Why reflection matters?: Reviewing the major forms of reflection and exploring their impacts on developing intercultural competence through study abroad programs

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Abstract: Due to the recent social expectation to educate global citizens and provide them with high English competence and intercultural communication competence, many colleges or universities have short- or long-term study abroad programs to provide students with opportunities to experience cultural differences and also improve their intercultural skills. Given that, if not interpreted appropriately, their cross-cultural experiences have a potential risk of reinforcing negative stereotypes against cultural "others", and let students stay in their own culturally encapsulated worldviews, this paper reviews the major research after 2000 and onward to explore the role and efficiency of reflective learning for developing intercultural communication competence in study abroad programs. (105 words)

Keywords: intercultural competence, study abroad programs, guided reflection, college students, intercultural development

Introduction: Why reflection matters to study abroad programs?

Developing intercultural competence (IC) has recently gained attention as an

objective for study abroad programs for college students (Watson & Wolfel, 2015). IC is defined in various ways---some scholars focus on cultural awareness, or cultural knowledge (Matveev & Mertz, 2014), while other scholars focus on communication and behavioral skills (Byram, 1997). A selective group of scholars focus on diversity management aspects of IC such as interpersonal skills, team effectiveness, intercultural uncertainty and intercultural empathy (Matveev & Nelson, 2004). Chen and Starosta (1996) and Hammer, Bennett and Wiseman (2003) further clarify that IC is individual's ability to effectively respond to cultural differences. As this paper explores the IC development through study abroad programs, the author focuses on how cultural worldviews, which significantly affect individual's abilities to respond to cultural differences, shift as a result of experiencing changes in belief systems through study abroad programs.

For developing IC, some scholars identify the importance of interventions with the student intercultural learning experiences such as guided critical reflection to help students assign the meanings to their intercultural encounters (Paige & Vande Berg, 2012). Although reflection takes an important role in perspective transformation (Merriam & Caffarella, 1999; Mezzirow, 1991), minimal study abroad research sheds light on how to develop IC through program-wide interventions such as guided critical reflection on student intercultural encounters until the year 2000 (Paige & Vande Berg, 2012). This trend in research on IC development through reflection highlights that reviewing the major researches on reflection in study abroad programs after the year 2000 and onward should be helpful to explore more about what forms of reflection is efficient to help students develop their IC.

To explore more about various reflection styles, note that the common and valid measurement tool of IC development is necessary to compare and contrast the results such as student IC developments after experiencing study abroad programs with reflection on their intercultural encounters. Paige and Verde Berg

(2012) identify the Bennett's model of Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI) as an instrument with "demonstrated validity and reliability that measure key intercultural constructs" (Paige & Verde Berg, 2012, p.31). Accordingly, IDI is capable of "providing a basis for comparison across studies" (Paige & Verde Berg, 2012, p.31). Hammer (2012) further clarifies that the validity and reliability of IDI as a measuring instrument have been tested and proven multiple times and IDI has been used in the major IC researches as an instrument many times. This paper, accordingly, reviews the major study abroad researches on reflection conducted with IDI published after the year 2000 and onward to compare and contrast how different student IC development could be as a result of different forms of reflection experience.

What IDI measures?: Where do individuals fall on the scale of developmental model of intercultural sensitivity (DMIS)

Intercultural Developmental Inventory (IDI) is a 50-item, paper-and-pencil-based survey that indicates where individuals are in the continuum of Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Hammer, 2012). DMIS consists of six different stages of IC: denial, defense, minimization, acceptance, adaptation, and integration. The first three stages are considered "ethnocentric" stages in which individuals' worldviews are based on the assumption that their cultural values are superior to all others and therefore should be universally accepted. While, the second three stages are considered "ethno-relative" stages, where individuals can accept cultural differences, adapt their behaviors based on cultural contexts in which they are situated, and integrate their experiences of different cultures into their bicultural or multicultural identity.

Denial refers to the stage in which individuals could not perceive the cultural differences and/or their own cultures, "because they have not considered how culture impacts their own or others' lives" (Bennett, 2011, p.1). Therefore, those

in denial could "dehumanize others, assuming that different behavior is a defi-
ciency in intelligence or personality" (Bennett, 2011, p.1). Defense refers to the
stage in which individuals may hold bipolarized perceptions of cultural differences
with a clear and hard distinction between "us" and "others" (Bennett, 2011).
Accordingly, those at this stage tend to negatively stereotype "others" and hold
the cultural view that their own cultures are superior to all others (Bennett, 2011).
Minimization refers to the stage in which individuals have "arrived at intercultural
sensitivity" (Bennett, 2011, p. 5). Those at this stage could start recognizing
common humanity among all people across cultures; therefore, "[t]his assump-
tion of similarity is then invoked to avoid recognizing one's own cultural patterns,
understanding others, and eventually making necessary adaptations" (Bennett,
2011, p.5). In other words, those at this stage tend to look away from cultural dif-
ferences based on the assumption of similarity, which is how the logic of color-
blind racism works.

Acceptance refers to the stage in which individuals "accept that all behav-
iors and values, including their own, exist in distinctive cultural contexts and that
patterns of behaviors and values can be discerned within each context"
(Bennett, 2011, p.7). In other words, those at the acceptance stage tend to accept
the distinctive worldviews from different cultures rather than agreeing with or pre-
ferring particular cultures. Adaptation refers to the stage in which individuals
"consciously shift … perspective" (Bennett, 2011, p.9) and capable of "inten-
tionally altering behavior … when there is a need to actually interact effectively
with people of another culture" (Bennett, 2011, p.9). In other words, those at this
stage are capable enough to shift the way they see the world and behave in anoth-
er cultural context. Integration refers to the stage in which individuals are "not
defined in terms of any one culture — typically a person who is bicultural or mul-
ticultural" (Bennett, 2011, p.11). This stage could be achieved "when individu-
als intentionally make a significant, sustained effort to become fully competent in

new cultures" (Bennett, 2011, p.11). Those at this stage tend to have a wide repertoire of cultural knowledge and are less likely to feel "at home" in any culture. These individuals could be referred to as "Third Culture Kids" as well.

IDI is designed to measure where individuals are in these different stages, and also indicate learners' progress along the continuum in points so that it is possible to statistically examine student IC development (Hammer 2012). Accordingly, conducting pre- and post-test of study abroad programs with IDI makes it possible to measure the progress in IC development in a statistically valid and reliable manner, and compare and contrast the student's IC development progress with the same scale. As Bennett's model of DMIS does not provide a theoretical framework to explore in detail on how learners move from one stage to another, the authors rely on Mezirow's (1991) transformative learning theory to explore what kind of learning makes learners move along the DMIS continuum.

Why reflection matters to IC development?: Transformative learning theory

> *Transformational theory is about change — dramatic, fundamental, change in the way we see ourselves and the world in which we live. This kind of knowing is more than merely what we already know: transformational learning shapes people; they are different afterward, in ways both they and others can recognize.*
>
> (Merriam and Caffarella, 1999, p.318)

Transformative learning requires changes in personal perspectives and interpretations of the world, which may lead to behavioral modifications. As long as learners tend to refer to the cultural framework of reference in order to rationalize their experiences, changing a way of interpreting experiences could indicate intrapersonal cultural transformation. What precedes this transformation tends to be a

disorienting dilemma, when adults confront a situation in which they are chal-
lenged to make meaning of what they just experienced with their current cultur-
al frameworks of reference (Mezirow, 1991). Obviously, student intercultural
encounters while studying abroad falls into this "disorienting dilemma". In other
words, study-abroad experiences let students experience the situations which they
are challenged to understand with their current frameworks of references; there-
fore, study-abroad experiences could provide them with opportunities to exam-
ine their standards of what is "normal".

When examining their own cultural frameworks of references, some schol-
ars point out the importance of critical reflection. Effective critical reflection is
followed by critical questioning by which "ingrained assumptions can be exter-
nalized" (Cranton, 1994, p.169). Brookfield (2000) claims that three qualities are
necessary for critical questioning: specificity, generality, and being conversation-
al. Specificity requires educators to link questions to specific events or actions in
everyday life. Generality requires questions to stay on general themes that every-
body may understand. Being conversational requires educators to stay away from
academic jargons, and describe ideas in informal ways (Cranton, 1994). In other
words, if we would like to have effective critical reflections, reflective learning
needs to be linked to learners' daily lives, easily understandable themes, and
informal conversations. These three qualities are important in terms of using crit-
ical questions as a way to stimulate reflection rather than testing the knowledge
of learners.

Critical reflection includes three different domains: content reflection,
process reflection, and premise reflection (Cranton, 1994). Content reflection
refers to an examination of the content or description of a problem represented
by questions such as "What is the problem?" Process reflection is defined as
checking on the problem-solving strategies that are being used; therefore, this is
the examination of the process of problem-solving in which the learner stops to

think, and asks "Did I do something wrong?" These two reflections are helpful in transforming meaning schemes. According to Cranton (1994), content and process reflection are "the dynamics by which our beliefs, meaning schemes, are changed, reinforced, elaborated, created, negated, confirmed, or identified as a problem" (p.50). Premise reflection, on the other hand, is claimed to be reflection, which may transform meaning perspectives by asking a question such as "Why do I need to do it?" (Cranton, 1994; Mezzirow and Associates, 2000). According to Mezirow (1991), it is premise reflection which enables us to "open the possibility for perspective transformation" by "reexamine[ing] and challeng[ing] our presuppositions and premises" (p.110).

These quotes highlight that effective critical reflection for perspective transformation needs to include opportunities to help learners identify: 1) what the problem is, 2) how they should deal with the problems, and 3) the reasons why they behave or think in the ways they do. Identifying these three factors helps learners understand what their unquestioned assumptions are, how these interfere with the ways they interpret their experience, and how to think about alterative interpretations of critical incidents. The next chapter explores what kind of reflection has been embedded in study abroad programs and how much those forms of reflection meet these three criteria for effective critical reflection.

Which reflection works best?: Online or on-site? Guided or non-guided?

Reviewing the study-abroad research findings after the year 2000 and onward, and transformative learning theory highlights that whether reflective learning is embedded in the study abroad programs or not may significantly determine the program efficiency for supporting students to improve their IC. There are three stages in study abroad programs to embed reflection: pre-departure, on-site (during study abroad), and post-return.

Given that some scholars already identified that "on-site (during study

abroad)〞reflection on student intercultural encounters best helps their inter-cultural learning and support their improvement in IC (Engle & Engle, 2004; Petersen, 2010; Vande Berg, 2007), this paper explores what forms of〝on-site (during study abroad)〞reflection best help students improve their IC.

Paige, Cohen and Shiverly (2004) examined a study abroad program and compares differences in IC improvement between students in the intervention group (with bi-weekly online journal reflection on student intercultural learning) and those in control (non-intervention) group. The result indicates that their average IDI point increase is 4.47 for all students and, statistically significant (Paige, Cohen & Shiverly, 2004). Paige, Cohen and Shiverly (2004) also clarified that there was not statistically significant IDI point differences between the students in the intervention group (with bi-weekly online journal reflection) and those in control (non-intervention) group. Paige and Vande Berg (2012) conclude that the improvement of IC among those with online reflection process tend to be modest compared with those in study abroad programs with on-site reflection.

Paige and Vande Berg (2012) also explored the study abroad programs with on-site guided reflection. Although some other factors such as types of residence (homestay, dormitory or apartment sharing with other studying abroad students), student countries of origin, student frequency of interactions with their host families, and program duration also could influence their advancement in IC, Paige and Vande Berg (2012) clarify that on-site in-person guided reflection on student cultural experiences, as a determinant of the significant intercultural development. Paige and Vande Berg (2012) also identify that differences in types of on-site guided reflection, reflection in groups or individual mentoring, do not significantly influence students IC development; Both groups stay in the same range of IDI improvement from .78 to 5.47.

Similarly, Pedersen (2010) explored how reflective learning in study abroad programs influences student development of intercultural sensitivity. She

grouped students into three groups: those studying abroad with on-site guided reflections on their cross-cultural experiences (Group A, N=16), those studying abroad without any on-site guided reflections (Group B, N=16), and those who wish to study abroad but stay on campus during the study abroad period (Group C, N=13). All students took pre- and post-IDI surveys to see how studying abroad with guided reflection influenced their intercultural sensitivity development. Petersen (2010) found that among these three groups: 1) Group A (pre-mean:91.31, post-mean:102.87) increased their overall IDI scores most, almost 10 times more than groups B (pre-mean:88.69, post-mean:89.91) and C (pre-mean: 90.34, post-mean:91.77), and 2) Group B and Group C's score increases were almost the same, so even studying abroad, if guided on-site critical reflection is not available, students' overall intercultural sensitivity does not increase very much. Pedersen (2010) found that when comparing the gap between the students' perceived intercultural sensitivity scores and their actual intercultural sensitivity scores, Group A (pre-gap mean: 30.24, post-gap mean: 23.54) significantly minimized their mean gap scores, while Group B (pre-gap mean: 29.31, post-gap mean: 31.04) increased the gap scores. This indicates that those studying abroad without on-site guided critical reflections tend to think that they are more interculturally competent than before studying abroad. Their actual intercultural sensitivity, however, does not improve as much as they think it does, whereas those studying abroad with on-site guided critical reflection actually significantly improve or develop their intercultural sensitivity.

Reviewing these research findings highlight that different study abroad programs share the commonalities that those who had opportunities for on-site "just-in-time" guided critical reflections on their cultural difference experiences tended to develop intercultural sensitivity much more than those who did not have such opportunities (Engle & Engle, 2004; Petersen, 2010; Vande Berg, 2007). As two theoretical frameworks describe, it is possible to claim that disorienting dilem-

mas such as experiencing cultural differences through cultural immersion, need to be mediated to assign proper meanings and to digest these experiences immediately after for avoiding reinforcing negative stereotypes against different cultures or "Others" and move toward biculturalism or multiculturalism. This indicates that those who organize study abroad programs aimed at developing intercultural sensitivity need to ensure that students have access to on-site guided critical reflection that helps them properly digest their intercultural encounters.

This inclination that opportunities for on-site guided critical reflection significantly influence the student intercultural development can be explained by 10 different phases of transformative learning theory that Mezirow (1991) identifies: 1) a disorienting dilemma, 2) a self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame, 3) a critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions, 4) recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change, 5) exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions, 6) planning a course of action, 7) acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plan, 8) provision trying of new roles, 9) building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships, and 10) a reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions dictated by one's perspective. If study abroad programs just offer the opportunities to gain intercultural encounters, these programs only offer opportunities for the phases 1 (disorienting dilemma) and 2 (self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame), whereas study abroad programs with online reflections may offer opportunities for the phases 1, 2, 3 (a critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions) and 5 (exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions) together by helping them challenge their cultural assumptions and providing some advice through journal feedbacks. Study abroad programs with on-site guided critical reflection with a cultural mentor either in groups or in person could offer opportunities for the phases 1, 2, 3, 4 (recognition that one's discontent and the

process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar
change), 5, 6 (planning a course of action) and 7 (acquisition of knowledge and
skills for implementing one's plan) together through cultural immersion and sub-
sequent interactions with the cultural mentor and their classmates.

Given that on-site guided critical reflection is most helpful in developing IC,
this analysis of how many phases of transformative learning are included in par-
ticular types of reflection indicates that the number of phases included in reflec-
tion corresponds with the efficiency of reflection for intercultural development.
In other words, if instructors need to create pedagogies for critical reflection on
student intercultural encounters, providing them with an access to pedagogical
structures or contents based on these 10 phases should be helpful to maximize the
benefits of on-site guided critical reflection.

How could instructors facilitate on-site guided critical reflection?

Reviewing the literature highlights that on-site guided critically reflective
learning on cross-cultural experience is very helpful for students to properly digest
their intercultural encounters and develop IC by helping them gain a proper under-
standing of cultural differences (Engle & Engle, 2004; Petersen, 2010; Paige &
Vande Berg, 2012; Vande Berg, 2007). This section further explores what kinds of
options instructors have to facilitate reflective learning for those students cur-
rently in study abroad programs and dealing with intercultural encounters on a
daily basis. To the author's knowledge, there is scant literature describing the
detailed processes of reflective learning on study abroad experiences; however,
some literature from teacher education—particularly, reflective learning on mul-
ticultural service learning—provides insights on how instructors could provide
opportunities for reflective learning on domestic intercultural encounters.
Multicultural service learning refers to the field placements required in some uni-
versity-based teacher education programs for preservice K-12 teachers in the US,

requiring preservice teachers to teach voluntarily at community centers in neigh-borhoods, where most residents have different racial, cultural, linguistic or socioeconomic backgrounds from the preservice teachers, and thereby learn about the diversity in sociocultural realties (Bowdon & Billig, et al., 2008: Powell, 2005; Rimmerman, 2009; Scott, 2012). As some literature on these multicultural service learning details about how to help preservice teachers reflect on their intercultural encounters, this section reviews the reflective learning for service learning experiences and explores what types of reflective learning on intercul-tural encounters could be helpful and whether these reflective learning examples are applicable to international cross-cultural experiences from study abroad pro-grams or not.

As Cranton (1994) and Mezirow (1991) describe in transformative learning theory, effective critical reflection needs to help learners identify the problems they have in new cultural environments, how they have been dealing with the problems so far, why they interpret intercultural encounters in the way they do and explore alternative interpretations of the cross-cultural experiences. Rimmerman (2009) identifies whole-class or small-group discussions guided by specific questions about students' intercultural encounters, and journal prompts as helpful strategies for reflecting on intercultural encounters through service learning experiences.

Boyle-Baise (2002) further explores the actual on-site guided critical reflec-tion process when preservice teachers engage in multicultural service learning, and identifies that the following guided questions are helpful to facilitate reflec-tive journal prompts or discussions: 1) What event or ideas, if any, prompted an intellectual or emotional response? 2) What, if anything, have I learned about "funds of knowledge" (FS: the specific information about the sociocultural prac-tices or social realties in the communities that helps teachers) for teaching? 3) Have my views, particularly about the labeling of others, changed in any way? 4)

Have my beliefs or views concerning myself changed in any way? and 5) What questions do I have for my community instructor (FS: the instructor, who is well informed about cultures in the communities   that preservice teachers are assigned to, and working on reflection process with preservice teachers)? Boyle-Baise (2002) further identifies that these five questions are helpful for identifying preservice teachers' deficit views—taken-for-granted negative and ethnocentric stereotypes against cultural "others" that their sociocultural practices are not good enough compared with the one they are affiliated with—about cultural "others". Accordingly, asking these questions helps instructors to challenge the assumptions that preservice teachers may hold against cultural "Others".

　　Pertaining to the on-site guided critical reflection processes through discussions, some scholars also stress that instructors need to monitor the ongoing reflection processes and need to intervene and challenge the preservice teachers' assumptions when necessary, particularly when instructors notice that preservice teachers are interpreting their intercultural encounters with a particular set of biases against those who are racially, culturally, linguistically or socioeconomically different (Rimmerman, 2009; Powell, 2005). Bayle-Boise (2002) also introduces some correspondence on reflection based on discussion as an alternative approach to identify how ethnocentric perception of cultural differences could lead preservice teachers to biased perceptions of different cultures.   For instance, a preservice teacher commented: "The community center is so unstructured. Sometimes only a few kids are there. I guess these parents are working so much, they don't keep tabs on where their kids are" (Bayle-Boise, 2002, pp.101-102). As the instructor asksed another preservice teacher who lives in the community to help his fellow preservice teachers better understand the community, he responded: "The kids may not be at the center, it may not seem structured. The fact that they have that place, they can check in, is a wonderful thing…You have to know your community before you can say why kids aren't

there."(Bayle-Boise, 2002, p.102). These correspondences in the discussion highlighted that guided critical reflection with a cultural mentor is particularly important because; 1) Preservice teachers tend to interpret their intercultural experiences with the sets of unquestioned strong biases against another culture, and therefore, 2) Comments or guidance from someone that knows the culture or community better (FS: cultural mentor) is very helpful to challenge these biased interpretations.

These reviews of literature about guided critical reflection on intercultural encounters also highlight that combining reflection processes through journal entry and discussions makes it possible for facilitators to gain access to the information about what kinds of misinterpretations are common among learners, and therefore, helps instructors facilitate discussions based on these common specific intercultural encounters that are hard for learners to digest. Otherwise, if learners do not have access to reflection processes, some scholars indicate concerns that there is a risk that learners will accept "reinforced stereotypes, simplistic solutions to complex problems, and inaccurate generalization from limited data" (Bringle, Hatcher & Jones, 2011, p. 150) about those different from them, and sacrifice their intercultural learning opportunities.

In sum, instructors can facilitate on-site guided critical reflection through multiple pedagogical strategies, including whole-class or small-group discussions guided by specific questions about learners' intercultural encounters. Combining journal prompts and discussions is particularly helpful, as instructors can learn about the common specific intercultural encounters that are more likely to lead learners to misinterpret or that are challenging to digest, so instructors can facilitate discussions based on these specific misinterpretations.

Conclusion/Discussion

Reviewing the literature on study abroad programs and reflection using IDI

published after the year 2000 and onward indicates that having opportunities for on-site guided critical reflections best helps learners avoid assiging meanings to their cultural difference experiences in their own ethnocentric views and properly digest the disorienting dilemma resulting from cultural differences.

It also became clear that when facilitating on-site guided critical reflection on intercultural encounters, combining journal prompts and discussions based on the information from the journal entries helps instructors facilitate discussions, specifically targeted at the specific intercultural encounters that learners are more likely to have problems interpreting. This pedagogical strategy beautifully fits with the concept of specificity that is claimed to be important to transform meaning schemes — the unquestioned ways of interpreting phenomena — in transformative learning theory. By doing so, on-site guided critical reflection could function as a process to shift learners＇ focus from＂others＂ to＂themselves＂ to identify how they interpret particular situations that are challenging for them to digest and help learners explore alternative interpretations instead of reinforcing their stereotypes about＂others＂.

Although this paper reviews major literature on on-site guided critical reflection for intercultural development, there is scant literature that describes in detail on the actual classroom interactions for effective on-site guided critical reflection. Accordingly, further research, especially about ethnography or discourse analysis-types regarding the processes of on-site guided critical reflection on intercultural encounters, is needed to explore in detail what kinds of dialogues or interventions could bring in more＂uh-huh＂ moments for learners studying abroad. Given the world trends of globalization and the consequent needs to educate global citizens, it is essential for international educators to know how to guide their learners to achieve global cross-cultural understanding. Accordingly, inquiring about the pedagogical strategies on how to help learners maximize their cross-cultural experiences through on-site guided critical reflection is a further avenue for

investigation.

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