Influence of culture and context on information behaviour and information literacy

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• Erasmus
• Internationalization
• Going globally
• Students from Asia
- Culture
- Language (English in a non-English speaking country)
- Education system
- Attitudes towards information / communication
Not everything should be easily labelled as cultural differences
  Confucianism
  Asian values
  Political environment
  Collectivism
  Power distance
  Lack of citizenship involvement
  Stereotypes (!)
...vì giống chủ nghĩa xã hội trước hết cần có những con người xã hội chủ nghĩa. Báo cáo con người xã hội chủ nghĩa không có con đường nào khác ngoài phải được tri thức hóa học và lý tưởng, đạo đức xã hội chủ nghĩa. Các con người xã hội chủ nghĩa, con người phần diện, nhất định phải có học thức.
WHAT I AM ADVOCATING FOR? (1/2)

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

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

- Expanded and updated in 2015 American Library Association’s definition on information literacy as well as the CILIP’s Information literacy definition (2018)

- Concepts of cultural literacy and Asia literacy suggested by Harry Irwin (1996)

- Three socio-cultural phenomena distinguishing South and Southeast Asia: Confucianism, Collectivism, and Large power distance
CONFUCIANISM
COLLECTIVISM
LARGE POWER DISTANCE

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

* The other four are: Individualism vs. Collectivism; Uncertainty avoidance; Masculinity vs. Femininity; Long-term orientation vs. Short-term orientation.
Cultural influences on information literacy and information behavior

- Cultural and linguistic differences can affect information literacy
- Asian students lack critical thinking skills
- They are expected to receive information passively and learn all information given and not selected one
- They do not use many sources while learning but usually limit to one
Information literacy in multicultural context and a new role for academic libraries

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

Librarians need to:

● identify students’ cultural background
● learn more about the cultures represented by the students
● learn more about the processes of students’ analysis
● analyze students’ work outcomes according to cultural models
SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL INTRODUCTION
Teachers and Learners in Vietnam

- Confucianism
- Teacher- and exam-oriented education
- One way communication
- Problem with critical thinking and analytical skills
IL in Vietnamese University Libraries

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

- February - May 2017

- Sample: 353 respondents; students of International Studies Dept. (N=267) and English Studies Dept. (N=86)

- Questionnaire (12 open-ended and multiple choice questions)

- Semi-structured in-depth interviews (interview guide with 14 questions)
Results

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

- Social media and Google
- Students’ awareness towards IL
- Students’ willingness to develop information skills
- Slow change in Vietnamese academia
- “Think locally, less formally”
My Study at the University of Warsaw

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

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

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

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

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

- Library as a good learning place
- Great infrastructure
- But too little and too complicated info in English
- Too little awareness about library collections
Ways of Access to Information

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

- Need of raising cultural awareness, to establish a tailored IL program
- Do not compare Asian students to other international students, particularly “Erasmus” ones
- Teachers should make efforts to understand a cultural background of their students
- Librarians can help, but they must improve their English and communication skills
- Not about Vietnamese students only
“The Chinese apps have got everything,” said Shen Yanan, 28, who works in Baoding, China, and has no interest in politics.
My works on this topic


Other selected references:


