

Rachel Lindner

Introducing a Micro-Skills Approach to Intercultural Learning to an English for Specific Purposes Course for Students of Sociology

Abstract

This article is concerned with the design of an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) course, "Exploring English for Sociology", at a German university. It focuses on that aspect of the course that involves the development of intercultural content aimed at facilitating intercultural competence. The first part of the article puts forward a rationale for introducing an intercultural dimension to the syllabus. In the second part I develop a case for combining "skills-based intercultural learning" with language learning and then outline in the third part how this will be implemented. Finally I reflect on potential problems with implementation and ideas for further developments.

Keywords: English for specific purposes, teaching English for intercultural communication, English for sociology.

1. Introduction

The last 20 years have seen profound changes in Higher Education (HE) study patterns as an increasingly mobile student population seeks educational opportunities and improved career prospects in study sojourns and internships abroad. In German HE this development has brought with it a rise in demand for English language courses, notably from students of non-linguistic faculties, for whom English has come to be perceived as a key skill.

In ESP, where learning English is increasingly seen “as part of the wider process of socialisation into a new academic community” (Corbett, 2003: 68), a response to this demand has been to supplement the traditional focus of reading and writing for academic purposes with communicative skills development. However, this response alone is unlikely to meet the needs of internationally engaged students: Alptekin (2002) argues that much communicative language teaching (CLT) is based on native-speaker notions of communicative competence that involve preparing non-native speakers of English (NNSs) for exchanges with native speakers (NSs), a model that is inappropriate in the NNS-NNS lingua franca contexts for which students often require English. Others, e.g. Kramsch (1995) or Corbett (2003) note that CLT focuses too exclusively on fluency and transactional “bridging-the-information-gap” skills, and often fails to address cultural aspects of communication.

A look at English teaching paradigms in Germany sheds more light on what appears to be a mismatch between ESP learner needs and language teaching practice.

1.1. A need to shift English teaching paradigms?

Figure 1 adapts Braj Kachru’s (1985, in Graddol, 2006) depiction of the global community of English speakers to illustrate English language teaching in Germany, where learners of English belong to the expanding circle of English speakers in which English is learned as a foreign language (EFL). Of the inner circle varieties, British English is traditionally used to provide an authoritative native-speaker model, thereby linking the language to a specific inner circle target culture. Learners are prepared for interaction with NSs from this target culture, whereby communication is typically taught in primarily linguistic terms, with cultural learning usually relegated to a separate “Life and Institutions” category (Kramsch, 1995: 86).

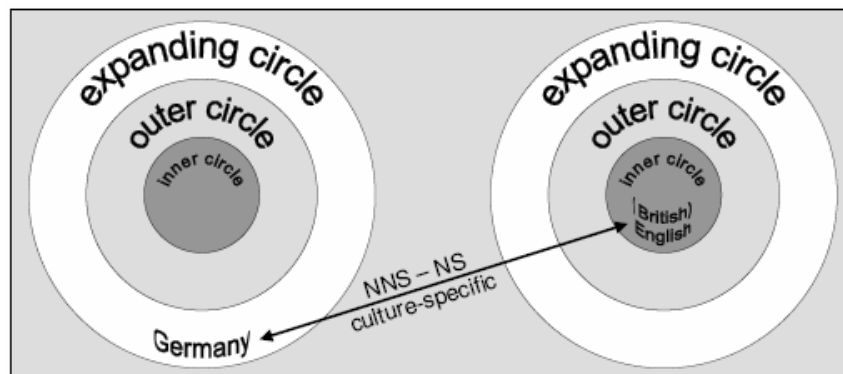


Figure 1: Traditional TEFL paradigm in Germany. Adapted from Kachru’s (1985) circles of Englishes

The global spread of English and its subsequent lingua franca status has had little impact on the German school curriculum. It is true that English has become a core compulsory subject from age eight, modern textbooks portray a slightly more differentiated British society and more space is dedicated to other inner circle Englishes. Even so, the thrust of English learning remains firmly within the TEFL paradigm (see e.g. Decke-Cornill, 2002; Wandel, 2002).

Unsurprisingly the TEFL paradigm is similarly dominant amongst many lecturers and language teachers in higher education establishments, for whom the principle goal of language learning remains native-speaker competence, English as a lingua franca communication perceived as being deeply flawed (Ehrenreich, 2009). However, as we have already seen, the TEFL paradigm fails to meet the non-linguist students' growing need for language training that prepares them for NNS-NNS academic and professional exchanges. A shift of paradigm might reconcile the mismatch.

Teaching English as an International Language (TEIL), as a Lingua Franca (TELF) and for Intercultural Communication (TEIC) have emerged in response to the global spread of English and the subsequent changing needs of learners. In comparison to TEFL, which is culture-specific in that it focusses on one principle target culture and prepares learners for asymmetrical NS-NNS interactions, the newer paradigms tend towards a culture-general approach for symmetrical interaction between NNSs from different cultures. Even in NNS-NS interaction, neither speaker is viewed in these paradigms as an "owner" of the language, but as an equal participant in an intercultural exchange.

Literature on TEIL, TELF and TEIC often uses the terms interchangeably. In this article TEIL and TELF are seen as providing more linguistically-oriented strategies for lingua franca communication. TEIC, on the other hand, focusses less on linguistic characteristics and more on facilitating effective English as a lingua franca communication through attention to communicational challenges arising from cultural differences. Since a detailed analysis of all three paradigms goes beyond the scope of this article, the focus here is the relevance of the TEIC paradigm for the learner group in question.

In contrast to TEFL the goal of TEIC is not so much native-speaker competence as intercultural communicative competence (ICC), in other words helping students become effective "intercultural speakers" or "mediators" (Byram et al 2002: 9) by raising awareness of their own culture, and in so doing helping them interpret and understand other cultures. Furthermore, TEIC differs from earlier approaches to teaching culture by making the intercultural dimension an integral rather than an add-on component of a language syllabus (Corbett, 2003: 30).

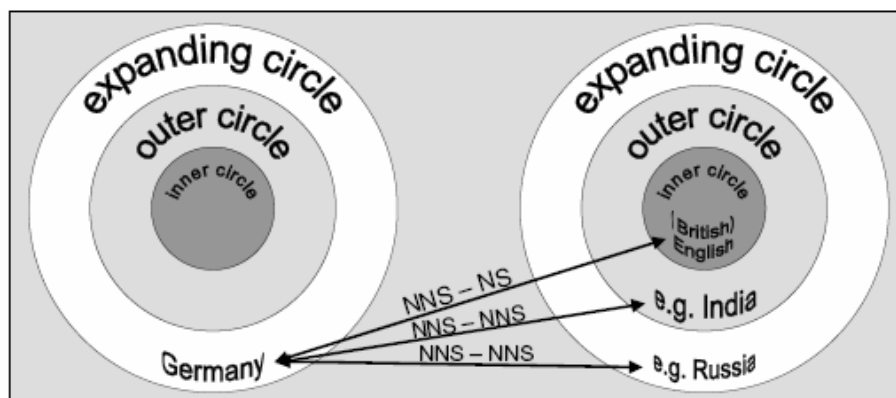


Figure 2: Newer teaching paradigms. Adapted from Kachru's (1985) circles of Englishes

Referring back to emerging English learning needs of students of non-linguistic degree programmes, I believe that these students will benefit from an approach to language teaching that prepares them for both linguistic as well as cultural challenges for both NNS-NNS as well as NNS-NS encounters (see Figure 2). The foregoing analysis suggests that student needs could be met by shifting learning paradigms from TEFL to TEIC and making intercultural content a significant component of a language course. The following section looks more closely at the objectives of intercultural content and how it can be integrated into an ESP syllabus.

2. Defining intercultural content

An often cited set of objectives for intercultural content is Byram's five "savoir" categories or "components of intercultural competence" (Byram, 1997; Byram and Zarate, 1997; Byram et al, 2002), which form the basis of the CEFR guidelines for intercultural learning, teaching and assessment (Little and Simpson, 2003).

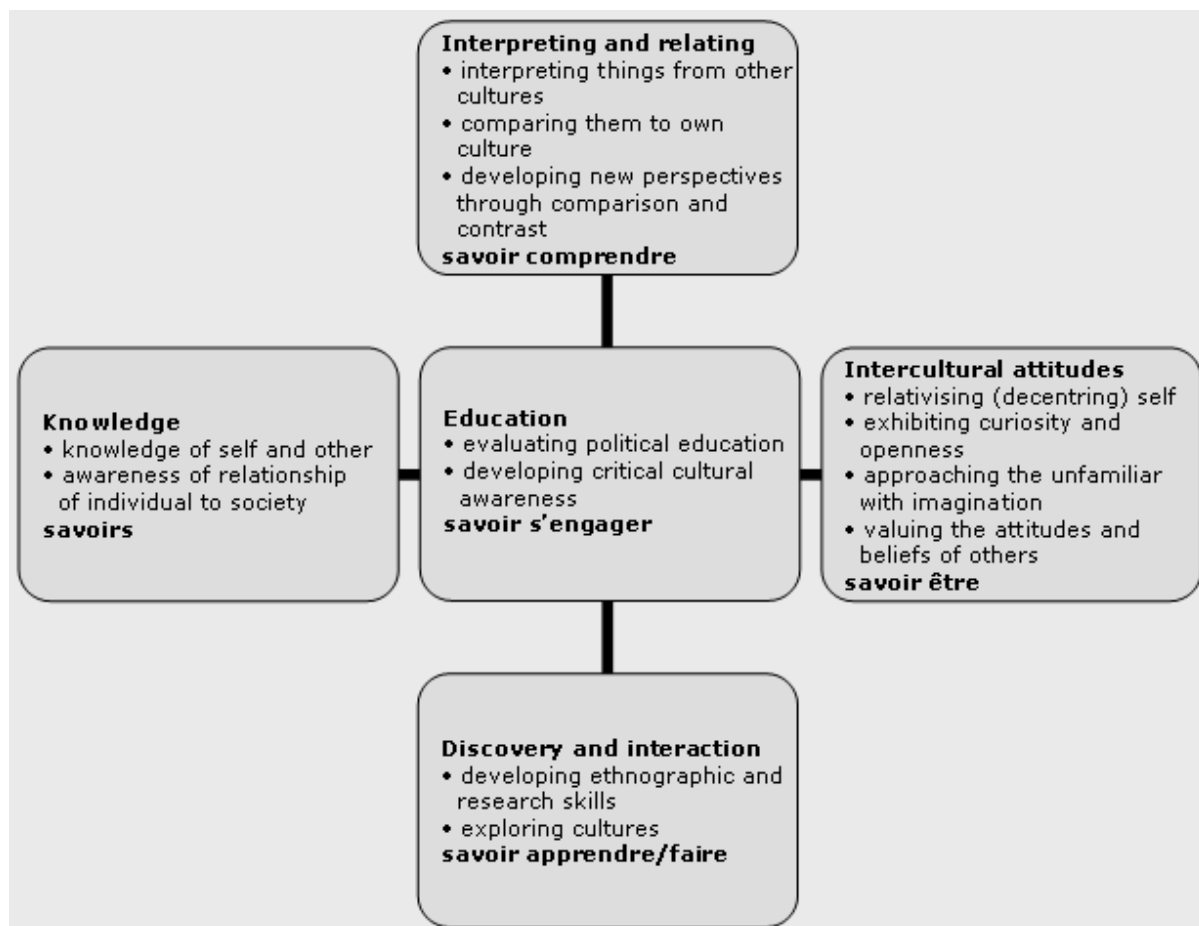


Figure 3: Byram's five "savoir" categories (adapted from Byram, 1997)

With their emphasis on the development of skills, attitudes and understanding, the five “savoir” categories provide a useful framework of objectives that encourages the learner to take a step back from arbitrary cultural information and national stereotypes and to develop instead a more critical insight into both their own and other cultures – the learner is invited to become a critical participant-observer in intercultural exchanges rather than a mere “consumer” of culture.

Most importantly, by focussing on critical and analytical skills and attitudes, the framework can be flexibly applied to a wide range of learning situations (Byram et al, 2002: 17). It can be applied to the TEFL paradigm – a group of German Canadian Studies students preparing for a sojourn at a Canadian university, for example. Thinking further, it is equally relevant for lingua-franca situations in a TEIC paradigm, such as NNS learners of Sociology at a German university preparing for online exchanges with students of Sociology at another NNS European university.

2.1. Focus on intercultural “micro-skills” – The Cultural Studies Syllabus

The Cultural Studies Syllabus (CSS) Branching Out (British Council, 1998) is an example of a language syllabus in which skills for intercultural learning have been made an integral component of syllabus design (cf. Figure 4). Developed in Bulgaria as part of a language and culture project, the syllabus is organised around four sets of analytical skills geared towards furthering cultural awareness (see also Figure 4 and British Council, *ibid*: 24-25):

- Critical reading and listening skills
- Comparing and contrasting skills
- Ethnographic skills
- Research skills

| 1. Critical reading and listening skills | | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|--|--|--|
| skim and scan reading | recognising genre | interrogating the text | identifying source, purpose and intended audience | recognising stereotypes |
| distinguishing between fact and fiction | “unpeeling” culturally loaded texts | deconstructing context of situation | drawing conclusions | avoiding over-generalisations |
| 2. Comparing and contrasting skills | | | | |
| developing sensitivity to difference | recognising cultural misunderstanding | recognising and analysing specific attitudes and patterns of behaviour | developing awareness of different starting points (which culture is “talking” to which culture?) | learning to be more detached about one’s own culture and more tolerant of other cultures |

| | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| going beyond superficial similarity / difference | interpreting differences | achieving basic familiarity with one's own and other cultures | identifying similarities and differences between source and target culture context | learning to be more tolerant of other cultures |
| 3. Ethnographic skills | | | | |
| drawing on personal experience (consciously using schemata and prior knowledge) | recognising, observing and interpreting modes of individual and collective behaviour | learning to be a participant-observer in one's own culture | learning to be a participant-observer in another culture | learning to ask the right questions (i.e. those that help the participant-observer to understand the cultural situation) |
| taking field notes | collecting, processing and analysing ethnographic data to understand aspects of cultural phenomena | participating meaningfully in the context of one's own culture and in the context of another culture | developing willingness to suspend judgement | |
| 4. Research skills | | | | |
| asking questions | learning to use libraries and other sources | learning to collect data selectively | designing questionnaires | acknowledging sources and referencing |
| planning interviews | reading and interpreting statistical data | identifying a research topic | designing a research project | analysing and drawing conclusions from data |

Figure 4: Cultural Studies Syllabus (adapted from British Council: 1998, 24-25)

In keeping with Byram's views on intercultural learning expressed in the "savoir" framework, the CSS developers felt that language learning should be partly about developing skills that help students to analyse, understand and appreciate cultural diversity and sensitise them to different cultures (British Council, *ibid*: 12). The syllabus should "give primary place to developing in students the ability to use tools for understanding by means of questioning and analysing the information supplied in various forms, for example through the media, tourist literature, medical leaflets and literary texts." (Davcheva et al, 1999: 64).

Although the CSS was originally intended for TEFL practitioners in Bulgarian schools, its ideas and materials have extended beyond the target audience, thus exemplifying the flexibility of the skills it sets out to teach. Indeed, it is highlighted here as an example of "skills-based" intercultural learning because the pedagogical principles it embraces are strikingly relevant for the learning needs of ESP Sociology students on three levels:

Language learning: Many of the micro-skills in the CSS are familiar from conventional language courses, for example skimming and scanning texts, comparing and contrasting opinions in ranking activities, interrogating texts and recognising genre in critical discourse analysis, as well as research in project-based language learning. Indeed, several writers (e.g. Corbett, 2003; Byram et al, 2002) point out that developing intercultural competence does not mean doing away with skills espoused by CLT: fluency and accuracy (though not necessarily native-speaker competence) are still desirable goals. However, tasks must be designed in such a way that culture becomes a regular part of the information exchanged and learners have opportunities to reflect on that exchange in intercultural terms.

Academic learning: There is a clear fit between the four-skills approach of the CSS and the academic skills that Sociology students are expected to develop in their regular studies. This is, perhaps, not surprising given that the study of culture is very much at home in the field of Sociology, with its ethnographical and anthropological disciplines. It should therefore be possible to find common ground between the sociologist's understanding of culture and ESP materials that integrate intercultural learning. Indeed, the CSS suggests themes and topics that are directly relevant to the field of Sociology, such as identity and social relations (British Council, *ibid*).

Intercultural learning: The Sociology students participating in the ESP course may not be planning to undertake a sojourn or do an internship abroad at present. However, they do need to deal with a wide variety of print and, increasingly, online English-language materials written for and by sociologists worldwide. The critical analysis of relevant English-language materials using the CSS approach can therefore be used to develop students' linguistic and intercultural skills. Furthermore, if we assume that students will at some point in the future be involved in international exchanges of some kind, then the intercultural competence developed by appropriately employing the CSS approach to ELT underpins intercultural *communicative* competence in person-to-person interactions.

2.2. Terminological clarification

Before discussing how intercultural content has been implemented in the ESP course for Sociology students, this seems a good point to take stock of the key terminology used so far in this article.

The term "intercultural" refers to comparing two or more cultures. I use "intercultural" rather than "cultural" because the latter is often used in the literature with reference to TEFL paradigms in which a target language is explicitly linked to a target culture in the inner circle of English speakers. In section 1 it was argued that the learner group needs English as much for NNS-NNS as for NNS-NS English interactions and that their needs are therefore best served by a TEIC paradigm, in which the language goal of communicative competence is supplemented by "intercultural communicative competence" (ICC). TEIC paradigms help students become effective "intercultural speakers" by raising their awareness of their own

culture, and in so doing facilitating their understanding of other cultures. This definition of ICC is almost synonymous with what Byram calls "intercultural competence": "the ability to ensure a shared understanding by people of different social identities and their ability to interact with people as complex human beings with multiple identities and their own individuality." (Byram et al, 2002: 10). The emphasis in ICC is perhaps more on the actual act of communication. Byram, on the other hand, refers to knowledge, skills, attitudes and values as the "components of intercultural competence" (Byram, *ibid*: 11) – the emphasis in this case on the mixture of components needed to communicate interculturally. The developers of the CSS also talk about a combination of knowledge and skills facilitating "intercultural awareness" - the individual's developing realisation of the nature of cultural similarity and difference (British Council, *ibid*: 10).

Drawing on the foregoing summary of terminology, it can be said that the principle objective of "Exploring English for Sociology" is to combine language learning with the development of skills such as those identified by the CSS in order to foster intercultural competence and intercultural awareness. These may in turn serve as the foundation of effective ICC.

3. Implementing the intercultural dimension

"Exploring English for Sociology" is open to Sociology students of any semester with a Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) language proficiency of B2 upwards.

Blended learning: The course comprises seven face-to-face sessions with online study in between (see Appendix 1 for an overview of the course syllabus). It has already been pointed out that students have to deal extensively with English-language online materials in their study of Sociology as well as print materials. Use of the internet in the course is therefore relevant for academic practice while at the same time providing opportunities for implementing the CSS approach in the analysis of web-based materials. Using the internet to access sociological discourse worldwide also enables students to gain an insight into the "small culture" (Holliday, 1999) of their academic community as they engage with materials written by and for sociologists. Furthermore, web 2.0 resources, such as blogs, wikis and YouTube, can bring students into direct contact with their peers internationally, at which point the development of intercultural competence moves into the sphere of intercultural communicative competence.

Skills-based but topics-led: A range of topics is covered during the course. As in the CSS, topics are essentially interchangeable and have been chosen for their sociological and intercultural interest. However, much as in a "regular" language course, the topics are a vehicle for skills development, in this case including skills for both linguistic and intercultural competence.

Part-negotiated syllabus: Sifakis (2004) recommends that learners should be actively involved in creating syllabi in newer language learning paradigms. This is the case in “Exploring English for Sociology” in so far as themes for discussion are negotiated in later sessions and students choose research topics to develop in a wiki in project-based study from about the middle of the course. Project-based learning is guided by the micro-skills outlined by the CSS, which students are expected to demonstrate in their work.

3.1. Features of task design

Tasks are designed to combine communicative and intercultural approaches to language learning. Corbett (ibid), Byram et al (2002), Alptekin (2002), Stifakis (2003) and Prodromou (1992) provide some useful pointers for task design, which are here summarised as follows:

Giving familiar themes and activities an intercultural twist: Many themes and activities from ELT textbooks lend themselves to an intercultural approach. In the materials developed for the first face-to-face session of “Exploring English for Sociology”, for example, I have taken a typical first meeting activity – discussing experiences of learning English – and used it to raise learners’ awareness of paradigms of English and the kind of English they may encounter in academic and professional circles (see Appendix 4). Similarly, a getting-to-know-you activity has been used to develop awareness of “otherness” (see Appendix 2). The key principle, as Byram et al (ibid: 21) point out, is to teach students to ask the “right” questions, make comparisons and help them see familiar themes from an unfamiliar perspective.

Familiarisation with vocabulary that helps learners speak about intercultural diversity: In “Exploring English for Sociology” many terms from the intercultural field are also found in the sociological field, although sociology and ICC may have different understandings of these terms. The course therefore provides opportunities to explore this terminology in depth, for example in a collaboratively produced glossary of terminology.

Make sure learners understand the context and intention of materials: The micro-skills in the critical reading category of the CSS are again very useful for helping learners to “interrogate” materials. Students should be aware of discourse features that give clues about the intention of the author and the target audience, whether the text represents majority or minority perspectives, institutional or individual opinion, prejudices or impartial views. For the reading activity outlined in Appendix 3, for example, rather than giving students a copy of the text, they are asked to download it from the internet, where they will find clues about the source and the institution behind the text.

Explorations of opinion gaps as well as information gaps: Byram et al (ibid: 25) recommend opinion as well as information gap activities that promote the

“sharing of knowledge and a discussion of values and opinions” involving comparing and contrasting skills. To support the kind of reflection required in activities of this kind, a blog has been set up for the course, in which students are encouraged to exchange opinions in writing between the face-to-face sessions.

Learner attitudes: Sifakis (2003) and Prodromou (1992) both emphasise the importance of finding out about learner attitudes in cross-cultural and intercultural learning approaches, especially regarding the issue of “ownership” of the language and the cultural content in Expanding Circle contexts, in which English is a foreign language. The questionnaire shown in Appendix 4, in which students interview each other about experiences of learning English and their perceived learning needs now, was inspired by the questionnaire in Prodromou’s paper (ibid).

Instructional materials should include different varieties of English: Alptekin (2002: 63) notes the importance of a mixture of discourse samples from NNS-NNS as well as NNS-NSs. Discourse displaying exclusive NS use should, according to Alptekin, be kept to a minimum as it is chiefly irrelevant for many learners in terms of potential use in authentic settings. Alptekin may have a point, but exchanges with NSs are still relevant for learners and exploration of internet resources for the course has so far produced mainly NS-NS discourse. Web 2.0 may, however, prove to be a useful source of authentic non-inner-circle exchanges, for example where NNSs join blog debates.

4. Concluding thoughts

There are several factors that speak in favour of the success of the learning approach outlined in this paper: “Exploring English for Sociology” attempts to balance the development of familiar communicative skills and English for Academic Purposes objectives with less familiar intercultural skills and to integrate this into topics and materials of interest for sociologists; students are invited to shape the syllabus with their own topic ideas and materials; above all, the micro-skills that are key to syllabus and task design are also skills needed and used by students in their study of Sociology. However, student and institute expectations must be taken into consideration and the slightly unusual approach may intrigue, but could equally, at first, perturb. A clear explanation of objectives is therefore needed at the beginning of the course to secure cooperation of all “stakeholders”.

If a key aim of this course is intercultural competence and intercultural awareness, the desired long-term goal must be effective intercultural communicative competence in interactions with other speakers of English. A further step in this direction is the future possibility of a computer-mediated intercultural exchange with Sociology students from a Slovenian university in which students from the German and the Slovenian universities work together to exchange and compare views on a topic using English as their language of exchange. Collaborative work in this NNS-

NNS context may engender curiosity and even lead to sojourns. It is hoped, therefore, that what happens in this course could put the corner stones in place for more extensive intercultural exchanges in the future.

One final consideration is the transferability of the course concept. Karastateva et al (2007) argue that greater advantage should be taken of ESP lessons for teaching students of non-linguistic subjects intercultural skills in preparation for dealing with intercultural communication in study sojourns and international work situations. Given the proven flexibility of the micro-skills framework, it would be worth examining how the principles underlying the course concept presented in this paper can be transferred to other ESP syllabi.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Overview of the syllabus

| Session | Information | |
|---|---|--|
| Introduction to the course and exploring how we use English | Typical subject for the beginning of an English course with an intercultural twist. Follow-up in internet with a web quest to explore English language sociological materials Ethnographical research on varieties of English they hear during the next week. Report back in the blog | Blog reflections start Glossary work starts |
| Culture and Identity | Students describe themselves in terms of social identities in a moodle forum. In-class experiential activities to explore identities from an intercultural perspective. Critical exploration of relevant web-based materials Discussion and reflection in the blog | Blog reflections Glossary work ongoing Using Holliday et al's critical incidents on identity and otherisation in <i>Intercultural Communication, an advanced reader (2004)</i> . |
| Communication and Society | A look at developments in the way people communicate today, using e.g. Wesch's Digital Ethnography and exploration of Sociology blogs. Possibility of following this up with a real blog exchange on the subject with | Blog reflections Glossary work ongoing |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|--|
| | students of Sociology from the University of Ljubljana | |
| The globalisation of culture | Setting up research projects. Students to provide ideas they would like to discuss in the next two sessions. Themes could be related to their research projects. | Blog reflections Glossary work ongoing Start on research projects in wiki |
| Negotiated topics Project work | Materials provided by students. | Blog reflections Glossary work ongoing Research projects in wiki |
| Negotiated topics Project work | Materials provided by students. | Blog reflections Glossary work ongoing Research projects in wiki |
| Presentations of projects | Project groups report back to the class on their research projects in the form of a presentation. | Glossary, wiki and blogs remain accessible to students after the course finishes as collaboratively created course products. |

Appendix 2: Getting to know each other in sociological terms

- Speak to other members of the group and find as many people as you can who match any of the numbers 1-10.
- When you've finished, compare your results with a partner to see if you can form an impression of the sociological make-up of the class. Where do you fit into this picture?

Find someone who ...

1. Comes from a different European country.
2. Comes from a different non-European country.
3. Can speak three or more languages fluently.
4. Has lived in Munich all their lives.
5. Has more than four siblings (brothers and sisters).
6. Comes from a multicultural family.
7. Worked full-time before going to university.
8. Is older than 24.
9. Is younger than 21.
10. Comes from a different area of Germany (i.e. not Bavaria).

Appendix 3: Critical reading – interrogating texts

When we're reading texts or watching/listening to audio-visual materials, it's important that we "interrogate" the resource to find out more about the source of what we read/watch/listen to and that we are aware of how we feel about it.

We can ask critical questions to help us, such as the following:

1. What are the materials about?
2. Where and when were the materials produced?
3. Who is the author, what is his area of specialisation?
4. Who is speaking/presenting (in videos, for example)
5. What kind of publication/video is it (e.g. commercial or institutional)?
6. Who is the intended audience?
7. What kind of English is being spoken/written? e.g. native speaker or a non-native speaker - this is difficult, but the website may give you clues.
8. What is the intention of the materials (persuade, argue, entertain, to sell something)?
9. Do the materials interest you, entertain you, educate you, make you feel angry ... and why?

Ideally, you should then compare your answers, feelings and opinions with other members of the group.

Try out the interrogating technique now in the following activity:

- Go to our learning platform, tasks for session one, and download the text that you'll find there. We'll be looking at part of the text in the follow-up activities.
- For now, I would like you to work in groups of three and try to find out a bit about the text's background using the questions above. The website you downloaded the text from might also be helpful.
- Compare your answers with another pair. If your answers are different, are the differences based on facts or opinions?

Appendix 4: Questionnaire: English experience and English needs

- Interview your partner to find out about their experience of learning English and English needs now. Compare your answers.

- When you've finished, join up with another pair and compare answers with them. To what extent are your experiences and needs the same? How do they differ? Why?
- Summarise the results of your questionnaires in your groups and prepare to present your results to the rest of the class.

1. How many years have you learned English?

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| Your answer | Your partner's answer |
|-------------|-----------------------|

2. When did you last do an English course?

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| Your answer | Your partner's answer |
|-------------|-----------------------|

3. Which variety of English did you come into contact with at school?

- (a) British English
- (b) American English
- (c) Other (please specify)
- (d) A mix
- (e) Don't know

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| Your answer | Your partner's answer |
|-------------|-----------------------|

4. Do you intend to study abroad during your studies or do an internship in a country where you will probably need English?

- (a) Yes
- (b) No

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| Your answer | Your partner's answer |
|-------------|-----------------------|

5. Indicate on a scale of 1 to 5 the probability that you will need English in your future careers (one is the lowest probability, 5 is the highest probability).

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| Your answer | Your partner's answer |
|-------------|-----------------------|

6. What is it important to practise/learn in this course? You can choose as many points as you like and add others.

- (a) Discussion of Sociology topics in English
- (b) Skills for intercultural communication with other English speakers
- (c) A critical understanding of text-based and audio-visual materials written for and by sociologists from all over the world
- (d) A critical understanding of reading and listening materials written for and by sociologists who are native speakers of English
- (e) Other (please specify)

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| Your answer | Your partner's answer |
|-------------|-----------------------|

7. Is the English you come into contact with now or think you will come into contact with later in your studies ...

- (a) native speaker English
- (b) non-native speaker English
- (c) both
- (d) don't know

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| Your answer | Your partner's answer |
|-------------|-----------------------|

8. For what purpose do you need English now or think you will need it for later?

- (a) For reading books and articles on your reading list
- (b) For understanding audio-visual materials
- (c) For research on the internet
- (d) For writing assignments/papers
- (e) For communicating with people about Sociology online
- (f) For communicating with people about Sociology face-to-face (e.g. in lectures, with visiting students, at conferences etc.)
- (g) Other (please specify)

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------|
| Your answer | Your partner's answer |
|-------------|-----------------------|