Proven Strategies for Effective Intercultural Learning Abroad

Lilli Engle
American University Center of Provence
Aix-en-Provence / Marseille, France

WISE Conference 2015
Behavioral Tendencies
in American Students Abroad

- English speaking
- Adhering to the American student group
- Excessive travelling
- Taking academics lightly
- Reproducing familiar patterns with the backdrop of an exotic setting
- Viewing (and judging) the host culture from a safe distance
- Staying very connected with friends & family at home

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Qualities of Student Preparedness

Minuses (Hinder their ability to maximize learning abroad)

- False notions of themselves (academic strengths, foreign language competence, level of independence)
- False notions of culture and cultural difference
- Generalization-phobia
- Diminished interpersonal skills
- Timidity / Fear
- Strongly established sense of The Way Things Should Be
- Defensiveness/Attached to Personal Opinion
- Internet addiction

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“In the beginning, students regularly saw their French language correspondents, and everything was great. But little by little, certain students stopped going.

I noticed that for the most part, the students in question were those with boyfriends or girlfriends back in the US, and that they preferred FaceTiming with the people back home or watching movies on Netflix instead of spending time with their French language partners.

Maybe you can ask future students: if your language partner sends you a text message at 9pm asking you to hang out in town, and you've just started watching "Breaking Bad" and you're tired, would you go, or not? What's more important?”

Gaby
AUCP Alum Fall 2014
Muhlenberg
Qualities of Student Preparedness

Pluses (*Sustain* their ability to maximize learning abroad)

- Motivated to succeed, to be liked
- Intermediate/High Intermediate target language entry-level
- Intelligent (academically solid 3.0 GPA)
- Open and adventurous
- Romantic and insirable

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Interlocking Strategies
Holistic Program Design

Intercultural Learning

Environment
Degree of Difference

Intervention
Teaching-Information = Knowledge
Facilitation-Guidance = Competence

Student Receptivity & Skills

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Intercultural Learning

- **Informs** about other cultures
- Fosters cross-cultural relations through the discovery of **commonality** (shared behavior, beliefs, and values)
- Stimulates interest in cultural **difference** (enriching and inspiring)
- Provides an unfamiliar interpersonal environment, **catalyst for adaptation** and personal growth
- Brings judgment and prejudice into **awareness**
- Cultivates understanding to **bridge** “us/them” polarities
- Broadens **perspectives**, not just repertoires of behavior
- Defines a **cultural identity**
- Develops **intercultural competence**

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Intercultural Competence
Comprehensive Skill Set

Engaging holistically the head, the body, and the heart: the cognitive, the physical, the emotional/motivational.


“A change in the feeling of appropriateness”

Intercultural Competence

- Experiential/Constructivist
- Holistic
- Developmental

Positivist Paradigm

It’s the Place that Counts
Relativist Paradigm - Immersion
Proximity to Host Nationals

Dancing with the locals

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Constructivist Paradigm
Expanding limits of perception and interpretation

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Evolving Perspective

The Goal as Measured by the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)

Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)
Increasing complexity in the way cultural difference is apprehended (greater awareness) and construed (patterned with meaning)
Developmental Scale

Monocultural Mindset

Denial

Polarization

Defense/Reversal

Minimization

Acceptance

Adaptation

Intercultural Mindset

Intercultural Development Continuum, modified from The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)
Milton Bennett, 1986

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The Georgetown Consortium Project* researched the learning of 1,300 students in 61 programs abroad.

- 190 home institutions, several providers
- $550,000 Title VI funding
- Two Learning Domains:
  - Oral Proficiency (seven foreign languages)
  - Gains in Intercultural Development

## Comparative IDI* Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nº of Students</th>
<th>IDI Point Progress</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Georgetown Study</strong></td>
<td>1159</td>
<td>2.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students from 61 programs tested,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>including AUCP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Georgetown Study</strong></td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>1.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>without AUCP group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>AUCP Group</strong></td>
<td>109</td>
<td>12.47</td>
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<tr>
<td>In the Georgetown Study</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AUCP Students</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>since 2002</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aix-en-Provence</td>
<td>695</td>
<td>13.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marseille</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>11.62</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Intercultural Development Inventory
Mitchell R. Hammer, Ph.D., Milton J. Bennett, Ph.D.
AUCP French Practicum
Experiential/Constructivist Learning

AUCP SPECIALIZED COURSEWORK

Individual Homestay
Language Partner
Community Service
Direct Enrollment
Personal Interest Activity

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AUCP’s Implementation of David Kolb’s Experiential Learning Cycle

**Concrete Experience**
Regular interaction with host nationals
Discovery of values & preferences

**Abstract Conceptualization**
Guided group discussion & analysis
De-briefing experiences
Cataloging / schematizing of cultural values & assumptions

**Active Experimentation**
Developing empathy
Trying new ways of interaction
Re-positioning the Self

**Reflective Observation**
Objective recording & sharing of both feelings & events
Identifying “difference” and one’s reactive response

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### Experiential/Constructivist Learning

#### Holistic Program Design

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concrete Experience</th>
<th>Reflective Observation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Active Experimentation</td>
<td>Abstract Conceptualization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- In-house courses with local professors</td>
<td>- In-coming orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Direction enrolment option</td>
<td>- On-going orientation/Intercultural Communication Class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Community Service</td>
<td>- One on one Mentoring</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Individual Homestay Placement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Language Partner</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Personal Interest Activity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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In-coming Orientation

Content

- Logistics
- Contractual Agreements
- Intensive French
- Why & How of French Practicum
- “How to” strategies for relationship building
- “How to” strategies for language learning

Goals

- Comfort & Safety
- Complicity vs Compliance
- Immediate language needs
- Influence of Culture
- Cultural Difference
- Student Responsibility
- Measurable Predictable Outcomes (TEF & IDI)
Etic categories
Indentify differences that make a difference to interaction

- Language Use
- Nonverbal Behavior
- Communication Style
- Cognitive Style
- Cultural Values

Gregory Bateson (1904-1980)
The word only exists as such—only has “meaning”—in the larger context of the utterance, which again has meaning only in a relationship.
Intercultural Communications Class
French (and North African) Cultural Patterns

Description:
Core-curriculum, required course taught in two weekly 90-minute sessions; explores objective (visible) and subjective (invisible) expressions of culture.

Lectures cover the values and assumptions that inform French societal systems and contemporary issues. Small-group discussions introduce intercultural communications theory, providing an analytical “toolbox” of vocabulary and concepts geared to guide and inform the students’ evolving experience of France (and Morocco).
Sharpen Perception / Highlighting Difference


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual</th>
<th>Group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universalist</td>
<td>Particularist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Task Oriented</td>
<td>Relationship Focused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tolerance for Ambiguity</td>
<td>Need for Certainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action / Doing</td>
<td>Planning / Preparation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short-term Orientation</td>
<td>Long-term Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formality</td>
<td>Informality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Achievement Orientation</td>
<td>Quality of Life Orientation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monochronic (Fixed time)</td>
<td>Polychronic (Fluid time)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attained Status</td>
<td>Ascribed Status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man Controls Environment</td>
<td>Environment Controls Man</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Explicit</td>
<td>Implicit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotionally Expressive</td>
<td>Emotionally Restrained</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Asking Right Questions & Cultivating « Witnessing Awareness »

Raymonde Carroll methodology for cultural analysis

Thiagi: Six-point de-brief

Rosenberg : Non-violent Communication
Raymonde Carroll’s Methodology for Cultural Analysis

- Seek meaning, not explanations: how meaning is produced, not why it is so
- Cultivate self-awareness (emotions & judgments)
- Be on the look out for the “bizarre”, sign of a new cultural context to be explored
- Imagine a context in which the “bizarre” becomes “normal”
- Identify a cultural interpretation that manifests elsewhere in the same culture, albeit in a different form
Thiagi: Six-point de-brief

People don't learn from experience; they learn from reflecting on their experience.

1) How Do You Feel?
   Share strong feelings and listen without judgment.

2) What Happened?
   Descriptively recall the series of events.

3) What Did You Learn?
   Identify general principles based on the activity and discuss them.

4) How Does This Relate To The Real World?
   Identify relevance to real-world experiences. Suggest that the activity is a metaphor and ask participants to offer real-world analogies.

5) What If?
   Imagine alternative scenarios to speculate on how people's behavior would change.

6) What Next?
   Apply insights to modify real-world behaviour.

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One-on-one Mentoring

Rosenberg : Non-violent Communication

- What happened?
  Identifies concrete actions we observe that affect our well-being

- How do you feel about what happened?
  Identifies how we feel in relation to what we observe

- What would you like that you’re not getting?
  Identifies needs, values, desires, etc. that create our feelings

- What can you ask for?
  Identifies concrete actions we request in order to enrich our lives
Identifying Honest Feelings

Observation/Description

- Afraid, agitated, angry, anxious
- Beat, bitter, blue, bored
- Cold, confused, cross
- Depressed, disappointed, discouraged
- Edgy, embarrassed, exhausted
- Fidgety, frightened, furious
- Gloomy, guilty
- Helpless, hesitant, hurt
- Impatient, indifferent, irate
- Jealous, jittery ...

Interpretation

- Abandoned, abused, attacked
- Betrayed, boxed-in, bullied
- Cheated, coerced, cornered
- Diminished, disrespected
- Misunderstood, neglected
- Patronized, provoked, put down
- Rejected, taken for granted
- Threatened, unappreciated
- Unsupported, unheard
- Unwanted, used

Encinitas: Puddle Dancer Press, 2003

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Qualitative Assessment Results
AUCP Programs Aix & Marseille Fall 2014

85% of all students agree/strongly agree that the Cultural Patterns course and their own direct experience allowed them to acquire valuable insights into values and beliefs that guide societal structures and relations.

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Qualitative Assessment Results
AUCP Programs Aix & Marseille Fall 2014

91% of all students agree/strongly agree that France and the French language and people will play an ongoing and cherished role in their life.

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Qualitative Assessment Results
AUCP Programs Aix & Marseille Fall 2014

96% of all students agree/strongly agree that their semester abroad allowed them to grow personally in valuable ways.

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“The AUCP experience is the perfect balance of in and outside of the classroom learning. What I learned in the classroom was supported by what I lived outside of it, and my personal abroad experience was enhanced by the insights of my professors and peers.”

Stefani
AUCP Alum Fall 2014
Barnard College