TEACHING METHODS: ETIC OR EMIC

Lane Kelley, University of Hawaii
Kelley@cba.hawaii.edu

Elaine K. Bailey, University of Hawaii

William David Brice, University of Hawaii

ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper is whether teaching methods are Etic or Emic based. Are they universal or culturally determined. The deterministic positions are described per Hofstede's individualism-collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance. Only descriptive statistics are used but differences and similarities are so strong that it is easy to reach some conclusions.

INTRODUCTION

As business schools become more global in their perspective, curriculum content, and nationality of students, the question of the importance of adapting different teaching methodologies for different cultural groups requires investigation (Chang 1996; Gardner (1993). This initial empirical investigation provides insight into the differences and similarities of learning preferences between multiple cultural groups in various learning environments. The comparison outcomes will benefit educators in the selection of learning pedagogy and adaptation of methodologies to culturally diverse groups.

In an article by Hofstede (1986), he cites an American professor who exclaimed in class, "You lovely girls, I love you". The Chinese students were terrified, but Gert is European, and this shows in his lack of understanding of the American culture. Given the impact of the feminist movement, an American professor would never use the term lovely, or girls, or say, "I love you". By his lack of understanding of the U.S. culture, he unexpectedly, provides justification for his position on cultural prerequisites for teaching effectiveness.

The above would be an example of inappropriate roles in relationships per se. This paper goes one step further to look at teaching methods themselves which can be argued are the result of directly and indirectly of significant cultural role patterns. In the Hofstede previously cited article the following four role pairs are identified.

Family	Parent-Child
	Man-Woman
School	Teacher-Student
Job	Boss-Subordinate
Community	Authority-Member

Each of the above pairs have unequal but complimentary roles. However, between cultures the relationships are unequal but vary in magnitude in degree and type of inequity. For example, if you walk the halls of the Business School, at Korea University, the first observation a U.S. professor will make is that the students will stop, stand at attention, and address the faculty with a formal greeting and a bow. A typical classroom is rectangular in shaped room, set classroom style with approximately 80 students or more per class. If you attend the class session, you will probably experience a lecture format with very little discussion, is this culturally determined or simply a practice that is determined by the organization? Another way to examine this choice of teaching methodology is to test whether it is etic or emic. In other words, are they universal or cultural specific?

Cultures within the context of cross-cultural psychology literature can be viewed as a system with complex interrelationships between variables, rather than a collection of factors each one of which can be set apart to serve as an "Independent" variable in the study. However, from the non-universalistic viewpoint, distinctions can be made specifying a hypothetical construct as culture-specific and can be distinguished from the universal (Lonner & Berry, 1986). In a multi-cultural comparison the etic refers to a phenomenon which has a common meaning across cultures, often referenced as the core meaning. Emic refers to a phenomenon different across cultures, but each emic is related to the shared etic core (Berry, 1969a; Brislin, 1983; Lonner & Berry, 1986). For the purposes of this study four the generally accepted outcomes based on current international business school curricula (etics) area assessed based on multiple instructional methodologies across various cultures.

The following cultural differences as established in the work of Hofstedt (1980) will provide a greater framework

and primary lens through which to view these cultural differences in a learning environment.

THE CULTURAL DETERMINIST POSITION AND TEACHING METHODS

In Hofstede's article entitled "Cultural Learning in Teaching and Learning", he explores implications of the extension of his four cultural dimensions to classroom instruction. A review of this application follows:

1. Individualist. Cultures that assume the individual's primary concern are self. Actions and choices are directed by self-interest. An Individualist culture is loosely integrated. (Reference Table 1)
2. Collectivist. Cultures that assume the individual's primary concern are with others in "their" group. Collectivists belong to one or more groups which protect the interests of its members. A Collective culture is tightly integrated. (Reference Table 1)
3. Power Distance. Defines the extent to which the less powerful individuals in a society accept inequality as acceptable or a common condition. "All societies are unequal, but some are more unequal than others" (Hofstede, 1980, p.136).(Reference Table 2)
4. Uncertainty Avoidance. Defines the extent to which individuals within a culture are made nervous by situations which they perceive as unstructured, unclear, and unpredictable Cultures with strong Uncertainty Avoidance are active, aggressive, emotional, compulsive, security seeking, and intolerant. (Reference Table 3)

How do these cultural dimensions related to teaching methodologies and what do they mean in terms of the classroom setting? The following tables describe examples of the characteristics of these cultural dimensions and the degree to which each dimension is assumed to impact on teaching methodologies.

Table 1
Differences in Teacher/Student and Student/Student Interaction Related to the Individualism versus Collectivism Dimension

Collectivist Societies	Individualist Societies
▪ Positive Association in society with whatever is rooted in tradition ▪ Young should learn; adults cannot play the student role ▪ Students expect to learn how to do ▪ Individual students will only speak up only when called upon personally by teacher ▪ Individuals will only speak up in small groups ▪ Classes split socially into smaller subgroups based on particular criteria (e.g. ethnic affiliation) ▪ Harmony in learning situations must be maintained at all times. ▪ Not the teacher nor any student can ever be made to lose face ▪ Diploma certificates are important and placed on walls	▪ Positive association in society with whatever is "new" ▪ One is never too old to learn; "permanent education" ▪ Students expect to learn how to learn ▪ Individual students will speak up in class to response to a general invite by teacher ▪ Individuals will speak up in large groups ▪ Subgroupings in class vary from one situation to the next based on universalist criteria (e.g. the task at "hand") ▪ Confrontation in the learning situations can be salutary; conflicts can be brought into the open ▪ Face-consciousness is weak ▪ Diploma certificates have little symbolic value

RESULTS

In our discussion we will focus on the teaching methods that received the highest evaluations and the lowest. There were twenty-eight methods assessed by the two groups of students who were from the U.S. and Japan. There were 29 U.S. students and 32 Japanese.

Knowledge Acquisition. The highest and lowest choices were different between the two groups with the U.S. students ranking group processes highest and the Japanese ranking passive approaches at the high end of the

scale. As the data illustrated the Japanese rated three approaches higher than the lecture method. Notice that both groups rated computer assisted methods as unattractive. Interestingly, both groups rated individual presentations as number 1, most preferred.

Interpersonal skills. Both groups chose active learning methods for developing interpersonal skills, and both chose group methods as the favored technique. The lowest ranked methods were less active approaches and again with computer approaches receiving lack of support from both groups. Interestingly, the U.S. students chose group

methods for both knowledge acquisition and interpersonal skills.

Problem Solving. Group methods were again the top choice for Japanese and U.S. students for problem solving skill development. Both groups chose case study and simulations as favored methods. Both selected film/ videos as least favored. The lecture method placed in the bottom half for both groups.

Table 2
Differences in Teacher/Student and Student/Student Interaction Related to the Power Distance Dimension

Small Power Distance Societies	Large Power Distance Societies
▪ Stress on impersonal "truth" which can in principle be obtained from any competent person ▪ A teacher should respect the independence of his/her students ▪ Student-centered education(premium on initiative) ▪ Teachers expect students to initiate communication ▪ Teacher expects students to find their own paths ▪ Students may speak up spontaneously in class ▪ Students allowed to contradict or criticize teachers ▪ Outside class, teachers are treated as equals ▪ Younger teachers are more liked than older teachers	▪ Stress on personal "wisdom" which is transferred in the relationship with a particular teacher (guru) ▪ A teacher merits the respect of his/her students ▪ Teacher-centered education (premium on order) ▪ Students expect teachers to initiate communication ▪ Students expect teachers to outline paths to follow ▪ Students speak up in class only when invited by teacher ▪ Teacher is never contradicted nor publicly criticized ▪ Respect for teachers is also shown outside class ▪ Older teacher are more respected than younger teachers

Table 3
Differences in Teacher/Student and Student/Student Interaction Related to the Uncertainty Avoidance Dimension

Weak Uncertainty Avoidance Societies	Strong Uncertainty Avoidance Societies
▪ Students feel comfortable in instructional learning situations; vague objectives; broad assignments, no timetables ▪ Students are allowed to say "I don't know" ▪ Teachers use plain English ▪ Students are rewarded for innovative reaches to problem solving ▪ Teachers are expected to suppress emotions (and so are students) ▪ Teachers interpret intellectual disagreement as stimulating exercise ▪ Teachers seek parents ideas	▪ Students feel comfortable in structured learning situations: precise objectives, detailed assignments, strict timetables ▪ Teachers are expected to have all the answers ▪ A good teacher uses academic language ▪ Students are rewarded for accuracy in problem solving ▪ Teachers are allowed to behave emotionally (and so are students) ▪ Teachers interpret intellectual disagreement as personal disloyalty ▪ Teachers consider themselves experts who cannot learn anything from lay parents—and parents agree

DISCUSSION

The focus of this paper was whether teaching methods are Etic or Emic based. Are they universal or culturally determined. The Determinist positions were described per Hofstede's Individualism-Collectivism, Uncertainty Avoidance, and Power Distance. Only descriptive statistics were used but differences and similarities were so strong that it was easy to make conclusions. American students always depicted as individualists - like group teaching methods. Active learning methods dominated both groups'

rating for all teaching objectives - Knowledge Acquisition, Problem Solving, Interpersonal Skills, and Participant Acceptance.

Given the recent move toward computer assisted learning, it is important to note that the computer-assisted methods did not receive Favorable rating. Video/films also received bad ratings. It is also important to note the similarities between the U.S. and Japanese students especially for favored approaches. Even though there were differences they were similar in their choices for active, experiential based. teaching approaches.

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