

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

Professor Jane Jackson, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

jjackson@cuhk.edu.hk

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

- Hammer, M. R. (2012). 'The Intercultural Development Inventory: A new frontier in assessment and development of intercultural competence', in M. Vande Berg *et al.* (Eds.), *Student learning abroad* (pp. 115-136). Sterling, VA: Stylus.
- Jackson, J. (2008). *Language, Identity, & Study Abroad: Sociocultural Perspectives*. London: Equinox.
- Jackson, J. (2010). *Intercultural Journeys: From Study to Residence Abroad*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Jackson, J. (Ed.) (2012). *Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Jackson, J. (2014). *Introducing Language and Intercultural Communication*. N.Y.: Routledge.
- Mezirow, J. (2000). *Learning as transformation*. San Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Paige, R. M. (2013). Factors impacting intercultural development in study abroad. Paper presented at Elon University, 16 August, 2013.

Acknowledgements

This initiative has been supported by a Teaching Development Grant (#4170416) from CUHK and a competitive General Research Fund award (#2110212) from the University Research Grants Council of Hong Kong. I greatly appreciate the willingness of the students in the General Ed. Course to share their international stories with me.