Which nationalities are they?

Graduate: Mostly Americans, and international students. Many of them from English-speaking countries like England, Canada, Australia and others are mainly from non-English speaking countries in Asia and Eastern Europe.

Interviewer: I see. And what problems do you often face when communicating with them in English? (in terms of language, nonverbal language and different cultures)

Graduate: I think, in terms of language, most problems are to do with listening: understanding different accents, fast speech, idioms. Americans tend to speak very fast and their accents are difficult to catch, especially at high speed. Indian English is also hard to understand too.

Interviewer: Have you got any stories to tell me?

Graduate: Yes, just some real experience that I had in terms of the difficulties in inter-cultural contexts, funny stories actually, still feel shy whenever I think of them :)

Interviewer: I am so curious to know.

Graduate: First, understanding the true meanings of the language in context. You know, when American people say "What's up?" or "How's it going?" or simply "how are you?", most of the cases they simply mean "Hello!!" and do not always expect you to respond fully, things like "I am fine, and you?" and so on....as students are taught in class. They may say it then walk away without waiting for your answer, because it just mean a simple greeting. It is fine for you to just respond to them "Hi" or "hello", you dont have to explain how you are doing, what are you doing etc. When I first came to the US, I found this shocking and always wasted lots of time making the follow-up conversations. Of course there are many cases that it is a way to start a conversation and people keep talking afterward, but for most of the cases, especially for strangers to meet, on the street for example, "how's going or how are you?" simply means "HI!" :)

- When I got my first paper back from my professor, his feedback was "it's interesting". I was so happy and thought that it was a compliment. But later I found out that American people say "it's interesting" when they mean "there is nothing good about it!!" when they want to put it in a polite way :)

Interviewer: very interesting to me.

Graduate: and also I experience things like Lack of shared/ inter-subjective knowledge at a different culture. It was June 2002 when I first came to the US and it was also my first trip abroad. I went to New York city and decided to try McDonald's fast food, as I had heard a lot about it from the books before, but never had a chance to try (there was none in Vietnam at that time). When I entered the shop, I saw a long queue of people waiting for their food in front of the counter, and everyone came out with the same set: a coke, some French fries, and a burger. I thought to myself, maybe every order should be the same, one set of food same to everyone! So when my turn came, I said very confidently to the waitress: "One McDonald please!!". The girl threw an astonishing look to me! "What would you like, again sir?" she said. I repeated, even louder "One Mc Donald please!!!" but just a split of a second after that I soon recognized how stupid I was when everyone was laughing so loud at me, both the waitress and the people queuing behind me. My face just turned red and redder :) Later I found out that customers are expected to order the food from the menu printed above the counter, there is no "one Mc. Donald" fixed set that I was asking for :)) what an embarrassing experience!! Mc. Donald culture was just so new to a young hungry me at that time, although I could communicate in English quite well at that point.

Interviewer: So, I wonder how you usually solve the problems.

Graduate: First, being patient and willing to ask for repetition and explanation, or sometimes simply ignoring. I also use nonverbal language such as facial expressions or body gestures to express my ideas.

Interviewer: As a graduate of the DAV, and I know you did teach English for some time before at the DAV, do you think that the English program at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (used to be IIR) taught you how to deal with these problems in Intercultural communication? Why? Why not?

Graduate: No, I do not think DAV prepares students enough for intercultural contexts, although the program sets good foundation for self-improvement. The main reason is students are not exposed to such authentic situations during school time. Most of the listening exercises for students at DAV are monologues (news from BBC or VOA), therefore do not adequately equip them with practical experience in listening to real English conversations, especially when the context is multi-cultural where different "types" of English are spoken. Speaking lessons are also paid less attention to, but more to reading and writing skills.

Interviewer: Based on your experiences, what do you think the program should teach in order to help students more successful in communicating with foreigners?

Graduate: I just thought of some suggestions:

- More samples of authentic English conversations to be introduced (Although during the first and second year of the program students are introduced with sample conversations, most of the time they are exposed to news or stories from the radio, which turn out to be at odd in real life conversations)
- More practice with American accents. Most of listening materials are British English, which is somehow different from American and other "Englishes". While it is necessary to teach Standard English, the program may incorporate different English accents into the lessons so that students at least have some ideas about the variety.
- More idioms and more time for real practice.

Appendix F: Interview with G46

(Translated Transcript – Online Interview)

Interviewer: Hi, long time no see.

Graduate: Yes, how are you getting on?

Interviewer: So so, but busy with thesis. As you know, I do thesis on the topic "A study on the DAV graduates' experiences in intercultural communication: A needs analysis". Now I have to interview 40 graduates online. Can you be one of them?

Graduate: Hihi. Ok. If you think I am suitable

Interviewer: Sure. I want to find out graduates' problems when communicating in English with foreigners in language, nonverbal language and cultures

Graduate: I see

Interviewer: Ok, so start now?

Graduate: Go ahead

Interviewer: Can you briefly introduce yourself?

Graduate: I am B. C. N, 26 years old. I am now a Project Representative for an NGO program in Quang Tri Province.

Interviewer: And how often do you communicate with English-speaking foreigners?

Graduate: Daily. I have to work in English everyday.

Interviewer: Which nationalities are they?

Graduate: Normally American and French

Interviewer: Great. I think you will have some interesting experiences to share with me. What problems do you often face when communicating with them in English? (in terms of language, nonverbal language and different cultures). Can you share any situations that you have met dealing with such problems as misunderstanding/ cultural shock due to different cultures?

Graduate: When communicating with a single person, there is no problems but in a groups, people use slangs and speak very fast so I don't understand. Some

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Americans are very talkative and friendly and I can not join their activities like drinking. In short, we have different ways, different cultures.

Interviewer: Haha. I see. It is not easy to understand their slangs.

Interviewer: So how do you usually solve your problems?

Graduate: Well, if there are strange things happen, I just try to understand their behaviors. I am also interested in reading materials about Vietnamese cultures and American one. I learn how foreigners feel about Vietnam so I can understand them. When it is necessary, I can explain to them things they want to know about our culture. It is important to know our culture too.

Interviewer: Good way. And do you still remember the English program taught at the DAV?

Graduate: Yes. Still.

Interviewer: Do you think that the English program at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (used to be IIR) taught you how to deal with these problems in Intercultural communication? Why? Why not?

Graduate: Well, not much but to some extent DAV students have the ability to adapt to intercultural communication, especially those who have chance communicating with foreigners often. I think the program should pay more attention to help the weak students to be more confidence in communicating with foreigners.

Interviewer: I am thinking about designing a course on "cross-cultural communication". In your opinion, what the program should teach in order to help students more successful in communicating with foreigners?

Graduate: Apart from general and academic English, daily English should be added. A course on Intercultural communication can help students. Especially the weak ones overcome barriers in communication. So, I think it can be a good suggestion to teach this course.

Interviewer: Same to me

Graduate: if you can design such a course, I think it will be very useful and practical.

Interviewer: What do you think I should teach?

Graduate: A lot. I like reading about foreigners' feeling about Vietnamese people, especially foreign employers. You can teach about working skills and communicative culture, especially other cultures to see the difference between Vietnamese culture and others.

Interviewer: Very good idea. Thank you very much.

Graduate: Just some thinking. Hihi. When I have more ideas, I can share with you later. Ok? Good luck!

Interviewer: Thanks

(Translated Transcript – Face-to-face interview)

Interviewer: Good afternoon. Today I would like to interview you for my research study of the MA-ELT in Thailand. The topic is: A study on the DAV graduates' experiences in intercultural communication: A needs analysis. The research aims at finding out the real needs of the graduates in order to see whether the English teaching at the DAV has met these needs. If not, how should we modify the program. I would like to ask you some questions with my guarantee that your information will be confidential and I would like to use it for my data collect. Is that ok for you?

Graduate: Yes, I agree.

Interviewer: First, can you briefly introduce yourself?

Graduate: Yes, my name is D. Q. C, 36. Before I was English teacher for 10 years at the DAV and now I am in charge of the Vietnam-Singapore training center. At the university, I was trained in interpretation. Therefore, besides my management time, I also take part in conferences in Hanoi.

Interviewer: Well, so in the capacity of the Director of Vietnam-Singapore training center, do you often communicate with English-speaking foreigners?

Graduate: Of course, here I often communicate with Singaporeans such as the Embassy staff who cooperate with me to manage the center. The most common contact is with Singaporean teachers who teach here.

Interviewer: Apart from Singaporeans, which nationalities of the foreigners that you commonly communicate with?

Graduate: Sometimes I communicate with British, American, Indian teachers who work here. Besides, when I work as an interpreter, I communicate with people from various nations including English, American, Asian (Korean, Japanese…) In general, I have many chances to communicate with foreigners.

Interviewer: Yes, when communicating with such variety of foreigners, have you ever faced problems due to language, nonverbal language and cultural differences?

Graduate: Sincerely, I do not face many problems in term of cultures. There are some, of course, due to the different cultures but not much. When working with people here, we have a long time to understand one another, so we rarely have problems such as misunderstanding or cultural shock.

Interviewer: How about language and nonverbal language?

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Graduate: well, when communicating with Singaporeans who are also Asian so we share quite the same pattern in term of nonverbal language. However, for European there are different norms and we should be careful to understand their nonverbal language.

Interviewer: Thank you. You also have more than 10 working experience in intercultural communication. How do you usually solve the problems in intercultural communication?

Graduate: Yes, I think we should be careful in intercultural communication. For example, when I started working with Singaporeans, I had to ask Vietnamese staff first, and then Singaporean co-workers, information about working with them in order to know how to behave in different cases. This helped me to understand their culture by talking directly to them. I think we need to study about other cultures by reading newspapers, materials in order to better communicate with people from different cultures.

Interviewer: Thank you. You have experience of being a teacher as well as a student at the DAV, do you think the DAV English program helps students in intercultural communication?

Graduate: Well, I think I taught there 10 years, the intercultural communication was not taught, just only in some lessons in basic English, not much and without any detailed curriculum. However, as far as I know, the DAV has just had a new Faculty of Media and Cultural exchange. I think it can be a start for designing a syllabus to help students better aware of intercultural communication.

Interviewer: Yes. Thank you. The last question, what the English program should teach in order to help students more successful in intercultural communication.

Graduate: I think the English Faculty should teach a syllabus in English by providing information about some common countries/ regions so that the students understand about their characteristics as well the communicative patterns of the people in these places. Besides, they need to distinguish the difference between cultures like Thai or Singaporean cultures to avoid misunderstanding when working with them.

Interviewer: Thank you for your informative answer and your help.

Graduate: Yes, you are welcome.

Interviewer: Hi. Thank you for giving me this interview.

Graduate: You are welcome.

Interviewer: First, can you briefly introduce yourself?

Graduate: My name is N. H. H, 27 years old. I am a Television Editor, VTC Vietnam

Interviewer: How often do you communicate with English-speaking foreigners?
Graduate: Yes, often when I attend Seminars, Press meetings or have interviews with foreigners.

Interviewer: Normally which nationalities are they?

Graduate: English, American, Belgium, and other people from Asian countries including Korea and Japan

Interviewer: What problems do you often face when communicating with them in English? (in terms of language, nonverbal language and different cultures). Can you share any situations that you have met dealing with such problems as misunderstanding/ cultural shock due to different cultures?

Graduate: I get difficulties in finding out the words to express my ideas, and I can not understand everything they say in my interview. Sometimes, I talk to them before or after my interviews about topics like families, children,,, but I had an experience that the topic is not the interest of many foreigners due to cultures. But for Vietnamese people, it is a way to show care and share with them.

Interviewer: I see. So how do you usually solve the problems?

Graduate: In term of language, I often try to replace words if I can not remember the exact words I want to say, or use body language to help. In a interview, I just catch the main ideas and keep the interview continue even I can not catch all the things my interviewee talks. For my job, I learn through working and books such as books to teach how to communicate with people, understand other cultures and things like that.

Interviewer: Do you think that the English program at the Diplomatic Academy of Vietnam (used to be IIR) taught you how to deal with these problems in Intercultural communication? Why? Why not?

Graduate: I think partly. The program taught me how to react fast in speaking and listening, finding various ways to express ideas. However, communicative

skill was not carefully taught due to restricted time and practice. I think each person should practice this one by their own, in reality. This soft skill is every important for everyone's success.

Interviewer: What do you think the program should teach in order to help students more successful in communicating with foreigners?

Graduate: It is a good idea to teach intercultural communication at the DAV, showing students awareness and encourage them to learn, to improve their communicative skills right at university level. If we understand ourselves, and others we can easily work in intercultural setting.

Interviewer: Thanks for your kind help.

Graduate: No problem at all