



Assessing Intercultural Learning

Beyond Assessment Tools

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Overview

- Definition of assessment
- Challenges related to assessing intercultural learning
- The Backward Design process
- Practical ideas/examples for assessing intercultural learning
 - Reflective Journals
 - Digital Storytelling Projects
 - Formal Papers
 - Group Projects

What is assessment?



Formative vs. Summative Assessment

■ Formative Assessment

- Given throughout the learning process
- Used to check understanding and determine how students are progressing toward a certain learning objective
- Goal is to *monitor* student learning to provide ongoing feedback
- Critical in intercultural learning

■ Summative Assessment

- Given after instruction or learning experience
- Provides educators and students information about what has been learned
- Goal is to *evaluate* student learning at the end of an instructional unit by comparing it against some standard or benchmark
- Complex/challenging in intercultural learning

Challenges Assessing Intercultural Learning

- Focus on high-level summative intercultural assessments without related lower-level formative assessments along the way
- Providing beneficial formative assessment
- How do we *grade* intercultural competence, learning, skills, etc. (i.e. “soft skills”)?

Backward Design



Backward Design

The designer starts the process by imagining a time when the course is over, say one or two years later, and then asking, ‘What is it I hope that students will have learned, that will still be there and have value, several years after the course is over?’ The answer to this question forms the basis of the learning goals. Then the designer moves backward in time to the end of the course and asks the assessment question, ‘What would the students have to do to convince me—and themselves—that they had achieved those learning goals?’ The process of working out the answer to that question clarifies the real meaning of the learning goals. And then it’s time to move back in time once more, to the time of the course itself, and ask, ‘What would the students need to do during the course to be able to do well on these assessment activities?’

- L. Dee Fink, 2013, p. 71

7 Steps to Designing Effective Intercultural Learning Curricula*

1. Identify important situational factors
2. Conduct a needs assessment
3. Identify/define key learning objectives
4. Decide upon feedback and assessment methods
5. Choose the most appropriate teaching and learning activities
6. Integrate activities into a coherent whole
7. Reflect on the process and identify key learning

Learning Objectives



STEP 3

Identify/define key learning objectives



STEP 4

*Decide upon feedback and
assessment methods*

STEP 5

*Choose the most appropriate
teaching and learning activities*

Four Core Intercultural Competencies*

- I. Increasing awareness and understanding of our own characteristic ways of making meaning and acting in familiar and unfamiliar contexts;
- II. Increasing awareness and understanding of others' ways of making meaning and acting in familiar and unfamiliar contexts;
- III. Responding mindfully in contexts that disorient or challenge us;
- IV. Bridging cultural gaps in those contexts: Shifting perspective, attuning emotions, and adapting our behavior in effective and appropriate ways.

Requires practice!

Examples of Learning Objectives Using the Intercultural Competencies Framework

Curricular Program	Example of a Program-Specific Learning Objective (and related competency)
Study away orientation for students going to multiple locations	Participants will identify at least one personally-held value or belief that may be in contrast to values identified by members of the host culture. (I)
Summer “Business & Culture” study away program in Brazil	Participants will compare and contrast how culture influences attitudes toward—and practices related to—business in the U.S. and in Brazil, identifying at least two differences and two similarities. (I & II)
Ongoing orientation for new international students on a U.S. campus	Participants will become more comfortable with not knowing and will come up with personal strategies for engaging ambiguity. (III)
Intercultural training program for faculty working with a diverse student body	Participants will identify the cultural values, beliefs, and assumptions represented in their course syllabus (I); consider how students from different perspectives may view the course syllabus and their teaching approach (II); and adapt their syllabus to be more inclusive of different cultural perspectives on teaching and learning. (IV)

Reflective Journals



Reflective Journals

- Formative assessment
- Assess students' understanding of intercultural concepts, theories, and practices, and their abilities to make connections between these and their own personal experiences
- Great for providing individualized feedback that helps students make connections and reflect deeper
- Opportunity to provide individualized balance of challenge and support
- Allow for flexibility, yet provide prompts/ideas
- Loosely graded only (rubric or clear expectations helpful)

Example: Global Identity Course

I've noticed that most of the problems that are faced in conversation both verbally and non-verbally happen between me (being a woman) and Indian men. Indian men seem to make a quick leap from a friendly smile or a quick hello, to I-want-to-sleep-with-you. Being from America (and especially after having grown up in the Midwest), I feel very rude not acknowledging someone when they try to get your attention on the street. In India however, we were told not to acknowledge anyone, and they meant anyone; begging children, street vendors and especially not anyone who is of the male sex.

Indian men see American movies which then in turn makes them believe that American women are like the celebrities in the movies (i.e. flirtatious and easy). They then use this preconceived notion to their advantage.

An example of this would be my "friend" Douglas.....

- Female undergraduate student studying abroad in India

Excerpt from Instructor Response

It's great that you recognize the cultural underpinnings of your desire to acknowledge someone when they try to get your attention on the street. I'd encourage you to reflect even more deeply on what the underlying cultural values are. Why do people in the U.S.—and in the Midwest in particular—feel the need/desire to acknowledge a stranger?

Regarding the relationship between men and women, have you talked about this with any locals yet? Once you feel comfortable enough with females from the local culture, I'd encourage you to ask them their views on male/female relationships. You mention that you think some of the reason Indian men approach U.S. American women the way they do is because they think "American women are like the celebrities in the movies (i.e. flirtatious and easy)." Trying to look at it from the perspective of Indian culture, do you think this stereotype has any truth? If someone comes from the mentality that sex before marriage is unacceptable, maybe many U.S. American women are "flirtatious and easy"?

“Leading Across Cultures” Reflective Journal Assignment

One of the key goals of this course is for you to develop your own intercultural leadership practice. Doing so requires deep personal reflection. In class, we will explore topics and processes that may inspire a wide variety of reactions—challenge, excitement, frustration, deeper self-awareness, etc. The reflective journals offer you a space to explore your experiences and reactions. Following each of the two intensive weekend meetings we will have for this course, you will be asked to complete a journal entry (two in total). The journal entries should include your personal reflection on the course content (in general or particular aspects of what was covered) – your own experience in the classroom, reactions to what was discussed, or the relationship between course content and your own life. Each journal is worth ten percentage points.

The following are a few sample questions to help spur your thinking with regards to the journal entries. You may, but are not required to, respond to one or more of these prompts in your journal entries:

- What aspect(s) of the class this weekend (including the readings and in-class activities/discussions) spoke to you most and why?
- What did you learn about yourself in this course this weekend?
- How does what we discussed in class relate to your own personal experiences?
- You may choose to apply or practice something we learned in class, such as developing your own stillness practice, and reflect on that experience.

Where do your ideas of leadership come from?

Many of my ideas of leadership come from seeing bad leadership. I'm kind of nervous as to what that says about me, my outlook on the world, or my experience in being a follower of poor leaders. "Hindsight is always 20/20" comes to mind when I think of situations in which leaders could have done their jobs a little bit better. Having not been in their shoes, though, I could have made the same "bad" decisions they did. An extra horrible rowing coach and the way she broke us down comes to mind. She criticized the team, but whipped us into shape. Somehow her crazy tactics worked, and we began to sweep gold, race after race. I think that's where leadership is confusing, when seemingly impossible demands create great results.



Tara Harvey

That you are able to learn and take something away from even negative situations?



Tara Harvey

I guess one important question then, and an important place to start, is how do you define "great results"? So not just what kind of a leader do you want to be, but how do you define success?

From our structured reading and personal reflection outside the classroom I was struck with the abundance of natural reminders that can serve as models and guides in my daily life. In class I picked a picture of a tree as my visual aide and I hope to use the tree as my personal daily visual guide for mindful life and leading. **What is the effect on a tree if it uses its limited resources of**

energy, light, water, and time but ignores itself and its relationship with its own environment? It is likely grow misshapen, dry and wither. What is the impact on my own ability to lead

effectively when I am closed to the flow of information within myself? What is my ability to

perceive the world I inhabit? Upon reflecting on these things I realize that when I am not

listening to myself, I am not worth listening to. What I mean by that is when I am ignoring my

own thoughts and feelings, I behave in ways that are external, reactive, reflective. When I am in

this “ignorant mode” I tend to guess what is happening and then act on impulse. **When I am not**

listening to myself I find that I say things and do things that don’t reflect my aspirational values.



Tara Harvey
Nice analogy.



Tara Harvey
Nicely said.



Tara Harvey
Yes.

Digital Storytelling Projects ▲

What is Digital Storytelling?

- A three- to five-minute video
- Combines images (usually still), story, and sometimes music
- Produced by someone who is not a media professional
- Typically constructed as a thought piece on a personal experience that is important to the author

“Digital Storytelling is the modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling. Throughout history, storytelling has been used to share knowledge, wisdom, and values. Stories have taken many different forms. Stories have been adapted to each successive medium that has emerged, from the circle of the campfire to the silver screen, and now the computer screen.”

– *The Digital Storytelling Association*

CIEE Intercultural Communication & Leadership Final Project

As a final project for this course, you will be creating a basic Digital Story—a short first-person story that combines your narration with still images (and possibly music).

The assignment is this: **Tell a story about an aspect of your experience abroad that has helped you develop your intercultural competence or contributed to your intercultural learning.** The assignment is quite general to allow you a good deal of freedom, and yet the story you tell should be relatively concrete or specific, rather than general. That is, you should not try to capture your whole study abroad experience or discuss everything you've learned in a three- to five-minute story, but should instead focus on a specific experience, moment, relationship, lesson learned, etc. This is your chance to tell a story that's important to you—something that is uniquely yours. As you brainstorm ideas, you may want to consider the following:

- What aspect of my experience do I want to discuss? How has this helped me develop my intercultural competence? What lesson(s) did I learn or how did this particular aspect help me grow?
- Why is this story important to me? Why is it important for me to share this story?
- Who is the audience for this story?
- What message do I want to convey?

Additional Info

- Students received resource packet to help
- Students introduced to six elements of good digital storytelling
 - Rubric based on these elements
 - Grading not about technical quality of video
- Check-ins throughout semester and peer story circle
- Format students can use to share learning with others
- Permission to share form filled out after project complete



CATEGORY	Excellent (4)	Good (3)	Fair (2)	Poor (1)
Story Purpose	Establishes a purpose early on and maintains a clear focus throughout. Clearly articulates how a particular aspect of the study abroad experience has contributed to the author's intercultural learning/development. It is clear that the author cares about the video and feels s/he has something important to communicate.	Establishes a purpose early on and maintains focus for most of the presentation. Articulates how a particular aspect of the study abroad experience has contributed to the author's intercultural learning/development.	There are a few lapses in focus, but the purpose is fairly clear. Makes some connection between the study abroad experience and intercultural learning/development.	It is difficult to figure out the purpose of the presentation. Little or no connection is made between the study abroad experience and the author's intercultural learning/development.
Script	Compelling and well written – concise use of words to make important points. Deftly integrates course themes (e.g., intercultural competence, multiple perspectives on a topic, cultural value patterns, Personal Leadership practices, etc.) into the video.	Well written – makes important points. Speaks to some of the course themes (e.g., intercultural competence, multiple perspectives on a topic, cultural value patterns, Personal Leadership practices, etc.).	Adequately written, but sometimes meanders or is confusing. Addresses at least one course theme (e.g., intercultural competence, multiple perspectives on a topic, cultural value patterns, Personal Leadership practices, etc.).	Difficult to understand the point. Doesn't address course themes.
Dramatic Question/ Creative Tension	Content is engaging – viewer is left with thought-provoking ideas and/or the story develops in a way that's different from initial expectations. Useful for prompting discussion and dialogue.	Content is interesting – viewer is left with thought-provoking ideas and/or the story develops in a way that's different from initial expectations.	Some surprises and/or insights, but realization barely differs from the expectation.	Predictable and not very interesting. Realization and expectation do not differ.

Digital Storytelling as Assessment

- Summative and/or formative
 - Feedback can be given during process (from instructor and peers)
- Could have intrapersonal (example) or interpersonal focus
- Grading may have to be based on factors other than their intercultural competence

Formal Papers



Formal Papers

- Often summative, but can be used in formative ways as well
- Could be interpersonal (analysis of intercultural case study) or intrapersonal (story of your intercultural learning journey)
- Grading may have to be based on factors other than their intercultural competence
 - Depth of reflection/introspection/self-awareness
 - Application/analysis of course concepts, theories, and/or processes
 - Quality of writing and paper organization

Case Study Analysis

Power distance identifies the amount of formality that is required when dealing with people at different levels of status within a culture. Russia has a very high power distance, which means that one can expect to find clearly stratified levels of hierarchy in traditional Russian businesses, as well as in society in general. Interacting with members of a high power distance culture often requires greater levels of respect and deference than many US Americans, being from a low power distance country, are used to. This is one of the factors likely at play in this situation: the older Russian trainers expect a level of respect and attention from the new Peace Corps trainees due to their age and experience. The American participants might view the trainers as fellow members of the Peace Corps organization and therefore colleagues because of the US American tendency towards informality.



Tara Harvey

Nice job defining your terms. Would be a good idea to cite, even though you've referred to your primary references earlier.



Tara Harvey

Be careful to use language that steers clear of overgeneralizing.



Tara Harvey

Nice insight (and good use of qualifying language – “might”).

Group Projects



Group Projects

- Focus on process (working across difference) just as much as product
- Assign students to diverse groups
- Make sure they:
 - Understand it's about process as much as product, and WHY this is important
 - Have tools—concepts and processes—to help them work together more effectively
- Have them reflect on their own role in the process

Group Projects as Assessment

- Focus on product can be summative, while focus on process (throughout) can be formative
- Find ways to provide feedback on both process and product
 - Written reflections
 - In-person meetings or check-ins
- Grading should reflect focus on both process and product

Concluding Thoughts



Themes/Tips

- Importance of formative assessment to intercultural learning
- With intercultural learning, formative assessment may be more focused on intercultural development, while summative assessment (grading) may need to focus on depth of reflection, application of concepts/ideas, analysis, etc.
- Useful to combine these approaches with non-graded pre-/post-testing
- Rubrics helpful
- Use feedback to validate/support and challenge/push

References & Resources

Story Center: www.storycenter.org

AAC&U VALUE Rubrics: <https://www.aacu.org/value/rubrics>

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Thank you!

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