Intercultural Training Facilitation in the Pre-departure Phase of Education Abroad

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Introduction

Intercultural Competence

Before a deeper exploration of the importance of intercultural competence in education abroad, those in the field of International Education must fully comprehend this concept and understand its central and critical place in the field. Dr. Fantini at the School for International Training (SIT) defines Intercultural Competence, or Intercultural Communicative Competence, as “the complex of abilities needed to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (Fantini, 2005).

Intercultural Competence Training in Education Abroad

After researching several institutions’ mission statements within their international, global, or study abroad department, many institutions share the same written dedication to some of the following hot terms: global citizens/citizenship, intercultural competence, cross-cultural competence, and multicultural skills. However, according to informational interviews of professionals in the field, the majority of U.S. institutions do not support these often empty words with sufficient training of their students to meet these learning objectives (Amy Tondu, personal communication, November 15, 2013). As compared to just 5 years ago, many more institutions than before are beginning to offer modules or training sessions of the subject either before or during their education abroad programs. However, these programs still remain the minority in the field, and many are not yet measuring the results and impact of said trainings.
It is accepted best practice to provide students with a pre-departure orientation, to address practical issues such as visas, housing, and course registration, among other topics. However, more institutions are recognizing the need for intercultural training as an integral part of the study abroad experience. This is the result of increased research measuring the impact of such trainings, and data demonstrating the impact of study abroad duration, paired with recent study abroad trends.

**Study Abroad Trends and IDI Measurement**

According to a survey conducted in 2003-2004, 38% of responding schools assessed intercultural competence of their students (Deardorff, 2009). In 2006-2007, the number of schools assessing intercultural competence increased to 46% (Deardorff, 2009). Additionally, according to IIE open doors report 2013, 58.9% of students in 2011/12 studied for short-term programs (summer or 8 weeks or less) (IIE, 2013). Institutions are thus beginning to recognize the need for ICC training in order to meet the mission and goals of universities that claim importance for token terms mentioned above, in programs with shorter durations.

The shorter duration of a program increases the need for extra training and preparation, as studies have shown that the longer the program duration, the greater development of intercultural sensitivity. For example, Portillo’s 2004 study compares students in short-term and long-term programs in Mexico and measured their growth in intercultural sensitivity using pre and post surveys. Portillo (2004) assessed student outcomes using the Intercultural Development Inventory, a measurement tool commonly used in this field. Portillo’s study found that students studying for longer periods of time achieved greater intercultural sensitivity. More specifically, students that participated in the longer program returned with higher IDI cores, broader vocabulary, a deeper understanding of
Mexican culture, and a critical and informed view of the United States’ culture (Portillo, 2004). Though no studies have claimed that duration is the only element, results such as these have begun to draw the attention of international education professionals, implying the greater need for ICC development especially as more students are studying abroad for shorter periods of time.

**Definition of Terms**

While progress is certainly being made towards reaching the goals of global citizenship and intercultural competence, quantitative data is unavailable for the number of schools that offer an ICC training to adequately prepare their students. One of the reasons behind the lack of preparedness and assessment is the lack of consensus on the definition and nuances of the hot terms described above.

Deardorff’s 2006 study on intercultural competence in higher education in the U.S. is among the first to demonstrate a consensus amongst leading experts in the field on the elements of intercultural competence. Deardorff’s *Pyramid Model of Intercultural competence* breaks down intercultural competence into the following sub categories: (1) desired external outcome, (2) desired internal outcome, (3) knowledge and comprehension, (4) skills, and (5) attitudes (Figure 1.0). This study is crucial to the development of intercultural competence training for institutions because for the first time they may have a guideline to the desired outcomes and student knowledge, skills, and attitudes. The overall desired outcome of the ICC training, based on Deardorff’s pyramid, would be: “Behaving and communicating effectively and appropriately […] to achieve one’s goal to some degree” (Deardorff, 2006). This is similar to Fantini’s definition previously provided, however Deardorff’s pyramid provides a solid structure that institutions may use to create their ICC training.
Pyramid Model of Intercultural Competence (Deardorff, 2006, 2009):

**DESIRED EXTERNAL OUTCOME:**
Behaving and communicating effectively and appropriately (based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes) to achieve one’s goals to some degree.

**DESIRED INTERNAL OUTCOME:**
Informed frame of reference/filter shift:
Adaptability (to different communication styles & behaviors; adjustment to new cultural environments);
Flexibility (selecting and using appropriate communication styles and behaviors; cognitive flexibility);
Ethnorelative view;
Empathy

- **Knowledge & Comprehension:**
  - Cultural self-awareness;
  - Deep understanding and knowledge of culture (including contexts, role and impact of culture & others’ world views);
  - Culture-specific information;
  - Sociolinguistic awareness

- **Skills:**
  - To listen, observe, and interpret
  - To analyze, evaluate, and relate

**Requisite Attitudes:**
- Respect (valuing other cultures, cultural diversity)
- Openness (to intercultural learning and to people from other cultures, withholding judgment)
- Curiosity and discovery (tolerating ambiguity and uncertainty)

**NOTES:**
- Move from personal level (attitude) to interpersonal/interactive level (outcomes)
- Degree of intercultural competence depends on acquired degree of underlying elements

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(Deardorff, 2006)
Examples from the Field

While developing an ICC training program, it is important to look for best practices in the field to find similar programs implemented in institutions throughout the nation. Both Wake Forest University and the University of the Pacific, just to name a few, can serve as examples and models for intercultural trainings that have been successfully integrated into education abroad.

Wake Forest University developed an ICC training model for their professors, to enable them to better teach and facilitate workshops in ICC for their students, called the Workshop for Intercultural Skills Enhancement (WISE). Throughout the workshop, faculty would gain the skills and knowledge necessary to help students develop and hone their intercultural skills (Duke, 2012). The 2-day workshop focused on the following topics:

- The Development Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)
- Assessment of students’ intercultural competence
- Successful and effective intercultural training activities
- Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI)

The program was so successful that it turned into an annual WISE conference, held in Winston Salem. At the 2014 WISE Conference, representatives from the University of the Pacific presented: “Facilitating Intercultural Learning. Model 1: home campus faculty, prior to and after study abroad” (La Brack, 2014). Their model, similar to that described in this paper, includes a pre-departure orientation course, followed by the student’s period of study abroad, and ending with a re-entry seminar. Susan Sample then conducted a survey of the University of the Pacific students in 2010, measuring student growth using the IDI measurement tool. Comparing pre and post IDI assessment scores, Sample
(2010) found that students who participate in the intercultural training had IDI scores 19.78 higher than prior to their study abroad experience. Incoming students had an average IDI score of 92.13, meaning they are primarily in the Low Minimization phase. After completion of study abroad, the average scores were significantly higher, placing them nearer to the Acceptance phase. Not only were Sample’s results statistically significant, and a significant gain in the history of this assessment within academic institutions (Sample, 2010). She concluded that the change in IDI scores “is both a significant change for these students and is significantly different from university students who have not been a part of the international curriculum or have not studied abroad” (Sample, 2010, p. 554).

Structure of the workshop

The web displayed in Figure 2.0 is a representation of a training workshop, as developed by Fowler and Mumford in 1999. The trainer is at the center and controls many of the elements, serving as the bridge between two cultures: the home and host. The facilitator will rely on methods, content, resources and design to facilitate the workshop, as detailed in their Intercultural Sourcebook volumes 1 and 2. The aforementioned resource is particularly useful and important for institutions beginning an ICC training.

Ideally, an institution of higher education would have the proper resources in time, funding, human capital, and technology to integrate and facilitate three phases of intercultural competence (ICC) training into all of their current offerings of education abroad programs. The three phases include: (1) a pre-departure ICC training on the home institution campus, (2) ICC activities and assignments to be completed by students on their own time in the month immediately preceding their departure, and (3) ICC activities and assignments during the students’ time abroad, whether at a host institution or in a
program center of the home institution. All three of these components are of equal importance to a student’s learning outcomes and growth. Each phase targets a different element of ICC and a different stage in the student’s self-learning and learning of their host culture. Using some of the elements from Deardorff’s 2006 study, the goals and learning outcomes of the complete three-phase ICC training are the following:

- Improve the student’s openness
- Increase the student’s awareness of their host culture
- Facilitate student’s reflection; increase self-learning and knowledge of self
- Increase student’s knowledge: knowledge of cultural theories, their own culture, and their host culture
- Improve student attitudes: foster openness, adaptability, sensitivity, tolerance and curiosity
- Improve student’s observation skills

The recommendations in the next section outlines a pre-departure training model developed by a project team in the Spring of 2014 at the Monterey Institute of International Studies for a graduate course in Study Abroad and International Exchange. This model and this written work have integrated some of the elements that Deardorff has identified as vital to successfully achieving intercultural competence, as well as theories from other experts in the field, and using Fowler and Mumford’s model displayed in Figure 2.0.
Figure 2.0

(Fowler, 1999)
Pre-departure Training: Phase 1

This section will address the intercultural competence training needs and the design elements for an intercultural training workshop during the pre-departure phase for education abroad programs. The following section will provide step-by-step recommendations and a framework for building an ICC training program or workshop for student’s participating in an education abroad program.

This one day, mandatory workshop would take place on the home campus in the semester prior to the student’s departure, in this case workshop in spring semester for fall departure. The host institution should, if adequate resources allow, hire a professional trained and experienced in facilitating intercultural competence workshops. If the institution encounters a lack in financial resources, then they may find a suitable facilitator amongst the following personnel at their home institution: a study abroad or global programs staff member, a professor in international relations, a professor of psychology or social psychology that perhaps specializes in the intercultural field, or any other faculty or staff member that has demonstrated experience with the theories on culture and the facilitation of a similar type of workshop or seminar. In addition, if the program has run for one year or more, then the facilitator should invite returning study abroad students to participate in the workshop, having pre- and post students side by side, to enhance learning. Experimentation is encouraged for the facilitator of this workshop, as they must test which activities are appropriate for them, their institutional setting, and students.

The ICC pre-departure workshop should be held in the semester prior to the students departure; for example, many general study abroad orientations for a Fall semester or year-long program would be held in the April or May prior to the students’ departure. In order to ensure
attendance, we propose making the entire three-phase intercultural training a 2-credit course that is mandatory for all students participating in an education abroad program. The 2-credit course would be spread out over the course of the year or semester abroad, beginning with the initial phase described here. Making the course credit bearing will reflect the importance of this training to the student’s experience, and the dedication of the institution to preparing their students for their time abroad. If given as a required course, the students will also understand the importance of the subject and the experience of participating in such a workshop.

The purpose of this phase is to serve as the student’s initial exposure to theories of intercultural competence and to encourage reflection. The pre-departure workshop has two central topics, or learning outcomes: (1) students must first understand the theoretical basis and definitions of culture and intercultural competence and (2) the student’s must be able to reflect on and better understand themselves and their culture before beginning to connect with another.

**Theoretical Foundations**

The first step of the pre-departure workshop is to give students a theoretical framework to understanding culture, intercultural competence development, and culture shock, to name a few important theories. The facilitator is strongly encouraged to integrate the works of Geert Hofstede and Milton J. Bennett to create a theoretical foundation for the students.

To introduce students to culture as a concept, and to the theories surrounding the study of this concept, the facilitator may describe culture as an iceberg. The cultural iceberg is an easy and approachable way to introducing culture.
The facilitator should then introduce Geert Hofstede and his extensive research on culture. He conducted one of the most comprehensive studies on the influence of culture on individuals, and his analysis of this survey caused him to be a paramount figure in the field of cultural studies and intercultural competence. Beginning with Hofstede’s work will introduce students to these two fields through the lens of some of the most influential research in the field. From his surveys conducted in over 70 countries, Hofstede created five distinct dimensions of national culture that distinguish a country’s culture from another (Hofstede, 2010). The facilitator should allow the students to explore the Hofstede Center website prior to the workshop and familiarize themselves with the four dimensions: Power Distance (DPI), Individualism versus Collectivism (IDV), Masculinity versus Femininity (MAS), Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI), and Long Term Orientation (LTO) (Hofstede, 2010).

Either prior to the workshop or during the first part of the workshop, the facilitator should allow the students to familiarize themselves with Hofstede’s work by exploring the Hofstede Center website, focusing first on the section entitled “National cultural dimensions” (Hofstede Center, 2014). The facilitator will hold discussions around the different dimensions such as PDI for example, asking students to provide examples from their personal experiences, and discuss the effect of power in certain situations for example. The students will be more comfortable with the elements of culture, giving them the basis for the rest of the workshop.

Bennett’s model of cultural competency complements Hofstede’s work on culture. After the students have the basis of culture and the dimensions that make each culture unique, the facilitator should delve into Bennett’s theoretical framework. Bennett’s model describes the process through which individuals reach various levels of cultural competence. The first three phases of a person’s transition towards cultural competence are denial, defense, and minimization, all three of which
Bennett describes as ethnocentric. The latter three phases of this journey are acceptance, adaptation, and integration, all of which are considered ethnorelative (See Appendix A) (Bennett, 1993). This model allows students to see the steps they will eventually follow during their time abroad. Students will fall into different stages of cultural competence at different points in their experience, and some may reach each stage at earlier times. Bennett’s model, in combination with Hofstede’s dimensions serve as simple and approachable theories of culture and intercultural competence, giving students the groundwork before continuing their training.

**Self Awareness**

Before the students can change their attitudes to that of openness, respect and curiosity, they must learn cultural self-awareness, as described by Deardorff (2006). To begin, the facilitator should have all of the student’s introduce themselves, having them state: (1) their name, (2) where they will be studying abroad (if this is a mixed group of students who will not all be on the same program) and (3) something they are excited about for when they go abroad and (4) something they are nervous or scared about. This introduction phase will allow students to connect based on their shared anticipations for their education abroad. This part of the workshop will also allow the facilitator to better understand his/her audience and the students’ needs. Most importantly, this activity will force students to truly reflect on their deeper reasoning for participating in study abroad.

Following the introductions, the facilitator should immediately jump into an activity. Later sections of this work are dedicated to resources where facilitators can access various intercultural activities suited to their needs. However, one suggested activity to begin the students’ self reflection is to have the students take a personality assessment called the Color Code. The facilitator may ask
that the students take this short assessment prior to the workshop. This personality test serves to identify an individuals' core motivators. The purpose of this activity in an ICC setting would be to encourage the students to better understand themselves and their interpersonal relations before trying to understand others and intercultural relations. The facilitator would then debrief the activity, having students reflect on their experience with the test and their results. The Color Code demonstrates, among other things, that all individuals world-wide have a shared human nature. The Color Code has been used across various nations. The facilitator could connect the Color Code to ICC by discussion the perception of each color personality in different culture. An individual in one culture might be characterized in one way as compared to other typical individuals from that culture, but someone from another culture may perceive their personality very differently. While human nature is shared, the perceptions of that human nature vary greatly through cultural lenses. The facilitator could also use this test to introduce students to some of the difficulties they may encounter using their second language, by having the students take the test in one of the of the other languages offered for this tool. The students may experience frustration as they must use varied vocabulary in their second language, and they may even get different results from the test. This will introduce them to the difficulty of self-expression in their second language as well as in the context of another culture. They may begin to feel the interesting dynamic that some study abroad student’s face of having two personalities. To use the Color Code, an institution may send a request form to the organization in order to gain more information on the educational applications of this tool.

Reflection will take place throughout the day in the form of debriefing. After each activity, the facilitator should debrief by asking the students to share their ideas, opinions, and feelings about the exercise and what they learned from it. The purpose of the reflection process is for the students to
better understand themselves, and also their home culture, which is something they will explore further in the second phase of the ICC training.

**Introduction to Host Culture**

To make the transition from knowledge of their own culture and their self to knowledge of their future host culture, there are many possible tools and approaches. One particularly informative web-platform for this is the CountryNavigator tool. Depending on the institution, the workshop may include all of the departing study abroad students, or may be divided by program. Regardless of the group, the CountryNavigator can serve as a powerful instrument to begin exploring the student’s future host culture. Though an expensive online resource, those institutions with the financial resources to allow their students access will find the offerings vast and information-filled. After a short survey, this tool creates a students cultural profile, placing them on a spectrum for three categories: relating, regulating, and reasoning. Once their profile is created, they may compare their position on the spectrum to that of a number of cultures. They may also search by country and find a succinct, yet detailed description of that culture and the deeper elements of what motivates the citizens of that culture.

If the institution cannot afford such an online tool, there are likely many resources available on their home campus, which they may use to expose their students to their future host culture. To begin, the facilitator is encouraged in invite the students on campus who have recently returned from the program to a specific host country. Returning students are often great resources, as they are familiar with the host country and have experienced it as an “outsider”. However, if the institution is launching a new program they will not have any returning students in their first year. In this case, the
facilitator may invite international students or professors from that host culture. They may also invite language professors who teach the language of the host culture, or professors/professionals in the field of international relations. Any extra individuals the facilitator may bring in to represent or discuss the host culture, with enrich the introduction to and discussion around that culture.

**Activities**

In addition to some of the activities and resources proposed above, the facilitator will want to integrate a variety of engaging activities for students. The purpose of this is two-fold. The students must be engaged in their own learning in order to fully benefit from the training. Often students will be resistant to a mandatory training for study abroad in addition to their workload, however if the institution established a tradition of engaging and interactive workshops, future students will be more inclined to participate. Secondly, the field of intercultural competence lends itself easily to interactive activities, where the students may begin to experience some of the feelings they will encounter during their time abroad. NAFSA has collected and published in its Resource Library an Intercultural Activity Toolkit. This resource includes hundreds of activities specifically for study abroad, ESL learners, international students, etc, to introduce them to intercultural competence and intercultural experiences. Each activity is described, giving clear instructions on time requirements and other necessary resources. The activities for the pre departure workshops have the goal of taking the students outside of their comfort zone and forcing them to reflect on cultural differences and similarities.
Speed Dating

One proposed activity is “Speed Friending”. Please see Figure 2.0 for further details. This activity is a good ice breaker. This would be particularly successful if international students were participating in the activity as well. Activities such as this will not only allow students to better know themselves and each other, but it will force them to interact with individuals they may not have otherwise spoken to, as often happens when students participate in education abroad. The facilitator may select the activities most relevant to their particular group of students and/or the activities best fit to their abilities as a facilitator. As a part of the debrief the facilitator will discuss the struggles of making personal connections with people in another culture in a short period of time. This is a nerve-racking and sometimes frightening feat for students.

Figure 3.0

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity Information</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recommended Audience</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of Time</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resources</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Number of Participants</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Source of Activity</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purpose</strong></td>
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OVERVIEW

Much like speed dating, we used “speed friending” as a way to break the ice with our Conversation Partner program at our matching event. We set up the room with tables in the center of the room and chairs all around. As students came in (regardless of if they were foreign or native), we had them seated and eating snacks.

Once everyone arrived, we explained the "speed friending" rules and we used a timer to keep each of the conversations to a certain amount of time. (Note: we had a larger group so to ensure that everyone got to mingle, we kept our time limit to two minutes, though up to five would be ideal.)
BaFa BaFa

This next activity, BaFa, BaFa is a good introduction to interaction with other cultures. “Its aim is to demonstrate that one’s feelings of attachment to a given culture are learned in the process of socialization, and that people judge other cultures based on their own cultural perspective” (Zurabishhvili, 2001). The students are divided into 3 groups. The majority of the students will be assigned A or B culture. 3-5 students, depending on the size of the group will be neutral observers. The A and B cultures are very different. They have certain traits that other cultures might find “bizarre” and they have certain dislike for other cultural traits. The facilitator may decide these details, but they may pertain to cultural categories such as eye contact, touching, personal space, voice volume…etc, students may encounter difficulty with differences in these categories when they go abroad. Students from A and B culture will be asked to interact for about 10 minutes, making sure each student has spoken to all individuals from the other culture. They will be asked to observe and listening, to pick up on social and cultural cues. The observers will watch and take notes on the interactions. The debrief is key for this activity. Students will begin discussing and developing in skills in observation, tolerance, and curiosity.
Conclusion
While all institutions of higher education were not created equal in terms of financial, time, and human resources, this written work aims to serve as a guideline and framework for any institution to begin creating and facilitating the first phase of an intercultural competence training in education abroad. If students are exposed to such a training prior to leaving their host institution, they will be more prone to openness and curiosity of their new host culture and its members when they arrive.
Appendix A


INTRODUCTION: Internalize the concept of intercultural sensitivity with a variety of cultures.

Integration: Adapt confidently and comfortably to another culture.

Adaptation: Adapt comfortably and behenstically to another culture.

Accommodation: Recognize and value cultural differences without judgment.

Minimization: Minimize cultural differences in order to protect one's own cultural identity.

Denial: Deny the existence of cultural differences and real ignorance.

Stages of Cultural Competence

Cultural Competence is the process by which people learn to value and respond respectfully to people of all cultures.

Integration

Adaptation

Accommodation

Minimization

Denial

Benne’s Model of Cultural Competency
Sources


