PREPARING FOR SUCCESSFUL CROSS-CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS: A DIFFERENT KIND OF LEARNING

Linda Fang

Temasek Polytechnic

ABSTRACT

It is crucial for Engineering students to be adequately prepared for successful cross-cultural encounters before they embark on any overseas industrial attachment or community service program. This is because they will be exposed to new kinds of experiences that involve informal, incidental, and experiential learning. In addition, the context in which learning takes place is different. Not only will students encounter different cultural norms and values, they have to cope with these at the national, regional, ethnic and organizational levels. Being able to learn positively from cross-cultural encounters is an essential life skill for all engineering graduates today. Hence, they would need to process their experiences within a cultural framework in order to appreciate and enjoy them more. It would also help deepen their understanding and increase their acceptance of cultural differences. At Temasek Engineering School, Temasek Polytechnic, the overseas internship and community service learning experiences for the Engineering students are varied: students can be posted to educational institutions, companies, or support work of NGOs; they could be in Asian or Western countries, in the city or rural areas of first world or third world countries. A fixed curriculum to prepare students for such varied purposes would be limiting in terms of catering to all learning opportunities. This paper outlines the various ways to prepare Singaporean Engineering students for such encounters. This includes the curriculum for face-to-face and online teaching, and the different forms of delivery. This flexible delivery and training model for such diverse needs has worked as the students have found the training useful. The paper ends with the positive feedback from the students and the potential for further development of this program.

KEYWORDS

Overseas work attachment, overseas community service, preparation for cross-cultural encounters, Engineering students

INTRODUCTION

The Overseas Student Internship Program (OSIP) and Overseas Community Project (OCP) at Temasek Engineering School, Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore, provide students with abundant learning opportunities. While the former provides internships in companies or educational institutions, the latter focuses on community service, often supporting programs run by a non-governmental organisation. Both initiatives increase the Singaporean students' international outlook and global mindset through real world experiences overseas. Knowing how different the West is from the East [1] and being aware of the different dimensions of culture [2 - 4] might help provide Singaporean interns with the right cross-cultural skills to "tune in" to the different cultures overseas.

Adequate preparation is therefore crucial. Sweitzer and King [5] emphasize the need for an intern to understand himself/herself as an individual by being aware of his/her values, reaction patterns, and cultural identity. The individual should also prepare himself/herself by learning more about the placement site and community. Hence, learning about the relevant national, regional, ethnic, organizational and institutional cultures are important to ensure positive experiences for students as well as those in the host country, community, company and/or institution.

"Preparing Engineering OSIP_OCP Students for Successful Cross-cultural Encounters" is an informal program that aims to sensitize students to their host country's culture. It also prepares them for cross-cultural encounters while working with organizations and specific communities. This program has been offered to Engineering students in Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore since 2006. Pioneered by one staff member in Temasek Engineering School, it was intended to support and augment the excellent work that the Liaison officers do to prepare their students for overseas internships and community service.

The need for the cross-cultural training was first realised in the late 1990s with sporadic requests for specific workshops to prepare Engineering students for their overseas attachments. The numbers were small and their training needs were fairly similar as interns were headed for companies and educational institutions in USA, England, Germany and Australia. The aim then was to prepare the would-be interns for the initial culture shock and provide them with survival tips for an extended stay of a few months. Differences in norms were emphasized.

Since then, the OSIP has expanded to include placements in more institutions, companies and countries. As Sweitzer and King [5] recommended that interns be more aware of themselves as well learn about their placement site and community, the less visible parts of culture, namely the norms and values of both the host institution or company, as well as home and host countries were emphasized. Hence, the program was expanded to encourage interns to be more aware of their Singapore culture, and learn about the organizational culture of their internship site, and the national and regional cultures of their host country before leaving for their overseas attachment. This is important as culture exists at different levels [2 – 3].

Subsequently, the overseas placements were expanded to include short-term community projects lasting 10 to 14 days. The first request for cross-cultural training for community service was articulated in 2005. It was for a group working with the Operation Hope Foundation (Singapore) and headed for Kampong Prey Veng, Hope Village, Cambodia. They had planned to bring solar technology to the village. Since the students would have had direct contact with the community at large, they needed to be aware of how they as Singaporeans would react to others and make and impact on their lives. This was in keeping with Sweitzer and King's [5] advice that interns understand themselves as individuals by being aware of their values, reaction patterns, and cultural identity (subgroup membership, including attitude towards other groups). The program was offered to subsequent teams working on similar projects, as well as those involved in other types of community service e.g. teaching English and Information Technology. It was also important to find out how learning took place in the communities that were to serve and the purpose of the training they were to provide.

With the expansion of OSIP and OCP, particularly to several locations in Asia, there was a need to provide a comprehensive program that could be offered on a more regular basis. Finally, the "Preparing Engineering OSIP_OCP Students for Successful Cross-cultural Encounters" program was offered under the school's Learning Development Program in 2006. This paper will provide the background to the conceptualization of the program, the delivery

of the curriculum, the outcomes of the program through the eyes of the students and staff, and recommendations for further development.

UNIQUE CHALLENGES, UNIQUE PROGRAM

Conceptualizing and planning the program were not easy tasks. Each year, the overseas internship and community service destinations increase, together with the types of activities and work involved. Currently, the overseas internship and overseas community service programs span 11 countries. For the year, 2008/2009, 83 students and 111 students went for their OSIP and OCP respectively. See Table 1 for details of countries and programs.

Table 1
Destinations for OSIP and OCP

Country	OSIP	OCP
China/HK	X	
Indonesia	X	
Vietnam	X	x
Cambodia	X	x
Japan	X	
USA	X	
Malaysia	X	
Myanmar	X	
India	X	
Laos		x
Thailand		x

Challenges

The scope of the programs was extremely broad, and there was not one typical overseas experience. The first challenge was to determine the range of learning outcomes. This was because the goals and the settings of the programs varied greatly. The OSIP aimed to provide students with a global mindset; the OSIP involved the bringing of expertise to a developing country to help the less fortunate, at the same time providing participants a chance to experience life and culture in a third world country. Hence, the needs for cross-cultural understanding would be different. For instance, the OSIP students require more understanding of organizational culture than the OCP students.

The second challenge was the variations of placements. The sites were in different regions and countries. The OSIP postings could be in developing and developed countries while the OCP focused on developing countries in Asia. The organizations students were attached to or worked with differ. OSIP attachments were at educational institutions of higher learning like MIT, and companies like TEAC, while the OCP mainly involved assisting non-governmental organizations like Operation Hope (Singapore). In addition, the duration the programs ranged from ten days to several months. The numbers for each trip would vary: students could be alone, in pairs, in small or large groups. They could be unescorted or escorted by staff members.

It was evident that the program had to be broad enough to encompass the range of learning experiences but yet sufficiently customized to the needs of the individuals. The program would include generic topics, as well as cover areas tailored to the type of attachments and the unique communication challenges of each setting. Generally, the program would emphasize the understanding of culture at the national, regional, and organizational level,

and the identification of cultural differences. Students would be more aware of how to impress people overseas and/or avoid offending them. Where the settings differed, the students would have learning experiences tailored to their needs.

Program Aims

It was decided that the aims of the program were to equip students with sufficient generic and specific skills for successful cross-cultural communication overseas. For the generic part of the program, students were expected be able to know about the types of culture they may encounter, categorize the information in terms of norms and values. For the specific part of the program, students were expected be able to perform their tasks with cultural sensitivity.

Resources

The resources were placed online on Blackboard 6 to give students an idea of the range of learning that was available and needed. All Engineering students would have access to the online materials in the semester prior to and during their internship semester, regardless of whether they intended to apply for OSIP or OCP.

Online materials could be used for preparatory work and referred to during their attachment. Online resources included vital information, cross-cultural lessons, tips by students and staff and experiences from returnees. See Figures 1 for online folders available for students on Blackboard 6.

Course Documents

1. What are the various schemes
What is the difference: SIP, OSIP and OCP? These are terms of three related schemes. Read the power point slides to find out.

2. Readiness Rating

These are related to your English Language, Interpersonal and Intercultural Skills, attitude towards work and community service.

3. All about Interviews
Students may have to go through a selection interview to get their dream placement. Preparing for an interview is not easy. This folder provides tips on how to prepare for the interview, from the resume, cover letter, questions asked and answered, dressing, body language and etiquette.

4. Survival Tips Contributed by staff and students

How to be a good ambassador overseas by a Senior Student Ambassador

Survival Tips for your OSIP and OCP by LSL, SH/Eng Com Skills

5. Language Lessons

Here are some language lessons for you ...

Students have been posted to Indonesia, Japan, China, Hong Kong, South Korea, Thailand, Vietnam and Taiwan. So be prepared. If you wish to improve your English, the links to free online Business English lessons may be useful too.

6. Country Profiles

Here are profiles of a few countries: Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam

7. First hand experiences
Enjoy these encounters: Teams to Cambodia (Solar 1, 2, 3 teams etc);
LL at MIT, Boston

8. All about Intercultural Communication
These resources will help you better adjust to the new culture in the host country.

9. Types of organizations
Organizations can be governmental, non-governmental, profit or non-profit.   Some of these are also educational institutions. These web quests will help you discover the differences.

10. Organizational Culture
Organizational Culture.ppt (263.5 Kb)
Organizational_Culture_SIP.doc (36 Kb)

In order to excel in your OSIP, you need to understand the corporate culture in the host country. These resources will help you do just that.

Figure 1: Online resource folders

Authentic materials

To provide authentic learning materials, students were invited to provide online resources. Students who had been overseas shared their experiences:
1. An Engineering student ambassador who spent a year in a high school in Japan shared how to be a good ambassador overseas through a set of slides with voice recording.
2. An intern attached to the GAMBIT Lab, MIT in 2007 shared how to prepare for an internship interview at an American University. She also shared her experience at MIT.
3. An intern attached to a private organisation that offered the Singapore national curriculum shared her experiences in Southern Vietnam, and provided insights to the national and organizational culture.
4. The team that helped out at the Project Khmer Hope in Cambodia in 2007 shared how they prepared for their English teaching stint.

Other students pitched in and provided language lessons:
1. An Indonesian student provided 10 useful Indonesian words and phrases, their meanings, and pointed out sensitivities that had to be observed in intercultural communication. She included this in her script:

    And while you are still learning the words and phrases, you can always smile to the people you meet; it's the best form of communication internationally... Remember that Indonesia is a country that values courtesy, relationship between people as well as

religion more than anything else. So, please be careful of your words and manners. Be respectful especially to the elderly. You must bend your body a bit and say "permisi" which means "Excuse me" when you walking pass by them to show your respect. … All the best to you. Enjoy your time in Indonesia.

2. A Myanmar student taught students how to pronounce ten common words and phrases that were used in Myanmar; she included an interesting commentary that accompanied the lovely pictures of her country.
3. A Singaporean provided a list highlighting differences between the Chinese terms used in Singapore and China.

In the July 2008, when two groups of students explored the use of wikis, blogs and podcasts, live chats, and Illuminate Live! the sharing was even richer. All these were available on the Blackboard Enterprise version that was being trialed at Temasek Polytechnic.

UNIQUE DELIVERY

The delivery of the program had to be flexible as the students received their "postings" at different times throughout the year. Hence preparatory learning opportunities needed to be available "on demand". The program had to be offered in a non-traditional, non-formal learning manner:
1. Face-to-face sessions (seminars and customized workshops)
2. Blended learning (use of online materials during workshops)
3. Online access (for independent work).
It provided students with the opportunity to learn with the tutor, with others and/or on their own:

For the first and second options, group sizes varied from 5 to 24. While seminars and workshops were open to those who were interested, the more common and effective method was for the Liaison Officers and accompanying staff to request for training. Students were encouraged to explore the materials on their own, especially if they did not have a chance to attend any training sessions.

Workshops

Below is an example of a very successful one day program offered on 19 December 2007 for both aspiring OSIP and OCP students. As a follow-up activity, the students were encouraged to explore the online materials for themselves.
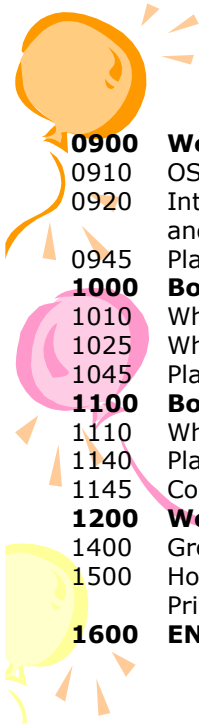
PROGRAM

0900	**Welcome & bonding activity (getting to know you)**
0910	OSIP_OCP – what is the difference?
0920	Introduction to different types of culture (national, regional and organizational)
0945	Planning for projects and break
1000	**Bonding activity 2**
1010	What's the difference? Different types of organizations
1025	What you need to know about organizational culture
1045	Planning for projects and break
1100	**Bonding activity 3**
1110	What to look out for national and regional cultural differences
1140	Planning for group projects
1145	Confirm group projects and resource persons
1200	**Working lunch – discuss group project**
1400	Groups sharing (report on project work)
1500	How to get that dream placement at an institution or company Prizes; Continuing as a learning community online
1600	**END**

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Learning Dvpt Prog

General workshops were offered to students going to different destinations and programs, with an emphasis on their site and community culture. These proved to be as effective as the specialized or customized workshops, and at times even more interesting given the diverse destinations and placements involved. Conducting such workshops in computer labs provided "on-the-spot blended learning". Each student added to the discussions and shared knowledge online as well as in class. The following sample texts from the Blackboard discussion board helped students to know more about their organizations and their culture, where possible.   Sample 1 was submitted by a student headed for TEAC in Australia:

Forum: Something about the organisation I will be attached to	Times Read: 8

Date: Mon Mar 03 2008 10:59

Author: E0K, CCS

Subject: TEAC Australia

The parent company of TEAC Australia, Singapore's TT International Limited (TTIL), has announced its intention to enter into a conditional share sale agreement with Austral Waste Group Limited (AEG) to inject into AWG its entire stake in TEAC Australia.

Also with a Master Licence by TEAC Corporation Japan on November 15, 2007, TTIL will be able to distribute TEAC products in Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Myanmar, Malaysia, Singapore and Vietnam on an exclusive basis, and Thailand on a non-exclusive basis.

This would increase the abilities of a growing of TEAC Australia. Hopefully, with the OSIP, we would be able to contribute in the company's success.

Sample 2 was a group project, submitted by their leader. They were headed for Cambodia:

Forum: Learning about your Com Service Organisation	Times Read: 10

Specialized workshops were offered to groups headed for one specific destination. For students who aspired to apply for an internship at the GAMBIT Lab, MIT, they were exposed to the learning culture at MIT. For the Solar Teams, much time was spent on understanding the mindset of the Cambodians, their needs, their taboos and communicating the transference of technology in a culturally acceptable way.

Customized workshops were available for those involved in teaching programs to Cambodia, Vietnam, Laos and Myanmar, in terms of equipping them with culturally sensitive teaching skills. Cultural differences had to be considered when teaching English. The students learnt how learners in each culture preferred to learn, and the teaching methodology they would be most comfortable with. Students were given the chance to plan lessons for beginners. In one instance, students preparing to teach English at a private educational company in Cambodia had selected the language structure from an English Language text book for a lesson which they titled "What are you doing today?" The lesson focused on using the verb in the continuous tense. They then drew visuals to help elicit answers e.g. I am working today. The purpose was to teach them to contextualize lessons and use visuals that locals could relate to. Another example was the lesson to be used at a language camp in Vietnam. The students decided to use a "game" approach to teach instructions and test their students (see photo 1 below).

Photo 1: Lesson Plan for "Blind Man"

The blindfolded person was asked to do the following: turn right, left, walk two steps forward/backward to reach the "treasure" item. They demonstrated the lesson in class and proved that it worked well.

POSITIVE, UNIQUE & MEANINGFUL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

If the learning was positive, it was also special for each student when it met his or her needs. In that way learning was unique and meaningful.

Positive Feedback

From the students' feedback, it was obvious that they had learnt much, and in varied ways. The following feedback relates to the different delivery systems.

Workshop, 19 Dec 2007

Students who attended this workshop had an interest in OSIP_OCP but did not yet have a confirmed place. They voluntarily attended this six-hour workshop during their term break. The 20 participants enjoyed the workshop and found it beneficial. The following comments from selected students attest to their positive learning experience:

> Everyone who came back from the trips were moved and it made a huge impact in our lives. (Student 1)

> We have to take note of a lots of things; notice their culture; be very cautious about how you speak. (Student 3)

There is a different culture between here and other countries. Must know what they like to do and better avoid to do the things they don't like. Must know the knowledge of their country and try to avoid offending them. (Student 5)

I learnt the different cultures of people in the different provinces. I also learn some experiences encountered in the working world in different countries. (Student 6)

I have learnt a lot about different countries have different formality, manners. And we need to know about the type of culture in an organization. (Student 8)

Solar 4 OCP Workshop

MY, the OCP-Cambodia SOL4R Team Leader gave feedback on behalf of his team that went to Kampong Prey Veng in 2008.

Regarding the pre-trip training, it was quite useful as it helped prepare us mentally for the trip in terms of communication and the different culture to be experience there. During the pre-trip training, there was a session when we were to research about Cambodia. These session was most beneficial to my members and I as it helped us realised the taboos of Cambodia, what to and what not to when we are there, and also what Cambodia has to offer to us. This made us more conscious of Cambodia and prepared of what is to come. … With this training, many of us were there with a clear mind, allowing us not to create any intercultural miscommunications. With this in mind, we were able to recognise the differences there were in Phom Penh, Cambodia and allow us to adapt to these differences and also to appreciate it.

Teaching Workshop

This feedback is from JO, who returned from his English teaching attachment at a private company in Yangon, Myanmar. He attended a workshop on how to teach English in Myanmar. Part of the workshop involved cultural sensitivities.

From my experience above I found the 1 day course conducted by … [name of trainer] very useful and enriching. On her topic of Intercultural Communication, she taught us on Identifying Causes of Intercultural Miscommunication and preventing or rectifying intercultural experiences. She told me that in other countries you must not expect everyone to be able to conduct themselves fluently with you, due to language and cultural barriers, the people in Myanmar are generally humble and friendly but are also weak in the English Language, and therefore will usually take some time to translate what they meant into English. And if I was able to enjoy this differences and adapt to the culture of that person, I would be able to adapt well. Therefore I applied what I learnt in …[name of trainer] course, of being patient and adopting an open minded mindset during my OSIP programme.

Usefulness of Online Resources

Not only were the training sessions useful, students also found the online resources useful. LJT, who was attached to a private educational centre in Myanmar, comments on the usefulness of the online resources, particularly "Tips on Surviving Your OSIP/OCP" and other teaching tips.

A workshop was conducted on 4th March 2008, Tuesday for all OSIP/OCP students. The materials provided under the Course Documents were very useful. It prompts us to think about some factors regarding going overseas that we have not thought of. To be specific, this slide on "what about the invisibles", broaden some questions that I

could look into to prepare for my OSIP trip. I went online and read up about the country's values, beliefs and about the people. Understanding the people's values and belief helped me when I first communicate with the people there. I was more careful and patient listening to them instead of the usual way we talk in Singapore. At the same power point slides, we learn how to teach. Some examples are like:
- Use lots of games, songs, basic vocabulary
- Pronunciation exercises
- Simple conversation / role plays
- Bring pictures, magazines, newspapers from Singapore
- Be prepared to draw on the board to explain new words & phrases

If I didn't have read this, I might not have thought of it myself when I was there teaching the Summer English class. I manage to apply games and interactive lessons which made the lessons much more fun.

Summary of Learning

There were unending benefits from this flexible program. Hopefully, these vignettes will prove this claim. The following observations were from the trainer and other staff members.

Opening minds to independent learning

The workshops were designed to open the minds of the students and encourage them to ask questions to extend their learning. One activity which required students to articulate what they did not know generated positive response. A group of students who were headed for a company in Cambodia realized that there were three factories at three different locations. Instead of waiting for their Liaison Officer to provide them with the answers, they decided to learn more about the three factories and find out if their role and functions differed. They had learnt that it was good to ask questions and look for answers for themselves.

Culturally sensitive students

The students were able to understand the theoretical aspects of culture and used the terms like norms and values with ease when categorizing the information they found on the internet. They were happy to view the world through cultural lenses. When they shared their stories to their juniors upon their return, they were then filled with understanding and appreciation, rather than prejudice and disdain. A good example was the sharing from the "English for Friendship Team" that was in Laos in August 2008. They entitled the slide, "Good Tips for aspiring ones" and highlighted six qualities that would lead to successful cross-cultural community service encounters.

Volunteering is an unforgettable experience. It can be one of the most rewarding and enriching things you'll ever do but at the same time, before you get out there, it can be very daunting.

Patience: The key to successful skills transfer projects. It's easy to get caught up in achieving outcomes and want to steam full speed ahead. Enthusiasm is great but it must be balanced with patience. Different things are important in different cultures. Relationships are a core part of culture so it pays to put time and energy into building rapport and trust. These things do take time to establish "You can't go into a community and expect to be immediately accepted and liked – it takes time and you must earn respect and friendship. The same as it does when someone new comes into your work or home situation". Gaynor Nicols
So take your time to get settled and shed your expectations. Don't expect to get started on the first day of your project. Ultimately you will achieve a lot more if you put

your early efforts into getting to know the people you will be working with first and foremost.

Listening: It follows that where relationships are important so is communication – in particular listening. Being able to listen, watch and ask questions enables you to gain insight into exactly what skills are necessary and the best ways in which to share them.

Openness**:** It's not just about skills transfer. Indeed it's highly likely one of your motivations is to learn more about culture and you won't be disappointed. Many of the participants come back humbled, often expressing a sense that they have gained more than they could possibly have given. There are so many lessons to learn about ourselves and the way we relate to others and the world around us. Volunteering is a wonderful opportunity for personal growth and development.

Flexibility**:** There will be times when things don't go to plan or you will need to work within very limited resources. This is your chance to get creative. Your ingenuity can be priceless in these situations projects and can bring about surprising results. We learnt that we had to change our teaching style to fit a different learning culture and to relax and go with the flow more, make learning more like a social activity.
Skills transfer is about hands on learning. Encouraging people to apply what you are sharing reinforces their understanding and builds confidence. Always look for opportunities to make skills sharing as practical as possible.

Perspective: Your contribution will and does make a difference. That said, things take time – don't expect to change things overnight or seek dramatic results. Often it's the less tangible things, like increasing someone's self esteem or broadening their horizons, that make the most priceless and powerful difference. Just your presence, the fact that you have gone out of your way to be there, is actively contributing to the reconciliation process.

Sharing: You're there to share skills, aren't you? But be open to sharing your world too. When on a project you will share yourself as well as your skills. You'll find this happens fairly naturally, but one great way to engage is to take a small photo album with pictures of where you live, your family etc - to help people get a sense of who you are. Last, but by no means least, you may find you end up sharing long term friendships well after your project is completed. So be yourself, relax, enjoy, have fun and share!

Considering others

The program prepared students to be aware of norms and values of the country they were heading to. The face-to-face sessions were ideal times to address behavior that could be unacceptable, disrespectful or shocking. They went on to look up on the accepted codes of behavior.   The students, who went to a private teaching centre in Myanmar wrote this:

In the programme, we were asked to find cultural information for Myanmar. Through browsing the internet, I found out that they do have wearing restriction in the country. For example, females shouldn't be wearing revealing clothes that will expose their legs or shoulders. Therefore I prepared all the clothing without that isn't revealing like bring only t-shirts and jeans for casual wear. When I arrived in the country, I quite relieve that I have made a right choice of bring t-shirts and jeans. Most of the females were wearing their traditional skirts with normal tops. But there were also working females wearing skirts that were covering their knees, which I think that is accepted in Yangon

The program also helped change habits of students. One group, who found it extremely difficult to come in time for their 9.30 am session, found out that in Cambodia, anyone who did not wake up at dawn was considered lazy. They immediately resolved to bring alarm clocks with them on their trip. Their Liaison Officer who accompanied them on the trip vouched that no one ever late when they were in Cambodia.

Bringing technology with humility

Students hoping to bring new technology over for a community project to a third world country were challenged to do so humbly. They had to consider whom they could persuade as early adopters of the new technology. MF had a chance to demonstrate an English language online program to the principal and teaching staff at the Project Khmer Hope. He did it with such clarity and humility that he won the hearts of his audience.

Dedicated Teachers

If a syllabus was in place and curriculum materials prepared, training was based on the lessons students were to teach. The students who went the Training Centre run by Project Hope Khmer in Cambodia in April 2008 taught from the "English in Action" book which was based on the Total Physical Response method. They discussed the language features, practiced teaching, and evaluated the strengths and limitations of the method. Being mindful of the errors they could make, they brought along their dictionary and grammar book and were careful to use Standard English in class.

For students hoping to teach English in companies, and no existing syllabus or materials some training was provided. They reflected on what learners of English as a Foreign Language would need, particularly if they were beginners, and reviewed lessons in several language books for their cultural suitability. They looked for objects or concepts that might not exist in the culture of the country they would be teaching English in. For instance, words like "snow" and "sheep" could be replaced by "rain" and "cows" respectively for lessons taught in Cambodia. The students then used an existing lesson and drew visuals that locals might relate to. They produced very focused, interesting and workable lessons.

Preparing for MIT GAMBIT Lab experience

The students who were vying for an internship at the GAMBIT Lab, MIT had to prepare for their selection interviews. Besides preparing their cover letter, resume and interview questions, they were given a chance to find out more about the GAMBIT Lab, education at an American Ivy League university and culture in the United States, particularly life in Massachusetts. For them, dialoguing with the trainer over several sessions helped them prepare for the different academic and social culture they would encounter. Their "opening up" to other educational cultures was noticeable.

CONCLUSION

The cross-cultural OSIP_OCP program is useful for engineering students. It provides boundless learning experiences that are determined by the students themselves. Being able to process overseas internship encounters through a cultural framework helped students understand, accept and enjoy the differences, ensuring a successful and enjoyable learning experience overseas. They too were able to make a more positive impact overseas. This program can be easily modified to use the more pervasive interactive media technologies available today.

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Biographical Information

Linda FANG is Section Head of Learning Development, Temasek Engineering School, Temasek Polytechnic. She has been offering cross-cultural courses since 1996. She now focuses her efforts on preparing her Engineering students heading overseas for their internship or community service for successful cross-cultural encounters. Her expertise is in curriculum planning, development and testing for online and face-to-face instruction and learning. Her research interests are in the areas of E-learning, culture and learning, cross-cultural service learning, simulation-based learning and adult learning.

Corresponding author

Dr. Linda Fang
Temasek Polytechnic
21 Tampines Avenue 1
Singapore 529757
Republic of Singapore
65-67805415
fangml@tp.edu.sg