

Analyzing Intercultural Relations and Deciding how to Act

Assessment Format: analytical and reflective task (exam or coursework)

Main competences assessed

Theoretical dimension 2, Interpersonal dimension 4

Type

Formative (Assessment during the course, stages II or III) **X**

Summative (Assessment at the end of the course, stage III) **X**

Student working format

Individual **X**

Pairs

Groups

Other (describe)

Task description

Students are presented with a text describing interpersonal (spoken or written) contact with a fellow professional translator detailing challenges, which may well be intercultural, involved in this interaction. This could be when working for a translation agency, an in-house translation team or other professional context.

Students are then in the first question asked to analyze differences in communication style (theoretical dimension 2) which may (or may not) be cultural. This should allow assessment of the extent of students' ability to assess possible 'cultural' influences on behavior without recourse to stereotypical interpretations. The second question invites students to offer reasoned and viable courses of action based on that analysis in question 2 (interpersonal dimension 4). This allows for the assessment of students' awareness of different options for action in the context of dominant social norms. A text for these two questions is supplied but could be replaced or adapted to suit other linguistic or cultural contexts.

Time

If exam (90 minutes). If coursework, the time given for the assignment would need to be appropriate to local institutional norms.

Length (break down by task)

1,000 –1,500 words

Adaptations of the task for integrated use

If the two sub-dimensions (competences) mentioned above are delivered as part of modules which are not stand-alone, this assessment task can still be used to assess them.

STUDENT TASK SHEET

Read the following text describing a possible working context and then answer the questions below the text **making reference to intercultural theorists** where that can deepen your answers.

TEXT

You are working for a large NGO as part of an in-house translation team. You work as part of a multinational team which is managed by a Spanish man from a commercial background. He is new to the organisation, is significantly older than you and expects a level of formality in communication with which you feel uncomfortable and which you are not used to in your country of origin. He is also less consultative than his predecessor. Although your NGO's organisational culture is relatively un-hierarchical in most sections, most of your immediate colleagues, who are mainly female and originate from Malaysia, Russia, India and a range of other countries, are not too disturbed by this change in management style. As a result you encounter limited sympathy from your colleagues when discussing the problems you have with this change.

Whilst your colleagues unsurprisingly have varied preferences in their ways of working, the new section head applies deadlines less rigorously than his predecessor and is also less fussy about strict timings for meetings etc. For him people need to be effective but can be so in their own way and time and, as a result, practices within the section move in a direction which doesn't suit you. You prefer clear deadlines and are a strong believer in careful time management.

The members of your section do form a sort of in-group which is social as well as professional and you enjoy being part of this. In spite of his consciousness of his own position and status he still likes to socialise quite frequently with other members of the section. But he has a tendency on occasions, especially if he drinks quite a lot, to dominate the conversation. To you this takes away a lot of the fun of this socialising and you at least feel tempted to stop participating in these social activities.

The post though is a good one and one you have until now enjoyed. Even though you are unhappy with the changes you remain committed to rising to the new challenges.

QUESTIONS

1

Explain in what ways differences of practices or norms in any of the cultural or sub-cultural groups referred to above might, or might not, explain the difficulties you have recently met with.

2

Describe in what ways you might act in the face of these various challenges if you are to continue to be effective in this organisation and yet happy enough to continue working there. Explain carefully at the same time **why** you would choose to act in these ways.