

# MAXIMIZING THE POTENTIAL FOR EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING ABROAD: TWO CASE STUDIES IN INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

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# Today's Student

- Firmly grounded in today's consumer culture
- “Yelp” generation
- Expect experiences to meet their preconceived notions or individually held expectations

*How will we ever get to a point where civic engagement and global learning is seen as a priority if students are so focused on “me?”*

# Trends in International Education



- Less emphasis on language learning
- Cultural immersion is not always a guarantee
- More participation in short-term programs abroad
  - Still categorized as “study abroad” regardless of duration

# Elements of Narcissism

- Jean M. Twenge, Ph.D., Psychology Dept at SDSU, using personality inventories, has found a growing trend towards narcissism in their scores.
- Her conclusion: *“Younger generations are increasingly entitled, self-obsessed and unprepared for the realities of adult life.”*
- The question becomes: *How do we as educators help students move past their self-obsessed culture to effectively engage with the “other?”*

# CASE STUDY #1

Experiential Learning through Studying and  
Teaching Abroad

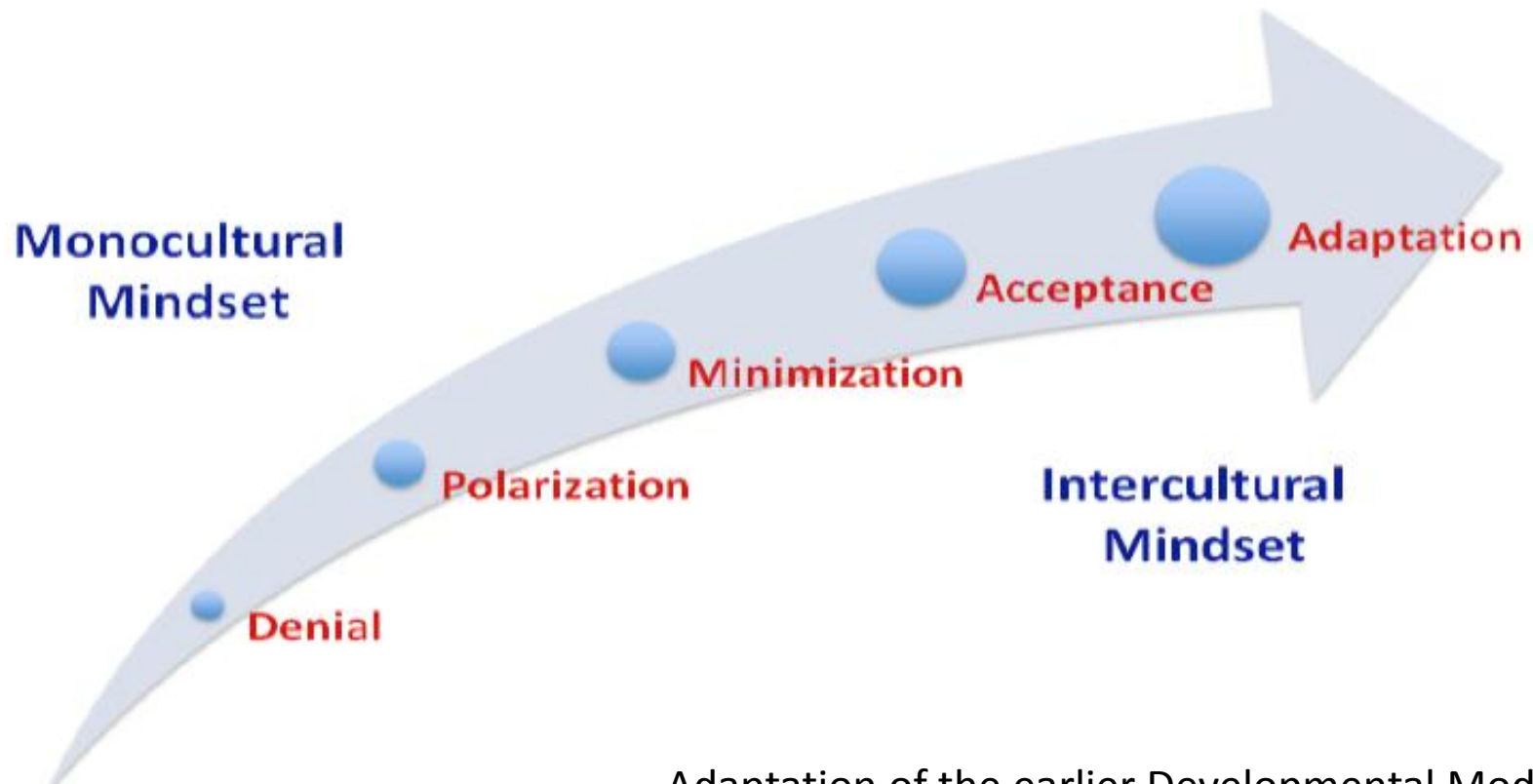
CEA Barcelona

# Overview

- Show that... it is possible to learn in Barcelona!
- Discuss strategies to facilitate experiential learning in a course taught in a study abroad context
  - Understanding, application, and reframing activities (Eyler, Giles & Schmiede, 1996)
- Discuss how experiential learning can have an impact on the students' intercultural development while studying abroad
  - Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1993)

# Experience of the cultural difference

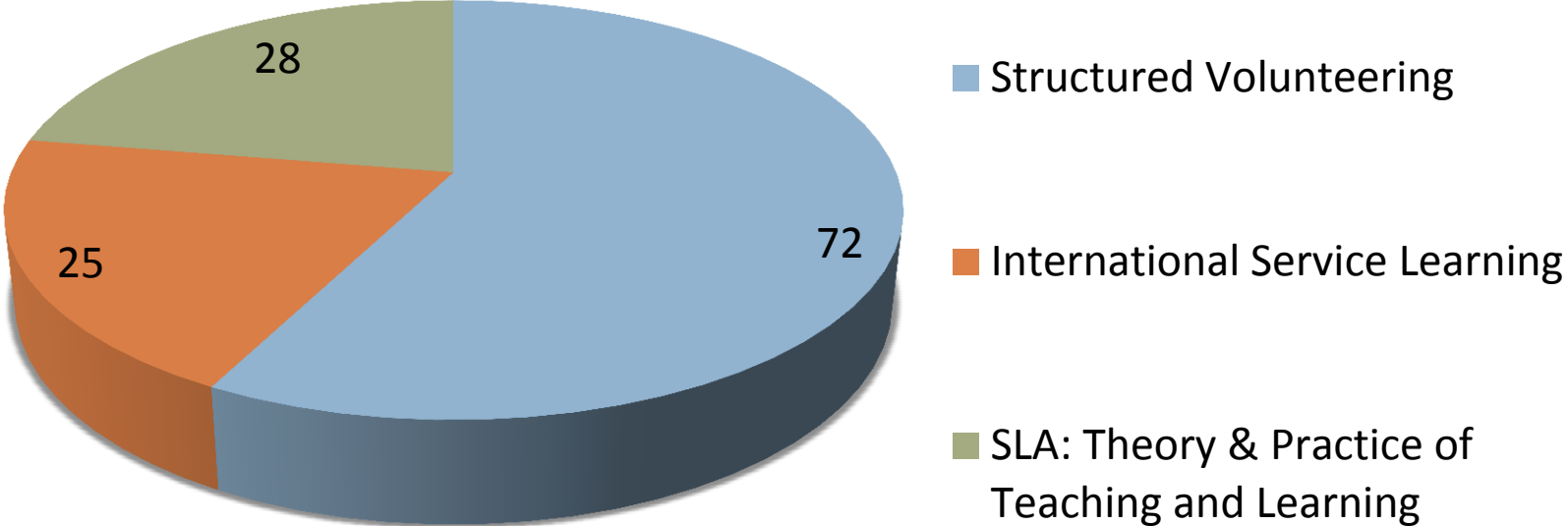
## Intercultural Development Continuum



Adaptation of the earlier Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity created Bennett (1993)

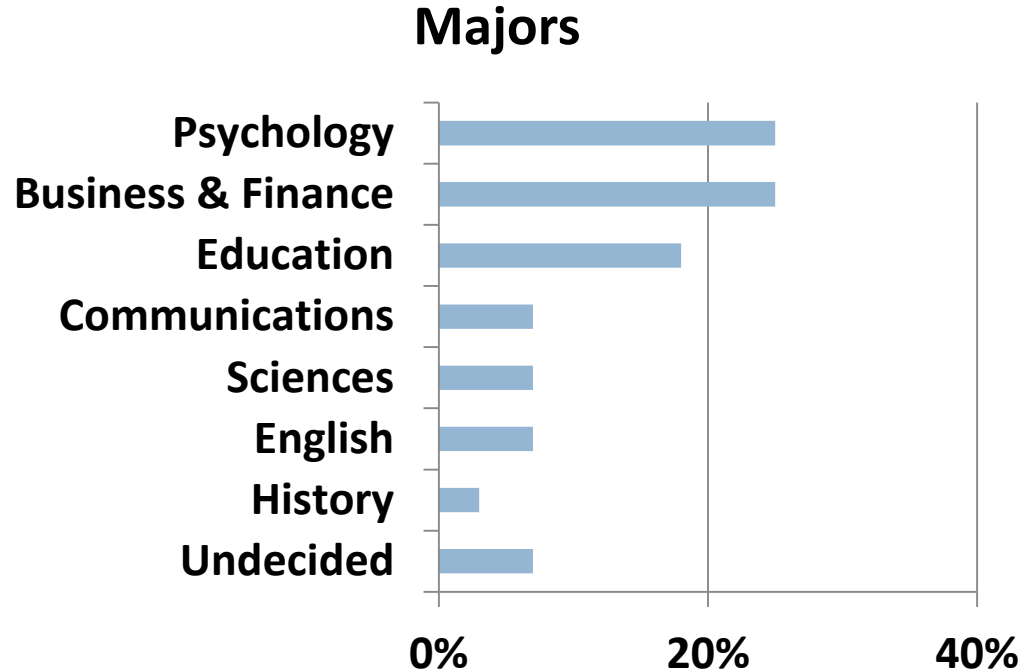
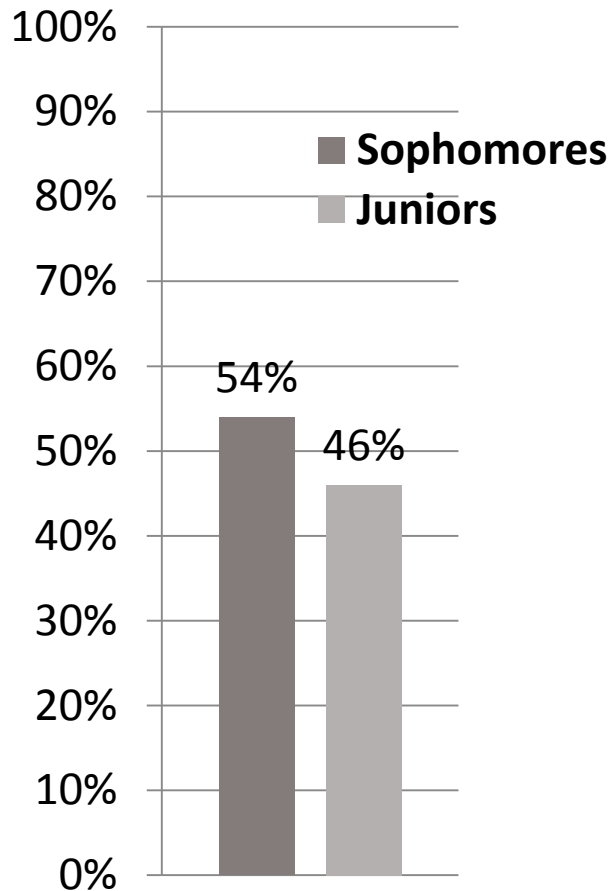
# Experiential Learning Programs Abroad

## CEA Barcelona 2013-14





# Students in SLA: Theory & Practice of Teaching and Learning



# SLA: Theory & Practice of Teaching and Learning

15-week course

Credits: 3

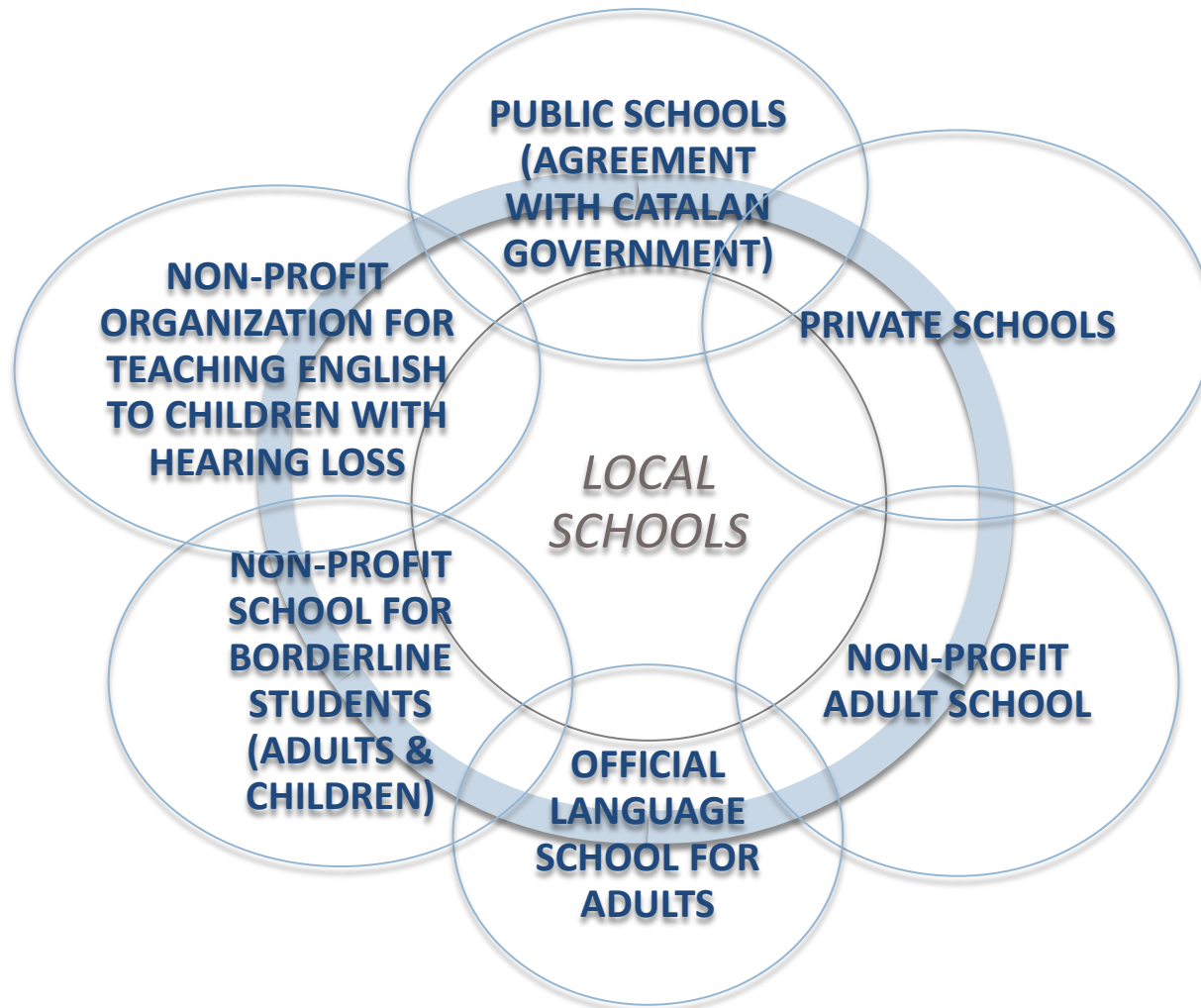
Language of instruction: English

Class contact hours: 30

Teaching service: 30



# Teaching Assistant Program Overview



# Teaching Assistant Program Overview

Coordinated by the Experiential Learning Coordinator, who is in contact with students, schools, and course instructor

## PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

VOLUNTEERING ORIENTATION

APPLICATION & INTERVIEW WITH EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING COORDINATOR

INTERCULTURAL LEARNING WORKSHOP

FIRST MEETING AT THE LOCAL SCHOOL

2/3 HOURS PER WEEK OF FIELD WORK

INDIVIDUAL FOLLOW-UP WITH STUDENT & SCHOOL

MIDTERM REFLECTION WORKSHOP

STUDENT'S PERFORMANCE EVALUATION FROM THE SCHOOL

RE-ENTRY & CAREER WORKSHOP

# Course Learning Objectives

Knowledge of SLA and teaching methodology  
Development of teaching skills

Learn theories of learning & teaching methods

Design teaching materials and test them in a real context

Reflect on the design and implementation of teaching materials

UNDERSTANDING  
(BEFORE SERVICE)

APPLICATION  
(DURING SERVICE)

REFRAMING  
(AFTER SERVICE)

Knowledge of the local culture  
Development of global & intercultural skills

Raise awareness on expectations & assumptions of the culture

Compare expectations to observations & interpret/evaluate differences

Find different interpretations for the differences observed and reframe evaluations

# Course Activities & Assessment

Knowledge of SLA and teaching methodology  
Development of teaching skills

Lectures & discussions  
Exam (15%)

Student needs analysis (5%), Teaching demo (5%), Field A. 3 (5%)

Field A. 4 (10%)  
Final Project (20%)

*Class participation (10%)*

*Teaching service (15%)*

UNDERSTANDING  
(BEFORE SERVICE)

APPLICATION  
(DURING SERVICE)

REFRAMING  
(AFTER SERVICE)

Knowledge of the local culture  
Development of global & intercultural skills

Volunteering  
Orientation, **Field Assignment 1** (5%),  
Intercultural Learning Workshop

Student needs analysis (5%), **Field Assignment 2** (5%)

Videopresentation (5%)  
**Field A. 4** (10%)

# Strategies to facilitate experiential learning abroad: **Understanding**

- **Creative writing (Field Assignment 1):** using students' creativity to raise awareness on their expectations, assumptions & prior knowledge of the local culture

Detailed description of how you imagine that the teaching placement site and your experience on the first day will be

Describe the context (neighborhood, school, facilities...): **WHAT YOU SEE, HEAR, SMELL...**

Describe your performance and the teacher's performance  
**WHAT YOU DO / WHAT (S)HE DOES**

Describe your experience  
**WHAT YOU FEEL**

# Students' Expectations

<b>EXCITEMENT</b>	<b>ANXIETY</b>
<b>Excellent communication</b>	<b>Fear of the language barrier</b>
<b>Excellent teaching abilities</b>	<b>Fear of lack of teaching abilities</b>
<b>“Paradise”</b>	<b>Out-of-comfort zone</b>
<b>Everything went as expected</b>	<b>Didn't know what to expect</b>

- There are very few experiences in your life where you will feel overwhelmed with pure happiness and I can tell this already will be one of those moments.*
- After the first day of class I'm expecting to feel a huge sense of relief because I will have made it through the first class of the day and hopefully been okay.*
- Despite the horrible feeling I had in my stomach while walking to the school, I almost miss having that strong feeling of complete unawareness, it's exciting.*
- I think it will be pretty similar to my experience teaching kids in the US.*



# Students' Expectations

<b>SCHOOLS: FACILITIES &amp; RESOURCES</b>	<i>I picture the school to be a large white cathedral looking building. The school will have a wall around it and between the walls and the building will be green bushes, flowers and trees. People will be sitting outside of the entrance on benches chatting about their day.</i>
	<i>The school I'm imagining is very large and outdoors. In terms of classrooms, I think each student will be given a desk as well as access to a limited amount of computers. I think the facilities will be fairly up to date because it is a school and parents/students will require working facilities. I can envision the classroom size to be quite small, like 15 kids.</i>
<b>PLANNING &amp; STRUCTURE</b>	<i>She explained to me my job and what the plan was for the day. Today she would introduce me to the children and I would basically observe the class. Then after class she would talk more about my duties and how I would be helping her to create and plan curriculum for the class. She then explained me the rules and policies of the class. She had laid out the plan for the day for me, along with a schedule of breaks/lunch/dismissal times</i>
<b>DISTANCE</b>	<i>The school is not too far from where I live. After a 15-minute walk, I am at my volunteering program by then.</i>

# Experiential Learning Strategies & Intercultural Development


- **What didn't work:**

- Field Assignment 2: Describe your experience and compare it to your expectations (what you had imagined). Reflect on why you had those expectations.

- *I didn't have any expectation*

- *I don't see many differences. The school works like any other school in the US.*

<b>DENIAL</b>	<b>POLARIZATION</b>	<b>MINIMIZATION</b>	<b>ACCEPTANCE</b>	<b>ADAPTATION</b>
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I don't  
think  
there's any  
other way

# Strategies to facilitate experiential learning abroad: **Understanding**

- **Student's text transformation to develop critical thinking:** highlight statements in their first assignment that involve assumptions and ask students to transform them into new statements:

I assumed / expected / believed that [*the school would be very large and outdoors*] because...

- Important:
  - Students' resistance
  - Examples discussed in class
  - Structured and focused activity

# Strategies to facilitate experiential learning abroad: **Application**

- **Making comparisons between expectations and experiences of the reality; interpreting and evaluating differences (Field A. 2)**

Compare your previous expectations to your observations at the teaching placement site. If you find differences, try to come up with a reason that may explain why things are the way they are and describe how you feel about the new realities you are finding.

Describe the context (neighborhood, school, facilities...):

WHAT YOU SEE, HEAR, SMELL... How is it different or similar to what you expected?

Why is it the way it is? How do you feel about it?

Describe your performance and the teacher's performance

WHAT YOU DO / WHAT (S)HE DOES. How is it different or similar to what you expected? Why is it the way it is? How do you feel about it?

Describe your experience

WHAT YOU FEEL. How is it different or similar to what you expected? Why is it the way it is? How do you feel about it?

# First findings about a new reality

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## SCHOOLS: FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

*It seemed as though they didn't have the most beneficial accommodations. Not only are there no electronics in the school (which I have found in my experience to be very helpful in my personal experience of learning another language, but also very helpful for those with special needs), but the students were also forced to eat in the room they also use as a theatre/auditorium. I think they should put more resources.*

*I originally thought that the school was going to be half outside and inside. I was completely wrong. The school is entirely indoor.*

*I was surprised to see 30 students in the class. I think this does not facilitate learning.*

*One thing that surprised me about the playground area on my way into the school was the lack of grass it contained. I don't know why it surprised me so much because I feel like I should have known there wouldn't be any greenery, it's just much different from the States and it was one of my first observations at the school.*

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# First findings about a new reality

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## THE TEACHER

*Not only couldn't she speak proper English, but it didn't seem as though she knew how to teach other than writing definitions on the chalkboard or playing a board game during which she sometimes would count in English.*

*The teacher read all the students mark after they performed therefore allowing for the entire class to hear the grade of his/her peers. I would simply tell each student individually. I feel this is just unacceptable.*

*If I could change something about the teachers, it would be to throw away the textbooks they use and have a teacher with better English speaking skills . However, the two teachers I work with are both extremely talented and I do not believe that it is their fault that their English is not perfect, because the instruction given to them was probably similar to this issue I have.*

*The teacher I work with in this class is super nice and funny. Her English is not as good as the other teacher, therefore I feel that my presence in her classroom is very necessary. She pronounces certain words wrong and finds it very helpful to have me there.*

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# First findings about a new reality

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## THE STUDENTS

*I also naively expected to be able to communicate more with the students. But they can barely speak English. It is very discomfoting to be in an environment where I basically can't communicate with anyone.*

*On my second week, only three students attended. This was different from what I expected because I had assumed that the students would be attending every week in order to learn as much as possible. I believe if attendance and homework were mandatory, the students would benefit much more from the teaching. (Adult school)*

*Their manners were wonderful and I was also curious to see what they would eat for lunch as well. I expected the students to be well behaved because of the culture. Americans aren't known for their impeccable manners so it was refreshing to see such young students behave.*

# First findings about a new reality

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## PLANNING & STRUCTURE

*One major difference between the school I teach at in Barcelona and the schools in the US is the extent to which lesson plans are subject to change. In the US, teachers are required to submit their lesson plans for the semester ahead of time and they generally stick to their syllabus. This is different from my experience at Sagrat Cor. Whenever I show up for my classes, the teachers trust my lessons and ideas for the class without me confirming the plan with them. This makes me nervous. I don't really like this way of teaching because I am an extremely organized person and I like structure in classrooms.*

*I had expected the teacher to give me clear-cut instructions of what to do , yet it seemed the entire class lesson was very unorganized and she just “went with the flow” of what the students wanted to do.*

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# First findings about a new reality

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## PERSONAL SPACE

*When it was time for break I was shocked to see the children playing so rough with each other. They weren't acting out of violence, just horseplay. However in America playing rough with other children isn't allowed and "keep your hands to yourself" is a constant phrase you hear on the playground. I liked how much fun they all had and how they got a long. I felt as if they all had a mutual respect for one another and it was understood. I was also surprised to see how teachers hugged kids as in America they would not be allowed to touch children.*

*His parents like to watch our sessions as they are very proud of their son and the family is very close/involved in general. My siblings and I used to receive tutoring as children, and I know from experience and American custom in general that when a student is with a tutor, it is private time for the two to work together. My parents never would sit in the room while me or any of my siblings were in a session with a tutor.*


## DISTANCE

*I expected that the school would be close to my apartment. So the first challenge is that I need to take a 50-minute metro ride from my apartment to get to the closest metro to the school. After I arrive, I have to walk roughly twenty minute's up-hill to the school. This is quite frustrating.*

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# Experiential Learning Strategies & Intercultural Development

DENIAL	POLARIZATION	MINIMIZATION	ACCEPTANCE	ADAPTATION
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- Polarization:
    - Defense
    - Reverse
  - Next steps:
    - **Feedback:** specific reflective questions and suggestions to do something
    - **Description-Interpretation-Evaluation activity** (Kohls, 1996) with a picture
    - **Instructions for Field Assignment 4**
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# Strategies to facilitate experiential learning abroad: **Reframing**

- **Structured reflection paper (Field Assignment 4)**

In this course, you have learned about (a) Teaching and Learning, (b) the Spanish/Catalan society, and (c) Yourself as a teaching assistant in a different culture. Write a paper with 3 sections (one for each topic) and complete the following tasks in relation to each topic.

Describe the **observations** you have made at your teaching placement site

Give possible **interpretations** of each fact observed

Write an **evaluation** of each fact observed. How do you feel about it? What is your opinion? Has this changed in any way over the semester?

- **Videopresentation:** Show your school and summarize the 5 most important lessons that you have learned while volunteering there

# Reframing

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## TEACHING AND LEARNING

*Before I came to Spain, I was under the impression that it was extremely easy for Spanish people to learn English. I assumed that it was taught throughout school and therefore something was wrong with the American system of teaching Spanish. I studied Spanish for almost eight years of school and still am not fluent, where here in Spain I felt that almost everyone was better than me at his or her second language. I **now see that it is not that way** and the students here must work extremely hard in order to perfect their English. Also, **similarly to the United States**, there are not many teachers who speak the L2 natively.*

*I have learned the way the Spanish teachers and students interact (...) In addition, the teacher is more vocal about other students in front of the class. For example, my teacher will read the students exam grades aloud for the entire class to hear. This is something that would never be done in the United States. I think the presence and aggressiveness of parents is the main contributing factor here because parents in the United States would complain to the school if a teacher exposed other student's grades. **Although I do agree with many people that parents in the U.S. are too protective I do believe that teachers should not read grades aloud.***

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# Reframing

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## CATALAN/SPANISH SOCIAL REALITIES

*At the beginning I thought that teachers were not great and that attendance in the school should be mandatory. As I spent more and more time at the school, I noticed how incredible the situation truly is. The teachers are mainly volunteers and dedicate so much time to the school. Although I find this extremely inspiring, I am even more impressed with the students. In order to attend the classes, they have to be scheduled at night. My particular class is from 8 till 10 pm, which is late even for a young student like me. Most of the students in the class work all day and then come straight to the class. **I asked one member of the class** who said that he works from 9 till 7 at two jobs before he comes to class. This means that the little free time he could have after work with his family he sacrifices to come to the class. He is extremely passionate about learning English, even though he is 50 and extremely uneducated. **Several other students work similar hours and still come to class with enthusiasm when they can. This opened my eyes to the concept that meeting one's goals can be a long and difficult process. I have also learned from them how the economic crisis in Spain is affecting people.***

# Reframing

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## MYSELF

*To be frank, waking up at 7:30 in the morning every Tuesday while studying abroad and taking an hour commute to teach young Spanish students English for two and a half hours doesn't sound like more like a hassle than an opportunity, but that **could not be more wrong.***

***A part of me is very happy I didn't have much direction when given tasks. Due to a lack of instruction, I was able to be creative and experimental with my lessons and presentations***

*Although I believe I did well at the school, **it wasn't always perfect.***

*I learned to adjust my lesson plans in order **to adapt to the students and what they knew.** This experience has also taught me how to **work with people who are older than me,** which I feel as though it important because it can be difficult for those who are older to take instruction from a younger person. These lessons will be useful wherever I go and to whomever I teach, and have **made me a more adaptable person in the work field.***

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# Reframing

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## MYSELF

*One major personality aspect that the teachers I work with have in common is knowing the balance of authority to exert over the children. They are both very kind and friendly to their students, but they also know when they need to put their foot down and be firm with the children. **This balance between friend and authority figure is extremely important as a teacher. (...).** I think understanding this has been one of the most important lessons I have learned. This is important to me in particular because as a person, sometimes I am not as assertive as I should be. Sometimes I am forced into doing things I do not want to do and can be overly generous. This cannot be the case when I become a teacher if I expect my students to fully respect me as an authority figure. **I will make a promise to myself to work on this personality characteristic of mine** to become the best teacher I can be.*

*While it is too late to realistically change my major at my university when I return home, **I am considering teaching English in a different country** (maybe Spain!) for a few years after graduation. Not only do I love spending time abroad and learning about different cultures, but I like to teach people about my culture as well, and I am thankful for this experience for teaching me that.*

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# Reframing

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*My last time seeing Roberto was near the Cathedral when I invited him and his family to the city for chocolate and churros. It was raining outside, and Robert had picked up a large leaf to hold over his head. Without realizing that he might not understand me I asked him, “Is that your umbrella?” (while pointing to the umbrella I was holding above my head), and he responded, “Yes, it is raining”. **This is the moment that I knew I had helped him in some way.** We had spent at least three sessions discussing the weather, and he would draw rain clouds/rain drops. He may not have been able to translate my question word-for-word, but he knew what I was asking him and answered in a complete, English sentence. **No four words have ever made me happier.***





# Experiential Learning Strategies & Intercultural and Global Development



**Global skills:** communication, interpersonal skills, critical thinking, coping with ambiguity, flexibility, problem-solving, teamwork, time management, citizenship skills, leadership skills

# Limitations



- Data should be cross-analyzed to determine the intercultural development stage of each student
- Quantitative data combined with qualitative data would shed more light on the impact of experiential learning activities on the intercultural development of students studying abroad
- Self-reporting measures should be combined with other measures such as evaluations from local schools, surveys (IDI) etc.

# CASE STUDY #2

Magical Britain Travel Seminar  
California Lutheran University

# Overview



- Discuss issues in short-term programming
- Introduce interventions to further prepare students for in-country experience and experiential learning in a limited timeframe
- Compare student expectations and outcomes from 2012 to 2014

# CLU Travel Seminars

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- Students enroll in a focused course on campus during the semester
- Upon completion of the semester, students are taken into the field for a two- to three-week period to put their classroom studies into context
- Cost for in-country travel is not covered by financial aid, but scholarships are available

# Magical Britain Travel Seminar



- English Dept Travel Seminar in the UK
- 4-credit course
- Focus on Arthurian Literature

# Course Objectives

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- Provide students with a solid grounding in Arthurian literature
- Students will understand Britain as a palimpsest: a landscape of successive cultures from the Neolithic builders of Stonehenge to the Anglo-Norman builders of the island's great stone castles, in which the legends of Arthur would have been avidly read and shared
- Students will acquire an understanding of the four broad cultural epochs of this palimpsest: the Neolithic and Iron Ages, Roman Britain, Saxon Britain, and Norman Britain

# 2012: Survey Responses

*“The accommodations on this trip were, for the most part, unpleasant. I feel as if the accommodations should have been much better for a trip like this. [...] **I feel as if omitting some site visits from the trip, and allocating those funds to provide nicer accommodations would make the trip much more pleasurable.** That being said, the site visits and the experience of the trip overall were nothing short of amazing. I loved seeing all of the various castles and little villages. This trip made a lot of great memories, and I am very very glad I went.”*

*“I am fully aware of the fact that **Britain is not the cheapest of vacation destinations,** however I know that **other travel seminars** did not have as difficult of a time adjusting to their lodgings as we did. Paying \$XXX leads one **to expect a certain level of comfort while abroad** and several of our locations fell far below this bar.”*

*“**This class should really be a history course** because it would have been more helpful to know the history behind each of the places we went to, not just how it related to King Arthur.”*

*“**Focus on the sites more in class,** rather than focusing so much on King Arthur specifically. I feel that if we knew more about the sites we were visiting before we arrived at them it would have helped to greater appreciate the site itself. Yes, **King Arthur was the subject matter in class, but many of the sites visited did not relate to King Arthur.**”*



# Issues



- Insistence on consumer comfort – not stepping out of their comfort zone physically
- Insular focus on self and peers
- Reinterpretation of experiential education to mean “my experience”
- Resistance to academic engagement in the context of travel

# Laying the Foundation: Information Sessions

- Introduce key information
- Target a few specific issues that were prevalent during previous iteration of Travel Seminar
  - Define hostels
  - Packing requirements
  - Course explanation – academic vs just trip
- Goals:
  - Deter students who are interested for the “wrong reasons”
  - Manage expectations early to avoid similar behavior

# Constructing the Framework: Semester Course

- More in-depth look at culture & group dynamics
  - “Culture Cookies”
  - Group work
  - Values exercise
- Look at course content through different lens
  - Contemporary novel essay
- Goals:
  - Provide background knowledge so students appreciate and not just tolerate cultural differences
  - Encourage them to hold one another accountable for behavior
  - Link course content to the present – how is this relevant?

# Culminating Experience: Travel Seminar

- Continue the learning process
  - Journaling on-site
  - Site Captain assignment
  - Group exercises
- Goals:
  - Reflect on what they have learned in the course
  - Reflect on what it means to be a traveler vs tourist
  - More effectively engage students in experiential education

# 2014: Survey Responses

*"It's just a really cool way to experience a class and subject. I really learned a lot about the Arthurian legend and got to experience it first hand, which was really neat and exciting. I loved it and became passionate about the material."*

*"I loved being able to connect what I read with what I could see and touch. I think that really deepens the material and makes it real. I loved this seminar and would do it a thousand times over if I could!"*

*"The seminar helped me understand that even though three countries are within an island doesn't mean they all agree. I thought it interesting that the three cultures are so massively different. It just added more personality to each area."*

*"I felt that the sights that we visited were overall exceptional as well. Most of the sights had strong connections to Arthur and it was great to be able to actually see the things we had been learning about; it made the material stronger for me."*

# International Experiences: Driving and Restraining Forces

Consumerism attitude  
Focus on self and peers  
Lack of situational awareness



## Student Experience and Worldview



Faculty adaptation & intervention  
Intentional course design  
Re-setting student expectations

# Conclusions for both case studies

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- Experiential learning activities can have an impact on students' intercultural development, facilitating development from denial to polarization stages and from polarization to minimization stages
- The length of the program may have an impact on the student's development

# Discussion

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- Are you noticing similar trends? Have you encountered these issues on your campus/programs?
- What strategies or interventions have been helpful for your faculty and students?
- Ideas moving forward?