

Developing Intercultural Competence in a Short Term Study Abroad Program

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*“Ukraine opened our eyes to different ways of life around the world,
and let us experience where what we learn comes from.
This trip brought us all closer as friends and gave us an absolutely unforgettable
experience that each of us will always remember.”*

Brenda, last diary entry



school

Intercultural competence

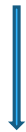
Shaules' Deep Culture Learning

- **Resistance** is “an unwillingness to change in response to the adaptive demands of a new cultural environment.” (p.150)
- * **Acceptance** – “perceiving as valid alternative interpretations of the cultural phenomena that one experiences.” (p. 166)
- * **Adaptation** - “allowing for change in oneself as a response to adaptive demands from a different cultural environment.” (p. 180).

Resistance

Acceptance

Adaptation



Explicit



Implicit

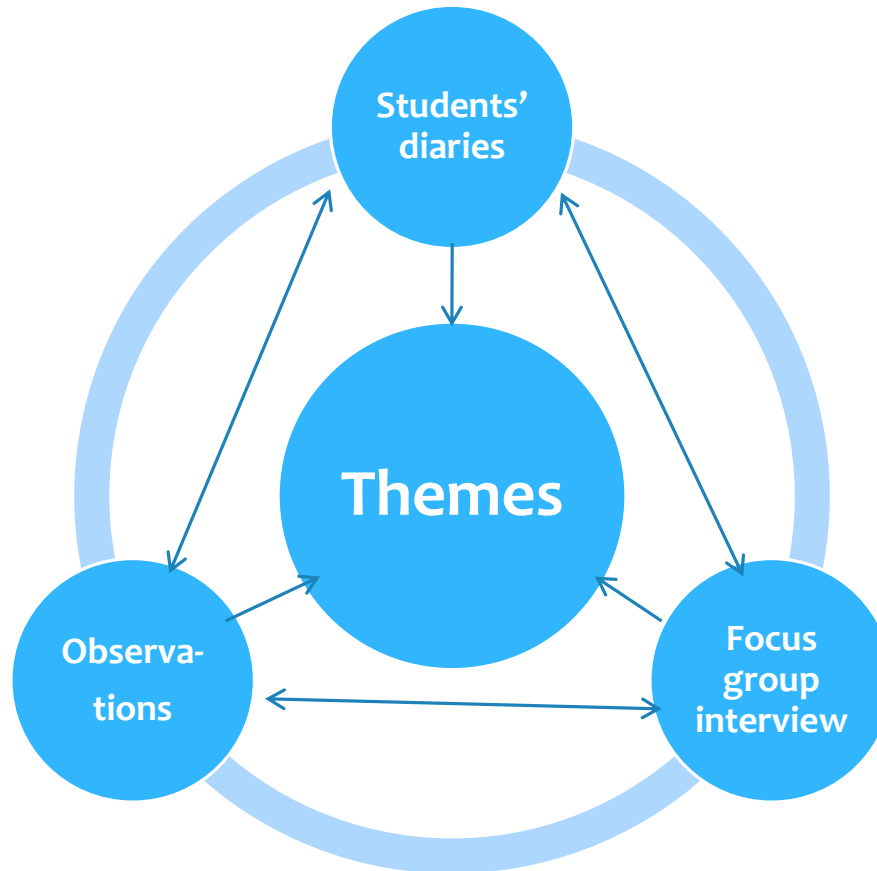
Increased depth of adaptive demands

Diagram - Shaules' (2007) Model of Cultural Learning (p.166)

Methodology

- * Qualitative Research Methodology - Basic Interpretive study
- * Ethics
- * Theoretical lens:
 - Byram's view of intercultural competence & Shaules' theory of intercultural learning
- * Participants

Data collection and analysis



Main Themes



- #1 Program design**
- #2 Intercultural learning**
- #3 Language as integral component of intercultural competence**
- #4 Personal development/transformation**

Theme 1:

Program design

- * Pre-departure preparation; intercultural training

“I am going to encourage myself to try as many new things as I can. In fact, that is my main goal for this trip!” (Svitlana, March 18).

- * Homestay

- * Attendance of classes in Ukraine

- * **Reflective/focused discussions**

- * Diaries

- * Supports during the sojourn & leadership

- * Reciprocity/relationship building

- * Safety

Theme 2:

Intercultural learning

* **Host families, Hospitality and Food**

“They really make you feel like you are part of their family.” (Brenda, Day 2)

* **Relationships with Ukrainian peers-quality of interaction**

“in Ukraine people say what they feel, but in Canada people are more reserved with their words.” (Pavlo, Day 14)

* **Confusion and annoyances**

“People that you aren’t familiar with aren’t very friendly. Like in Canada, we thank the bus drivers, the cab drivers, someone who holds the door for us, etc, and in Ukraine if you thank a bus driver or someone at a store, they look at you like you are insane.” (Ann, last entry, April 25).

“Getting to school was certainly interesting. It’s kind of like playing a videogame, weaving around other vehicles, it was awesome.” (Ned, Day 3)



Miss Gymnasium Beauty Contest



- * Experience of different worldviews on beauty, talent, values, and even power.
- * Talent or/and beauty?

Theme 3: Language as an integral component of intercultural competence

- * Difficulties with language use

“When talking Ukrainian I still feel really intimidated.”(Brenda, Day 4)

- * Improved language speaking skills

- * Use of English – negotiating spaces

- * Revitalized interest in the language

“I was planning to leave the program after this year, but the trip made me see and become more interested in the Ukrainian culture! I have decided to stay and finish the program.” (Alice, last entry)

Theme 4:

Personal development/transformation

- * Students became more independent, mature, and self-confident.
- * *“I’ve learned that trying new things helps you and makes you a stronger, more willing person. Even if its something little, you are still going out of your boundaries to try something new and it makes you feel good inside.” (Marsha, Day 15).*
- * Appreciation of their life in Canada; more aware citizens.
- * *“Ukraine opened our eyes to different ways of life around the world, while bringing us to be more in touch with our heritage and let us experience where what we learn comes from. This trip brought us all closer as friends and gave us an absolutely unforgettable experience that each of us will always remember.” (Brenda, last entry, June 9).*
- * Change of attitudes and appreciation of difference.
- * Tolerance for the unknown.

Recommendations

for short term student exchange organizers

- * **Goal of any study abroad: development of Intercultural Competence**
- * **Preparation... preparation... preparation**
- * **Careful matching of homestay families**
- * **Safety orientation; setting goals**
- * **Intercultural training**
- * **Continuous support**
- * **REFLECTIVE DISCUSSIONS**
- * **JOURNALS**
- * **Focus on building relationships**
- * **Strong sustainable leadership**

?Questions?

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