

Intercultural engagement and the study abroad experience

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Thursday 12 March 2015

The IEREST project (Intercultural Educational Resources for Erasmus Students and their Teachers)

<http://www.ierest-project.eu/>

(Lifelong Learning Programme, funded with the support of the European Commission)

Preview

1. Purpose
2. Module 1: Pre-departure activities
 - Theoretical orientations
 - Learning outcomes
3. Modules 2a & 2b: While-abroad activities
4. Module 3: On-return activities
5. Methodology (of the modules and their activities)
6. Piloting: Module 2: Intercultural Geography

1. Purpose

Responds to need for preparing students for mobility

Helps teachers and students reflect on issues prior to leaving

Takes an “interculturality” approach

- Questions assumptions and perspectives used in the IC field which are problematic and counter-productive
- Non-essentialist

2. Pre-departure activities (Module 1)

- 1. Perceptions of Self and Other**
- 2. Anti-discrimination and racism study circle**
- 3. Exploring narrative in intercultural mobility contexts**
- 4. Meeting others abroad**

2. 1 Theoretical orientations

a. Multiple identities

The activities teach students how to recognise the subjectivity and instability of worldviews.

b. Power

Students need to know how to identify words, phrases, and discourses that limit the opportunity for some people to enjoy multiplicity.

c. Culture

Students learn to go beyond solid, stereotypical, sometimes negative constructions of culture when discussing their country and other countries.

2.2. The learning objectives and learning outcomes

Overarching objectives:

- To help students to examine their own and others' intercultural communication and encounters—through processes of experiential learning, analysis and reflection;
- To reflect on the myths of student mobility, and encourage students to set realistic goals.

3. While-abroad activities (Modules 2A & 2B)

- 1. Intercultural geography**
- 2. Experiencing (interculturality through) volunteering**
- 3. 24h Erasmus life**

3. 1 Theoretical orientations

a. Culture shock

The dangers of attributing uncomfortable feelings to diversities => self-awareness

b. Language

Multilingualism; lingua francas (tolerance & accommodation of language errors)

c. Cultural groupings (small cultures)

Refers to the dynamic ongoing group process and the activities and discourse(s) within the group

3.2. The learning objectives and learning outcomes

Overarching objectives:

- To develop in students an understanding that interculturality in today's world is a complex concept
- To encourage Erasmus students to explore their own autonomy in the world out of the class by inviting them to engage in sustained encounters and reflection of them with local community groups/individuals.

4. On return activities (Module 3)

1. One, two, many ... Erasmus experiences

2. Bringing interculturality back home

3. Erasmus/mobility beyond the academy

4. 1 Theoretical orientations

a. Small cultures (in/out groups)

Students become aware of the ways in which people orient to particular groups and express group belonging/preferences.

b. Identity formation

e.g., ascribed, personal, intercultural, professional identities.

c. Autoethnography

Students write their own accounts, and analyse those of others (to inform others—in a meaningful way—about their Erasmus experiences)

d. Representation

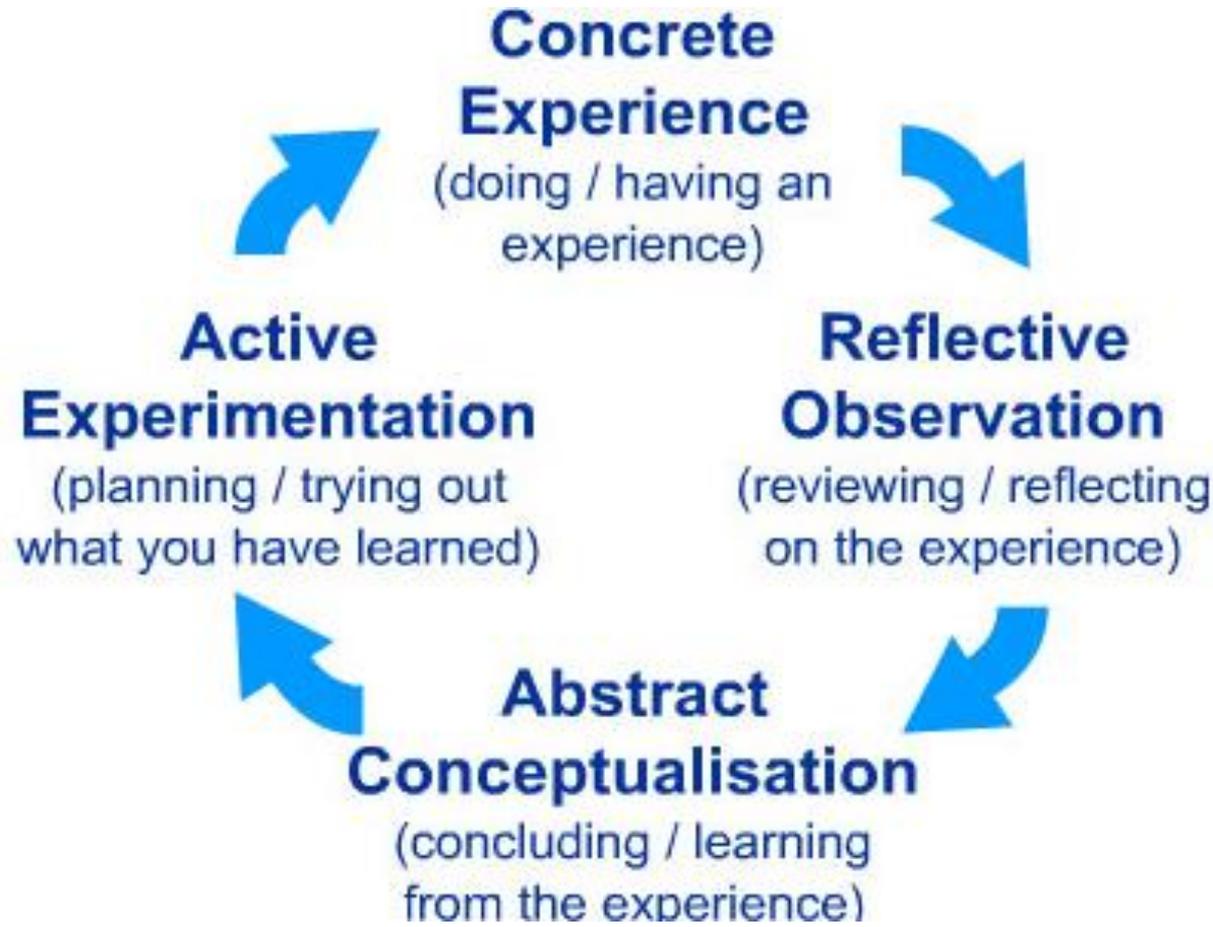
Whatever representation is shared, is also co-constructed with others; it represents “what reality is intersubjectively agreed to be” (Howarth, 2006, p. 8).

4.2. The learning objectives and learning outcomes

	Learning objectives	Learning outcomes
1	explore how an Erasmus experience contributes to their personal and professional identity development beyond the academy;	understand the benefits of their sojourn experiences for their personal and professional identity development;
2	understand and appreciate how language and interculturality are empowering resources for engagement with others;	use their language and intercultural skills as empowering resources for engagement with others;
3	become aware that interlocutors are active producers and receivers of meanings (e.g., through the narratives they tell);	monitor how they convey their meanings to others, taking into account that interlocutors are active producers of meanings;
4	develop the ability to name, critically question and explain to others their Erasmus intercultural experiences;	name, critically question and explore ways to explain to others their Erasmus intercultural experiences;
5	develop an awareness of the importance of monitoring their own language to avoid perpetuating culturalist discourses;	use their own language in a way that avoids perpetuating culturalist discourses;
6	develop a sense of responsibility towards future mobile students as recipients of one's narratives.	act upon a sense of responsibility towards future mobile students and reflect on their own Erasmus stories accordingly.

5. Methodology

The activities draw on Kolb's reflective learning model



Each activity comprises 3-4 tasks; 6-12 hours of classroom work; some extension tasks.

Languages – English; some examples in Italian, Dutch, and can be freely translated

Context – European mobility, but activities can be adapted to other contexts

Methods - texts, videos, ppt (theory), interactive discussions, guided tasks (hand-outs), encounters in the community, reflection on experience

Activities promote critical thinking, co-constructivist perspectives and reinforcement of learning

Activities are interactive, engaging

Assessment:

- The activities do not include an assessment dimension, although it is implied in LOs.
- Some guidelines for assessment are given (in certain tasks).
- Some tasks are difficult to assess because behavioural and affective responses may be different across the students in the group.

Teacher guidelines

- Brief guidelines are offered for each activity and related tasks.

Intercultural geography

Activity 1: Intercultural geography

Students reflect on how their host environment—the city, its neighbourhoods, the university—has been shaped by its history, culture(s), inhabitants and the spaces they occupy

Students are encouraged to compare their own experience and perception of the host environment with those of others (other students, residents)

Activity 1: Tasks

- a. Concrete experience – noticing
Ss (individually) locate familiar places and routes on a map
- b. Reflective observation – comparing
Ss compare maps, discuss criteria/reasons for their choices => group map
- c. Abstract conceptualisation – reflecting
Ss watch a video of the city/region, then discuss the image projected; further exploration of places
- d. Active experimentation – interacting
Ethnographic fieldwork – students find a local informant to discuss living in the city

Conclusion

“Students who go abroad still discover their own image in the eyes of their hosts, and sometimes this image is to them, in various ways outrageous. They still encounter indifference to the realities of their past lives, and they still feel compelled to explain, as best they can. They still find themselves assigned identities, and even names, that they did not expect and would not willingly choose.” (Kinging, 2015, p. 7)

“It is incumbent upon educators to develop explicit pedagogical strategies to assist students in developing awareness of their identity-related challenges involved in language learning.” (Kinging, 2015, p. 13)

⇒ ... and to develop awareness of interculturality in intercultural encounters.

Kinging, C. (2015). Student mobility and identity-related language learning. *Intercultural Education*, 26(1), 6-15.

Thank you

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Holmes, P., Bavieri, L., & Ganassin, S. (2015). Developing intercultural understanding for study abroad: Students' and teachers' perspectives on pre-departure intercultural learning. *Intercultural Education*, 26(1), 16-30.