

Cultural Awareness in Higher Education: A Contrastive Study of Language and Technical Students' Perceptions

Andreea R. RUTHNER¹
Claudia E. STOIAN^{2*}

¹ Department of Communication and Foreign Languages, Politehnica University of Timișoara, Romania; andreea.ruthner@upt.ro, <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4962-3155>

² Department of Communication and Foreign Languages, Politehnica University of Timișoara, Romania; claudia.stoian@upt.ro, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7232-697X>

*corresponding author: claudia.stoian@upt.ro

Abstract: *Cultural awareness is an extremely important skill in nowadays multicultural and globalized society. It should be acquired at an early age and continuously developed throughout the lifespan. Little research has been carried out on diagnosing students' cultural awareness. The present study aims to contribute to the topic and shed more light on it by investigating the importance of cultural awareness from the perspective of the students at the Politehnica University Timișoara. It compares two different representative samples of students, one studying translation and interpreting and, the other, computer engineering, and their perceptions of cultural awareness, based on a set of questions starting from a critical incident involving culture. The students' answers were collected in June 2024 online and anonymously. Even though the expectations were that the Translation and Interpreting students would show a higher level of perception regarding cultural awareness than the Automation and Computing students, due to the nature of their training, the results have shown quite similar percentages. Both groups of students based their answer on their native culture, indicated a relatively high level of perception regarding cultural awareness in recognizing and accepting major cultural differences between cultures and expressed a high interest in increasing their sociocultural knowledge. Moreover, the items addressed only to the Translation and Interpreting students demonstrated, as expected, that they are completely aware of the necessity of cultural ability and sociocultural knowledge in their training. All in all, the students' high level of perception regarding cultural awareness is encouraging for the educational process and for the training of professionals.*

Keywords: *culture-specific knowledge; sociocultural competence; behavioral patterns; cultural horizon; empathy; intercultural communicative awareness.*

How to cite: Ruthner A. R., & Stoian, C. E. (2025). Cultural awareness in higher education: a contrastive study of language and technical students' perceptions. *Revista Românească pentru Educație Multidimensională*, 17(3), 472-504. <https://doi.org/10.18662/rrem/17.3/1031>

Introduction

The life we are living nowadays has become extremely multicultural. From dawn to sunset, from the grocery shop to the job place, from education to tourism and entertainment, we are continuously immersed in a multicultural environment. To deal with such an environment, particular skills are required. One of the most basic and important ones is being culturally aware. Awareness of culture and its implications in terms of similarities and differences is essential as it helps people communicate better in their everyday activities, like buying from a foreign cashier, studying or working with foreign colleagues.

Even though cultural awareness is essential for people's personal and professional growth, it is barely taught to students of any age, from childhood through adulthood (Mostafa, 2020; OECD, 2020). It is rather self-discovered and self-learnt in various life situations but seldom considered a skill to be trained within institutional contexts, such as schools and/or workplaces. Even if it is trained, it is not done consistently, but rather sporadic or as one activity among others (Mostafa, 2020). At home, during early childhood, and at school, later on, children could be prepared for the multicultural and intercultural world they live in. The first step could be raising their cultural awareness regarding the meaning of culture and its implications, as "students' attitudes and dispositions are positively and significantly associated with the number of global-competence learning activities in which they are engaged at school" (Mostafa, 2020). From this important foundation, further skills can be constructed, namely intercultural communicative competence, intercultural intelligence and so on.

Moreover, as many more people graduate from universities, these higher education institutions need to continue the intercultural training and preparation of future professionals in order to meet the market requirements. No matter the degree specialization, be it future engineers, economists, architects, or linguists, students should be aware of the world they live in, its multiculturalism and its cultural interferences in their everyday, as well as professional lives.

The present study focusses on university students' cultural awareness and analyzes it by comparing different samples. First, it briefly presents other studies carried out in the area. Then, it describes the actual study, considering its methodology and hypotheses. Finally, it depicts the results of the samples and their comparison, summarizing the conclusions reached and presenting further implications.

Literature review

Cultural awareness has become more and more important in learning and teaching a language, being considered the fifth skill, alongside reading, listening, speaking and writing. Learning and teaching a foreign language, as well as its culture, develops “an awareness of, and sensitivity towards, [its] values and traditions” (Sharma, 2022). As communication takes place between two or more cultures, awareness turns both intercultural and communicative. Intercultural communicative awareness stands for “the intentional sensibility to the impact of culturally induced behavior in communications across cultures” and “implies an ability to identify cultural diversity and a desire to develop empathy based on an individual’s socio-cultural knowledge relevant to the foreign language context” (Sharma, 2022). In time, such awareness “leads to a gradually developing inner sense of the equality of cultures, an increased understanding of your own and other people’s cultures, and a positive interest in how cultures both connect and differ. [It] can broaden the mind, increase tolerance and facilitate international communication”, as pointed out by Tomlinson (2001) in Sharma (2022). According to Tomalin & Stempleski (1993), cultural awareness includes three main qualities, namely a) awareness of one’s own culturally induced behavior, b) awareness of the culturally induced behavior of others, as well as c) the ability to explain one’s own cultural standpoint.

Most of the studies carried out previously on cultural awareness have mainly focused on different ways to improve or integrate in the curriculum cultural activities in order to raise students’ awareness and, even to develop their cultural competence (PICT, 2012; Stoian & Simon, 2017). Even though students are exposed to the culture of the foreign language as they are studying continuously through listening exercises, reading original texts, or visual representations, this does not make them automatically more aware of it. As pointed out by Çakır (2006), “[l]earning to understand a foreign culture should help students of another language to use words and expressions more skillfully and authentically; to understand levels of language and situationally appropriate; to act naturally with persons of the other culture, while recognizing and accepting their different reactions, and to help speakers of other tongues feel at home in the students’ own culture”. Language learning should offer students the opportunities “to develop a shared world of interaction and experience through discovering the meaning of text in relation to its context of situation”, while they “negotiate and create a new reality by using their own frames of reference, deriving basically from their life world experience and socio-cultural background” (El-Hussari, 2007; Sharma, 2022).

Researchers have proposed several traditional ways to integrate culture into the curriculum and to raise students' awareness, like analyzing cultural misunderstandings, knowing one's own and others' cultures, watching movies or practicing empathy. Lately, however, the offer for alternative digital learning concepts such as digital communication tools, educational software, social networks experiences and AI applications (intelligent tutoring systems, adaptive learning platforms) (Sun, 2024) as online learning environments has dramatically increased. Training sociocultural competency based on the techniques of gaming simulation (Gerulaitienė, 2015; Gorodetskaya et al., 2015), enhancing cultural heritage awareness in an immersive learning experience through alternate reality games (Lin et al., 2024), improving intercultural competence through AI-enabled Collaborative Online International Learning (Sun, 2024), stimulating cultural awareness through exposing students to social media cultural phenomena (Memes and Reel Life Videos) (Björk et al., 2017; Boa Sorte et al., 2019; Tidy et al., 2024) are just a few examples of the present global digital perspectives in intercultural competency training. All these activities aim to help foreign language learners to “develop the ability to use language appropriately and effectively in various cultural contexts, to discover assumptions, values, and attitudes that underlie utterances and behaviors in their own cultures, to notice implicit conflicts and analyze the causes, to identify options for solving conflict situations, to try out options, observe the consequences, and take necessary measures, to resist falling back on stereotyping and ethnocentrism, to develop empathy with other cultures” (Sharma, 2022). They could be extracurricular and/or integrated into the classroom. They could also be non-formal and carried out in partnerships with different institutions and organizations (Simões, 2021).

Several studies have paid particular attention, not only to cultural awareness' role in teaching and learning foreign languages, namely English, but also to the formation of translators and interpreters. Petrescu (2012), for example, has investigated how much the target language adopts concepts from the source language in the context of European Union, becoming ideologized and forgetting about its own cultural and linguistic particularities, as English seems to be meant to become one language with several tongues. Solovyeva et al. (2015) have carried out an experiment on the level of general cultural knowledge and competencies of their students of translation and interpreting and found it very low. As such, they proposed a model based on the integration of linguistic and cultural disciplines and tested it on two groups of students from Kazan Federal University for a period of 5 years. The experimental group showed higher levels of awareness than the control one. Stoian and Trajanoska (2025) have proposed several activities to be carried

out with students in accordance with the framework of Intercultural Competence proposed by the PICT project (2012), such as translating texts with numerous culturemes or translating a text about a delicate subject that activates their empathy.

Attention has been paid by researchers, not only to foreign language teaching and learning or to translation and interpreting, but also to rather more technical disciplines, gathered under the umbrella of STEM. Handford et al. (2019) have examined the operationalization and conceptualization of the concept of culture in engineering education by looking, both quantitatively and qualitatively, at several relevant engineering education articles published in leading academic journals between 2000 and 2015. Their analysis has concluded that intercultural communication did not receive “the attention it deserves, given the multidisciplinary, diverse, global nature of the engineering profession” (p. 161). The predominant approach found in the majority of articles is the essentialist one, that considers culture as given, in terms of differences between nations that could offer explanations for individual behavior. The authors disagree with this approach due to its simplistic and stereotypical tendency and propose the use of “small culture” approach in engineering education and indicate alternative ways for developing intercultural communicative competence.

More pedagogically centered, Galanina et al. (2015) have focused on higher engineering education and the training of the sociocultural competence of future engineers, more exactly those from the Elite Education Department of National Research Tomsk Polytechnic University. They have proposed a cutting-edge pedagogical approach that aims to develop sociocultural competency through gaming simulations that allow students to participate in realistic scenarios. One of the games proposed, entitled *Intercultural communication*, forms several abilities, such as taking nationally specific psychological and sociocultural traits of the communicants into account, overcoming communicative barriers and social, ethnic and cultural stereotypes, working with multi-purpose and multinational teams and building up conditions for efficient communication considering cross-cultural issues (p. 342).

Moreover, Taylor et al. (2015) have focused on several Cross-Cultural Communication workshops dedicated to engineers in the USA, describing their development, implementation and assessment. They have highlighted the need of engineering education to support the professional development of its students by embedding multicultural awareness, knowledge and skills into their mandatory curricula. Several other researchers across the globe have highlighted the importance of cultural awareness in engineering education, by

proposing a cultural approach (Nguyen et al., 2022) focused on cross-cultural communication training (Gorodetskaya et al., 2015) and technology integration (Lin et al., 2024; Prasad et al., 2024; Redecker, 2017).

Relating technology to working environments, researchers across the globe have analyzed also how national cultures, as well as organizational cultures, accept, adopt and use technologies (Jan et al., 2024; Taras et al., 2011; Udo et al., 2012; Venkatesh & Davis, 2000). Furthermore, specific models and cultural dimensions have been investigated, such as Hofstede's power distance and email acceptance (Huang et al., 2003), several of Hofstede's cultural dimensions and management (Luca, 2005), or Schwartz's cultural value types and their impact on ICT Use (Bagchi & Kirs, 2009).

Very few studies though have assessed and investigated students' cultural awareness in order to see their actual needs. PISA assessed in 2018 the competences needed to live in an interconnected and diverse world and how these are taught to students around the world (OECD, 2020). Intercultural competence is gathered under the umbrella of global competence, considered by the report as "a multi-dimensional capacity that encompasses the ability to: 1) examine issues of local, global and cultural significance; 2) understand and appreciate the perspectives and worldviews of others; 3) engage in open, appropriate and effective interactions across cultures; and 4) take action for collective well-being and sustainable development" (p. 17). The assessment highlights the importance of including global competences abilities regularly in the activities with students, addressing up-to-date topics adapted to the students' ages and needs and paying attention to equity.

Moving to more specialization-centered studies, Fenner (2015) has paid a closer look to cultural awareness in foreign language teaching and learning and described it historically, moving from culture as an additional dimension to language to culture as an integral part of it. Her chapter focuses also on other related aspects, such as cultural knowledge, communicative competence, as well as content and language integrated learning. Moreover, it draws attention to the problem of assessing cultural awareness as it is a complex concept to be evaluated and tested. He (2012), on the other hand, has paid attention to the cultural awareness of Chinese students of translation from a technological vocational college in China, investigating their level of awareness, their cultural knowledge, alongside with their opinions on the current translation teaching materials. Her findings point out that most of the students questioned show little concern for culture learning during their study and have weak culture awareness, even though they agree that culture knowledge is important in translating.

Also, in the field of translation, Ruthner (2021) has aimed to find out if the concept of equally training communicative and intercultural competences to form a perfect sociolinguistic mechanism has gained importance among the local teachers and students of Politehnica University Timișoara (Romania). As the concept is rapidly spreading worldwide, the study has identified the local teachers' and students' perceptions regarding the importance of this synergy of competences in the field of translation and interpreting studies. The results have shown that the participants were aware of the importance of both the foreign and the inherited socio-cultural competence in the translation and interpreting process, and the students also proved to be very interested in acquiring intercultural competence during the unassisted training time.

The Romanian educational system has been previously studied (Morera& Galván, 2019), and attention has been paid to its values according to Hofstede's model of national culture and his proposed cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2001; Hofstede Insights, 2005; Luca, 2005). The results of the study conducted by Gallup International and Interact, using the *Value Survey* by Hofstede (Hofstede Insights, 2005), showed higher levels particularly in Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance dimensions among the Romanian participants, indicating that the Romanian educational process is teacher-centered, since the communication in class is initiated only by the teacher. Moreover, the importance given to rules, norms and corrections seems to maintain rigid codes of beliefs and behavior to the detriment of originality.

For the last two decades, however, there have been some official attempts to improve and adapt key elements of the Romanian educational system to the student-centered teaching approach. Worth mentioning are the Project Curriculum relevant, educație deschisă pentru toți – CRED [Relevant Curriculum, open education to everyone - CRED] (2015), cofinanced by the European Social Fund (ISE, 2015, p. 2-3), the Project *Reglementări Noi pentru un Curriculum Relevant și Educație Deschisă* – RECRED [New Regulations for a Relevant Curriculum and Open Education - RECRED] (2024), cofinanced by the European Social Fund Plus (Ministerul Educației și Cercetării, 2024) and the Education Law 199/2023, Art. 121, regarding student-centred teaching in Romanian Higher Education (Parlamentul României, 2023). The National Alliance of Student Organizations in Romania has also played a key role in this matter, constantly promoting and supporting the concept of student-centred teaching in Romanian Higher Education (ANOSR).

The conclusions of recent studies, on the other hand, mention that the levels of Power Distance and Uncertainty Avoidance dimensions are still quite high in Romanian (Higher) Education (Contiu et al., 2012; Malea, 2019; Neag, 2025).

As far as the assessment of cultural competence is concerned, Eyckmans (2017) has provided several options already used for this as a separate construct, such as the tests of declarative knowledge, e.g. the “Test of Cultural Competence in Translation” developed by Bahumaid (2010), or the questionnaires that appraise individuals’ cultural attitudes and abilities. In the end, since the types of tests discussed do not show exactly or predict the relation between the cultural knowledge and the students’ skills in applying it, Eyckmans (2017) has recommended considering cultural competence as part of the translation competence and measuring it in a contextualized environment by text translations.

Having in mind the little research carried out in diagnosing students’ cultural awareness and their perceptions of it, the present study aims to contribute to the topic and shed more light on it. As such, it investigates the importance of cultural awareness from the perspective of the students at the Politehnica University Timișoara. Starting from the premise that culture-specific knowledge, intercultural awareness and a careful attitude towards differences are essential in achieving professional success, the study focuses on two samples of students, one studying translation and interpreting and, the other, computer engineering, and their degree of cultural awareness in relation to their professional life.

The study

The present study is based on the responses of two large sample of students from Politehnica University Timișoara, one from the Faculty of Communication Sciences and the other from the Faculty of Automation and Computing. The survey, conducted exclusively online over the period of three weeks in June 2024, has addressed separately the two samples of students, with the purpose of drawing a comparison between, on the one side, the participants whose studies put the utmost emphasis on developing intercultural competence or even more, cultural ability, to form a perfect sociolinguistic mechanism, and increase their probability to become intercultural experts at the end of their 3-year degree that master transcultural communication, and, on the other side, the participants, who develop cultural awareness only in complementary courses, such as foreign language or culture and civilization.

Aim of the study

The concept of Intercultural Communicative Competence has become of irrefutable importance in Translation Studies in recent years. Students learning languages have discovered over their process of acquisition

the importance of culture and, probably, have become more culturally aware. Translation and Interpreting students are expected to be aware of the importance of their own sociocultural heritage and of the relevance of foreign sociocultural norms, values, behaviorism and phenomena to the translation and interpreting process. As for the engineering students who are most likely going to end up working in multinational corporations, the question is whether, in the current European context, which is more and more defined by cultural and ethnic diversity, the idea of an intercultural European/international identity and community has also reached them. Do future engineers feel encouraged to identify, study and compare cross-cultural similarities and differences? Do they feel drawn to the idea of unassistedly broadening their intercultural horizon? And, last but not least, to what extent do they manage to overcome the observed differences and find similar behavioral patterns and traits in their own culture, so that they can create a cultural bridge between the two different worlds and make it easier for them to transpose or interpret the behavioral situations specific to a source culture in a target culture?

Having these aspects in mind, the present study aims to draw a comparison between the language students specializing in Translation and Interpreting and the engineering ones specializing in Automation and Computing, more exactly Automation and Applied Informatics, Computers and Informatics. Politehnica University Timișoara has approximatively 13.500 students, out of which the large majority are engineering students, while around 500 are language and communication students (Universitatea Politehnica Timișoara, n.d.). The study intends to see if the two categories of respondents have entirely different mindsets or, on the contrary, the curious and intuitive soul of this generation makes them all, regardless of their educational context, feel attracted to discovering new sociocultural realities and acknowledging and absorbing multicultural information and perspectives. More exactly, the study plans to analyze the degree of *cultural awareness* of the two categories of students.

Regarding Ethics, the respondents offered their answers online, anonymously. Romanian law makes no reference to the necessity of a review from a local Institutional Review Board or an Ethics Committee (Codul cadru de etică și deontologie universitară, 2024).

Methodological framework

The data was collected between 3rd - 23rd of June 2024, using two questionnaires, administered separately. One was answered by 45 first- and second-year students of the Translation and Interpreting specialization

(hereafter shortened as TI), who represent 75% of the total number of students studying this specialization. The other questionnaire was responded to by 78 first-year students of the Faculty of Automation and Computing (hereafter shortened as AC), who stand for 60% of the AC students. These percentages reveal that a majority of the targeted group of subjects has taken part in the study. All the TI students major in English language and culture, 63.4% of them study French and 36.6% German languages and cultures. The AC students take foreign language (English, German or French) and culture and civilization courses in their first year of study. The respondents offered their answers online, anonymously. The demographic data of the sample students is depicted in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic data

Faculty/ Specialization	Number of respondents	Year of study	Age	Major in	Gender		Percentage of total respondents	Percentage of total number of students per faculty/specialization	
					M	F			
AC	78	I	19- 25	AAI: 35	18	17	44.87	60	
				CI: 43	24	19	55.13		
TI	45	I	19- 21	E/F: 12	E/G: 8	2	18	44.44	75
		II	20- 24	E/F: 15	E/G: 10	5	20	55.55	

*AAI stands for Automation and Applied Informatics, CI for Computer Information, E for English, F for French, G for German, M for Male and F for Female.

Source: Authors' own concept

The two questionnaires are in Romanian and consist of 7 and, respectively, 9 questions. 7 out of the 9 questions are identically formulated for both categories of students (language and engineers ones), in order to receive both parties' points of view and consequently, a balanced and accurate picture of the discussed matters. Starting with a short description of a critical incident involving German and American cultures, the students were asked to choose one of the 4 explanations in response to the strange behavior of the characters in the story. The next 6 questions are connected to the critical incident and the chosen answer, inquiring about various reasons for the students' choices, such as:

- a) The extent to which the answer was based on one's knowledge about common Romanian behavior?
- b) The extent to which the answer was based on one's cultural knowledge about the American and the German (European) society?

- c) Are there big cultural differences between the patterns and behavioral aspects of one's own society and those of the studied foreign cultures?
- d) And if they can overcome these differences and find similar behavioral patterns and traits in their own culture, so that they can create a cultural bridge between the two different worlds and make it easier for them to transfer/interpret the behavioral situations specific to a source culture into a target culture?
- e) If they try, on a personal level, to broaden their cultural horizon, to make contact with the cultural reality, behavioral patterns and features specific to the studied civilizations?
- f) How great do they consider their knowledge about the studied culture and civilization/society?

The questionnaire addressing the Translation and Interpreting students has 2 more questions than the one assigned to the Automation and Computing students. They focus on aspects of their training as future translators and interpreters, asking them:

- g) How important do they find cultural knowledge, the knowledge about behavioral patterns and features typical for the studied foreign society and their correct interpretation for their training as future translators and interpreters?
- h) How important is their knowledge about their own culture and civilization/society, about their own behavioral models and traits and their interpretation in the training as future translators and interpreters?

As can be seen above, except for questions d) and e), which are dichotomous questions, all the other questions requested the subjects to rate their answers. Questions b) and c) asked the students about the extent to which their answers were based on their knowledge about common Romanian behavior and about the American and the German (European) society, respectively, using a 1-to-5 rating scale, where 1 means *not at all* and 5 means *completely*. Question f) used the scale *very often/seldom/never*, rating the frequency of the participants' personal attempts to broaden their cultural horizon, while question g) rated their knowledge about the studied culture and civilization/society as *insufficient/sufficient/good/very good*.

Questions h) and i), which were addressed only to the TI students and inquired about the importance of cultural knowledge (foreign and inherited) in their training, offered as possible answers *less important/important/very important*.

Initial hypotheses

As mentioned before, the main purpose of the study has been to examine the perception of *cultural awareness* of two categories of students and compare them. Years of experience in translator training have given the authors the opportunity to observe the concept of *cultural ability* becoming of considerable importance to translation and interpreting studies, therefore we expected Translation and Interpreting (TI) students to show a higher level of perception regarding cultural awareness than Automation and Computing (AC) students, due to the nature of their training.

Other models of intercultural competence encountered in literature pay attention to different aspects, such as the attitudes of openness, curiosity, and willingness to suspend judgment when encountering cultural differences, as well as the skills of discovery, interaction and critical evaluation (Boye & Byram, 1997; Byram, 2021), the cognitive, behavioral and affective dimensions (Deardorff, 2006), or the empathy aspect (Liu et al., 2023). As highlighted by Dervin, cultural awareness is dynamic, critical and related to the context. Due to this, it needs deconditioning, reflexivity, dialogic identity work, attention to power, as well as intersectionality (Dervin & Gross, 2016).

The point of departure for this study was based on seven hypotheses, which were developed by taking Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (1986) into consideration. Bennett (1986) mentions two stages of intercultural development in an intercultural learning situation, an initial ethnocentric, having three steps: Denial, Defense and Minimization, followed by an ethnorelative one, represented by Acceptance, Adaptation and Integration (1986, p. 182). We expected AC students to have at least reached the step of Acceptance, while the TI students would probably prove to have passed the Acceptance moment, reaching for Adaptation, in general.

- H1. While TI students will probably choose their answers to the critical incident situation based rather on a high level of foreign sociocultural knowledge, AC students will choose their answers based rather on a higher level of knowledge about common Romanian behavior.
- H2. Most of the students of both categories will consider that there are big cultural differences between the patterns and behavioral aspects of one's own society and those of the studied foreign cultures.
- H3. TI students succeed to a larger scale than AC students in overcoming the sociocultural differences and finding similar behavioral patterns and traits in their own culture, so that they can create a cultural bridge between the two different worlds and make it easier for them to transfer/interpret the behavioral situations specific to a source culture into a target culture.

- H4. A larger percentage of TI students than AC students are interested in broadening their cultural horizon, making contact with the cultural reality, behavioral patterns and features specific to the studied civilizations.
- H5. TI students will probably consider their knowledge about the studied culture and civilization/society predominantly as *good* or *very good*, while AC students, on the other hand, will consider their sociocultural competences as rather *sufficient* or *good*. AC students might, however, not be aware of the real depth of (multi)cultural knowledge.
- H6. TI students will predominantly consider deep multicultural knowledge, the specific behavioral patterns of the studied culture as *very important* for their training as future translators.
- H7. TI students will predominantly regard knowledge about their own culture and civilization/society, about their own behavioral models and traits and their interpretation as *very important* for their training.

Results

Contrary to our expectations, the answers of the two parties were quite similar, although the AC students are offered a significantly smaller amount of time in class to improve their sociocultural abilities compared to TI students. This might be proof that the youth are becoming much more aware of the importance of the intercultural phenomenon in the European multiethnic work communities, and that language courses in school concentrate increasingly on sociocultural development, as well.

The critical incident

As already mentioned, a critical incident story has been chosen as a starting point for the surveys, in order to offer the students an anchor they can relate to. By means of the presented incident, we intended to guide the participants through the survey and help them understand and even visualize the questions more easily.

The following critical situation was presented:

“Consultations

Georg has recently joined the faculty of a well-known American university, having taught at a university in Germany for several years after completing his doctorate. He was quite happy about the greater freedom it gave him to study and teach in other countries. He was excited about this opportunity because he was able to work so closely with students and colleagues in his area of expertise. But he was particularly pleased to have the opportunity to have in-depth individual conversations and discussions with

American students in his office hours, as he knew it from his German students.

After a month, his enthusiasm began to wane. He had prepared very detailed lectures and selected appropriate additional reading. However, two unexpected incidents bothered him considerably. On the one hand, despite his enthusiasm for the material, the students did not ask any questions in class and did not participate in discussions. They seemed to be content with just passively writing everything down. But what particularly confused him was the fact that many students came to the office during his office hours to discuss basic things that he had already discussed in class. Georg wondered why these students were wasting their time on such trivialities. Office hours should be reserved for more important topics. Why didn't the students ask such questions in the classes? If Georg came to you with this question, what would you suggest to him?" (Vatter & Schepers, 2020).

The participants surveyed were offered 4 different answers to the above questions:

1. The students considered it rude to interrupt the professor during class.
2. The students were afraid to ask 'stupid' questions in front of their fellow students.
3. The students said they had to repeat their notes before they spoke to the professor alone in order to have a 'smarter' conversation.
4. The students felt it was important for their professor to get to know them personally before the final exams.

The American sociocultural orientation system would suggest the fourth answer as the most appropriate, as "Americans attach great importance to individuality. Often, students feel 'lost in the system' and think they are just a number in the administration. That is why many try to balance such feelings by actively seeking opportunities to meet their teachers and establish some kind of personal relationship. Among students who are new to the university or the subject, profound, intellectually stimulating questions are not yet the norm. Therefore, a common basis for discussion can only be based on the available material. In addition, many hope for better graduation results from a personal relationship with their professor. Foreign teachers in the U.S. need to be prepared for these types of conversations during their office hours." (Vatter & Schepers, 2020)

Romanian students, however, who are familiar with the American mindset mostly only from television and social media, seem to have considered the situation and their answers from their own point of view, which is probably why the vast majority of both categories of participants chose the second option as an answer (71.1% of the TI students and 75.6%

of the AC students, as pointed in Table 1). The answer reveals, maybe unexpectedly, the greatest fear of Romanian students, to become less respected by others. This matter will be further delved into in subpoint 4.2. Students' answers are summarized in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Students' answers to the critical incident presented

Answers	TI students	AC students
1: The students considered it rude to interrupt the professor during class.	8.9%	9%
2. The students were afraid to ask "stupid" questions in front of their fellow students.	71.1%	75.6%
3. The students said they had to repeat their notes before they spoke to the professor alone in order to have a "smarter" conversation.	8.9%	11.5%
4. The students felt it was important for their professor to get to know them personally before the final exams.	11.1%	3.9%

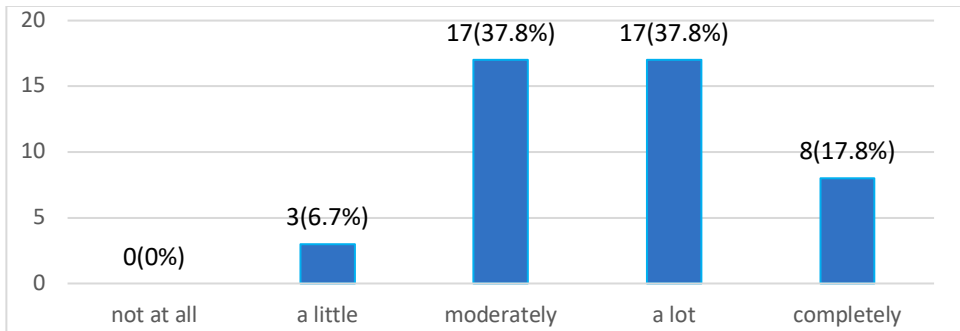
Source: Authors' own concept

Considering Table 2, it worths pointing out that the percentage of TI students who have chosen answer 4 as their option (that they felt it was important for their professor to get to know them personally before the final exams) is more than double the percentage of AC students with the same choice. This difference of 64.87% may indicate that more than double of the TI students is probably familiar with the American sociocultural context. The Romanian professor-student relation would be in general described as rather non-personal, strictly academic, even distant compared to the presented American sociocultural context, therefore it cannot be said that the participants' choice was influenced by personal lived experience and Romanian mindset.

Questions addressed to both samples of students

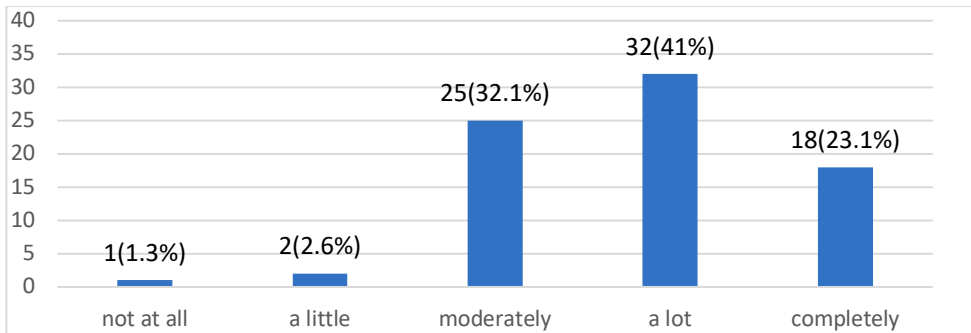
Question 2 (To what extent did you choose your answer based on your knowledge about common Romanian behavior?) analyses the extent to which the participants based their first answer on common Romanian behavioral patterns and features on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means *not at all*, 2 *a little*, 3 *moderately*, 4 *a lot* and 5 means *completely*.

Figure 1. Knowledge about common Romanian behavior (TI students)



Source: Authors' own concept

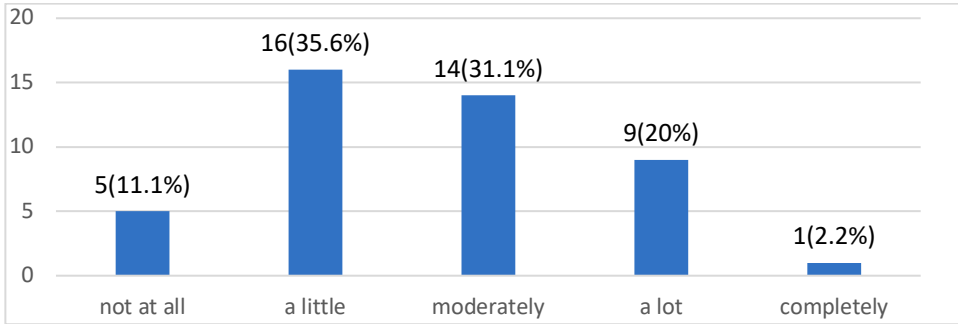
Figure 2. Knowledge about common Romanian behavior (AC students)



Source: Authors' own concept

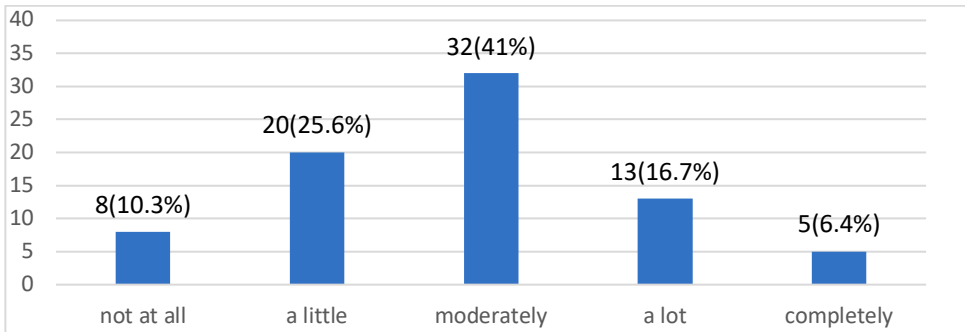
Question 3 (To what extent did you choose your answer based on your cultural knowledge about the American and the German (European) society?) focuses, on the other hand, on the extent to which the participants based their first answer on their cultural knowledge about the American and German (European) society, on a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 means *not at all*, 2 *a little*, 3 *moderately*, 4 *a lot* and 5 means *completely*.

Figure 3. Cultural knowledge about the American and German (European) society (TI students)



Source: Authors' own concept

Figure 4. Cultural knowledge about the American and German (European) society (AC students)



Source: Authors' own concept

Figures 1 and 2 prove that all participants, TI and AC students, have rather based their answers to the critical incident on Romanian specific behavioral patterns and values, their decision was taken in the spur of the moment, and it was an instinctive choice. We see from the figures 3 and 4, that 41% AC students compared to 31.1% TI students are quite confident about their foreign sociocultural knowledge, 75.6% of the AC students compared to 71.1% of the TI students have, however, chosen option 2 of the first part of the survey, and that up to 64.87% more TI students than AC students haven chosen answer 4 as their option, as we have already pointed out. This might indicate that AC students are not completely aware of the real depth of (multi)cultural knowledge.

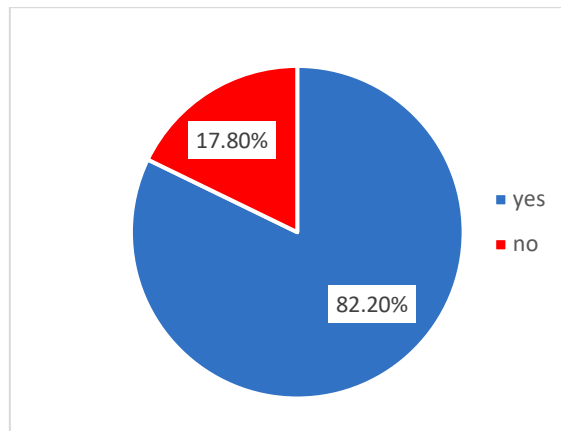
As can be inferred from the findings, **Hypothesis 1** (*While TI students will probably choose their answers to the critical incident situation based rather on a high level of foreign sociocultural knowledge, AC students will choose their answers based rather on a higher level of knowledge about common Romanian behavior*) is only partially confirmed. AC students based their answers rather on a higher level of

knowledge about common Romanian behavior, they made their choice socioculturally unconscious and automatic, which supports the hypothesis. Most of the TI students, on the other hand, did not choose their answers to the critical incident situation based rather on a high level of foreign sociocultural knowledge and this fact contradicts our first hypothesis.

As previously mentioned, the first step to cultural awareness is being familiar with the existence of cultural differences between the patterns and behavioral aspects of one's own culture and those of the studied foreign cultures. The purpose of *question 4* (*Do you think that there are big cultural differences between the patterns and behavioral aspects of one's own society and those of the studied foreign cultures?*) was to discover if the surveyed students are familiar with this sociocultural gap. *Question 5* (*Can you overcome these differences and find similar behavioral patterns and traits in your own culture, so that you can create a cultural bridge between the two different worlds and make it easier for you to transfer/interpret the behavioral situations specific to a source culture into a target culture?*), in turn, was supposed to reveal the level of difficulty as perceived by them in overcoming these differences and creating a cultural bridge between the two different worlds

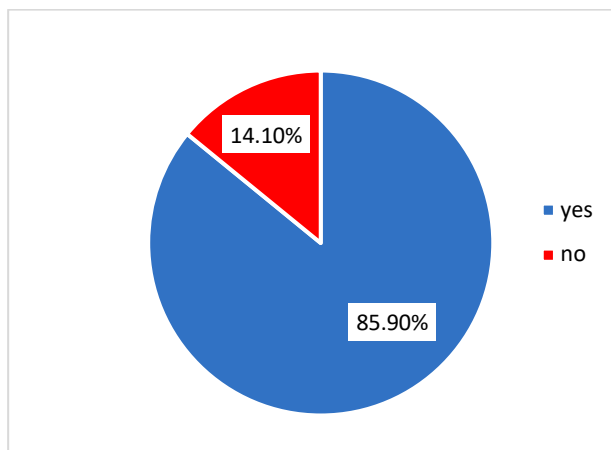
The vast majority of both categories of students responded affirmatively to these two questions, as indicated in the figures ranging from 5 to 8.

Figure 5. Awareness of sociocultural differences (TI students)



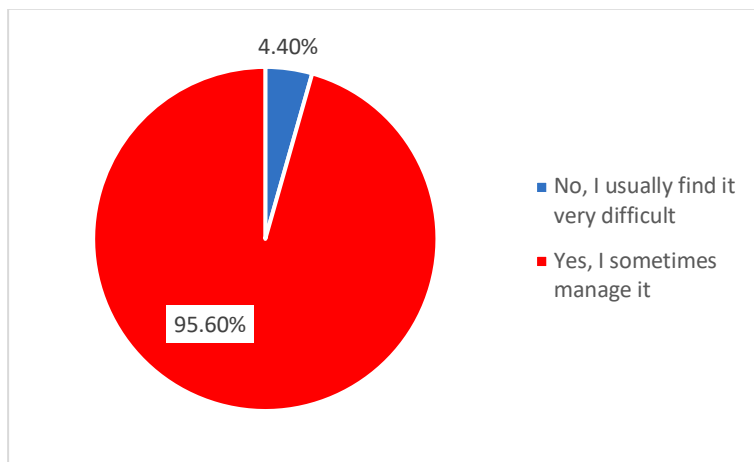
Source: Authors' own concept

Figure 6. Awareness of sociocultural differences (AC students)



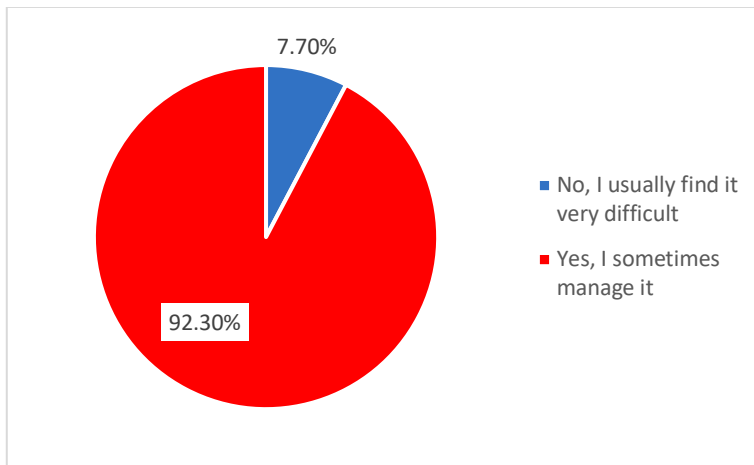
Source: Authors' own concept

Figure 7. Ability to overcome sociocultural differences (TI students)



Source: Authors' own concept

Figure 8. Ability to overcome sociocultural differences (AC students)

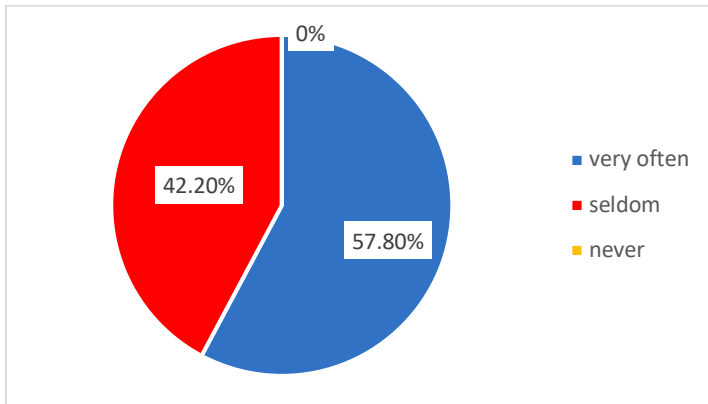


Source: Authors' own concept

The answers confirm **Hypothesis 2** (Most of the students of both categories will consider that there are big cultural differences between the patterns and behavioral aspects of one's own society and those of the studied foreign cultures) and **Hypothesis 3** (TI students succeed to a larger scale than AC students in overcoming the sociocultural differences and finding similar behavioral patterns and traits in their own culture, so that they can create a cultural bridge between the two different worlds and make it easier for them to transfer/interpret the behavioral situations specific to a source culture into a target culture). Most of the students of both categories will consider that there are big cultural differences between the patterns and behavioral aspects of one's own society and those of the studied foreign cultures. TI students succeed to a slightly larger scale than AC students in overcoming the sociocultural differences and finding similar behavioral patterns and traits in their own culture, so that they can create a cultural bridge between the two different worlds and make it easier for them to transfer/interpret the behavioral situations specific to a source culture into a target culture.

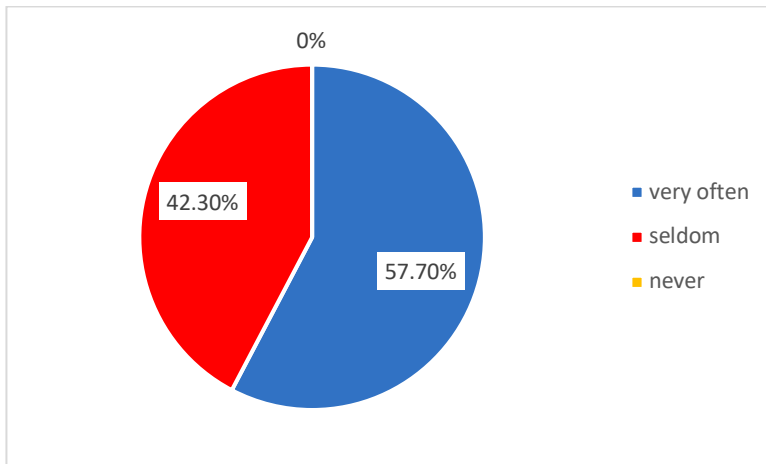
Question 6 (On a personal level, do you try to broaden your cultural horizon, to make contact with the cultural reality, behavioral patterns and features specific to the studied civilizations?) inquired about the students' efforts to broaden their cultural knowledge, to become acquainted with the cultural reality, behavioral patterns and features specific to the studied civilizations. To our great surprise, the answers of the two categories of participants were almost identical in percentage, as can be seen below.

Figure 9. Efforts to broaden one's cultural horizon (TI students)



Source: Authors' own concept

Figure 10. Efforts to broaden one's cultural horizon (AC students)



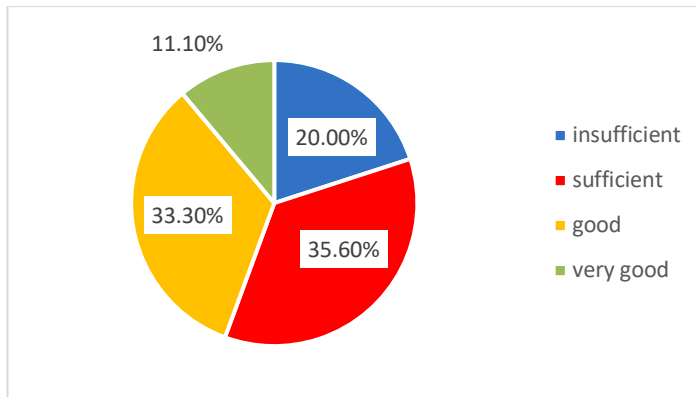
Source: Authors' own concept

Consequently, **Hypothesis 4** (A larger percentage of TI students than AC students are interested in broadening their cultural horizon, making contact with the cultural reality, behavioral patterns and features specific to the studied civilizations) is not confirmed, both parties describe their efforts to improve their sociocultural competence to equal percentages. At this point, we must highlight the positive fact that not a single student described his/her efforts of sociocultural improvement as none, and, even more, the majority of the students are very preoccupied with increasing their sociocultural knowledge.

The purpose of the 7th question (Do you consider your knowledge about the studied culture and civilization/ society as: insufficient/ sufficient/ good/ very good?) was to mirror the

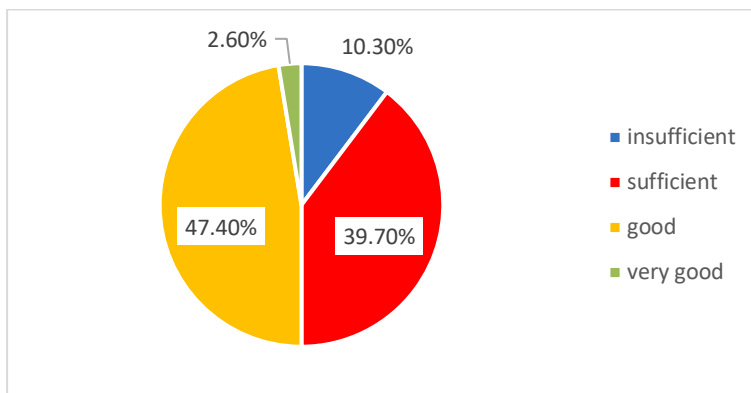
opinions of the participants regarding their level of foreign sociocultural competence. We anticipated the TI students would consider their knowledge about the studied culture and civilization/society predominantly as *good* or *very good* and expected the AC students to consider their sociocultural competences as rather *sufficient* or *good*. The results show us a great number of technical students having a very good and confident personal perception of their sociocultural skills, and a group of realistic and maybe even a bit modest TI students. We agree, though, with the answers of the TI students, the years of experience in TI training have given us the opportunity to closely observe the profile development of our future translators and interpreters, and from our experience, the average Romanian TI student has a rather sufficient or good level of sociocultural knowledge; very few of them have very good sociocultural skills.

Figure 11. Perception of foreign sociocultural knowledge (TI students)



Source: Authors' own concept

Figure 12. Perception of foreign sociocultural knowledge (AC students)



Source: Authors' own concept

The percentage of the AC students, who perceive their knowledge as *sufficient* or *good*, is up to 18.2 larger than that of the group of TI students. This fact might indicate that AC students are not completely aware of the actual depth of sociocultural knowledge, that they possibly see only the tip of the iceberg compared to the other category of participants in the survey.

We can, therefore, validate only the second part of **Hypothesis 5** (*TI students will probably consider their knowledge about the studied culture and civilization/ society predominantly as good or very good, AC students, on the other hand, will consider their sociocultural competences as rather sufficient or good. AC students might, however, not be aware of the real depth of (multi)cultural knowledge*), as we expected the TI students to be much more confident of their sociocultural competence. A realistic and constructive perception is, however, also highly appreciated.

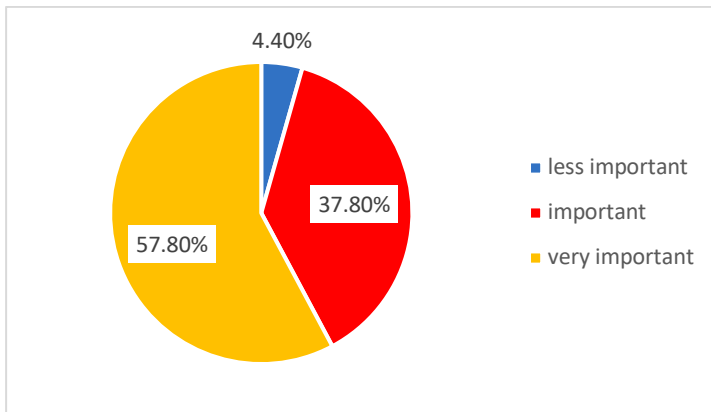
To summarize this part, contrary to our expectations, the six questions addressed to both parties registered very similar percentages of answers, as we already mentioned at the beginning of our result analysis.

Questions addressed only to TI students

The last two questions, *question 8* and *9*, were addressed exclusively to the TI students, because they inquire about the degree of importance placed by the participants to the inherited and foreign sociocultural knowledge for their training as future translators and interpreters.

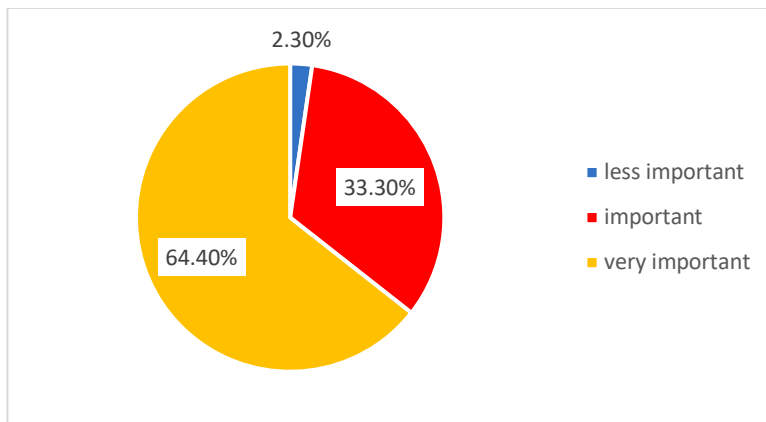
As expected, most of the respondents consider sociocultural abilities as *very important*.

Figure 13. Importance of foreign sociocultural knowledge (TI students)



Source: Authors' own concept

Figure 14. Importance of inherited sociocultural knowledge (AC students)



Source: Authors' own concept

The last two hypotheses of the study, **Hypotheses 6** (TI students will predominantly consider deep multicultural knowledge, the specific behavioral patterns of the studied culture as very important for their training as future translators) and 7 (TI students will predominantly regard knowledge about their own culture and civilization/ society, about their own behavioral models and traits and their interpretation as very important for their training) are, therefore, confirmed. The participants predominantly consider deep multicultural knowledge, the specific behavioral patterns of the studied culture and of their own culture and civilization/society as *very important* for their training. The last two answers demonstrate that our students are, in fact, completely conscious of the necessity of *cultural ability* in translation and are also aware that sociocultural competence requires hard work and excellent training.

Discussions

Taking the presented results into consideration and returning to Bennett's Developmental Model (1986, p. 182), we consider that our expectations regarding the developmental stage reached by the two distinct groups of respondents were generously met. We expected AC students to have at least reached the step of Acceptance and TI students to have passed the Acceptance step, reaching for Adaptation in general. Most of the AC and TI students recognize and accept sociocultural differences between their own society and those of the studied foreign cultures. Moreover, they express a high interest in increasing their sociocultural knowledge, which proves their wish for adaptation to a foreign sociocultural orientation system, when

needed. Most of the respondents seem to be aware of the importance of acquiring intercultural competence for the present multicultural working context and for the translation process.

All in all, the results of the study have fully confirmed four and partially validated two of the seven hypotheses of the study. One hypothesis was not confirmed at all.

Concerning **Hypothesis 1**, we expected the TI students to base their answers regarding the critical incident on their foreign sociocultural knowledge. However, both groups of students reacted instinctively to the exposed incident, rather using their higher level of knowledge about common Romanian behavior. This was expected from the AC students, so the hypothesis was partially confirmed.

As for **Hypotheses 2 and 3**, these were fully validated, as most of the respondents proved to recognize and accept major cultural differences between the patterns and behavioral aspects of their own society and those of the studied foreign cultures. These findings show a higher degree of cultural awareness in the students of Politehnica University Timisoara compared to students in other studies, such as He (2012) and Solovyeva et al. (2015). The answers have also revealed the fact that TI students can easier overcome sociocultural differences and find similar behavioral patterns and traits in their own culture. Thus, they can create a cultural bridge between two different contexts and succeed in transferring/interpreting the behavioral situations specific to a source culture into a target culture.

On the other hand, **Hypothesis 4** was not confirmed at all. Although we expected TI students rather than AC students to be interested in broadening their cultural horizon, both parties expressed a high interest in increasing their sociocultural knowledge. Therefore, we cannot state that a larger percentage of TI students than AC students are interested in broadening their cultural horizon. The percentage of the AC students, though, who perceived their sociocultural knowledge as *sufficient* or *good*, was up to 18.2 % larger than that of the group of TI students. We expected TI students to consider their knowledge about the studied culture and civilization/society predominantly as *good* or *very good*, whereas AC students, to perceive their sociocultural competences as rather *sufficient* or *good*. Consequently, **Hypothesis 5** was only partially validated.

As expected, the vast majority of TI students considered being familiarized with deep cultural knowledge and specific sociocultural patterns of the studied culture as essential to their training as future translators and interpreters, which confirmed **Hypothesis 6**. The findings are opposed to other studies, like Bahumaid (2010), whose students had inadequate

knowledge of both the source and the target culture, lacking also awareness of culturemes and other semantic issues. The TI students under discussion in the present study also regarded knowledge about their own culture and civilization/society, about their own behavioral models and traits and their interpretation as very important for their training. In this case, the results are in line with other studies in the field (He, 2012; Ruthner, 2021). **Hypothesis 7** was, thus, also validated.

Furthermore, the present study has also led to some unexpected aspects, as well. The fact that both categories of students are, fortunately, aware of the importance of acquiring intercultural competence for the present multicultural working context and for the translation process, respectively, is really encouraging for us as teachers. In fact, promoting *intercultural competence* and *cultural ability* is necessary for an optimal development of the modern societies of growing cultural and linguistic diversity, as teachers and students are offered the opportunity to enrich their learning experiences, by acknowledging, appreciating and capitalizing different cultural and linguistic heritages, hence diversity. Working in a multicultural context also requires mastering the mechanisms of intercultural communication, by establishing respectful intercultural relationships and creating the premises for a healthy work/study environment.

Romania is currently dealing with an exponential increase in incoming labor migration. This fact is regarded, however, as a novelty by the Romanian society. According to official data presented by the General Inspectorate for Immigration (2025), approximatively 30,000 visas and 7,000 work permits were requested in 2024, rising the number to a total of 240,000 foreigners located on Romanian territory and 106,000 solicited work permits during 2024. Compared to the countries with highest inflows of migrant workers in 2023, the United Kingdom (283,000), Canada (145,000), Germany (93,000) and Japan (90,000) (OECD, 2024), 7000 additional work permits a year represent a rather low inflow. Therefore, although the young adult and adult population is confronted with visible labor immigration, their level of cultural awareness cannot be expected to reach a high or even a moderate level yet, as neither the communist regime, nor the later restructured educational system have made any attempts to add a sociocultural dimension to the Romanian educational context (Morera& Galván, 2019). Teaching Culture and Civilization courses in Romanian technical universities has been rather challenging, as the educational system for future engineers did not put much emphasis on intercultural development. The courses have been focused mainly on information about European institutions/ policy or on exploring ancient European cultures and civilizations (Constantin et al., 2015).

The present study is, therefore, a first attempt in analysing the students' perception regarding the need of a new sociocultural perspective in their community and of a more flexible attitude towards different cultural orientation systems, as they will be increasingly confronted with such changes in the near future. Up to the last two years, intercultural cooperation and communication was reduced to multicultural working teams in international corporations. Further on, since "education for the awareness of cultural diversity is not to be taken lightly", but it should be rather viewed as "one of the most important issues facing educators today" (Sharma, 2022), we intend to carry out new studies in order to analyse the changes that we anticipate will occur in response to the sociocultural changes happening in the local community environment and the increase of the intercultural communicative competency and cultural awareness at a larger scale among the population. In other words, we plan to extend the present research to other Romanian Higher Education institutions for a more general diagnosis of the Romanian status. Further studies could be also considered regarding the non-university young adult population and their needs compared to the university students.

Conclusions

The recent accelerated transition to online teaching and e-learning has probably forced the students to work online to a much greater extent than ever before, and quite often unassisted, encouraging them to become part of the "digital society" (Lindgren, 2017). Being able to assimilate information only in online mode, students have discovered a new way of acquiring intercultural competence in a foreign sociocultural context by means of digital media. Working most of the time unassisted, they assimilate information at their own pace and have been allowed an increased freedom and independence regarding the learning strategies and sources they use (Gherheș et al., 2021; Stoian et al., 2022). This offers them multiple cultural perspectives through a wide range of examples and explanations and consequently creates bridges of coherence between their own and the studied culture, culture-specific behavioral patterns and semiotic systems.

To conclude, we strongly believe that the concept of *cultural awareness* has become of considerable importance in Romania as well, not only to competent future translators and interpreters but also to language learners of all ages, who need to find their way in a foreign cultural context of action, then blend in successfully with the new cultural orientation system and, finally, become part of the foreign culture. Culture-specific knowledge helps learners to free themselves from their own cultural patterns of action and interpretation and be open-minded enough to question them in the light of a

foreign cultural context of action. By respecting a different cultural matrix, learners acquire a multicultural perspective. Intercultural learning is therefore to be understood as a process of self-development, which also includes the acquisition of communicative and equally important, socio-cultural skills (Ruthner, 2024). All in all, when we finally become cultural aware and we realize that “I could have been you, you could have been me, given different circumstances – in other words, that the stranger... is in us” (Kramersch, 1996; Sharma, 2022), “the line of communication is no longer broken and language serves as the cement that will hold the intercultural Bridge together” (Sharma, 2022).

References

- ANOSR. (n.d.). ANOSR a lansat Ghidul “Învățământ Centrat pe Student”.
<https://anosr.ro/uncategorized/anosr-a-lansat-ghidul-invatamant-centrat-pe-student/1065/>
- Bagchi, K., & Kirs, P. (2009). The impact of Schwartz's cultural value types on ICT use: A multi-national individual-level analysis. *Proceedings of the International Conference on Information Systems (ICIS)*, 1, 1–18.
<https://aisel.aisnet.org/icis2009/205>
- Bahumaid, S. (2010). Strategies of translating idioms in English-Arabic dictionaries. *International Journal of Arabic-English Studies*, 11(1), 101–126.
<https://doi.org/10.33806/ijaes2000.11.1.9>
- Bennett, M. J. (1986). A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10(2), 179–196.
[https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767\(86\)90005-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0147-1767(86)90005-2)
- Björk, E. L., Eschenbach, J., & Webb, L. (2017). Reel life methodology: Developing intercultural competence through film fragments and dialogue in South Africa. *Journal of Intercultural Communication*, 17(2).
<https://doi.org/10.36923/jicc.v17i2.740>
- Boa Sorte, P. (2019). Internet memes: Classroom perspectives in the context of digital cultures. *Educação e Formação: Revista do Programa de Pós-Graduação em Educação da Universidade Estadual do Ceará (UECE)*, 4(12), 51–66.
<https://doi.org/10.25053/redufor.v4i12.1385>
- Boye, S., & Byram, M. (2017). Language awareness and the acquisition of intercultural communicative competence. In J. M. Cots & P. Garrett (Eds.), *The Routledge Handbook of Language Awareness* (pp. 435–449). London: Routledge.
- Byram, M. (2021). *Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence* (Revised ed.). Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781800410251>

- Çakır, I. (2006). Developing cultural awareness in foreign language teaching. *The Turkish Online Journal of Distance Education*, 7(3), 154–161.
<https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/156431>
- Codul cadru de etică și deontologie universitară. (2024). *Portal legislativ, Guvernul României*. <https://legislatie.just.ro/Public/DetaliiDocumentAfis/281570>
- Constantin, E. C., Cohen-Vida, M. I., & Popescu, A. V. (2015). Developing cultural awareness. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 191, 696–699.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.04.228>
- Contiu, L. C., Gabor, M. R., & Stefanescu, G. (2012). Hofstede's cultural dimensions and students' ability to develop an entrepreneurial spirit. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, 5553-5557.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.06.474>
- Deardorff, D. (2006). Chapter 11. Assessing Intercultural Competence in Study Abroad Students. In M. Byram & A. Feng (Eds.), *Living and Studying Abroad: Research and Practice* (pp. 232-256). Bristol, Blue Ridge Summit: Multilingual Matters. <https://doi.org/10.21832/9781853599125-013>
- Dervin, F., & Gross, Z. (2016). Introduction: Towards the simultaneity of intercultural competence. In F. Dervin & Z. Gross (Eds.), *Intercultural competence in education* (pp. xx–xx). Palgrave Macmillan.
https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-58733-6_1
- El-Hussari, I. A. (2007, October 25–26). Promoting the concept of cultural awareness as a curricular objective in an ESL/EFL setting: A case study of policy and practice. In *1st Mediterranean Graduate Students Meeting in Linguistics*, Mersin, Turkey.
<https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=c6515cb77f3364067dbe683ad4c743e83d5cbb5d>
- Eyckmans, J. (2017). Cultural competence in translation studies and its assessment. In J. Deconinck, P. Humblé, A. Sepp, & H. Stengers (eds.), *Towards transcultural awareness in translation pedagogy* (pp. 209–229). Berlin/Zürich: LIT Verlag.
- Fenner, A.-B. (2015). Cultural awareness in the foreign language classroom. In J. Cenoz, D. Gorter, & S. May (Eds.), *Language awareness and multilingualism* (pp. 2025–2037). *Encyclopedia of Language and Education*. Springer, Cham.
- Galanina, E., Bikineeva, A., & Gulyaeva, K. (2015). Sociocultural competence training in higher engineering education: The role of gaming simulation. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 166, 339–343.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.12.533>
- General Inspectorate for Immigration. (2025, July). *Peste 250.000 de cetățeni din state terțe și Uniunea Europeană se află legal pe teritoriul României*.
<https://igi.mai.gov.ro/peste-250-000-de-cetateni-din-state-terte-si-uniunea-europeana-se-afla-legal-pe-teritoriul-romaniei/>

- Gerulaitienė, E. (2015). The role of intercultural simulation games in the study process: The impact on the development of intercultural competence. *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference*, 1, 222–231. <https://www.lituanistika.lt/content/77716>
- Gherheș, V., Stoian, C., Fărcașiu, M. A., & Stanici, M. (2021). E-learning vs. face-to-face learning: Analyzing students' preferences and behaviors. *Sustainability*, 13(8), 4381. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su13084381>
- Gorodetskaya, I. M., Shageeva, F. T., & Valeeva, E. (2015). Cross-cultural communication training for future engineers: A model developed at the Kazan National Research Technological University to prepare students for mobility programs and the global marketplace. *122nd ASEE Annual Conference & Exposition*. <https://peer.asee.org/23764.pdf>
- Handford, M., Van Maele, J., Matous, P., & Maemura, Y. (2019). Which “culture”? A critical analysis of intercultural communication in engineering education. *Journal of Engineering Education*, 108, 161–177. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jee.20254>
- He, X. (2012). Cultural awareness and translation teaching at higher vocational college: Problems and solutions. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 3(1), 74–83. <https://www.academypublication.com/issues/past/jltr/vol03/01/09.pdf>
- Hofstede, G. (2001). *Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviours, institutions and organizations across nations*. London: Sage Publications.
- Hofstede Insights. (2005). *Romania: Country comparison*. <https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison/romania/>
- Huang, L., Lu, M., & Wong, B. (2003). The impact of power distance on email acceptance: Evidence from the PRC. *Journal of Computer Information Systems*, 44(1), 93–101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08874417.2003.11647556>
- ISE (2015). *Repere pentru proiectarea și actualizarea curriculumului național: Document de politici educaționale*. București: Institutul de Științe ale Educației. <https://www.ise.ro/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Repere-pentru-proiectarea-si-actualizarea-curriculumului-national-versiune-de-lucru-decembrie-2015.pdf>
- Jan, J., Alshare, K. A., & Lane, P. L. (2024). Hofstede's cultural dimensions in technology acceptance models: A meta-analysis. *Universal Access in the Information Society*, 23(2), 717–741. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10209-022-00930-7>
- Kramsch, C. (1996). Stylistic choice and cultural awareness. *Challenges of literary texts in the foreign language classroom*, 162–84.
- Parlamentul României. (2023). *Lege 199/ 2023. Legea învățământului superior nr. 199/2023*. Monitorul Oficial, Partea I nr. 614 din 05 iulie 2023.

- <https://lege5.ro/Gratuit/geztqmjwgq4ts/legea-invatamantului-superior-nr-199-2023?pid=532872111#p-532872111>
- Lin, H.-C. K., Lu, L.-W., & Lu, R.-S. (2024). Integrating digital technologies and alternate reality games for sustainable education: Enhancing cultural heritage awareness and learning engagement. *Sustainability*, 16(21), 9451. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su16219451>
- Lindgren, S. (2017). *Digital media and society*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Liu, S., Gao, S., & Ji, X. (2023). Beyond borders: Exploring the impact of augmented reality on intercultural competence and L2 learning motivation in EFL learners. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1234905. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1234905>
- Luca, A. (2005). *Employescu: A cross-cultural perspective on management in Romania*. Editura România de Măine.
- Malea, L. (2019). Romania's National Culture in Hofstede's dimensions through the Eurobarometer Standard 90 (2018). *Journal of Global Politics and Current Diplomacy*, 7(1), 5-20. https://journal.centruldedic.ro/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/Malea_2019-1.pdf
- Ministerul Educației și Cercetării. (2024). Ministerul Educației anunță derularea proiectului „Reglementări noi pentru un curriculum relevant și educație deschisă” – RECREd. Retrieved July 2025, from https://www.edu.ro/info_derulare_proiect_RECRED
- Morera, I., & Galván, C. (2019). Hofstede's cultural dimensions in the educational context. In *The European Proceedings of Social and Behavioural Sciences* (pp. 298–306). <https://doi.org/10.15405/epsbs.2019.04.02.38>
- Mostafa, T. (2020). Do all students have equal opportunities to learn global and intercultural skills at school? *PISA in Focus*, 109. OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/2fdce668-en>
- Neag, C. (2025). *Educația centrată pe elev în școala românească: între ideal pedagogic și realitate practică*. EDICT. <https://edict.ro/educatia-centrata-pe-elev-in-scoala-romaneasca-intre-ideal-pedagogic-si-realitate-practica/>
- Nguyenet, T. L., Do, T. M. T., & Pham, V. S. (2022). Awareness of cultural approach in engineering teaching by lecturers: A literature review. *International Journal of Engineering Pedagogy*, 12(1), 4–20. <https://doi.org/10.3991/ijep.v12i1.24961>
- OECD. (2020). *PISA 2018 results (Volume VI): Are students ready to thrive in an interconnected world?* OECD Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1787/d5f68679-en>
- OECD. (2024). *International migration outlook 2024* (48th ed.). https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/international-migration-outlook-2024_50b0353e-en.html

- Petrescu, C. (2012). How to raise cultural awareness through teaching translation. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 46, 3910–3915. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2012.06.171>
- PICT. (2012). *Promoting intercultural competence in translators: Intercultural competence curriculum framework*. University of Westminster. <http://www.pictlp.eu/en/curriculumframework>
- Prasad, B., Raiula, T. N., & Alasa, V. M. (2024). The role of technology in enhancing multicultural education and promoting cultural awareness among students in Fiji. *Jurnal Pendidikan Abad Ke-21*, 2(2), 92–110. <https://doi.org/10.53889/jpak.v2i2.50692>
- Redecker, C. (2017). *European framework for the digital competence of educators: DigCompEdu* (Y. Punie, Ed.). Publications Office of the European Union. <https://doi.org/10.2760/159770> (<https://publications.jrc.ec.europa.eu/repository/handle/JRC107466>)
- Ruthner, A. (2021). The impact of the intercultural communicative competence on translation and interpreting studies: A study on Romanian students. In L. Gómez Chova, A. López Martínez, & I. Candel Torres (Eds.), *EDULEARN21 Proceedings: 13th International Conference on Education and New Learning Technologies* (pp. 2308–2313). IATED. <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=8609891>
- Ruthner, A. (2024). Kulturspezifisches Wissen in der interkulturellen Alltagskommunikation im Beruf: Eine komparative Studie aus der Perspektive der Student/-Innen der Universität Politehnica Timișoara, Übersetzungswissenschaften versus Ingenieurwissenschaften (Computer Science) [Deep cultural knowledge in intercultural everyday communication at work. A comparative study from the perspective of students at the university politehnica timișoara, translation studies versus computer science]. *Studii de Știință și Cultură*, 20(3), 103–118. <https://www.cceol.com/search/article-detail?id=1268503>
- Sharma, R. (2022). Language and culture: Developing cultural awareness through the teaching of English. *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research*, 9(6), B210–B213. <https://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR2206129.pdf>
- Simões, A. V. (2021). Developing multilingual competence and cultural awareness through forms of non-formal learning: A contribution to sustainable employability, active citizenship and social inclusion. *European Journal of Education*, 4(2). <https://doi.org/10.26417/670hst77c>
- Solovyeva, E., Sabirova, D., & Morozova, T. (2015). Forming students' linguistic and cultural competence in academic translation and interpretation studies. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 199, 415–422. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.567>

- Stoian, C. E., Fărcașiu, M. A., Dragomir, G.-M., & Gherheș, V. (2022). Transition from online to face-to-face education after COVID-19: The benefits of online education from students' perspective. *Sustainability*, 14(19), 12812. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141912812>
- Stoian, C., & Șimon, S. (2017). The integration of cultural aspects in syllabus design. In *ICERI2017 Proceedings* (pp. 6346–6352). IATED.
- Stoian, C., & Trajanoska, I. (2025). Intercultural communicative competence in translation training in higher education: A pedagogical perspective. In C. Stoian & I. Trajanoska (Eds.), *Language, culture and business* (pp. 245–265). Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Sun, L. (2024). Enhancing intercultural competence of Chinese English majors through AI-enabled collaborative online international learning (COIL) in the digital era. *Education and Information Technologies*, 30, 7995–8027. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10639-024-13143-7>
- Taras, V., Steel, P., & Kirkman, B. L. (2011). Three decades of research on national culture in the workplace: Do the differences still make a difference? *Organizational Dynamics*, 40(3), 189–198. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.orgdyn.2011.04.006>
- Taylor, A., Matheis, C., Watford, B., Boyd-Sinkler, K., Waters, R., Sikder, Y., Lee, W., Arnold-Christian, S., & Lester, K. (2018). Embedding cross-cultural communication awareness and skills training in a living learning community for first-year undergraduate engineering students. In *JSEE Annual Conference International Session Proceedings* (pp. 3–9). https://doi.org/10.20549/jseen.2018.0_3
- Tidy, H., Bolton-King, R. S., Croxton, R., Mullen, C., Nichols-Drew, L., Carlisle-Davies, F., Moran, K. S., & Irving-Walton, J. (2024). Enhancing the student learning experience through memes. *Science & Justice*, 64(3), 280–288. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scijus.2024.03.004>
- Tomalin, B., & Stempleski, S. (1993). *Cultural awareness*. Oxford University Press.
- Tomlinson, B. (2001). Seeing more between the lines. *The Guardian Weekly*, 5(2), 21–27.
- Udo, G., Bagchi, K., & Kirs, P. (2012). Exploring the role of espoused values on e-service adoption: A comparative analysis of the US and Nigerian users. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 28(5), 1768–1781. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2012.04.010>
- Universitatea Politehnica Timișoara. (n.d.). Despre universitate. https://www.upt.ro/Informatii_despre-universitate_44_ro.html
- Vatter, C., & Schepers, A. (2020). *Culture Assimilator*. <http://www.andreas.de/ca/inc2.html>
- Venkatesh, V., & Davis, F. D. (2000). A theoretical extension of the technology acceptance model: Four longitudinal field studies. *Management Science*, 46(2), 186–204. <https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.46.2.186.11926>