

# Enriching & extending international learning through critical reflection & web-enhanced pedagogy

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## Abstract

The number of students who venture abroad has increased dramatically in recent years and many feel profoundly changed by the experience. All too often, however, they return home and, without adequate support and encouragement, they soon 'shoebox' their learning. Valuable opportunities for deeper intellectual integration and L2 enhancement are then lost, and others in the home community do not benefit from their experience. How then can we enrich and extend the learning (e.g., language, cultural, academic, personal development) of returnees? This session focuses on the design and delivery of a new web-enhanced course at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) that is based on the findings of a series of investigations of Chinese sojourners. The course is open to English majors and students in all Faculties who have had recent international experience (study abroad, international exchange, volunteering, service learning, internships, educational travel, work or residence abroad). This credit-bearing course, which follows an outcomes-based approach (OBA), provides opportunities for deeper intellectual integration and L2 enhancement. The course explores theories and models of intercultural (communicative) competence and intercultural transitions, employing a practice-to-theory-to-practice pedagogy. In relation to their own (and others') international experience, participants explore such topics as language/culture shock, intercultural adjustment, reentry, identity expansion, and intercultural/ sociopragmatic competence in an L2. This process encourages them to use their own data to test and apply existing theories and research. Through critical reflection, reading, discussion, and writing (e.g., discussion forums, blogs, narratives), students develop a deeper understanding of their international/L2 experience and discover ways to incorporate it into their campus life and post-graduation plans (e.g., set concrete goals for future L2 enhancement/ intercultural contact). Near the end of the course, the students do group presentations to share their insights with students who are thinking about or planning to go on exchange. This session highlights the benefits of designing a research-driven, learner-centered curriculum that prompts extensive self-reflection, analysis, and writing to help students make the most of the time spent in the host speech community. (This project is supported by a Teaching Development Grant (#4170338) & benefits from data generated by a General Research Fund (#2110167).

## Topics/ fundamental concepts

1. The dimensions of intercultural transitions
2. Cultural identity and intercultural contact
3. Identity reconstruction and hybridity
4. Intercultural adjustment and adaptation: Culture shock and recovery
5. Interpersonal, intercultural relationships/ friendships
6. Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)
7. Integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation
8. Homecoming, reentry, and identity issues (e.g., Cultural marginality/ Feeling in-between)
9. Transition shock when returning home: Intercultural adjustment and re-adaptation
10. Intercultural personhood and intercultural/ global citizenship
11. Intercultural (communicative) competence/ Intercultural competence in interpersonal relationships
12. Marketing your education abroad experience/ intercultural communication skills
13. Future international/ L2 experience

## Learning outcomes

By the end of the course students should be able to:

- assess their international/ reentry experiences and articulate how it has affected their sense of self (identity) and worldview;
- describe theories and models of culture shock, transitions, re-entry, identity reconstruction, intercultural (communicative) competence, and responsible global, intercultural citizenship;
- test these theories and models, using their own international/ intercultural experiences, case studies, and narratives found in literature, media, interviews, and research reports;
- apply the theories and models in new intercultural encounters on campus and in the wider community (e.g., grasp the nature of cultural differences and identify productive, mindful ways to meet the challenges of intercultural communication in today's globalized world);
- assess their cultural self-awareness and communication style and set realistic goals to enhance their intercultural communicative competence (e.g., ability to communicate effectively with people from other cultures) and global competency;
- integrate their international/ intercultural experiences into their daily life/ plans for the future (e.g., career goals, further studies/ travel/ volunteering abroad);
- express their ideas more clearly in English in both written and oral form (e.g., reflective narratives/ blogs, poems, essays, online discussions, group oral presentation/ sharing session with future exchange students).

## Assessment Scheme

Participation	10%
Online reflective postings/ blogging	35%
Reflective writing portfolio/ peer reviews	40%
Group presentation (Sharing session with future exchange students)	15%

## eLearning

Moodle serves as the eLearning Platform (web-based course management system). It is used for a) course announcements b) dissemination of lecture notes/ other course materials & links to resources including websites; c) online discussion (Forum chats); d) blogging (e-e-journal entries and responses) and e) student work submission (along with a hard copy).

## Moodle blog (e-journal) entries (35%)

Reflection is a key element in this course and the students' personal experiences/ perspectives are highly valued. Reflective writing entails 'a combination of calm, quiet thinking with a retrospective focus— looking back over a period of time and considering its meaning and significance in connection with your experience. Reflective writing is a route to self-knowledge...'. (A. Trupe, 2001) In the weekly forum discussions and blog entries, the students will link their international experience with those of others as well as current transition/ identity/ L2 learning/ transformation theories. In an atmosphere of mutual respect, everyone in the course (Instructor, tutors, students) will participate (contribute to Forum discussions/ weekly blog entries on the theme of the week or other issues in international education.) Using a reflective writing rubrics, students will receive feedback on their Forum postings/ blog entries midway through the course, at the end of the term, and at other strategic intervals.

### **Reflective writing portfolio/ peer reviews (40%)**

- Essay #1 – Share your story ((Length: approximately 1,500 words)
- Essay #2 – Deeper reflection on international experience (Length: approx. 1,600 words)
- Essay #3 – Taking stock of your int'l learning/ setting goals for future development (Length: 1,700 words)

Students submit their writing portfolio (all draft materials, annotated drafts, polished essays & completed peer review forms) at the end of the course. Using reflective writing rubrics, students will receive timely feedback after each essay is submitted. Writing and peer review workshops will be incorporated into the course.

### **Group oral presentation (Sharing session) (15%)**

This end-of-course assignment provides an opportunity for participants to share what they have gained from structured reflection on international experience. The primary audience is students who are thinking about or planning to go on exchange (or gain some other form of international experience).

### **Resources on international/ intercultural education**

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