

## **Exploring Internationalization of a Higher Education Language Course Curriculum in Vietnam: A Study of Students' Perceptions**

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Received 2024-09-13; Revised 2024-11-28; Accepted 2024-12-11;

Published online: 2024-12-29

### **Abstract**

Internationalization of the Curriculum (IoC) has been among the most important academic strategies in a number of institutions worldwide in the last decades. While much of what has been written in the scholarly literature on how internationalized the curriculum in higher education has typically focused on the voices of institutional leaders, academic administrators and lecturers, students do not seem to be adequately engaged. This study, therefore, by examining how dimensions of IoC integrated in a higher education language course curriculum in Vietnam, is an effort to fill the gap. Based on the analysis of data collected from 88 English majors at Faculty of English Linguistics and Literature, University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University, Ho Chi Minh City, three important findings were reported as follows: (1) The investigated course showed a decent and positive level of IoC; (2) No correlation was found between the internationalization of the curriculum and students' course learning satisfaction, and (3) Certain activities were perceived to make a course more internationalized. Findings of the study reveal significant insights of the reality of IoC in a Vietnamese university. The results make meaningful contribution to existing literature of IoC in the region and shed light on the growing need of such a strategy in the investigated setting.

**Keywords** :*Internationalization of the Curriculum; Language proficiency; Vietnam higher education.*

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### **1. Introduction**

As the world is getting more and more globalized, what happens in a country is logically in its closer connection with that in others. The same story can be found in the area of higher education. Fragouli (2020) anticipated that “education shapes minds and global education; global pedagogy would contribute to shaping a global mindset for all.” (p.68). Also, Weisssova and Johansson (2022) insisted that “Globalization and technological development are steadily reshaping the landscape of higher education (HE) and making new demands on higher education institutions (HEIs) to prepare their graduates for the

challenge of living and working in a globally connected world” (p.23). Based on the perspectives, the term “global” seems to be the shared value of education, especially higher education, in this era. It could be inferred that there is a growing need for higher education institutions to bring universal/global values to classes as a way to enable their students to handle growing demands of the world labor market. In such a circumstance, internationalization in higher education might be even more important than it has been over the last decades.

Given Knight’s (2023) definition of internationalization of higher education which encompasses a multi-faceted aspect of international, intercultural and therefore global dimensions, discussions about the *raison d’être* of internationalization of higher education are called for. It is evident that the field of internationalization has obtained a solid position in higher education worldwide. Over the last decades, although mobility programs have undoubtedly been beneficial to participants who are commonly known as teachers, scholars and students and actually have always worked as a great contributor of internationalization worldwide, IoC proposed by Leask (2015) as a strategy to leverage teaching and learning process seems to be a more accessible and affordable option. Like what Clarke and Kirby (2022) contended, the increasing emphasis on the value of higher education as both an export market and a revenue generator and the obvious increases in international student enrollment is what motivates higher education leaders to seek to provide curricula which reflect the global perspectives that students need to work and function within increasingly complex and multicultural work environments (p. 408). It is evident that the needs of having a curriculum embracing global perspectives and bringing students more values are growing. In such a setting, IoC, as an approach to open up more chances for the majority of students in local context to experience international, intercultural and global values, seems to be an uptrend and possibly serves as a possible solution for higher education institutions in coming years.

There has been a great deal of research discussing IoC in many parts of the world (Healy & Link, 2012; Clifford & Montgomery, 2015; Zapp & Lerch, 2020; Fragouli, 2020; Leask, 2020; Shahjahan et al., 2024). However, little is known about this area of study in such a developing country like Vietnam.

As Egron-Polak and Marinoni (2022) concluded, “no single model that fits all regions, or even the nations and institutions within a region” (p.75), opinions from different stakeholders in a particular setting are critical and should be carefully considered as part of continuous improvement in IoC. This study, therefore, through the review of current literature about students’ perspectives on curriculum internationalization and surveying students’ perceptions of what they experienced in a specific course in a Vietnamese university, is an effort to investigate what has been done when it comes to IoC and how students perceive it in their learning process. Results from the study, hopefully reveal interesting insights on IoC in this part of the world.

## **2. Research objectives**

The study aims to investigate students' perceptions about teachers' integrations of dimensions of IoC into their teaching. Also, the participants' preferred activities to make their course more internationalized are investigated.

## **3. Research questions**

The current study aims to address the following questions:

3.1 How are dimensions of IoC integrated in a higher education language course curriculum as perceived by English majors in a Vietnamese university?

3.2 Is there a correlation of the internationalization of the curriculum is and students' course learning satisfaction?

3.3 What are the participants' preferred activities to make the course more internationalized?

## **4. Literature Review**

### **4.1 Drivers for internationalization in higher education institutions**

Internationalization is highly appreciated in higher education in the new era and can be regarded as the direction ahead for institutions worldwide. It is referred to as a multifaceted and evolving phenomenon that touches on a wide scope of issues (Rumbley et al., 2022) and a very broad and varied concept, including new rationales, approaches, and strategies in different and constantly changing contexts (Knight & de Wit, 2018). Sreenivasulu (2022) insisted that "with most universities internationalising education as part of their mission, vision, and strategies, it has also become an integral part of meeting institutional goals." (p.6). Leask (2014) stated that "all students will live in a globalized world, as professionals and citizens, and this is a common rationale for internationalization" (P.5). Additionally, due to the increasing importance of such an aspect, Davey (2023) pointed out drivers for institutions to develop an internationalisation strategy including building global reputation and influence, having a positive influence on communities, income generation, and helping their students gain a global perspective or develop intercultural competencies. Accordingly, it can be inferred that internationalization strategies are promising to some extent thanks to the opportunities they may bring to institutions in the upcoming stages of higher education.

### **4.2 Growing trend of curriculum internationalization**

As the most important feature of internationalization strategy (Bond et al., 2003), IoC has become more and more trendy all over the world (Hubais & Muftahu, 2022). Over the years, it has been a priority of a number of higher education institutions (Clarke & Kirby, 2022). Owing to the significance of IoC, International Association of Universities

(2012) has strongly advocated the internalization of universities across contexts. This can be achieved through the internationalization of the curriculum. As such, non-mobile students can partake in the internalization process and thus develop necessary global competences.

Unlike early stages of internationalization when mobility occupied the primary role in internationalization strategies, current discussions on this field are commonly about how institutions can enable the majority of their students to get exposure to the light of internationalization rather just groups of their elite students or teachers. As mentioned in Wimpenny et al. (2021), internationalization, from where they stand, is more than increased mobility, recruitment of international students and growth in branch campuses. The authors view internationalization processes as requiring critical cultural awareness and understanding of themselves, their positionalities and their world-view and values, which in turn inform their curriculum practices.

Leask (2009) defined “Internationalization of the curriculum” or known as IoC, as “the incorporation of international, intercultural, and/or global dimensions into the content of the curriculum as well as the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods, and support services of a program of study. (p. 209). Additionally, Leask (2015) put forward a conclusion that “The impact of an internationalized curriculum on student learning will be profound if attention is paid to internationalizing learning outcomes, content, teaching and learning activities, and assessment tasks” (p.14). As shown in Leask’s definition, learning outcomes, content, teaching and learning activities, and assessment tasks are the four important elements of IoC. What students actually learn under the impacts of these four fundamental pillars reflect how much internationalized the curriculum is. Because of this, in her Questionnaire on Internationalization of the Curriculum Version 1 (QIC1), Leask (2015) aimed at exploring how teachers visualize their strategies of IoC in their teaching practice.

Clearly, IoC is increasingly important and granted, international, intercultural, and/or global dimensions, as fundamental factors of IoC, should be included in the curriculum so that the majority of students in higher education institutions can get access to. This indicates that more effective strategies pertaining to IoC should be carefully considered.

### **4.3 Recent research on students’ perceptions on IoC**

Kelly (2009) pointed out a difference between the planned curriculum and the received one, with ‘planned’ referring to the curriculum intended by policymakers, curriculum designers and educators, and ‘received’ meaning what is actually understood and experienced on the part of the students in the teaching and learning process. Similarly, IoC should be built on the foundation of what is planned and what is actually learned. Like what Clarke and Kirby (2022) mentioned, the participation of all higher education

stakeholders including institutional leaders, faculty, staff, and students determine the success of internationalization comprehensively. It is evident that students' perceptions about what they actually learn whether the curriculum has been internationalized or not is also worth considering. Over the last two decades, different views pertaining to students' roles on curriculum internationalization have also been on active discussions (Absalom & Vadura, 2006; Zou et al, 2020; Brewer & Leask, 2022; Abon & Jean-Francois, 2022).

Recent research on students' perceptions on IoC have shown some interesting findings, which are discussed below.

Shuib and Azizan (2018) revealed that generally IoC is well-perceived by local students in the Malaysian public university. The respondents in the study agreed on the importance of IoC by their university and that the internationalization elements have been integrated into the curriculum through various approaches by their lecturers, such as infusing a global perspective in their lessons. Additionally, data from 384 students belonging to two different Thai universities by Mehta et al. (2021) showed that IoC was one of students' desires that had a positive and significant impact on the global mindedness of students, making them more adaptable to global culture.

From a different perspective, Cheng et al. (2018) revealed that the practice of IoC in both Scotland and Australia was rather limited, and that students, chinese ones, expressed a desire for more international perspectives in the course content, and for more mobility experiences, in order to prepare for their future careers. The study indicated that the mismatch between academics' and students' understandings of IoC was considered as an arena of power differential and an area for further study. In addition to this, Marangell (2023) pointed out three limitations of current literature on student experience of internationalization including: (1) focusing too much on the experiences of particular student groups (e.g., international or domestic students) and their interactions with each other, (2) having the predominance of studies coming from business-related subjects and (3) being limited to investigations of group work, multicultural or otherwise, and peer mentoring or students' international internships. According to Marangell (2023), one of main findings relating to the personal level was that students expected high-quality, highly frequent intercultural interaction, specifically 86% of participants expected "a lot of opportunity to interact with students from different backgrounds" (compared with 14% who expected "not a lot"), and 74% expected "a lot of classroom discussion". The author pointed out that "When viewing the main findings through the lens of the PiC (person-in-context) framework, the student experience of an internationalized university seems to be exemplified by a lack of alignment between the individual and environmental dimensions, with particular misalignment in the interactional elements of the learning environment." (Marangell 2023, p. 156).

Results from a qualitative study among 13 participants including 5 students, four coordinating staff and four faculty members from Hartzell (2019) pointed out 4 themes that

need considering in the process of IoC including bridging students and faculty from diverse backgrounds, expanding knowledge while crossing borders, working towards global citizenship, and sustainability.

It has been noted that students from different settings have slightly different perceptions about IoC, but they share the same idea that there is a growing need for institutions to approach IoC in a better and more appropriate way. Although in the majority of above studies, the curricula had been internationalized and global, international and intercultural dimensions had actually been intergated into classroom practices as a way institutions prepared students for their personal and professional lives, students weren't quite happy with gained benefits and did expect stronger policies should be applied to truly bring the world to class.

#### **4.4 A way forward of IoC**

Over the years, a number of research has put forward some recommendations on what should be done to promote IoC.

IoC at the course level, according to Griffith (2011), involves embedding global, international and multicultural dimensions in the seven areas: (1) Course Content and Design, (2) Learning and Teaching Activities, (3) Materials, Tools and Resources, (4) Classroom Practices, (5) Assessment, (6) Evaluation and Review and (7) International Accreditation.

Shahjahan et al. (2024) recommend 5 strands for future research on IoC including: (1) investigating how the literature represents the meanings of curriculum internationalization and the challenges or constraints of curriculum internationalization actualization, (2) having more empirical investigations of cross-national or regional studies of curriculum internationalization across disciplines, (3) addressing the underrepresentation of curriculum internationalization literature published in English from certain regions, that is, the Caribbean, Southeast Asia, Africa, or Latin America, (4) paying attention to the affective, temporal, and racism possibilities and challenges of engaging curriculum internationalization in higher education and (5) having more comparative case studies on the interconnections between curriculum internationalization and digital media (i.e., virtual platforms, movies, streaming services, and social media) in global higher education policy.

Fragouli (2020) proposes five steps to internationalize a curriculum including: (1) to identify what is internationalization, (2) To identify how international is the curriculum, (3) to review current practices, (4) to identify areas of development and (5) to develop an action plan. Related to step 5 in Fragouli's proposed list, a series of actions need considering: (1) Internationalize or enhance internationalization in the curriculum/module, (2) Provide opportunities for intercultural interaction in the classroom, (3) Support

international students, (4) Collaborate with national or/and international partners, (5) Encourage or organize overseas visits, (6) Make use of development opportunities for staff and (7) Internationalizing curriculum and student employability.

Data from 364 Malaysian participants including final year undergraduate students, MBA and PhD students by Ohajionu and Kayode (2018) revealed the most appealing internationalisation strategy/ policy as follows: (1) International student exchanges (23.4%), (2) Encouraging students to have work/ study abroad/ service learning experiences (21.4%), (3) Integrating student mobility into academic requirements (study/ internship, et al) (14.3%), (4) Joint and dual/double degree programmes (10.2%), (5) Using international or inter-cultural case studies (8.8%), (6) Strengthening international/inter-cultural content of curriculum (6.6%), (7) Organising international field work or study tours (5.8%), (8) Hosting international scholars and visiting experts (4.4%), (9) International research collaboration (3.3%) and (10) Offering foreign academic programmes in your institution (1.9%).

Next, Aponte and Jordan (2020) proposed 12 criteria for internationalization of the engineering curriculum, specifically related to the learning environment for engineering students as follows: (1) Formative purposes, (2) Innovative pedagogies, (3) Sustainable development goals, (4) Intercultural sensitivity, (5) Global citizenship, (6) Contents, (7) Personal learning networks, (8) Student teacher relations, (9) Learning outcomes, (10) Bibliography, (11) Classroom practices and (12) Evaluation.

The above findings and suggestions show that a wide range of activities can be integrated into the IoC strategies in each institution, but they actually share fundamental aspects of IoC including the content of the curriculum and the learning outcomes, assessment tasks, teaching methods, and support services of a program of study proposed by Leask (2009). Based on the pillars, Leask (2009) proposed a questionnaire to measure the practice of IoC.

As IoC is increasingly important, depending on current starting points and goals of internationalization, each higher education institution can flexibly select what might be relevant for their students, include them in their strategic planning and have their curriculum upgraded accordingly. However, the journey does take time and different aspects should be taken seriously. As Abdul-Mumin (2016) reported, “research on how a curriculum is internationalized to accommodate non-mobile students studying in their home country is limited”. A similar scenerio can also be found in Vietnam. Although IoC is considered as a growing area of study in the country, there is limited research on students’ involvement in it. In this setting, Hoai et al. (2023) pointed out that “current approaches to internationalized activities in Vietnamese universities are *ad hoc* in nature, while resources and language incompetence of staff and students are limited”. However, Trinh and Conner (2019) argue that there is a possibility for students to act as partners in the program and that their engagement in IoC can offer multiple insights and possibilities to enhance IoC. This

study, therefore, is an attempt to explore the current practice of how students in the investigated setting perceive dimensions of IoC as shown in a particular course of their curriculum.

## 5. Research Methodology

### 5.1 Participants

Participants in the study include 88 students of different cohorts of the Faculty of English Linguistics and Literature- one of the largest faculties in University of Social Sciences and Humanities, Vietnam National University. This institution is home of more than 20000 students coming from 28 faculties. As a leading university majoring in language education in the south of Vietnam, the institution is widely known for its scientific and training contribution in the country. As shown in table 1, 42 participants of the study are Sophomore, 27 of them are junior which accounts for 47,7% and 30,75 and the rest is “senior”. They are all pursuing their bachelor degree marjoring in English Language. Graduates from the program can pursue their career in language teaching, culture and literature, or translation-interpretation.

**Table 1.** Research participants

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Senior	19	21.6	21.6	21.6
Junior	27	30.7	30.7	52.3
Sophomore	42	47.7	47.7	100.0
Total	88	100.0	100.0	

About the investigated course, Language Proficiency was followed by two prerequisite ones titled Listening-Speaking C1 and Reading-Writing C1, which means that students have passed their proficiency tests of C1 level. The course was chosen as it is the last one and also the most difficult one, in term of language skills, in the entire curriculum. While students at lower levels were required to work with listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in form of pair-skill courses aiming to develop students’ two skills in one integrated course such as: Listening-Speaking B1, Listening-Speaking B2, Listening-Speaking C1, Reading-Writing B1, Reading-Writing B2 and Reading-Writing C1, the course of Language Proficiency which was investigated in the study is much more challeging and can be regarded as a wrap-up one. It was designed to help student have an overview of fundamental aspects of the four skills in English learning process. Regarding the teachers, 10 of them working with the students in such a course from 2022 to 2024 were all master holders in TESOL and only 2 of whom had their masters from western universities and 8 of them got the degrees from local universites, which means the teachers actually had a decent level of international exposure. Additionally, like the majority of



courses in the entire university, this one has not been officially internationalized and, as can be seen in table 2, the current course learning outcomes mainly focus on helping students to apply acquired skills and knowledge in handling communication purposes at C1 level. International, intercultural, and/or global dimensions do not seem to be its focus. Therefore, while the textbooks are from a world-recognized publisher and the topics covered are all universal, IoC has never been a discussion topic in academic meetings in the setting.

**Table 2.** Course overview

<b>1. Course title</b>	Language Proficiency
<b>2. Type of course</b>	Compulsory
<b>3. Level of course</b>	Bachelor
<b>4. Year of study</b>	2
<b>5. Number of credits allocated</b>	2
<b>6. Prerequisites</b>	Students are required to have successfully completed all the Language Skills courses of C1 level
<b>7. Course learning outcomes</b>	Upon completion of the course, students will be able to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- apply acquired skills and knowledge to comprehend extended academic written and spoken texts of various subjects at C1 level</li> <li>- apply acquired skills and knowledge to produce oral and written texts of various subjects at C1 level</li> <li>- develop creativity, problem solving and critical thinking skills</li> <li>- express positive attitudes towards learning</li> </ul>
<b>8. Required reading</b>	Archer, G. & Wijayatilake, C. (2018). <i>Mindset for IELTS: Level 3</i> . CUP.
<b>9. Assessment scheme</b>	Midterm test: 30% of the final grade Final test: 70% of the final grade

## 5.2 Instruments

The research tool used in this study was an online survey consisting of two sections with 13 questions totally. In the first section, 10 questions pertaining to important dimensions of the curriculum including learning outcomes, teaching and learning arrangements and assessment tasks which are fundamental aspects of IoC proposed by Leask (2009). These 10 questions were adapted from QIC1 by Leask (2015). Leask's original questionnaire actually aimed at stimulating reflection and discussion amongst teams of teaching staff about IoC in their program. However, the author of the current study, in his teaching and scholarly work, realized that the survey might also be meaningful for students and could also be used as a tool to investigate students' perceptions about whether dimensions of IoC could be found in their course which is Language Proficiency. Next, in the second part of the adapted survey, 3 more questions were added to get students' reflection on their course learning satisfaction and also collect their preferred activities that

might make their course become more internationalized. This included one open-ended questions aiming at collecting students' comments and suggestions.

As various activities could be included in IoC strategies, in this study, based on appealing activities recommended by Ohajionu and Kayode (2018), Fragouli (2020), and Aponte and Jordan (2020), the seven following activities which are culturally and academically relevant to the students were chosen to measure students' preferences: (1) Inviting a foreign teacher to be in charge of the entire course, (2) Inviting international guest speakers to present some important international, intercultural and global dimensions, (3) Adding some modules that embrace more international, intercultural and global dimension, (4) Providing students with more chances to discuss more international, intercultural and global issues, (5) Having at least one exchange program included in the course so that students can experience international, intercultural and global in a foreign country, (6) Having an online platform for students to interact with those who share a similar course in different countries and (7) Having additional reading materials about international, intercultural and global issues.

### 5.3 Data collection Procedure

Table 3 refers to the total number of students participating the course of Language Proficiency from 2022 to 2024. The total number of students in the three cohorts is 1121 which means on average 374 students per semester. In this study, the online survey was sent to all of the students participating the course of Language Proficiency during this period of time thanks to the class teachers' help within 3 weeks from mid of June to early of July, 2024. However, only 88 valid responses were noted. The respondents account for 23,6% of the total number of students in a semester and 7,85% of the total number of students in the entire population.

**Table 3.** Number of students in the course between 2022 and 2024

Cohort	No of students taking Language Proficiency in a semester	Average of students taking Language Proficiency in a semester	Percentage of participants out of the population in the semester (n=88)	Percentage of participants of the study out of the population in three cohorts (n=88)
2021	380			
2022	375	373	23,6%	7,85%
2023	366			
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,121</b>			

## 6. Results and discussion

The data collected reveal three interesting findings pertaining to the internationalization of the curriculum in the investigated setting.

The first one is that the curriculum in the investigated setting is internationalized to a certain extent. Although the figure is at a quite modest level, it is proven positive. Table 4 shows that Median ranges from 2.0 to 3.0 and the average of which is 2.44, noticeably the median of “Clearly defined and articulated learning goals, aims and outcomes”, “Teaching and learning arrangements developing international and intercultural skills and knowledge” and “Culturally sensitive assessment tasks” are all 3.00. Although, as shown in table 4, median of the question pertaining to rationale for IoC understood by students is 2.00 and additionally, dimensions of internationalization are not included in the course syllabus, the figures in table 4 reveal that students do appreciate the dimensions of internationalization shown in their learning. As mentioned, the course is actually designed to help them achieve language-based goals, but it does provide students with exposure to international, intercultural and global dimensions. This is a big plus in the setting and can be considered as a good starting point for IoC in the setting.

**Table 4.** Students’ perceptions of how internationalized the curriculum is

		Rationale for IoC understood by students	Clearly defined and articulated learning goals, aims and outcomes	Teaching and learning arrangements supporting cross-cultural groups and teams	Teaching and learning arrangements encouraging intercultural interaction	Teaching and learning arrangements developing international and intercultural skills and knowledge	Assessment tasks considering issues from a variety of cultural perspectives	Assessment tasks recognizing intercultural issues relevant to their discipline and/or professional practice	Culturally sensitive assessment tasks
N	Valid	88	88	88	88	88	88	88	88
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Mean	2.42	2.68	2.44	2.49	2.86	2.58	2.39	2.56
	Median	2.00	3.00	2.00	2.00	3.00	2.50	2.00	3.00

The second finding is that no correlation between the internationalization of the curriculum and students’ perceived course learning satisfaction was found. Table 5 shows that only 4.5% of the students are not satisfied with what they learned while the number of

“Very satisfied” and “Extremely satisfied” is 45.4%. The figure indicates that during the course, teachers successfully delivered important messages to the students and to some extent, the course was a successful one. However, while dimensions of IoC and course learning satisfaction are both found positive, Pearson analysis in the study revealed that no correlation between them was found. Although the participants may not seem to understand IoC and the lack of understanding did not interfere with the course, they were relatively satisfied with the course elements enabling them to improve their language skills.

**Table 5.** Students’ course learning satisfaction

<b>Students’ atisfaction</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent</b>	<b>Valid Percent</b>	<b>Cumulative Percent</b>
Not satisfied at all	4	4.5	4.5	4.5
Slightly satisfied	15	17.0	17.0	21.6
Neutral	29	33.0	33.0	54.5
Very satisfied	34	38.6	38.6	93.2
Extremely satisfied	6	6.8	6.8	100.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>	

The third finding is that students showed their preferred activities to make the course more internationalized. Although students were not so sure about what internationalization was actually like, they did expect to experience aspects by their names.

Based on the open-ended question in the survey, students proposed three suggestions as follows:

- Their first suggestion is to bring in more chances for students to interact with foreigners. Student 22 suggests the lecturer to “offer students more chances to go outside of the classroom and do interviews with foreign visitors or international students at school so that they could have more intercultural exposure”. Similarly, student 39 agrees that due to the budget and time limit, international speakers might not be a possible option, so she suggests the teachers “to encourage students to meet and interview foreigners in a mini project or an official assignment”. For her, this could be a good way to get students actively involved in cultural interaction and learn from it. It can be seen that, as a language learner, the students in the investigated setting do expect to experience the feeling of a language user in real-life situations with native or foreign English speakers. Their needs are understandable and this is what the teachers in the investigated setting may need to reconsider.

- Their second one is to design more activities for students to exchange their ideas with their friends about international, intercultural and global issues. Apart from the chance to talk to foreigners as mentioned, exchanging ideas about international, intercultural and global issues is also students’ interest of concern. Student 50 expects the teachers to “give students the opportunity to communicate and expand their knowledge of foreign cultures”. Sharing the same idea, student 25 said that “I hope my teacher provides

students with more chances to discuss more international, intercultural and global issues during class time”. Besides, according to Student 70, “the current language proficiency course (at the time I studied it) is still skill-oriented and thus the international and intercultural aspects are rarely discussed in the class. Some of my suggestions: (1) lecturers can give students some writing tasks/ speaking tasks regarding international, intercultural and global issues for students to discuss in class”. The ideas discussed show that, students in the setting are eager to learn more about the world outside the learning environment and they also want to share their ideas with their peers about these interests. This is a good reason for the teachers to include more discussions into the class activities.

- Their third one is to include more international, intercultural and global issues into the learning materials. Student 34 believes that “to make this course more internationalized, the lecturer could incorporate global perspectives in the content, activities, and resources”. This could involve including international case studies, readings from diverse authors, and assignments that encourage intercultural understanding.

The data collected from the closed-ended question which ask students to rate their expected activities is consistent with what is noted in the open-ended one. To illustrate, of the seven common activities recommended in recent studies about how to internationalize the curriculum, the most appealing activity to the students is “Providing students with more chances to discuss more international, intercultural and global issues”, which is suggested by 62.50% of the participants. The findings are consistent with findings of Fragouli (2020) and Marangell (2023). Specifically, while Marangell (2023) revealed 86% of participants expected “a lot of opportunity to interact with students from different backgrounds” (compared with 14% who expected “not a lot”), and 74% expected “a lot of classroom discussion”, the results in this study show that 62.50% of the participants want to involve in classroom discussions and the students in the setting mean the discussions among local students.

However, what is different in the study is that 40.91% of the participants showed their expectation to interact with those who share a similar course in different countries via an online platform. Additionally, the second most expected activity is “Having at least one exchange program included in the course so that students can experience international, intercultural and global in a foreign country”, notably 59.09%. This result is consistent what what Cheng et al. (2018) mentioned about students’ expectations of mobility. The third expected activity as suggested is “Inviting international guest speakers to present some important international, intercultural and global dimensions”, which is 54.55%. Fourth and fifth activities include “Adding some modules that embrace more international, intercultural and global dimensions into the course”, which account for 43.18%, and “Having additional reading materials about international, intercultural and global issues”, notably 39.77%. The results found here are rather lower but in more specific than what Ohajionu and Kayode (2018) and Fragouli (2020) mentioned about the integration of IoC dimensions into the class content. The differences between the current and the previous lies

in the two activities include: (1) Inviting international guest speakers to present some important international, intercultural and global dimensions and (2) Having an online platform for students to interact with those who share a similar course in different countries. During such high-tech time, when the widespread of the virtual platforms and educational technologies, students' expectation of virtual collaborations are understandable.

**Table 6.** Students' preferred activities for a more internationalized course

No	Students' preferred activities to make the course more internationalized	Frequency (n=88)	Percentage
1	Inviting a foreign teacher to be in charge of the entire course	25	28.41%
2	Inviting international guest speakers to present some important international, intercultural and global dimensions	48	54.55%
3	Adding some modules that embrace more international, intercultural and global dimensions into the course	38	43.18%
4	Providing students with more chances to discuss more international, intercultural and global issues	55	62.50%
5	Having at least one exchange program included in the course so that students can experience international, intercultural and global in a foreign country	52	59.09%
6	Having an online platform for students to interact with those who share a similar course in different countries	36	40.91%
7	Having additional reading materials about international, intercultural and global issues	35	39.77%

Based on the results reported in this study, some important aspects need to be considered.

Firstly, while IoC is a growing trend worldwide, it does not seem to be the focus in the setting under study. Like the majority of courses in the investigated curriculum, this one was designed to serve language-based goals. Therefore, although teachers did have some international experience and the textbooks were from world publishers, teaching and learning did not go beyond the limit of language learning. This is what may limit both the teachers and the students. They should have had more opportunities to approach global issues and viewpoints so that they can have better understanding about diverse cultures and learn how to appreciate differences. Such a circumstance, the boards of the investigated

faculty may want to consider internationalizing the course as a way to help students gain more merits in the long run.

Secondly, students' learning needs about aspects related to IoC is worth considering. Although the course had not been internationalized and teachers had not been required to help their students to get exposure to international, intercultural and global dimensions, students did show their great interest in international, intercultural and global issues. This indicates that what teachers did in the course just partly met students' learning expectation. As a consequence, better strategies about IoC might need to be considered as a way to enhance learning satisfaction and improve students' career competitiveness.

Thirdly, as IoC is common and has made significant contributions to the development of higher education worldwide, this area of study needs more priorities in the investigated setting. When there are more studies on voices of different stakeholders, especially students, IoC could be further developed and hopefully make more positive changes in students' learning experience.

IoC is a process requiring a concerted effort from all stakeholders—be they university administration, faculty and students. Therefore, the ideas discussed thus far in this study may shed further light on how institutions of higher learning can tap into IoC. This will enable students to become accustomed to internationalization and to be better prepared for future careers.

## **7. Conclusion**

IoC requires great efforts and strong determinations of different stakeholders. In this study, the reality of whether or not dimensions of IoC are available in the curriculum in Vietnam is discussed. The findings revealed the significance of internationalizing the curriculum and key aspects deserving a serious consideration from institutional, faculty and other administrative leaders in the process of IoC. Results from the study are in line with the recommendations offered by extant literature about the need to include international, intercultural and global values to teachers' activities as a way to internationalize the curriculum. Given the foregoing, a widespread application of IoC among faculty members is highly sought-after by means of international subject matters appropriate for both the formal and informal curricula. This will help students to be exposed to global values and be better prepared for their future jobs.

## **8. Acknowledgement**

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to the teachers and students whose support and contributions have been instrumental in the completion of this study.

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