

Digital Storytelling as a Tool for Reflection on Study Abroad

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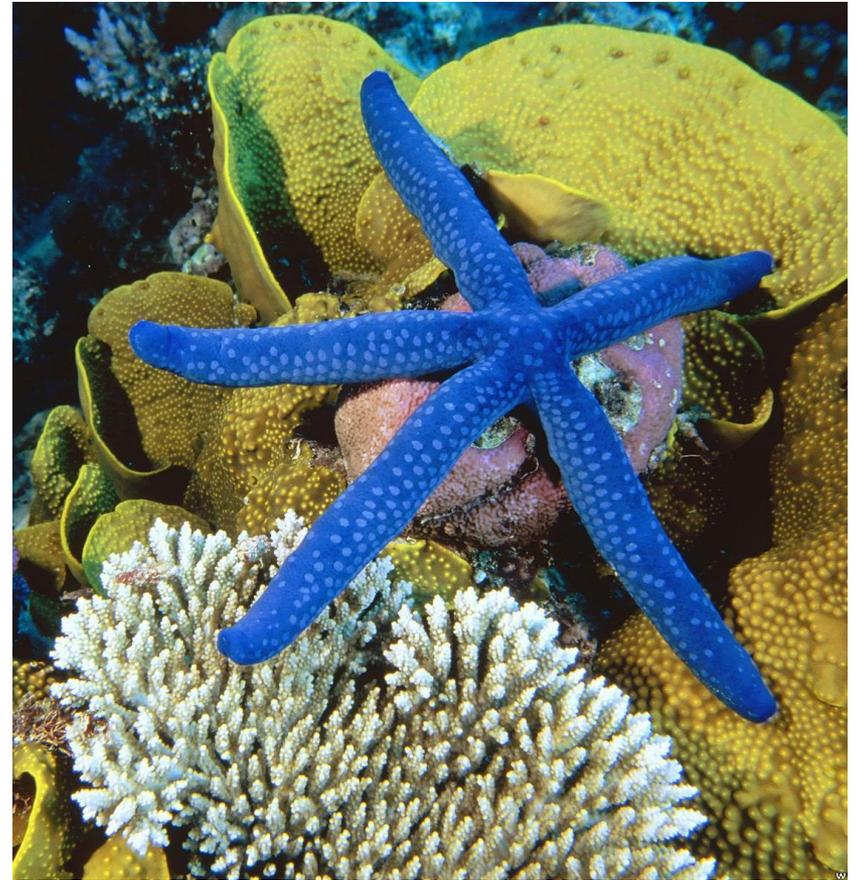
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Reflection on Study Abroad

- Why is reflection important to study abroad?
- What techniques could you use to bring about reflection?



Reflection on Study Abroad

- It is important for students to spend time in guided, critical reflection on their study abroad experience. This can bring about transformative learning outcomes (Mezirow, 1990; Pedersen, 2010; Taylor, 1998; Vande Berg, Paige, & Lou, 2012)
- Reflection often includes writing
- Digital Storytelling can be another important form of reflection



Digital Storytelling

- Digital Story- short video, created by a non-media professional, using images, video clips, audio, and/or narration to illustrate a story (Robin, 2008)
- Centre for Digital Storytelling- Joe Lambert and Dana Atchley, U.C. Berkeley
- Popularized by organizations like Story Corps
- Adopted for pedagogical use



Digital Storytelling

- Benefits
 - Gain 21st Century skills
 - Empowering and gives a voice to diverse experiences
 - Encourages creative expression and emotional response
 - Uses artifacts such as pictures and video clips that students are often naturally collecting
 - Can allow students to be more personally connected to the reflection than they might be through writing, or other forms
- **Question: Can digital storytelling be a useful tool for reflection on the study abroad experience?**

Theoretical Framework

- Transformative Learning Theory, Jack Mezirow
 - “By far the most significant learning experiences in adulthood involve critical self-reflection—reassessing the way we have posed problems and reassessing our own orientation to perceiving, knowing, believing, feeling, and acting” (Mezirow, 1990, p. 13).
 - 10 Phases beginning with a disorienting dilemma
 - In the context of study abroad, the experience of a new culture can serve as a disorienting dilemma for students, and with the help of critical reflection, the study abroad experience can then turn into catalyst for transformative learning

Theoretical Framework

INTERCULTURAL KNOWLEDGE AND COMPETENCE VALUE RUBRIC

for more information, please contact valuel@aacu.org



Definition

Intercultural Knowledge and Competence is "a set of cognitive, affective, and behavioral skills and characteristics that support effective and appropriate interaction in a variety of cultural contexts." (Bennett, J. M. 2008. Transformative training: Designing programs for culture learning. In *Contemporary leadership and intercultural competence: Understanding and utilizing cultural diversity to build successful organizations*, ed. M. A. Moodian, 95-110. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.)

Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample or collection of work that does not meet benchmark (cell one) level performance.

	Capstone 4	3	Milestones 2	Benchmark 1
Knowledge <i>Cultural self-awareness</i>	Articulates insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g. seeking complexity; aware of how her/his experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases, resulting in a shift in self-description.)	Recognizes new perspectives about own cultural rules and biases (e.g. not looking for sameness; comfortable with the complexities that new perspectives offer.)	Identifies own cultural rules and biases (e.g. with a strong preference for those rules shared with own cultural group and seeks the same in others.)	Shows minimal awareness of own cultural rules and biases (even those shared with own cultural group(s)) (e.g. uncomfortable with identifying possible cultural differences with others.)
Knowledge <i>Knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks</i>	Demonstrates sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.	Demonstrates adequate understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.	Demonstrates partial understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.	Demonstrates surface understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices.
Skills <i>Empathy</i>	Interprets intercultural experience from the perspectives of own and more than one worldview and demonstrates ability to act in a supportive manner that recognizes the feelings of another cultural group.	Recognizes intellectual and emotional dimensions of more than one worldview and sometimes uses more than one worldview in interactions.	Identifies components of other cultural perspectives but responds in all situations with own worldview	Views the experience of others but does so through own cultural worldview
Skills <i>Verbal and nonverbal communication</i>	Articulates a complex understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication (e.g. demonstrates understanding of the degree to which people use physical contact while communicating in different cultures or use direct/indirect and explicit/implicit meanings) and is able to skillfully negotiate a shared understanding based on those differences.	Recognizes and participates in cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication and begins to negotiate a shared understanding based on those differences.	Identifies some cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication and is aware that misunderstandings can occur based on those differences but is still unable to negotiate a shared understanding.	Has a minimal level of understanding of cultural differences in verbal and nonverbal communication; is unable to negotiate a shared understanding.
Attitudes <i>Curiosity</i>	Asks complex questions about other cultures, seeks out and articulates answers to these questions that reflect multiple cultural perspectives.	Asks deeper questions about other cultures and seeks out answers to these questions.	Asks simple or surface questions about other cultures.	States minimal interest in learning more about other cultures.
Attitudes <i>Openness</i>	Initiates and develops interactions with culturally different others. Suspend judgment in valuing her/his interactions with culturally different others.	Begins to initiate and develop interactions with culturally different others. Begins to suspend judgment in valuing her/his interactions with culturally different others.	Expresses openness to most, if not all, interactions with culturally different others. Has difficulty suspending any judgment in her/his interactions with culturally different others, and is aware of own judgment and expresses a willingness to change.	Receptive to interacting with culturally different others. Has difficulty suspending any judgment in her/his interactions with culturally different others, but is unaware of own judgment.

The Study

- Discover Abroad Maymester trips to Australia and New Zealand
- DA trips tend to appeal to students with little international travel experience. Affordable, short, no language barrier.
- 5 trips with different academic disciplines. All trips focused on concepts of sustainability and progress
- All students were required to complete a 3 minute digital story, reflecting on how their understanding of progress had changed



The Study

- DA trips are organized around various excursions and experiences
- Write a thematic essay in response: “Describe your understanding of progress and lessons (you have learned from this program) for a sustainable future”
- Essay is reviewed by peers and used to narrate their digital story
- Digital story workshop. They learn storyboarding and other skills
- Encouraged to take pictures and videos throughout trip
- Video must be uploaded within 7 days of the trip’s conclusion



The Study

- Examine digital stories from 2015 Discover Abroad Maymester trips to evaluate whether they are a useful tool for reflection
- Digital stories on YouTube mean they are publically accessible. Non-invasive study. Also IRB approval
- Obtained all links to videos, randomly sorted to get a representation from all 5 trips. Analyzed until saturation at 25
- Transcribed and scored according to rubric. Cross checked with another coder to established intercoder reliability



VALUE multimedia rubric

	Visual Content	Pictures and video choices are imaginative, memorable, and compelling and enhance the effectiveness of the presentation. They illustrate and add to the narration.	Pictures and video choices are thoughtful and generally support the effectiveness of the presentation. They illustrate the narration	Pictures and video choices are mundane and commonplace and partially support the effectiveness of the presentation. There is little to no connection between the visual content and the narration	Pictures and video choices minimally support the effectiveness of the presentation. Some of the visual content is not appropriate to the audience
	Supporting Material	A variety of types of supporting materials (music, statistics, quotations, illustrations, examples, etc) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that significantly support the presentation.	Supporting materials (music, statistics, quotations, illustrations, examples, etc) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that generally supports the presentation	Supporting materials (music, statistics, quotations, illustrations, examples, etc) make appropriate reference to information or analysis that partially supports the presentation	Insufficient supporting materials (music, statistics, quotations, illustrations, examples, etc.) make reference to information to analysis that minimally supports the presentation
Intercultural Knowledge and Competence	Knowledge <i>Cultural self-awareness</i>	Articulates insights into own cultural rules and biases (e.g. seeking complexity; aware of how her/his experiences have shaped these rules, and how to recognize and respond to cultural biases resulting in a shift in self-description)	Recognizes new perspectives about own cultural rules and biases (e.g. not looking for sameness; comfortable with complexities that new perspectives offer)	Identifies own cultural rules and biases (e.g. with a strong preference for those rules shared with own cultural group and seeks the same in others)	Shows minimal awareness of own cultural rules and biases (even those shared with own cultural groups) (e.g. uncomfortable with identifying possible cultural differences with others)
	Knowledge <i>Knowledge of cultural worldview frameworks</i>	Demonstrates sophisticated understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices	Demonstrates adequate understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices	Demonstrates partial understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices	Demonstrates surface understanding of the complexity of elements important to members of another culture in relation to its history, values, politics, communication styles, economy, or beliefs and practices
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Results: Academic Learning

- Ryan: describes the issue of progress in American terms, but then acknowledges, “one’s understanding of progress can be different based on perspective”. He illustrates this point by describing the way the Noosa community in Australia chose to address economic growth and tourism through a sustainable response
- Rachel: defined progress only in personal terms, rather than exploring the idea of progress as it pertained to the academic content. Rachel defined progress as “moving through a process in order to reach goals” and “always moving forward”. Rachel identified that her goals for the program were to be more independent from her family and that by the trip’s end she says, “I have made more progress than I ever thought possible”.
- this response suggests that Rachel did not critically consider the idea of progress from the point of view of the communities that she visited, which was the academic purpose of the excursions.

Results: Academic Learning

- Highest score was reserved for students who drew a conclusion that made a personal application to or reflection on their life. This is consistent with Mezirow's TLT
- Sally: describes how her understanding of progress and sustainability is no longer "solely economic". She describes practical ways that she plans to integrate this new knowledge into her life, not only as a responsible citizen, but also as someone who is planning a future in politics. Sally views her new knowledge as "weapons to help win the battle for sustainability and progress". Sally has conceptualized how her new learning not only applies to her life as a citizen, but can also be integrated into her desired career path.

Results: Use of Digital Story

- Assess stylistic mastery of this genera
- In several cases students did not connect their visual content to the narration and displayed, instead, a selection of pictures—albeit dramatic and aesthetically stunning--in seemingly random order during their digital story. The students who failed to connect the visual content to the narration missed an opportunity to support and add to the richness of their reflection.

Results: Intercultural understanding

- In many cases, students were able to identify how their own experiences contributed to shaping their perspectives. Eliza, for example, says, “Due to being raised in a comfortable urban setting, my initial opinion of progress was fixated more on the social and economic expansion of an area as opposed to the environmental growth”. Eliza connects her urban, upper middle-class, American upbringing with her understanding of progress.
- Lazaro explains that his understanding of progress comes from his “various life experiences”, and says that learning from the perspectives of people in other cultures brings “balance and equity.” Lazaro describes the ways Europeans devalued the perspectives of the Aboriginal people, who were actually very sophisticated in their understanding of sustainability. He says that in order for progress to be achieved “in a multi-diverse culture, then culture needs to be respected”. This shows Lazaro assigning importance to various worldviews and perspectives and advocating for a way to respect all of them.

Discussion

- Useful tool for capturing various types of learning
- Adds depth to reflection by allowing the student to interact with the process of reflection in a different way than writing
- Perhaps successful in part because of the focus on writing. Provides a familiar backbone for students
- Many have not fully realized the potential and purpose of the digital story form