Intervening in student learning abroad: A research-based, online General Education course

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Abstract
This poster reports on a research-based, online General Education course designed to propel international exchange students to higher levels of intercultural competence and engagement while abroad.

‘Intercultural communication & engagement abroad’:

- draws on ethnographic & mixed-method studies of L2 student sojourners (Jackson, 2008, 2010);
- incorporates cultural mentoring/guided critical reflection (Mezirow, 2000; Paige, 2013);
- employs the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) (Hammer, 2012), linked to the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC);
- is in line with notions of adult education & study abroad as potentially transformative (Jackson, 2012; Mezirow, 2000).

By the end of the course, participants should be able to:

- identify and define core concepts in intercultural communication;
- describe theories of transition shock and cross-cultural adjustment;
- interact more effectively and appropriately with people who have a different linguistic and cultural background;
- assess the impact of their international experience on their identities, worldview, L2 attitudes/use, and intercultural competence;
- set realistic goals for further enhancement of their L2/intercultural competence.

Content/fundamental concepts

- Core elements in intercultural communication (e.g., NVC, enculturation, communication styles) (Jackson, 2014);
- Transition shock & cross-cultural adjustment (e.g., adapting to different ‘cultures of learning’);
- Intercultural competence/L2 sociopragmatic awareness;
- Identity and intercultural communication (e.g., feeling ‘in-between’, hybrid selves);
- Intercultural, global citizenship;
- Re-entry;
- Marketing international experience

Cultural mentoring & guided critical reflection

an intercultural pedagogy in which the mentor provides ongoing support and prompts deep reflection to facilitate intercultural learning & development (Paige, 2013).

Learning activities

- Analysis of readings, YouTube clips & ‘real world’ data excerpts
- Weekly online Forum (full-group; theme)
- Weekly fieldwork tasks & debriefings (small groups with a similar level of IC competence)
- Reflective essays

Profile of participants

Class size: 22 int’l exchange students (L2 speakers)
Status: 16 (72.7%) local; 6 (27.3%) non-local
Sex: 4 (18.2%) male
18 (81.8%) female
Year of study:
2 (9.1%) 2nd year;
20 (90.9%) 3rd year;
Diverse Faculties/majors
Sojourn duration:
10 (45.5%) Semester
12 (54.5%) Academic year
Host country:
5 (22.7%) Canada
4 (18.2%) U.S.
3 (13.6%) Japan
2 (9.09%) Australia
8 (36.4%) other countries

Key findings

- A content analysis of the qualitative data revealed that the participants became more mindful of their attitudes and behavior in intercultural interactions, and more willing to engage with host nationals;
- The group as a whole gained 11.41 points on the IDI; in comparison, 154 semester-long int’l exchange students who received no intervention gained only 0.33 points, suggesting that the GED course propelled students to a higher level of intercultural competence.

References


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