

Moving From Culture Shock to Cosmopolitanism: The Position of Students Immersed in Educational, Cross-Cultural Experiences

Objective

In a world where globalization is rapidly on the rise, possessing cross cultural understanding and affinity is increasingly important. I am interested in studying the experiences of students studying abroad as they endeavor to acquire a cross-cultural experience, including acquisition of a language, exposure to diverse socializations, and world views, and resulting in an educational experience on scholastic and personal levels. Through the use of questionnaires, surveys, and detailed journaling I will be charting the progress of students and myself in our respective cultural immersion programs. Specifically, I will be monitoring the progress of 10-20 students who are studying abroad in France.

Literary Background

As I have been preparing for my time abroad in the past months, I have interacted with interesting literature and studies which have confronted issues of cross cultural experiences, studying abroad, and culture shock. Exposure to this material in addition to input from my faculty advisors has inspired me to incorporate research into my time abroad in order to formulate an organized perspective which I may share with and benefit others through. In particular I am interested in the writings of Paul Pederson who writes of the common experiences encountered while abroad, as well as F. Schumann's work on the effectiveness of journaling in charting linguistic acquisition. In his work, *The Five Stages of Culture Shock: Critical Incidents Around the World*, Pederson follows in the path of previous studies on culture shock, namely P.S. Adler's publications in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. As discussed in Pederson's work the prescribed stages experienced by an individual while living abroad include; the honeymoon, disintegration, reintegration, autonomy, and interdependence (Pederson, 26-263). Schumann's work on the other hand, has resulted in the identification of six variables which affect individual foreign language acquisition. While I have referenced Pederson's approach as an inspiration for monitoring the progress of my focus group and myself, I intend to follow Schumann's example by incorporating my own progress in a more personal and detailed manner. I will be applying Schumann's technique of composing detailed journals on a daily basis in order to situate myself within the template of his variables, specifically as a second language learner in the context of cultural immersion.

Details of Pedersonian Stages

While Pederson has distinguished the stages of culture shock as distinct, he also stresses that they are unique in the experience of each individual; "[culture shock] is a process and not a single event, [and] may take place at many different levels simultaneously." (Pederson, vii) Using Pederson's definitive work as my guide, I intend to chart the progress of my own experiences and those of the focus group of students I will be communicating with.

Honeymoon stage

Individual is characterized by a sense of adventure and freedom upon recent arrival in host country. Any differences or difficulties merely heighten and encourage the individual's sense of excitement at new experiences encompassing time abroad (26).

Disintegration stage

As the individual becomes more aware of their own differences from the host culture they experience feelings of disorientation and weakened self-confidence as they feel inadequate. They misinterpret cultural signs, while becoming detached from their own cultural links and supports. Feelings of depression, loneliness, and withdrawal (79).

Reintegration stage

The observed differences are rejected by the individual and become a source of frustration, anxiety, and pre-occupation. Preferences and dislikes in culture are emphasized for the individual. Self-esteem grows as individual asserts opinions (134).

Autonomy stage

Individual experiences confidence in own capabilities and becomes relaxed and comfortable in setting. Increased feelings of control and independence (201).

Interdependence

Celebration of cultural differences. Individual experiences wide range of emotion and create meaning for situations leading to productivity and a sense of responsibility (245).

Through using these stages as a frame of reference I will administer surveys and questionnaires that will result in the charted progress of my focus group's time abroad. The results from this portion of the research will demonstrate the position of the students within Pederson's schema.

Schumann's Factors

Schumann emphasized the use of detailed journaling to chart the progress of a language learner on a personal level (as featured in the Selected Papers from the Los Angeles Second Language Acquisition Research Forum). This task was accomplished by using "journals as research tools for self-investigation in second language learning (SLL)." (Schumann, 51) I will be applying his principles within the context of language acquisition within the setting of education in cultural immersion. As a second language learner, this method is appropriate and applicable to my research. In agreement with his findings, I believe that such a tool will contribute to my research through identifying my personal "language variables". Schumann's work establishes six language variables as the factors, which contribute and effect a student's language acquisition and can be identified through detailed journaling.

Nesting Patterns

Language learning is affected by the manner in which students situate themselves in their host country, as evidenced in journal entries. (51)

Reactions to Pedagogical Techniques

The manner in which students interact and respond to teachers and teaching methods within the classroom setting. (52)

Motivation for Choice of Language Learning Materials

The student's relation to and reception of a specific classroom text or material can improve or hinder their learning (52).

Desire to Maintain One's Own Language Learning Agenda

Journaling may evidence that tension arises as student's plan for language learning conflicts with the instructor's agenda (52).

Eavesdropping vs. Speaking as a Language Learning Strategy

Some students show a preference for learning through active listening, rather than having to speak themselves in order acquire language. (53)

Competition vs. Cooperation in SLL

Students can identify through journaling whether or not they benefit in competitive or cooperative learning settings when acquiring second languages (53).

Method

By administering surveys, questionnaires, and interviews at stages of pre-departure, arrival, mid-stay, pre-return, and post-experience, I will chart the personal progress of the focus group in their unique relations to Pederson's stages (please see surveys #1-4). Factors to be considered are as follows, but not limited to; personal motivations, expectations (of self, country, and experience), educational background (such as foreign language proficiency and knowledge of country), personal characteristics (personality, traits, adaptability to change etc), perception (of self in relation to host country and of host country culture), and emotional state (as occurring throughout process). Aspects such as these will be monitored in research to gauge the progress of the students, but also enable results that will evidence patterns of experience while abroad. This data will also serve as a contemporary and specific focus group, the results of which will be compared to the stages elaborated by Pederson. For, I am not interested in merely interpreting his stages, but observing how the schema set out by Pederson applies to the specific experiences of my focus group in the real life scenario of a definite student experience, specifically those studying abroad in France.

In addition to utilizing Pederson's stages as a frame of reference for my research, I will also be recording my own progress to incorporate a highly detailed and personal aspect into my research. In addition to taking part in the surveys and questionnaires of my focus group, I will be maintaining a journal including such elements as my linguistic acquisition and relation to the variables established by Schumann. These journal entries will be completed in conjunction to the Pederson studies, in order that I may utilize this experience to identify my personal language variables, in addition to understanding the personal processes of a student abroad.

Purpose

As a result of this research in conjunction with my time abroad, I intend to gather and organize information that will compose an insightful and educational study in cross-cultural educational experiences. The opportunity to share the results of this summer research project with individuals at the symposium will grant me the opportunity to share the findings with a broader audience, in the hope that such findings may benefit individuals who desire to study abroad and or acquire a second language through such a cross-cultural experience.

Projected Timeline

- Spring Quarter- continue meeting with academic advisors to refine survey questions.
- Spring Quarter- meet with selected focus group members and administer pre-departure surveys and questionnaires (see Survey #1), and establish reliable form of correspondence to be used while abroad (most likely to be conducted through email).
- By week 10 of Spring Quarter- complete any unread literary and academic works from the 'sources' list and incorporate any appropriate information into research.
- Pre-departure- begin personal journal of expectations to be continued throughout time abroad (after Schumann) and incorporated into research presentation upon return.
- Pre-departure- final in person meeting with advisor(s) prior to departure.
- Arrive in France July 2 and begin cultural immersion program at University of Burgundy in Dijon. Establish contact with advisor(s) and with members of focus group as they arrive at their respective destinations at various French institutions.
- July 9: administer Survey #2 to focus group (tentatively via email). Collect and organize results. Maintain communication with advisor(s), relaying data.
- Mid-program: administer Survey # 3 to individuals, then collect and organize results. Maintain communication with advisor(s), relaying data.
- Pre-return: administer Survey #4 to individuals, then collect and organize data.
- Post program: organize all data in comprehensive manner to show variance of experiences in relation to Pederson's "Stages", interview participants about experience and conduct comparison of initial

expectations (referencing Survey #1 results) with actual outcome of time abroad (tentatively to be recorded on cassette and transcribed).

- Spring: Present Results to Research Symposium at UC, Irvine.

Sources

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Survey #1: Pre-departure

Please answer the following questions by selecting the answer that reflects your position. For selections ranging 1-5: 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (disagree), 3 (neutral/not applicable), 4 (agree), and 5 (strongly agree).

1) Primary reason for studying abroad:

a. education b. language acquisition c. leisure d. cultural experience

other:

2) How many years did you study French before college?
a. 1 b. 2 c. 3 c. 4 d. 5 e. more than 5 years

3) How many years of French instruction have you taken at the college level?
a. less than 1 b. 1 c. 2 d. 3 e. 4 d. more than 4 years

4) Have you studied abroad before?
a. yes b. no

5) If so, where and when did you study?
country: _____ ; date: _____.

6) Have you traveled abroad before?
a. yes b. no

7) If so, where and when did you travel?

Country(ies)/ dates _____.

8) Where will the credit from the courses you take abroad be applied? (check all that apply)

a. not applicable, not taking courses for credit

b. courses contributing to degree requirements

c. classes contributing towards credit to graduate but not degree requirements

d. courses counting towards both elective credit and degree requirements

9) While abroad I will be living:

a. with a host family b. in a dormitory c. in an apartment d. other:

10) I will have roommates in this living situation.

a. true b. false

11) I am currently taking part in the following activities to prepare for my time abroad (circle all that apply):

a. speaking with students that have studied abroad in my country

b. speaking with individuals who have traveled abroad

c. researching the location I will be studying in

d. watching French films, plays, or productions

e. listening to French music

f. reading French publications

g. taking French language classes

h. speaking to individuals from France

12) On a weekly basis I speak in French (outside the classroom):

a. for less than 1 hour b. 1-2 hours c. 2-3 hours d. 3-4 hours e. 4-5 hours

f. more than 5 hours (if so, please specify: _____ hours per week)

13) I am acquainted with some of the individuals I will be studying with while abroad.

- a. true b. false

14) I am currently participating in the following activities at my home university:

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. volunteer work | g. political groups |
| b. religious activities | h. academic/educational groups |
| c. sports/fitness | i. music events |
| d. outdoor/recreation | j. interaction with faculty/staff |
| e. artistic events/activities | k. social groups/organizations |
| f. student clubs | |

15) When at my host university abroad I would like to take part in the following on campus activities (circle all that apply):

- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. volunteer work | g. political groups |
| b. religious activities | h. academic/educational groups |
| c. sports/fitness | i. music events |
| d. outdoor/recreation | j. interaction with faculty/staff |
| e. artistic events/activities | k. social groups/organizations |
| f. student clubs | |

16) The following word(s) describe my relation to my future experience abroad:

(circle all that apply)

- | | |
|-------------|-----------------|
| a. anxious | e. not prepared |
| b. excited | |
| c. calm | |
| d. prepared | |

II. Rate the following statements in accordance with how they apply to your circumstance. '1' meaning you strongly disagree, '2' you disagree, '3' meaning you are neutral, '4' you agree, and '5' you strongly agree.

11) I have fears and anxieties about studying abroad.

1 2 3 4 5

12) I am confident in my French language abilities.

1 2 3 4 5

13) I am expecting to improve my French language skills while abroad.

1 2 3 4 5

14) I am knowledgeable about the area I am studying abroad in.

1 2 3 4 5

15) I enjoy change and experiencing new situations.

1 2 3 4 5

16) I actively seek out educational and challenging experiences.

1 2 3 4 5

17) Before my departure I am actively seeking out situations and activities that will prepare me for my time abroad.

1 2 3 4 5

18) I am an outgoing person/extrovert.

1 2 3 4 5

19) I am a reserved person/introvert.

1 2 3 4 5

20) When I study abroad I expect to undergo changes in my outlook on life.

1 2 3 4 5

21) While abroad I intend to keep in touch/communicate with my family and friends at home.

1 2 3 4 5

22) I intend to make friends with French students at my host institution.

1 2 3 4 5

23) I intend to make friends with foreign students like myself while abroad.

1 2 3 4 5

24) When abroad I expect to be welcomed by those native to my host country.

1 2 3 4 5

25) I anticipate disliking my study abroad experience at some point during my stay.

1 2 3 4 5

26) I anticipate regretting my abroad experience at some point during my stay.

1 2 3 4 5

27) I expect that I will not want to return to my home at the end of my abroad experience.

1 2 3 4 5

28) Feelings of homesickness will accompany my time abroad.

1 2 3 4 5

29) I expect I will assimilate to cultural practices and customs while abroad.

1 2 3 4 5

30) After returning from my experience abroad, I expect I will desire to re-visit my host country.

1 2 3 4 5

31) During my time abroad I expect to form lasting friendships/connections.

1 2 3 4 5

Survey #2: Arrival

1) I experienced difficulties during my trip to my destination.

1 2 3 4 5

- 2) I am experiencing feelings of homesickness.
1 2 3 4 5
- 3) My living arrangements are satisfactory.
1 2 3 4 5
- 4) The 'locals' have been welcoming and receptive.
1 2 3 4 5
- 5) My language skills have been adequate for situations I have encountered.
1 2 3 4 5
- 6) French is the language I am expected to speak in by the individuals I have interacted with.
1 2 3 4 5
- 7) I am comfortable speaking French.
1 2 3 4 5
- 8) I have observed different customs and social interactions.
1 2 3 4 5
- 9) I am able to act as I did while I was in my home country.
1 2 3 4 5
- 10) I have no regrets about choosing this experience.
1 2 3 4 5
- 11) I feel confident in my abilities to accomplish my goals while abroad.
1 2 3 4 5
- 12) I feel anxious about the experience that awaits me.
1 2 3 4 5
- 13) I have been using English frequently.
1 2 3 4 5
- 14) I have easily found individuals who are willing to answer my questions and assist me.
1 2 3 4 5
- 15) I expect to be able to continue daily activities that I am accustomed to.
1 2 3 4 5
- 16) I have been utilizing a guidebook to acquaint me with my surroundings.
a. true b. false
- 17) I have contacted my family and or friends at home.
a. true b. false
- 18) I will have access to internet and email while abroad.
a. true b. false

- 19) I will be using the following methods to contact friends and family at home (check all that apply):
- a. email
 - b. phone
 - c. letters/postcards
 - d. do not plan to contact friends/family
- 20) Differences have been observed in the following categories:
- a. gender roles
 - b. social greetings
 - c. status/class interactions
 - d. observance of meals
 - e. travel procedures
 - f. climate
 - g. social interactions
 - h. attire/dress
- 21) Individuals I have encountered are able to tell that I am not a native.
- a. true
 - b. false
- 22) I feel I could have better prepared myself for this experience.
- a. true
 - b. false

Survey #3: Mid-Stay

- 1) I am experiencing feelings of homesickness.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 2) I am satisfied with my housing situation.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 3) I have difficulty sleeping.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 4) I have become more proficient in my French language skills.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 5) French natives have been willing to converse with me in French.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 6) I have experiences difficulty when communicating in French with native speakers.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 7) I have become active in student and community activities.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 8) I am annoyed at some cultural customs and differences I have observed.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 9) I have encountered criticism of my country of origin and political beliefs
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 10) My academic program is more difficult than that at my home institution.
- 1 2 3 4 5
- 11) (Since the last survey) Individuals can tell that I am not a native.
- 1 2 3 4 4

- 12) The student population is:
- more diverse than my home institution
 - less diverse than my home institution
 - as diverse as my home institution
- 13) I have been spending the majority of my time with:
- American students
 - Foreign students
 - French students
 - individuals met outside of school setting
- 14) I have been participating in the following activities at my host institution:
- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| g. volunteer work | g. political groups |
| h. religious activities | h. academic/educational groups |
| i. sports/fitness | i. music events |
| j. outdoor/recreation | j. interaction with faculty/staff |
| k. artistic events/activities | k. social groups/organizations |
| l. student clubs | |
- 15) I have been participating in the following activities in the community outside my host institution:
- | | |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. volunteer work | g. political groups |
| b. religious activities | h. academic/educational groups |
| c. sports/fitness | i. music events |
| d. outdoor/recreation | j. interaction with faculty/staff |
| e. artistic events/activities | k. social groups/organizations |
| f. student clubs | |
- 16) I frequently interact with the individuals I live with.
- true
 - false
- 17) French is the main language of communication for me.
- true
 - false
- 18) I have begun to 'think' in French.
- true
 - false
- 19) I could have taken steps to better prepare myself for this experience.
- true
 - false
- 20) I have taken trips outside the area I am studying.
- not at all
 - once
 - 1-2 times
 - 2-3 times
 - 3 or more times
- 21) I have had dreams in French.
- true
 - false
- 22) I feel "at home".

- a. true b. false

- 23) I have been communicating with my family and friends at home.
a. true b. false

Survey # 4 Pre-Return

- 1) I am prepared to return home.

1 2 3 4 5

- 2) I am satisfied with my experience abroad.

1 2 3 4 5

- 3) I plan to return to visit the area I studied in.

1 2 3 4 5

- 4) I made the most of my opportunities while abroad.

1 2 3 4 5

- 5) I am satisfied with my language improvement as a result of this program.

1 2 3 4 5

- 6) I embraced the differences I encountered in my host country.

1 2 3 4 5

- 7) I now view my home country from a different perspective.

1 2 3 4 5

- 8) I was able to establish a 'home' for myself while abroad.

1 2 3 4 5

- 9) I became comfortable using French in everyday situations.

1 2 3 4 5

- 10) My pre-departure preparation was beneficial.

1 2 3 4 5

- 11) I learned the most through my interactions outside the classroom.

1 2 3 4 5

- 12) I felt homesick throughout my stay.

1 2 3 4 5

- 13) I am currently feeling homesick.

1 2 3 4 5

- 14) I was able to form friendships with natives.

a. true b. false

- 15) I made friends who plan to visit me in my home.

a. true b. false

