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# Developing Intercultural Sensitivity in Study Abroad Programs

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**Abstract**

Promoting intercultural sensitivity is a key objective in a world characterized by increased mobility and social interaction within multicultural environments. Study abroad programs represent an opportunity to develop intercultural communication competences and intercultural sensitivity, if students' reflective processes are effectively prompted. In this article, we will present acculturation and intercultural sensitivity as important theoretical frameworks to promote students' growth while studying abroad. We also discuss the use of narratives produced through video-logs as an assessment and reflection tool that can be implemented by educators involved in study abroad programs.

**Keywords:** intercultural competence, intercultural sensitivity, acculturation, study abroad, narratives, video-logs

Promoting sensitivity about cultural differences (i.e., intercultural sensitivity) is a key objective in a world characterized by increased mobility and social interaction within multicultural environments (Olson & Kroeger, 2001). Study abroad programs are a voluntary opportunity to develop intercultural communication competencies and intercultural sensitivity, compared to different types of cross-national mobility, such as migration or displacement. Universities all over the world have a long tradition of promoting internalization and cultural exchange, in order to have students improve cross-cultural knowledge and skills (see a recent special issue on study abroad, Adams & de Wit, 2011). However, study abroad programs, and the related exposure to cultural differences do not automatically lead to increased intercultural understanding and in-

tercultural communication competence, unless students' acculturative strategy is taken into account (Berry, 1997), and their reflective processes are explicitly prompted (Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006; Deardoff, 2009; Vande Berg, 2007; Vande Berg, Paige, & Hemming Lou, 2012). For this reason, assessing students' acculturative strategies and intercultural sensitivity development and including these assessments as a form of reflection on their experiences with cultural differences are of paramount importance. In this contribution, first we will present two main theoretical models for acculturative strategies and intercultural sensitivity; then, we will discuss narratives as a way to prompt students' reflections on their study abroad experiences. We will discuss narrating as a measure that gives students the opportunity to speak from experience, ideally focusing on critical incidents, in the form of a video-log (narrative). Because our narrative analysis process including plot analysis is systematic and qualitative as well as quantitative, the results can be related to the other self-report measures.

**Acculturation**

When there is a continuous and prolonged contact between two cultural groups, individuals within the groups must adapt to the new cultural situation (Huynh, Howell, & Benet-Martinez, 2009). Migrating people are asked to adapt and adjust to a new culture, with the former term referring to behavioral changes (i.e., learning a new language) and the latter term referring to the psychological changes (i.e., acquiring a different perspective on relationships). The adjustment process has been called *culture shock*, *acculturation*, or *acculturative stress*. *Culture shock* is the term most frequently used: originally proposed by Oberg (Oberg, 1960), it refers to anxious reactions to the loss of familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse. However, this term is characterized by a strong negative connotation, and it refers to a historical period in which cultural exchanges were less frequent, migrating people had less prior knowledge about the host culture, and the host culture was less prepared to welcome migrating people. Nowadays, the term *acculturation* is preferable,
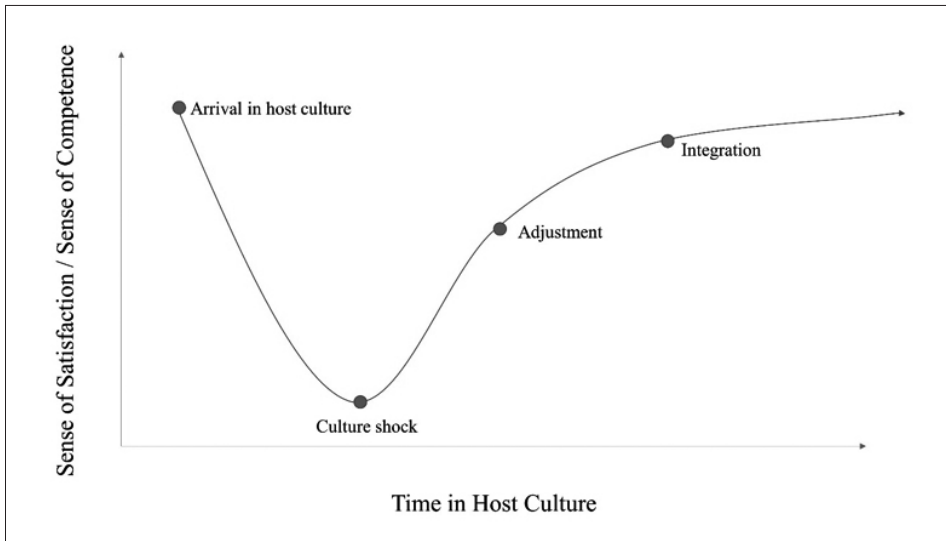
Sense of Satisfaction / Sense of Competence

● Arrival in host culture

Integration

Adjustment

Culture shock

Time in Host Culture

*Figure 1.* The acculturation curve

as it attributes to cultural contact a neutral connotation, and occasionally can become stressful for the individual, with different degrees of intensity (*acculturative stress*).

In the early days of research, acculturation was interpreted through a one-dimensional model (see Figure 1): The more time people spend in a culture, the more oriented they become toward the host culture, and, at the same time, they relinquish their heritage culture (Cuellar, Harris, & Jasso, 1980).

The classic acculturation curve, or "culture shock" curve, represents the changes in study abroad students' sense of satisfaction and sense of competence as a function of time spent in the host culture. Generally, at the arrival in the host culture scores are high (the "honeymoon stage"). Soon enough, students' sense of satisfaction and competence begin to decrease when they start interacting with the host culture, until reaching a very low score (the culture shock stage). Through experimentation the students start adjusting their ways of thinking and behaving to the host culture ones (the experimenting stage), until they feel integrated in the

host culture (the mastery stage). However, such a graphic and theoretical representation of students is affected by two main problems: it standardizes students' experiences to one pattern only, whereas students could show different adaptation patterns as a function of their background; it represents adaptation as an exclusive process: one can identify themselves with either the heritage or the host culture.

Recently, a bi-dimensional model for acculturation has been proposed (Celenk & Van de Vijver, 2011; Heine, 2008; Huynh et al., 2009; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999), based on Berry's theory (Berry, 1974). Individuals can have interdependent but separate orientations towards their origin and host culture. From the interaction between these two dimensions (orientation towards origin culture, and orientation towards host culture) four acculturative strategies can be derived: Integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization (see Figure 2).

People with high identification with their original culture and high interest in intergroup relations approach cross-cultural experiences with an integration strategy. Those with high identification with their original culture but low interest in intergroup relations approach cross-cultural
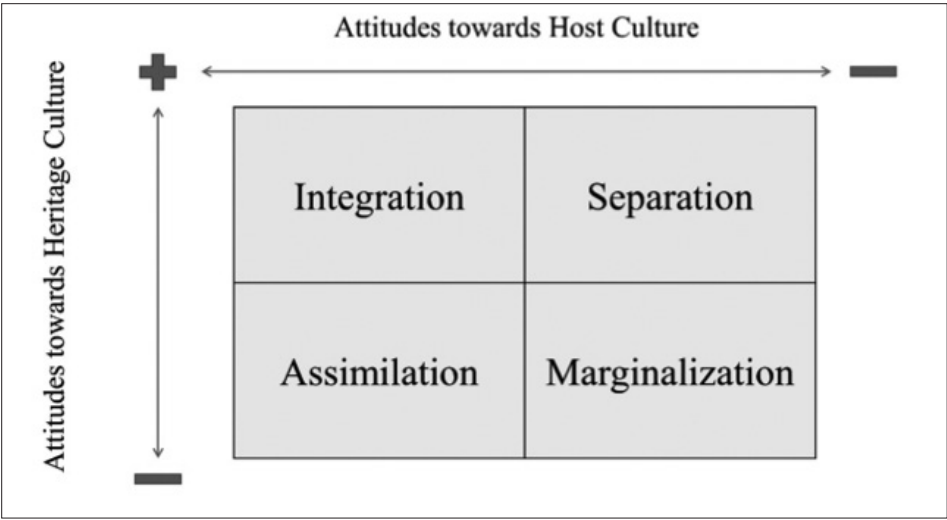


*Figure 2.* Acculturative strategies.

experiences with a separation strategy. People with low identification with their original culture but high interest in intergroup relations approach cross-cultural experiences with an assimilation strategy. Finally, those with low identification with their original culture and a low interest in intergroup relations approach cross-cultural experiences with a marginalization strategy. These strategies are not intended to be individual characteristics, but rather relational, and enacted in specific cultural contexts. Past studies have found that marginalization and separation strategies are generally associated with higher levels of acculturative stress, as compared to integration and assimilation strategies (Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987).

**Measuring acculturation**. Some questionnaires allow us to assess people's orientation towards origin and host culture, and identify their main acculturative strategy. There are two main approaches: typological and dimensional. Typological instruments include four separate scales to measure each acculturative strategy separately (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). For instance, "We're living in Canada, and that means giving up our traditional way of life and adopting a Canadian lifestyle, thinking and acting like Canadians" represents an item to test people's assimilation strategy levels. Alternatively, dimensional approaches allow us to assess acculturation through two scales, i.e., relationship to culture of origin and relationship to culture of contact, and have used a bipartite split to allow the investigation of the four acculturation strategies (see for instance the Vancouver Index of Acculturation by Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000, or the Acculturation Index by Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999). For instance, "I often behave in ways that are typical of my *origin* culture" and "I often behave in ways that are typical of my *host* culture" represent items that test individual orientation towards, their origin and host culture respectively. Interestingly, acculturation scales differ also by the format of questions they employ (Kang, 2006). People's orientations towards origin and host scales can be assessed in terms of frequency of behavior (e.g., "How much Italian do you speak at home?"), or in terms of proficiency (e.g., "How well can you speak Italian?"), or in terms of endorsement (e.g., "I am proud of my

Italian roots"). The Acculturation Index (Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999) represents an example of acculturative scale employing a bi-dimensional approach to acculturation through endorsement questions. The Acculturation Index includes 20 cognitive and behavioral items, such as clothing, pace of life, food, friendship, and the like. For each item, students are asked to consider two questions about their lifestyle in Italy: "Are your experiences and behaviors similar to those of people from your country of origin (co-nationals)?" and "Are your experiences and behaviors similar to those of Italians (host nationals)?" Students are asked to rate each of the two questions on a scale from 1 to 7, in which (1) corresponds to 'not at all', and (7) corresponds to 'extremely'. Students obtain two scores, a co-national identification and a host identification score (range 20-140 in each scale).

**Intercultural sensitivity**

Intercultural sensitivity, a term sometimes used interchangeably with intercultural competence, refers to individuals' ability to discriminate and experience relevant cultural differences (Bennett, 1986; Hammer, 2015). In general, people can approach cultural differences with two main worldviews: an ethnocentric one, in which people experience their own culture as central, as "the right one", and an ethno-relative one, in which people experience their own culture as just a worldview possible among many other alternatives (Bennett, 1986). In the 1980s, a seminal model for intercultural sensitivity was proposed, focusing on the developmental progression from less to greater levels of intercultural competence: the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS, Bennett, 1986). The DMIS is a constructivist-grounded model viewing intercultural sensitivity as complex and developmental in nature. The DMIS conceptualizes intercultural sensitivity on a linear continuum from three ethnocentric (denial, defense, and minimization) to three ethno-relative stages (acceptance, adaptation, and integration). In Denial, one's own culture is experienced as the only real one, and consideration of other cultures is avoided by maintaining psychological isolation from differences. In Defense, one's own/adopted culture is experienced as the only good one, and cultural difference is denigrated. In Minimization,

elements of one's own cultural worldview are experienced as universal, so that cultures are seen as essentially similar to one's own, despite acceptable surface differences. In Acceptance, other cultures are experienced as equally complex but different constructions of reality. In Adaptation, one attains the ability to shift perspective in and out of another cultural worldview; thus, one's experience potentially includes the different cultural experience of someone from another culture. In Integration, one's experience of self is expanded to include the movement in and out of different cultural worldviews. In a recent development of the DMIS model, minimization was conceptualized as a transition from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism, rather than an ethnocentric stage, and integration was conceptualized as a construction of an intercultural identity, rather than a development of intercultural competence (Hammer, 2015). One of the aims of studying abroad is to promote a development in intercultural sensitivity, but the outcome greatly depends on individual and contextual factors. In terms of individual variables, students' acculturation orientation, prior exposure and experiences with cultural differences might influence their development in intercultural sensitivity (Pedersen, 2010). In terms of contextual variables, "cultural mentoring" and direct contact with host culture influence development in intercultural sensitivity (Engle & Engle, 2004; Pedersen, 2010).

**Measuring intercultural sensitivity.** Development in intercultural sensitivity is generally measured with standardized tests (e.g., the Intercultural Development Inventory, Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003) administered to students before they leave for study abroad, and after their return home. Thus, development in intercultural sensitivity is operationalized as pre-departure and post-return differences. However, study abroad students process cultural experiences as they are occurring; thus an assessment of intercultural sensitivity should be contingent to the study abroad experience (Pedersen, 2010).

### Personal Experiences

While measures of intercultural sensitivity and acculturation provide statements from previous research and thus opportunities for

study participants to indicate their connection to those predetermined statements, narratives of experience offer opportunities to attend to and interpret events in self-determined ways. Narratives may enact critical incidents, which are also concepts relevant to cultural studies. A critical incident is "*any observable human activity that is sufficiently complete in itself to permit inferences and predictions to be made about the person performing the act. To be critical, an incident must occur in a situation where the purpose or intent of the act seems fairly clear to the observer and where its consequences are sufficiently definite to leave little doubt concerning its effects*" (Flanagan, 1954). Critical incidents have previously been used in intercultural learning settings (Busse & Krause, 2015, 2016; Vande Berg et al., 2012) students engaged with critical incidents. These were either analysed (analytical focus, being "*brief descriptions of situations in which there is a misunderstanding, problem or conflict arising from cultural differences between interacting parties or where there is a problem of cross-cultural adaptation*" (Wight, 1995, p. 128). Critical incidents require people to reflect on themselves and their viewpoint, and go beyond the observation of cultural differences (Fitzgerald, 2001).

Critical incidents were introduced into intercultural training at the beginning of the 1960s (de Frankrijker, 1998), and display misunderstandings that derive from cultural differences, which are left unexplained to the participant (Busse & Krause, 2015). Generally, critical incidents provide some contextual information to "set the stage" and some comments about feelings and reactions by the people involved. The critical incidents should end with a question encouraging participants to provide their view on what has happened. This technique encourages participants to identify cultural standards and expectations and generate potential operational scenarios in response to the incident (Wight, 1995). Working with critical incidents can promote study abroad students' self-reflection (Fitzgerald, 2001) and help them to de-construct cultural stereotypes. Critical incidents have a long tradition as an intercultural learning activity, but students are always asked to reflect on incidents that have happened to someone else, affecting their ability to construct empathy with the situ-

ation. Some authors have tried to reduce this gap by choosing cultural incidents produced by individuals who were included in the same intercultural situation (e.g., past study abroad students). This stratagem might be effective in reducing variance due to contextual factors, but it does not contribute to reducing variance due to individual differences. Research should point towards ways of using personal narratives as critical incidents to be treated as objects of intercultural reflection.

**Narratives as Measures**

Narrating in daily life is typically an oral activity involving spoken words and gestures. Narratives are an important means of communication, but they also represent a sophisticated decontextualized form of reflection and meaning making (Spencer, Kajian, Petersen, & Bilyk, 2013). Meaning making is a blend of material and cultural life. It integrates biological qualities (like vocalization and hearing) with culture (like agreements about when we share stories and which stories are worth telling.) The quality of connecting with others and the world through narratives is defined as dynamic storytelling. This concept explains how symbolic media can be used for making sense of activities in its context (Daiute, 2014). As such, asking people to recount everyday interactions through narration allows them to assess and develop meaning in relational contexts. One way to increase students' reflection on their own narrative is to focus on how the story was told. Recent theory-based research has developed and implemented rigorous narrative analyses methods that can offer insights to compare individuals' narratives over time, individuals' narrated experiences to their responses on surveys, and more. One such method that is relevant to narrating experience in a foreign culture is plot analysis (Daiute, 2014).

Plot analysis offers the theory and method to assess (and improve) a study from a cultural point of view. Each narrative should include three main structural elements: initiating action (the sentence depicting the event that sets the story in motion), the high point/turning point/climax (the plot conflict, that is the central pivot or point of the story, building from the ini-

tiating action and shifting toward resolving actions), and the ending. While these three elements represent the overall structure of a story, most narratives also include some additional elements: the setting (physical and psychological background of the story), complicating actions (sentences advancing the story from the initiating action), resolution strategies (attempts to resolve the plot pivoted from the high point / turning point, climax), and coda. Complicating actions and resolution strategies are relevant to intercultural conflict escalations and attempts to address the conflicts, as narrated. Both complicating actions and resolution strategies express cause-and-effect relations in intercultural conflict narratives.

**Video-logs.** The use of video-logs as a specific form of narrative is useful for promoting students' reflection on their own critical incidents. The use of video-log has been proposed for fostering deliberate and scaffolded reflection on experiences that involve cultural diversity (Wong & Webster, 2012). A video-log is a form of blog in which the medium is the video. Video-logs can help students develop narratives about cultural incidents that have happened to them. Through narratives they can express, become aware of, and reflect *on the person performing the act* (Flanagan, 1954). In study abroad programs, video-logs could be used as an assessment instrument, to reveal students' worldviews, and as a training instrument, to have students reflect on their own cultural analysis of events. More specifically: 1) students' video-logs should be used in combination with acculturation scores, in order to interpret misunderstanding in light of the specific acculturation strategy used; 2) students' video-logs could be used as a way to assess their intercultural sensitive worldview enacted in a situation; 3) students' video-logs are a form of visually-produced narratives, and can be analyzed through narrative theory and analysis approaches (see next paragraph).

## Examples of study abroad students' narratives

In the previous paragraphs we described two main theoretical frameworks (acculturation and intercultural sensitivity), and one method (analysis of narratives as expressed through video-logs) that can be implemented in study abroad contexts to promote students' reflection on

their cultural experiences. Following, we will provide some examples of past students' narratives while spending a study abroad semester in Italy. Narratives are categorized by intercultural sensitivity worldview represented, and coded with a plot analysis approach.

| A "Denial" Narrative | Plot Analysis Element |
|---|---|
| My culture incident happened about six months ago in Rome / during my work experience | SETTING |
| It was just a normal day at the canteen | SETTING |
| And I ordered some pasta with tuna | SETTING |
| And I also wanted some parmigiano on top | SETTING |
| And I was wondering why the woman didn't ask me if I wanted some parmigiano with my pasta like she usually does with risotto or with soup | INITIATING ACTION |
| And for me it's very unusual to have cheese in my soup because this is something we don't do in Slovenia | SETTING |
| And instead of just adding the cheese and passing me over the plate the woman just started laughing at me so much that everybody turned around and stared at me | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| And the situation was obviously very embarrassing and very very confusing for me | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| And um / yeah so I decided to go for an afternoon coffee with my Italian colleagues | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| And I asked them why would people laugh at me what is so weird about it | HIGH POINT |
| And uh / they answered they laughed all at the same time | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| And they were like // how could you how could you even think of having fish with cheese and it's so disgusting | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| And it's just like having your cappuccino at four in the afternoon / pointing at my cappuccino | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| And um so the question still remained unanswered | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| And I just assumed it's one of those many rules that I've learned in Italy during my stay | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| Such as / no cappuccino after 10 am no pizza for lunch no wine with pizza only beer | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| And um / yah so all those rules for me they don't make sense There's no reason in my opinion | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| And uh / and I just keep having cheese with my fish | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |

In this example, the Denial student is listing a series of complicating actions, and a list of resolution strategies that are disconnected to the complicating actions. The high point of the narrative is not focused on the cultural differences, but more on other peoples' behavior.

| A "Defense" Narrative | Plot Analysis Element |
| --- | --- |
| The first Saturday I was with four other friends | SETTING |
| and we decided to go to Assisi | INITIATING ACTION |
| We arrived at the train station a good twenty minutes before. | SETTING |
| I thought this would be plenty of time. | SETTING |
| First I had to try to navigate those machines. | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| This went okay but I had also been warned that I HAD to validate my train ticket before going on the train. | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| This was definitely different from the United States but we were certain that we had to do this. | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| So we went to the validation machines. | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| It took me about five minutes to figure out how to use the machines. | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| It was really (giggle) embarrassing, | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| and I don't know why I had trouble with it | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| but it was definitely a little different from the United States. | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| You don't have to do that to get on the trains. | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| But then when we all looked at our train tickets, | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| we could not figure out which platform to go to. | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| We had about ten minutes but still we were a little nervous | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| and none of us could even remember the word FOR "platform". | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| We later learned it was "binario". | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| But still it was a little worrying. | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| Everyone started freaking out "Oh no, oh no, where's our train, where's our train?" | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| Worse yet, there were no maps AROUND for us to figure out WHERE our train was going. | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| We couldn't find any sign or anything that said Assisi, | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| so we all got a little nervous, a little freaked out. | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| We had to wait in line to ask someone WHERE our train was. | COMPLICATING ACTION |

| | |
|---|---|
| Now that left us five minutes (giggle) to get our train. | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| so we all had to RUN to get our train. | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| it was a little frantic and worrying and a little stressed out | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| but we did it. We eventually made our train. | HIGH POINT |
| For me, this showed how like everything is different, um not everything, but the train system and the whole idea of having to validate your ticket | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| and it also showed the different modernization of Italy. | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| I think in the U.S., there definitely would have been clear signs, | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| there would have been a map, | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| there would have been computerized signs showing us where to go, specific step-by-step instructions | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| but in Italy this was not the case. | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| It was a good cultural experience though because at first, once I learned how to do it, | CODA |
| I now know how to use the train system very easily | ENDING |

In this example, the Defense student is just listing a series of complicating actions, whose frequency is not balanced with resolution strategies.

| A "Minimization" Narrative | Plot Analysis Element |
|---|---|
| So coming to Florence we really didn't know what to expect, what we would have, what we would be missing | SETTING |
| So we decided one of the first weekends here to take a trip to Ikea. | SETTING |
| So one of the things that I love about home is my bed, | SETTING |
| And I tried to make my bed here as comfortable as it is at home and give me a little piece of home while I'm in my apartment here. | SETTING |
| So I've been to Ikea in America countless times, | SETTING |
| My mom is obsessed with Ikea, we always go. | SETTING |
| So I thought that getting sheets would be a no-brainer, very easy. | SETTING |
| But it turns out that was not the case at all. | INITIATING ACTION |
| So, one of the first things that was troublesome was in America we use size like "Twin" "Queen," and "King", while in Italy they just show the dimensions in centimeters on the package which is completely different from how we do it at home and especially because I don't, we didn't really read Italian at all, I really had no idea at all how to read it. | COMPLICATING ACTION |

| | |
|---|---|
| So looking at the package at Ikea, I had no idea what was going on. | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| So I decided to go up to one of the people that was working there and hopefully they would speak English | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| And they didn't. | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| Uhum, we talked to about four people, | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| And none of them spoke English very well, | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| So we decided to draw a picture | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| So I get out um a scrap piece of paper | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| and I'm trying to draw stick figures of twins | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| So I tried it out in stick figures, I'm not very good at drawing at all | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| And finally one of the employees finally understands what I'm saying and she says "twin"? | HIGH POINT |
| And I've never been so excited to hear a word in my entire life. | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| And I was like "Yes, yes!" | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| So she brings the right package. | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| And it was really great to kind of, even though we don't speak Italian, it was nice to still communicate to someone who is from a different culture from another language, like that had universal language between the two of us using gestures and pictures. | CODA |
| It was nice to think that even though I don't speak Italian I will be able to get along in Italy. | ENDING |

In this example, the Minimization student presents a more balanced ratio between complicating actions and resolution strategies than the Defense student did, but the high point is not focused on cultural differences, and the coda reduces the analysis of the experience to a mere communication problem.

| An "Acceptance" Narrative | Plot Analysis Element |
|---|---|
| Hello, I want to talk about a cultural incident, which uh had happened the first time I went for a swim here in Padova. | SETTING |
| So, when I'm done with swimming, I entered the showering room, the public showering room, | SETTING |
| and there to my surprise, I am each time confronted with um a couple of women who are showering over there completely naked, | INITIATING ACTION |

| | |
|---|---|
| and who are not hiding themselves behind a curtain but doing it openly and naturally | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| and my first impression when I uh was in that situation was to apologize and to take a step back to go away because I had the feeling that I entered a room where I was not allowed | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| but of course after a while I realized that for them it is apparently normal to do it like that | HIGH POINT |
| and I am allowed in the room | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| and they have no problem with me seeing them uh naked | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| So yea, of course I'm not used to it | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| in Belgium where I live I have never experienced that before | SETTING |
| We are yea, we are think more shy and more ashamed of ourselves | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| and when we go for a shower in a public showering room, we always use our own little cabin | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| and we close the curtain because NObody should see us | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| And here, the atmosphere is open and you can behave naturally without being ashamed of yourself; | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| you can even talk to each other | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| so I like it very much | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| but I don't know if at the end of my stay here in Padova, I will do it myself, I will behave like an Italian, | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| I don't know, I don't think that I am capable of doing that um | CODA |
| but still it yea, it's really interesting to be in a situation like this. | CODA |

In this example, the "acceptance" student focuses the narrative on the cultural difference, with the high point of the stories being a realization that something that is uncomfortable for a culture could be normal for another culture.

| **An "Adaptation" Narrative** | **Plot Analysis Element** |
|---|---|
| Hi, so I was initially going to do my video about a cultural incident here in Padova regarding my helmet. | SETTING |
| I'm one of the very few people who wear a helmet here in the city and that has actually gotten me a lot of funny looks and stares. | SETTING |
| But I actually have a better story for you today, also regarding my bicycle and how I acted like an Italian because of it. | SETTING |

| | |
|---|---|
| Um, so my bicycle broke down again yesterday | INITIATING ACTION |
| and so I decided I would walk it down to the train station, park it there, and then on my way back from school, I'd ah, bring it to the bicycle repair shop by the station and then ride it home afterwards. | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| Um but on my way back from school today, as I was passing the Giardino di Larena, um, I saw some guy selling my bicycle! | HIGH POINT |
| So I walked up to him, | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| and he said "Oh, you want to buy this bicycle for 20E?" | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| and I said, "Uh, excuse me sir, but this is my bicycle that you stole and are trying to sell to me". | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| and he says "Oh, 10 euros, buy it for 10 euros". | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| Oh, and I was being kind of Canadian and trying to reason with him and I said "Signore, questa è la mia bicicletta" [Sir, this is my bicycle"] | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| and I'm being polite, and I said "I'm a student, I don't have enough money to pay for a new lock, which you cut, and buy my bicycle back" | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| Um and he wouldn't, and he said "Cinque, take it, cinque" ["Five, take it, five"] | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| And after that, I got a little bit flustered, | COMPLICATING ACTION |
| and I think, because I was trying to speak to him in Italian, as well, I was feeling like an Italian, and so I took out the hands, and it's like, "Signore, questa è la mia bicicletta, no vado pagare dieci o cinque per la mia bicicletta" ["Sir, this is my bicycle, I am not going to spend ten or five for my bicycle"]. | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| and I even threatened to call the police | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| and um, I think he started thinking, | RESOLUTION STRATEGY |
| Probably back in Canada, I would have tried to negotiate a little bit more | SETTING |
| but it has never happened that somebody stole my bicycle and tried to sell it back to me. | SETTING |
| but, um, regardless, this is my story of how I acted like an Italian today, "ciao". | CODA |

In this example, the Adaptation student presents a high point focused on the cultural difference, and a well-balanced ratio between complicating actions and resolution strategies. The coda reflects the ability of responding to the critical situation in a culturally-appropriate way.

**Conclusion**

The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) defined Intercultural Knowledge and Competence as:

*a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioural skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts.*

Student mobility allows college and higher education students to come into continuous and first-hand contact with individuals of the host culture. However, students could have dysfunctional adjustment, for many reasons: differentiation between host cultures; cultural distance; unsatisfying relations with host country individuals; weak host country identification; and poor language proficiency (Pedersen, 2010). Thus, it is important to include specific attention to students' acculturation processes in study abroad. At the same time, it is important to foster a reflective approach to cultural differences. If students adopt an ethnocentric approach, they will avoid cultural difference (by denying its existence, by raising defenses against it, or by minimizing its importance), thus reducing the opportunities for growth in intercultural competence. Conversely, we need to foster an ethno-relative worldview, in which students seek cultural difference (by accepting its importance, by adapting one's perspective to take it into account, or by integrating the whole concept into a definition of one's identity). From an educational perspective, narratives produced through video-logs seem a promising tool to have teachers assess students' worldview on differences and students reflect on their own critical incidents. The instruments discussed in this contribution should be used in interaction, in order to understand students' intercultural sensitivity as displayed by their narratives, and in light of their acculturative strategy.

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