Enhancing study abroad: Interventions for greater language proficiency and intercultural development

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes an experiential education course designed to enhance student learning while abroad. Studies have shown that students studying abroad need specific

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interventions in order to profit fully from the immersive experience. The article describes a sequence of task-based interventions designed to prompt students to engage with the host language and culture. A description and rationale for each assignment explains how the tasks target language functions and intercultural development. The language functions relate to ACTFL's proficiency scale. The intercultural development process relates to Bennett and Hammer's Intercultural Development Continuum model (Bennett, 1986; Hammer, 2012). The students involved participated in the five-year dual bachelor's degree International Engineering Program at the University of Rhode Island and spent a year abroad in China, France, Germany, Chile, or Spain, studying for six months and then interning for six months. Discussion of student work shows the extent to which the tasks elicited interaction with the host culture and reflection on the experience. Results show that the interventions result in greater student engagement with the host culture and greater reflection on the impact of the overseas experience on their linguistic and cultural competency development.

Introduction

Study abroad offers students a rich experience of broad and deep learning. While overseas, students have the opportunity to engage in a wide range of cultural experiences, to develop an extensive set of life skills, and to expand their personal attributes. In addition, students can deepen their intercultural competence, their language skills, and their self-knowledge. For many language educators and their students, the study abroad sojourn constitutes a cornerstone of their curriculum. It is often seen as the most important part of a language student's course of study. Given its importance, it is normal for educators to try to ensure that students get the most out of their time abroad and have a profound learning experience. Likewise, it is normal for educators to be disappointed when students gain little from their time abroad and have a superficial experience. As the volume *Student Learning Abroad* (Vande Berg, Paige, & Lou, 2012) shows, student learning while overseas does not happen automatically. Students need targeted interventions and thoughtful reflections in order to experience fully the host culture and language and to process these experiences. With this in mind, for our students' year-long stay abroad, we created a sequence of tasks that encourage them to interact with the host nationals in ways that foster both language and intercultural competence gains. Within this article, we describe the tasks, explain the rationale for them, and provide examples of student work.[1] The results show a promising start and also the need for further enhancements in student preparation and reflection.

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Literature Review

Research has shown that program design plays a large role in student learning during study abroad. Dewey et al. (2014) sought to determine which variables are associated with greater second language (L2) gains during study abroad. The seven variables the study looked at were intercultural sensitivity, personality, initial proficiency, social networks, gender, age, and program characteristics. Their findings conclude

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1. The University of Rhode Island's Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved the study's protocol, including the use of anonymous student work. The approval number is IRB1819-164.

that the program itself is the biggest factor in L2 use. The impact of the program is also found in Engle and Engle (2012) who describe their own program and demonstrate that their particular program design has attained significantly higher levels of language gains than others. Vande Berg, Connor-Linton, and Paige (2009) found relationships between student learning abroad and certain program features, notably program length, enrollment in content courses taught in L2, and pre-departure orientations, prompting them to state that "students learn most effectively abroad given proactive learning interventions" (p. 2). Hernandez and Boero (2018) show that interventions targeting pragmatic competence yield significant gains even during a short-term study abroad experience. Baker-Smemoe, Dewey, Brown, & Martinsen (2014) find that the two strongest predictors of language gains are intercultural sensitivity and social network formation, which suggests that programs should focus on developing these. Watson and Wolfel (2015) look at the relationship between language socialization practices of study abroad students and their gains in proficiency and intercultural competence. They found little correlation between language gains and intercultural competence gains, but found significant correlation between language gains and certain language socialization practices, such as hours of target language conversation.

When discussing intercultural gains during study abroad, Paras et al. (2019) found that pre-departure orientations and service learning opportunities had the biggest impact. For the pre-departure orientations, their research suggests that the most effective ones foster a deeper understanding of one's own cultural self-identity. Also, the inclusion of activities that train students to handle disorienting and discomfiting situations lead to greater gains. For the service learning components, the authors suggest that these opportunities put students into more direct face-to-face interactions giving them more chances to hone their intercultural skills. They conclude that facilitated intercultural training is necessary to ensure significant gains in intercultural development. They suggest that hybrid models, involving some online training, could be a viable alternative to face-to-face training sessions.

In respect to experiential learning, Moreno-López, Ramos-Sellman, Mirano-Aldaco, & Gomis Quinto (2017) found that face-to-face contact with native speakers in both study abroad and service learning boosts students' intercultural awareness as well as their perceptions of improvements in listening and speaking skills. Wu (2017), in a case study involving one student, found that effective support for a student interning abroad can be provided off-site through online interaction involving guided self-reflection, oral reporting, and Skype conferencing.

Spenader and Retka (2015) studied growth in students' intercultural development during eight different faculty-led semester-long study abroad experiences. They measured intercultural development using the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) (Hammer, 2012) and found an average gain of 5.17 points on the IDI's Developmental Orientation, but noted that four programs showed gains of eight or more points while one showed a loss of one point and the others showed modest gains of under five points. They were unable to point to any specific variable that explained the differences but suggest that "some of [their] programs are striking an appropriate balance between challenge and support in terms of intercultural experiences" (p. 33).

Paige and Vande Berg (2012) state that of the seven defining components proposed by Engle and Engle (2003) — (1) length of student sojourn; (2) entry target language competence; (3) language used in coursework; (4) context of academic work; (5) types of student housing; (6) provision of guided/structured cultural interaction and experiential learning; and (7) guided reflection on cultural experience — the most predictive of intercultural gains is the last one.

It is certainly true that students in some situations fail to profit from the immersive opportunities study abroad can offer them. For example, Allen (2010) examined the amount of interactive content with French that students had during a six-week summer study abroad program in Nantes. She found that students had little contact with locals, noting that 39% of them said that they never had contact with locals outside their host family beyond routine service encounters, another 39% reported having only occasional contact, and only 22% reporting weekly contact or several contacts with locals.

Slagter and Piper (2019) found that students attained lower language gains than they initially hoped for during study abroad. They attribute this to linguistic loneliness, which they describe as the inadequacy of one's language skills to allow for full engagement with a target-language speaker. Because of this lack, students revert to speaking English with their home-country peers.

Related to social interactions, Dewey, Ring, Gardner, and Belnap (2013) looked specifically at the factors that lead to social network formation in study abroad. In their study, when students were asked to indicate which program interventions helped them form friendships, they most commonly responded that it was the program's institution of a speaking requirement. Similarly, Trentman (2017) examined gains in oral fluency and sociolinguistic competence of students in study abroad (SA) in Egypt. She found that high gainers socialized in Arabic with both SA students and Egyptians, while low gainers tended to socialize in English with SA students and Egyptians. She contends that the high gainers had extensive social networks, extending to all three circles in Coleman's (2013) model, and that they relied on the program's pre-established social networks. She also points out that many of the students stated that they used Arabic because of the program's language pledge. She concludes that a program's interventions should focus on facilitating access to local social networks and using the language beyond basic service encounters.

New evidence (Davis & Knight, 2018) adds that aside from designing specific experiences for students that lead to the development of cultural intelligence, cultural learning relates to "how much students push themselves to seek new experiences and get outside their comfort zones" (Engberg, Jourian, & Davidson, 2016, p. 23). Based on this crucial insight, Davis and Knight (2018) advocate for creating courses that connect students "with people unlike themselves," encourage "reflection," and push students "outside their comfort zones" (p. 2). Thus, the research shows that students may not automatically immerse themselves in the language and culture during study abroad but that they need well-designed programmatic interventions to coax them to jump into and engage with their new world.

Program Context

These research findings prompted us to take a critical look at the year abroad in our International Engineering Program (IEP) at the University of Rhode Island since we had considered the experience abroad itself to be sufficient for full immersion. The IEP is a five-year program in which students earn a B.S. in an engineering discipline and a B.A. in a foreign language. Students spend the fourth year of the program abroad, studying at a partner engineering school and then interning with a company in the host country. During the six-month internship portion of their year abroad, students enroll in a class entitled "Internship Abroad" with the adjective for their respective language of study preceding the word "internship." They can earn six academic credits, which count for their language major, e.g., Chinese, French, German, Italian, and Spanish or the Japanese track of the Global Language and Area Studies major.

When the five-year IEP was first created in 1987, initially with a semester of interning abroad only, and from 1995 on with an additional preceding semester of study at a partner

university abroad, the challenge was to design curricular maps for the two simultaneous majors that would, first, allow IEP students to graduate in five years and, second, to leverage their year abroad for credit transfer toward their academic majors since they were already taking the maximum credits during their studies at the University of Rhode Island. Language faculty also wanted the IEP students to continue developing their writing skills while being immersed in the internship and target country culture. Hence, the course started out as a means to provide students with six academic credits. The students do not receive any credit in engineering for their internship experience. Therefore, it was decided among the language faculty that students would receive academic credit for their language gains during their six-month internship. The students were told simply to write ten two-page reports every two weeks, and that they could write about a variety of topics such as describing the location of their study abroad semester, the location of their internship, the nature of their internship, differences between university and company culture, or reflections on their travel. The six academic credits were not solely for the reports themselves, but also for the six months of language use during their internship. Because of this, the reports were never given much academic rigor in their conception or their evaluation.

Meanwhile, as part of the program's strategic plan, we challenged ourselves to implement systematic assessment and design of a course accompanying the internship. This effort included launching a midterm internship survey, which elicited important information from the students halfway into their internships, as well as a final study abroad and internship survey after completion of their year abroad. To the students' host company supervisors, we sent out post-internship surveys in the various foreign languages. We began doing some official ACTFL assessments, most notably the OPI, as a way to begin to assess our students' language gains. We also wanted to help our students develop their intercultural competence. To better recognize where students were in terms of their intercultural development gains, we looked at their survey feedback and their written reports through the lens of the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC)[2] (Figure 1, next page) which describes a set of orientations toward cultural difference and commonality that are placed along a continuum from the more mono-cultural mindsets of Denial and Polarization through the transitional orientation of Minimization to the intercultural or global mindsets of Acceptance and Adaptation (Hammer, 2019, p. 29). For our initial assessments we selected the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), a scientifically validated instrument, which assesses where individuals or groups are on this continuum.

A first piloting of the IDI in short-term study abroad showed us that while a short-term experience could provide measurable advancement in intercultural development, it could also cause regression for some students (Berka, Geithner, Kaldor, & Streiner, 2017). While all these efforts were being made to launch a rigorous assessment plan, our students were also still turning in their reports following the old course model.

With our new knowledge, we began to see trends within these written reports. Over the span of roughly two years, the evidence began to show that our students needed to engage with the language and culture more productively. While we saw impressive language gains made by some students, we also noted that others made very little progress and could profit more from the immersive experience. Some of the students turned in the midterm

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2. "The Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC) assessed by the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) is adapted from the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). The original formulation of the DMIS is: Bennett, M.J., 1986, Towards enthnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In New York: University Press of America" (Hammer, 2019, p. 29, fn 3).

Figure 1. Intercultural Development Continuum (Image taken from Kaldor (2017).
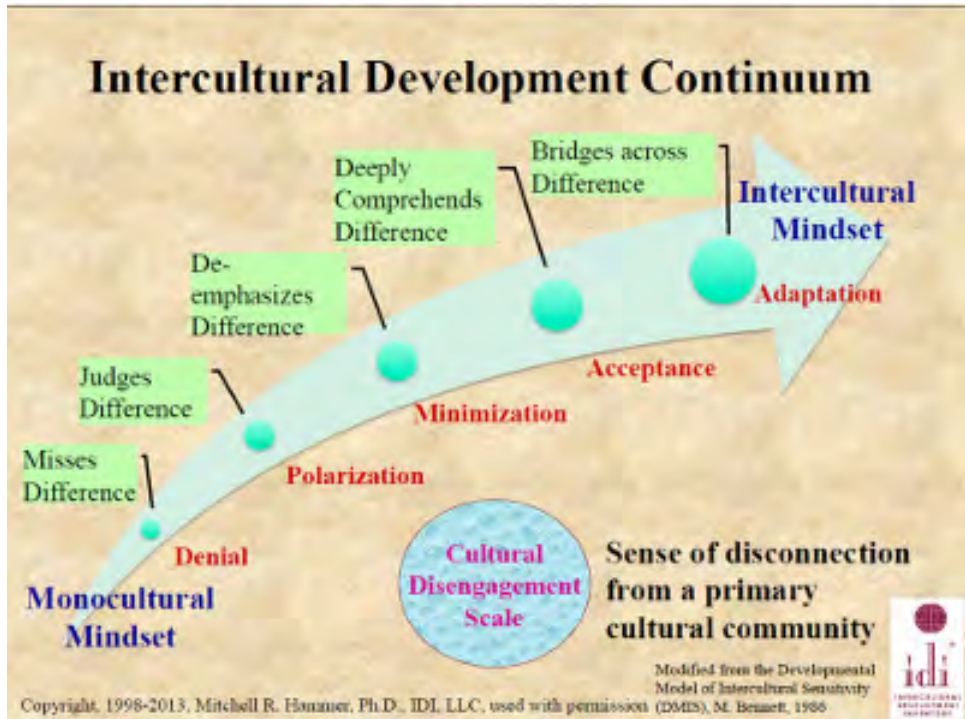
internship survey with alarming comments reflecting a limited experience and capability for understanding and responding appropriately to cultural values and behaviors, precisely because they often did not see differences in perceptions and behavior as cultural. This mindset represents the developmental stage of Denial. A comment from a student such as

> Registering for classes is apparently something you do not do here. It seems like you just go to the classes you want and take the exam at the end of the semester. To me, this doesn't seem very legitimate, but everything here is so different and relaxed (frustrating).... Honestly, the best part about being here has been the ability to go to other places…."

shows that the difference between the educational system abroad and one's own is not recognized as cultural, but rather as annoying. The comment suggests a lack of interest in learning about the cultural practices of others and an active avoidance of cultural difference. The developmental strategy for a student in the Denial stage is to help the individual notice and engage in cultural differences.

Likewise, students' reports during their internship often described cultural differences and concluded by evaluating the host country as "strange" or "weird." Labels like these represent a stage in the IDC called Polarization. Polarization is an evaluative mindset that views cultural differences from an us-versus-them perspective. In its defensive form, cultural differences are often seen as divisive and threatening to one's own way of doing things. Labeling a practice as "strange" or "weird" is judgmental, and the intercultural competence development strategy for individuals in Polarization is to help them recognize when they are overemphasizing differences without fully understanding them, and to help them search for commonalities in order to adopt a less evaluative stance toward understanding differences.

Aiming to overcome the evaluative stance and to arrive at the stage of Minimization means that the individual would be able to highlight similarities and to recognize universal values and principles. Minimization is a stage of development transitioning towards the fuller intercultural worldviews of Acceptance and Adaptation.

Furthermore, in exit interviews, students frequently stated that they used the host language the most during the internship portion of their stay. The move from the study abroad part in which students were still together in groups of peers to the internship segment of their year abroad in which they mostly ventured out on their own proved to be a difficult transition, both linguistically and culturally, and one that required us to offer interventions that would provide them support for the challenge of this part of their sojourn. In the section below on our interventions abroad, we showcase how we re-designed the Internship Abroad course and turned the developmental strategies into pedagogical assignments with concrete learning goals.

Description and Impact of Interventions Abroad

All of the student feedback and research on developmental gains during study abroad showed us that we needed to make changes to our Internship Abroad course. We needed to motivate and coach students to use the language more and to interact more productively with the host culture. However, none of the research we consulted told us how to design such interventions.

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Cognizant of the need for both faculty-designed interventions and student-initiated cultural reflection, we re-developed our internship abroad course by devising a series of assignments that require students to interact with the host culture and to use their language skills to do so. A full description of all the assignments for the French version of the class is found in Appendix A. The tasks are the same for the other languages except for culture-specific modifications. Each assignment targets a specific proficiency range on the ACTFL scale and a movement along the IDC scale. We strived to give students a variety of tasks, and to that end, we balanced the tasks between oral and written ones and varied the emphasis between interpersonal, presentational, and interpretive modes of communication. We also included student reflection within each one. While Vande Berg et al. (2009) advocate for on-site cultural mentoring, this is not possible for our faculty although each partner institution we work with abroad uses student buddies or mentors to ease with the transition into the host country. Concerning student-faculty interaction, we feel that through student reflections and instructor feedback on them, we arrive at a good substitute for face-to-face interactions with a cultural mentor. As the course progresses, the tasks advance further and further along the ACTFL proficiency scale and the IDC scale in anticipation of students' progress throughout their internship experience.

Assignment 1: Discover Your Internship Area

The first assignment, "Discover your internship area," asks students to prepare for their internship by doing some Internet research to find out what the area will be like. They write a 400-word presentation of the area. It is a present-tense description that includes geography and climate as well as popular activities in this area. They also find out about the public transportation system, market days, special events, and anything the area is famous

for. They include anything else that is of interest to them about the area. In addition, students look for information on the clubs and associations in the area. They must pick three clubs that sound interesting to them and contact one about how to join. They conclude with some ideas of how they might be able to fit in and adapt to this area. The intercultural development goal is for students to notice how people live in the internship area and how life might be like for them there as opposed to one's own life, and to engage those cultural differences. The idea is to get students to discover how they can be part of the rhythms and fabric of the area instead of an outsider on its edges. The language task focuses on present tense, detailed description and we therefore expect this activity to yield writing in the range of Intermediate-Mid to Intermediate-High, though students who make this a cohesive essay with great detail attain the Advanced range. With respect to facilitating students' movement along the intercultural development continuum, we hope to help them change from a monocultural mindset (represented by the stages of Denial and Polarization) to an intercultural mindset. As can be seen from the earlier student quotations, at the outset of their engagement with another culture, students sometimes are in Denial and unable to perceive differences, or in Polarization, a judgmental mindset that views cultural differences from an us-versus-them perspective. Polarization can take the form of defense, which amounts to comparing differences and privileging the way things are done in their home culture. It represents a state in which they cannot imagine an equally human experience for the other. The pedagogical strategy for further intercultural development aims to help learners establish commonality even though they will not yet develop a sophisticated understanding of the other culture. Some might move from Polarization to Minimization, a state in which they see the commonalities of cultures, summarized as believing that deep down we are all the same. Students with a Minimization orientation experience a certain degree of success navigating the other culture (Hammer, 2012, p. 122).

This first assignment with the learning goal of noticing and engaging differences in culture yielded some very successful interactions between the students and the host culture. For example, one student discovered that her internship city of Mulhouse, France housed a few important museums related to its history, namely the *Cité de l'automobile*, the *Musée de l'impression sur étoffes* [Museum of Textile Printing], and the *Cité du train*. In addition, the student found a gym that she was interested in joining. She filled out the form online to request information and five minutes later her phone rang with a call from the gym owner who set up an appointment with the student to show her the facility. Thus, the assignment connected the student to the city's culture, history, and at least one of its people and helped to develop a strategy to navigate the cultural practices of the new culture and the ability "to go along to get along," as summarized in Hammer (2019). It is part of a strategy within Minimization to navigate the dominant (here the French) culture when you belong to the minority (here the U.S.) culture.

Assignment 2: Compare Cultural Differences

The second assignment, entitled "Compare cultural differences," or "How does this culture tick?" results in an oral presentation in the form of a video. The assignment includes some preparatory listening comprehension work. For the French version of this assignment, students watch a video by the French Youtuber, Cyprien (2011), in which he comments on his perception of the US. Then, they create their own three- to five-minute- long video in which they comment on their perceptions of French culture. They post their videos on a discussion board and comment on the videos of two other students. For the language goals, the assignment elicits oral production that centers on present-tense description in the form of loosely linked sentences

but can include paragraph-length discourse and past narration. The expected oral proficiency range is from Intermediate-Mid to Advanced-Mid depending on the level of detail, time frames used, and range of topics discussed. With this assignment, we hope to make students aware that perceptions of culture are themselves culturally situated. In terms of the stages of the IDC, we aim at setting them up for successfully moving towards the stage of Acceptance, an orientation where individuals recognize and appreciate patterns of cultural difference and commonality in their own and other cultures. They are curious to learn how a cultural pattern or behavior makes sense within different cultural communities. We made the decision to require students to post their videos to a discussion board based off Vande Berg et al. (2009) who found that students who spent 26-50% of their time with host nationals made the most gains in intercultural development while students who spent 51-100% of their time with host nationals lost ground, and for students who spent 76% of time with fellow US nationals "intercultural learning simply stopped" (Vande Berg et al., 2009, p. 24). Vande Berg et al. (2009) posit that the fully-immersed students may become overwhelmed by the cultural differences. Furthermore, they suggest that the instructor's participation and mediation on the discussion board allows him or her to play the role of a cultural mentor who can facilitate intercultural development. Through the comments in the discussion, the instructor can guide students to consider explanations for the behavior and to realize that what might seem normal to them is strange to others. By observing differences, then describing them in their video and then commenting on each other's videos, we hope to continue moving students toward the beginnings of an intercultural mindset. The observation and description of social behaviors abroad heighten their self-awareness of their own cultural background, and the use of the French Youtuber's video serves to show that perceptions of others are relative, and allows them to experience differences in perceptions with greater complexity.

This assignment produced some interesting work from Chinese International Engineering Program students studying abroad in China as well. After interning in an insurance company for a month, with the task to sell insurance to customers, a student recorded an interview with a co-worker discussing her culture-related challenges in a five-minute long video in which they discuss a case. The student said,

> 我就跟他说我在某保险公司实习，然后问他（客户）有需要的话可以来找我，然后我就说唯一的问题我发现就是：在中国，人们的保险意识很差，我很难说服中国人买保险。然后他就说你们保险蛮好的.

> [I informed him (the customer) that I am interning at A Insurance. And then mentioned that he can contact me if he has any needs (for insurance/financial products). Then I said to my boss that the only problem is that I realized Chinese people do not have a strong sense of need for insurance. It's difficult to persuade Chinese people to buy it. The boss responded that A Insurance is great, and it has a large space for career growth, a lot of opportunities for me too.]

Her coworker commented,

> 实际上，中国人买保险的意识不差，真的。在中国，不管这个东西好不好，如果其他人买了，那么他们也买。所以很多人是抱着这种心态的：因为我身边的朋友都买了，所以我也买，并不是我相不相信的问题。像我父母，他们给我买过保险，但是他们根本就不信这套，包括我来该保险公司工作，他们都是反对的，但是他们依然给我买保险.

> [Actually, their sense of need for insurance isn't lacking, really. Instead, it's because Chinese people have this habit, whether or not something is good, if other people

bought it, they are also going to buy it as well no matter what. A lot of people hang on to this type of mindset: because all of my friends bought it, I'm going to buy it too, though not because I believe in it. For example, my parents bought me insurance, but they don't believe in it. When I came to work at A Insurance, they strongly resented that, but they still bought insurance from me because other people bought it.]

The student replied, 但是着对我来说很难啊. [But it's difficult for me.]

After the one-minute discussion, the student posted her observation and reflection, which showed that she was able to penetrate deeper into understanding how an observed cultural pattern made sense within a certain cultural community. The student realized that at the initial stage of interaction, Chinese people show a courteous attitude through respect, positive reciprocity, and sincerity in order to build a harmonious communication climate. But when the balance is in jeopardy, such as asking them to purchase some kind of insurance or seeing their son working for insurance companies in this case, one sees that Chinese people actually can express their emotions quite directly and aggressively.

Assignment 3: Engage in Simple Transactions

In the third assignment, which we entitled "Scavenger hunt," students engage in a series of simple transactions. Students make audio or video recordings of themselves making transactions. They must buy bread or pastries from three different shopkeepers. They also go to the local open-air market and buy three local products from three different merchants and ask each merchant about the local specialties that they sell. They also ask three people at work about restaurants or cafés in the area that they like and also about clubs or associations that they belong to. Finally, they go to one club or association (either one recommended by people at work or one they discovered in their earlier research on the area) and inquire about joining. After having done everything on the scavenger hunt list, they make a video or audio of between two and three minutes in which they assess how well they were able to handle these tasks linguistically, how well they handled them culturally, and how challenging they found this assignment overall.

Engaging in everyday transactions falls into the Intermediate range on the ACTFL oral proficiency scale. These are straightforward interactions that occasionally require asking questions. For the cultural goals, this assignment aims to get students interacting with local merchants and inquiring about local products. Through these transactions, they become familiar with the local products. The recordings also give the instructor an idea of the student's ability to interact in culturally appropriate ways. While the interactions are not particularly challenging linguistically, the experience of interacting directly with local merchants can be intimidating. These are often not people accustomed to dealing with learners of their language; this in turn, may add stress to the interactions. Through this assignment, students may develop an attitude of openness and come to realize that in their own culture, as well as others, there is a certain set of expectations for making transactions. Furthermore, the social aspects of this assignment, especially making the inquiries into joining a club or association, serve to expand students' social network. Isabelli-Garcia (2006) highlights the importance of social networks, showing a correlation among learners' motivations, social networks, and linguistic gain. She adds that the students with the most highly developed social network were the ones who got involved in extracurricular activities such as volunteering or travelling to visit friends of friends (Isabelli-Garcia, 2006). Through this intervention, we hope, on the one hand, to get students more involved with host nationals through clubs or associations that interest them, and, on the other hand,

recognize that lifestyle choices may differ from culture to culture and may symbolize different concepts and values in work-life balances. For example, the same assignment led students in the German IEP to realize that there is a *Verein* [club] for basically any leisure activity. Depending on their geographical location, students became members in a *Bogenschützen-, Fussball-, Schwimm-, Ski-, Mal, Musik-, Garten-, Angel- und Naturfreundeverein* [archery, soccer, swimming, skiing, painting, music, garden, fishing, and nature-lovers club], they joined *Ruder-, Tauch-, Fitness- und Radrenn-Clubs* [Rowing, diving, fitness and cycling clubs], they became members of a *Chor, a Kanugemeinschaft, a Jäger- or Judo-Jiu-Jitsu Vereinigung* [chorus, canoe club, a hunting or judo-jiu-jitsu association] They engaged in e-mail dialogue with club managers and were asked if they have ever used a kayak or canoe, instructed to bring their *Badelatschen* [flip-flops], fill out a membership agreement, or were invited to just meet up *zum Schnuppern* [get a taste of it]. The task involved students in real communication with locals about a wide range of topics. While some students just enjoyed embracing the sheer breadth of leisure offerings and successfully engaged with the club culture, others reflected on the experience in greater complexity and discovered a core concept of German cultural values and behaviors: the Germans take their *Freizeit* [leisure time] very seriously and this lifestyle may be grounded and motivated by a stronger separation between work and leisure or public and private spheres in the German culture.

Assignment 4: Compare Internship to Studies

The fourth assignment involves retrospection and introspection. Students write a 500-word essay in which they compare a typical day at their internship site to a typical day at their study abroad site. They begin by writing about three of their personal values or things that are important to them. Then, they write about three goals that they have for themselves during this year abroad. Next, they write a page or a page-and-a-half comparison of a typical day at their internship site to a typical day at their study abroad site. In a concluding paragraph, they discuss which site (study abroad or internship) seems better for helping them attain their values and goals. For the language goals, students write a series of paragraphs that include detailed descriptions and comparisons, which will be in the present and past time frames. They also describe their own values and goals and project them into the near future. These are mainly Advanced-level tasks on the ACTFL scale, but since not all students may have mastered these yet, the expected range is Intermediate-High to Advanced-Low. For the cultural goals, the main objective is to get students to situate themselves within the local culture and to consider how their personal goals can be realized in the new cultural context. This involves contrastive self-reflection between one's own culturally learned perceptions and behaviors, and those of different cultural groups: Who are they? What is important to them? How can they satisfy their developmental needs in their current situation? Those are the introspective questions. By comparing their semester of study to their internship, the students look back as a means to better move forward. For some students, this assignment will spur them to move past Polarization and toward Minimization by helping them overcome cultural differences and see similarities and universal values and principles among cultures in order to fulfill themselves within the new culture. For other students, the assignment may help them move into Acceptance where they recognize and appreciate patterns of cultural difference. The assignment encourages them to see that they can live within the new culture in a way that is fulfilling and that they can learn to appreciate and accept. It provides them with a schema for experiencing a different cultural context and facilitates a deeper understanding of cultural difference. This assignment is one of the most reflective ones, and the resulting essays indicate that it

refocused students' sense of purpose for the year abroad. Many students in the French IEP, for example, commented on the more highly structured schedule during the internship. In addition, they commented on the frequent use of English during the study abroad portion due in part to the easy access to their compatriots but also to the large number of international students for whom English was an easier common language than French. One specific student in the French IEP said of his three goals,

> *Le plus important objectif est à m'entraîner à mes compétences d'ingénierie. [Pour le deuxième objectif,] je veux être plus social. Aux Etats-Unis, je n'ai pas passé beaucoup de temps avec mes amis et je ne suis pas souvent sorti avec mes amis. La dernière chose est que je veux améliorer ma capacité à parler français.*

> [The most important goal is to train myself in my engineering skills. [For the second goal,] I want to be more social. In the United States, I did not spend a lot of time with my friends and I did not go out often with my friends. The last thing is that I want to improve my ability to speak French.]

The student's second goal, being more social, involves modifying his behavior to be more social than he was in the US. His third goal is to improve his French. While the student does not connect the two goals in a causal relationship, he seems to understand that being more social will lead to more opportunities to use French. Thus, this suggests that the student has moved past Polarization since he does not consider the change to his habits as a threat but rather as an opportunity.

The student concludes his essay with a reflection on which site is better. He writes,

> *La question qui est importante est quel site est le meilleur en respect de mes objectifs et de mes valeurs. J'ai appris beaucoup de choses à Compiègne, mais s'il faut que je choisisse une ville, je choisirais sans doute Strasbourg chaque fois. J'ai devenu [sic] plus social, je peux travailler comme ingénieur ou [sic] ce ne serait jamais possible à Compiègne qu'à Strasbourg. Toujours je travaille sur des projets importants qui pourront aider les chirurgiens avec leur patients. J'ai rencontré quelques gens extraordinaires. J'ai rencontré deux chirurgiens qui ont venu au japon [sic], ils sont déjà retourné [sic], qui étaient le plus aimables. Je veux dire que j'ai déjà appris ici plus que Compiègne. Ce stage, c'est tout que [sic] j'ai désiré.*

> [The question that is important is which site is better in respect to my goals and my values. I learned a lot of things in Compiègne, but if I have to choose a city, I would choose Strasbourg each time. I became more social, I can work as an engineer or (sic) this would not be possible in Compiègne than in Strasbourg. Always I work on important projects that will be able to help surgeons with their patients. I met extraordinary people. I met surgeons from Japan, who already went back, who were the friendliest people. I want to say that I already learned more here than in Compiègne. This internship is all that I desired.]

His concluding remarks give some evidence of both the Minimization and Acceptance orientation. For Minimization, he seems to be impressed with professionals from various cultures, which suggests that he recognizes values and principles that they hold in common. For Acceptance, he expresses appreciation for the novelty of his internship experience abroad, which hints that he is open to patterns of cultural difference although perhaps not yet fully able to recognize them since there is insufficient evidence to support this.

Assignment 5: Interview a Colleague

For the fifth assignment, students interview a colleague at their internship. They make an eleven- to fourteen-minute interview video in which they ask a colleague at their internship site about her or his academic preparation, career path, and other questions about the person. Students need to ask spontaneous follow-up questions to some answers to get extra information and they need to reformulate some answers to verify that they understood. They conclude their video with a short segment in which they talk about how this person's career path compared to their own or to that of someone else in the US. The main language goal is to ask questions to elicit information, and the secondary language goal is to implement interpersonal speaking strategies such as demonstrating listening comprehension by asking follow-up questions or reformulating answers to verify their comprehension. This places the activity in the ACTFL proficiency range of Intermediate-Mid to Intermediate-High, which is lower than the previous activity. However, the cultural goals for this task are more advanced. The surface goal is for students to get to know a specific person at work and how this person came to work at this place. Setting up the interview and conducting it ensures that students are making connections at their internship site. On a deeper level, the activity intends to move students from Polarization to Minimization or from Minimization to Acceptance. In the former, students who might see their education through polarized lenses (our system is better than theirs), may be able to see now that everyone has career goals and has undergone specific training to attain them. In the latter case, students may begin to see that while everyone has career goals, these may be conditioned by one's background or by the educational system of one's country.

Assignment 6: Write a Technical Description

The sixth assignment involves a detailed written description of a technical process or object. Students are asked to create a glossary of 35-50 technical words or expressions in the target language that relate to their specific technical internship. Then they write a detailed 250-word description of a technical process or object that is part of their internship experience. They conclude with a brief paragraph reflecting on how being able to use the right technical language has helped them become part of their team and professional culture at work. This is a detailed description of something of professional interest and as such the activity falls in the Advanced range. We expect students to perform at the Intermediate-High to Advanced-Low range depending on accuracy, level of detail, and cohesion of their description. For the cultural goal, we want students to think about their identity, particularly their identity as an engineer and their emerging identity as an engineer capable of working in another language as well as in another engineering culture. They may be part of a French team of engineers who rely heavily on math to back up their research or they may be in a German team that practices long-term planning of a project in order to anticipate everything that can go wrong rather than jumping into it and troubleshooting along the way.

The following excerpt is from a German and civil engineering student's technical essay *Der Bauprozess: nicht nur das Bauen* [The construction process: not just building]. She put in bold the glossary terms she had collected in the weeks prior to the writing assignment. As an intern at a German construction company, she was part of a team of civil engineers and urban planners moving a highway into a tunnel with the long-term goal of reducing traffic jams, air and noise pollution, and creating more green space to the inner city: a park is planned on top of the future submerged highway. The student realized that rather than beginning with the actual tunneling and fixing potential problems as they arise, the German

work culture requires long-term planning, anticipation of hurdles, and an extremely high adherence to safety regulations before the actual project can begin. The student wrote,

> ***Gefährdungsbeurteilungen*** *mussten auch gemacht werden.* ***Arbeitsschutz*** *ist in Deutschland natürlich extrem wichtig, also muss jeder auf der Baustelle* ***eingewiesen*** *werden. Jeder bekommt auch eine Kopie der* ***Betriebsanweisung****, und während der ganzen Bauzeit werden* ***Sicherheitsbegehungen*** *gemacht. Vielleicht trägt der* ***Polier*** *sein* ***Schutzhelm*** *nicht, oder vielleicht fährt der* ***Radlader*** *zu schnell. Alles soll dokumentiert und genehmigt werden. Falls ein* ***Mangel*** *deutlich wird, ist eine* ***Mangelanzeige*** *zu schreiben. Nach dem Einbau der* ***Bewehrungseisen****, aber bevor die Betonage, muss eine Abnahme stattfinden. Das Bauen selbst ist überschaubar im Gegensatz zu der Vorbereitung, Planung, Dokumentation und allem rund um den Planungsprozess.*

> [Risk assessments also had to be made. Occupational safety is of course extremely important in Germany, so everyone has to be briefed on the construction site. Everyone also gets a copy of the operating instructions, and safety inspections are made throughout the construction period. Maybe the polisher will not wear his safety helmet, or maybe the wheel loader is moving too fast. Everything should be documented and approved. If a defect becomes clear, a defect notice is to be written. After the installation of the reinforcement iron bars, but before the concreting, a certification process must take place. Building itself is manageable in contrast to the preparation, planning, documentation and everything related to the planning process.]

The student shows a deep awareness of the process-oriented approach of German engineering and thus displays recognition of a culture-specific framework based on an understanding of values (desire for order and safety) and behaviors (adhering to regulations). Furthermore, the technical vocabulary helps the student integrate into the host country's engineering culture.

Assignment 7: Describe a Cultural Incident

The seventh assignment requires students to describe a cultural incident. For these purposes, a cultural incident is a moment when they did something that was not within the expected cultural norms and it created a moment of awkwardness, humor, unease, or conflict. This is an oral presentational assignment and students make an eight- to ten-minute long video in which they go into detail about what happened. They describe the context, narrate the actions step by step, describe how people reacted, and how they felt. They conclude by reflecting on what they learned from this incident.

In the Spanish IEP, a student interning in Chile recounted the following cultural incident that took place during his first day of class at the local university. Having arrived a few weeks before the beginning of the semester, the student had been hearing the expression *felicidades por pasar agosto* [congratulations for having survived August]. By the time classes started, the student felt he had fully grasped the meaning of the expression and was ready to use it in class. The professor arrived, reputedly the most feared professor on campus, and the student welcomed him with the expression "Congratulations, professor, for having survived August." Along with total silence of the class and extremely surprised faces of the students, the professor responded with a stern voice, "I believe you got this one totally wrong." The month of August is the coldest month in Chile, and, in the most southern regions of the country, it can be really hard on older people's health. Therefore, when using such an expression one is saying that the person is not only old, but so fragile that a cold

winter could take his or her life. The student's recounting of this episode is an example of an Advanced-level past narration. Moreover, it shows that the student learned the subtleties of the local idiomatic expressions that are in turn linked to the local culture. In terms of his intercultural development the student realized that the meaning of an expression is deeply embedded in a specific cultural context. Initially missing the semantic nuances of his speech act, he learned from the reaction of the locals that there was a complex layer of cultural subtleties to account for if one wanted to communicate successfully, both linguistically and culturally appropriately, here with members of the Chilean community.

Recounting a specific cultural incident such as this includes some Advanced-level language functions since students need to narrate and describe in the past time frame. The concluding reflections could give evidence of some Superior language-level abilities depending on how students do it. For those reasons, the targeted level of attainment is Advanced-Low to Advanced-High. For intercultural development, the assignment asks students to pinpoint cultural behaviors and to describe how they differ from their own culture's norms. The reflections help students process how to navigate differences in behavior and accept those differences. For some students, this assignment will help them move from Minimization to Acceptance in that they acknowledge differences and explain how modification of their own behavior can help them fit in. "Students with an acceptance orientation experience the foreign culture as a complex maze of differences, with each recognized difference enlarging intercultural understanding." (Hammer, 2012, p. 123). In summary, intellectually, assignment seven may provide a schema for experiencing a different cultural context.

Assignment 8: Photo Essay

The eighth assignment is entitled "Photo essay" and involves interpretative writing as well as presentational writing. For this assignment, students take pictures of five to six things that they feel are different or unusual in their host country. They can take pictures of a few big things, like a Gothic cathedral, but are encouraged to take most pictures of very small, everyday things like doorknobs, street signs, or bus passes. They then write a 500-word essay about these things. For example, interns in the Chinese IEP were requested to share two photos every week with their peers from their workplaces to show their awareness of cultural difference on an online forum so that their peers can discuss and comment on them before the 500-word essay writing. Photos are diverse, some indicating the air pollution issues of the office buildings, some showing their colleagues' lunch boxes, and some showing the office nap culture. One student posted the photo (on the next page) in the second week, and wrote,

为什么我同事们的办公桌上都放着枕头？他们都打算在办公室睡觉吗？这是好事儿还是坏事儿呢？[Why are there cushions on my colleagues' desks? Are they planning to sleep in the office? Is that a good thing or bad thing?]

The comments included:

"初创公司大概都很忙吧！惨了！" [Maybe people are super busy because they work for a startup company. That is too bad!]
"也许是为了偷懒，哈哈。" [Maybe they are lazy, haha.]
"或者是为了拿加班费吧？[Maybe they just want to get overtime pay?]
The course instructor adopted the role of a cultural mentor and posted this first intervention: "能不能采访一下你的同事，他们每天都午睡吗？他们为什么会这么累？别的公司也这么做吗？" [Would you please ask your colleagues the reason why they want to take naps? Do they nap every day? Do people nap in other companies as well?]

Some student comments from the second round are excerpted here. They were:

"我的同事们也是一样的" [The same as my colleagues (they also nap everyday.)]
"嗯，我们公司也是!" [Yes, the same as my company!]

The course instructor then posted the second intervention: "请你做一个调查研究，包括网上资料搜集，然后考虑写出一篇作文" [Please do some in-depth research, including online literature review about US/Chinese cultural differences.]

The students discovered that the Chinese take mid-day naps at work in order to be refreshed for the rest of the workday. The pillows allow them a comfortable spot to rest their heads. Thus, in this assignment, students place cultural products within a larger cultural context, which gets them to think of culture as an interconnection between products, practices, and perspectives. Through the reflections, students are encouraged to see the host culture through the perspective of the host culture. In terms of the developmental stage of Acceptance, they "can also confront cross-cultural ethical questions within their specific work place or living situation by fully considering what a particular practice means from their own perspective and what a cultural practice represents in a different cultural community" (Hammer, 2019, p. 32). In the example above, the student develops a new appreciation of what makes the host culture, e.g., discovering that sleeping on the job is considered good in the Chinese culture and a major strategy to keep fresh and effective.

Assignment 9: Describe How You Have Changed

The ninth assignment requires students to reflect on how they have changed during their year-long sojourn abroad. Students write a 500-word essay, describing the ways in which they have had to change during their time abroad. They write one paragraph, in which they describe specific examples of how their language skills have forced them to change the way they communicate. They write another paragraph about how the local habits and customs have forced them to adopt new ones and to abandon, at least temporarily, others. For the third paragraph, they write about the ways they have had to change their outlook on the world and themselves because of these modifications. They add an introduction in which

they summarize the main change or changes. In the concluding paragraph, they explain how they think these changes will affect them upon return to the US, and what habits they might bring back to their home country from abroad. This reflective essay includes paragraphs that describe specific examples in the past with an introduction and conclusion that link the paragraphs together. Because it invites abstract discussion of complex matters and includes hypothesizing in the conclusion, this assignment constitutes a presentational writing assignment with some elements of the Superior level. Given that not all students will be able to handle all the functions, the expected performance range for this assignment is from Advanced-Mid to Superior. For the students' intercultural development, we hope that this assignment further develops or even consolidates an accepting intercultural mindset. Throughout their sojourn, they have become accustomed to the differences of the host culture, and this assignment asks them to reflect on the extent to which they have adopted these practices, and which changes to their adopted lifestyle they hope to bring back to the US.

In talking about the local habits she adopted, one French IEP student wrote,

J'ai aussi commencé à prendre une baguette chaque soir à la boulangerie qui se trouve en bas de chez moi et j'ai commencé à faire les courses beaucoup plus souvent qu'aux Etats-Unis, presque tous les deux jours en fait, parce que je ne pouvais pas porter beaucoup de choses à la fois sans voiture. Peu à peu, je suis devenue plus française en faisant des choses qui me facilitent la vie.

[I also started to get a baguette each evening from the bakery below my place and I started to go grocery shopping more often than in the United States, almost every other day, in fact, because I could not carry a lot of things without a car. Little by little, I became more French by doing things that made my life easier."]

Answering how he has changed, and how he sees himself before and after the year in Germany, a mechanical engineering student answers in a way that indicates a deeper level of reflection and cultural adaptation. Having gotten a taste of German lifestyle during his semester of study at the *Technische Universität Braunschweig* [Technical University of Braunschweig], yet not fully pushing himself out of his comfort zone since he was part of a large peer group of German IEP students, he made the conscious decision to do away with old habits he had engaged in back in the US like video game playing and surfing the Internet for hours on his own, and adapt to the German lifestyle during his internship. He began to take risks such as accepting invitations from German coworkers and interns to join them for outings and even a short weekend vacation and in general embraced the new culture by reading German books and trying out a new sport (joining a bouldering group) and traveling. While it was not easy for this introverted student to choose the more difficult path of social engagement and cultural immersion, he eventually was rewarded for his risk taking and determination and discovered a new way of living that was ultimately more satisfying and healthier; it also allowed him to accept perspectives other than his own as equally valuable. He wrote,

Aufgrund dieser Erfahrung bin ich offener für neue Ideen und Lebensstile. Ich habe oft früh gedacht, dass meine Meinung die beste Meinung ist. In einem neuen Land, einer neuen Umgebung mit Menschen unterschiedlichster Herkunft sehe ich, dass es viele Möglichkeiten gibt, zu leben und zu denken. Man kann diese anderen Perspektiven ignorieren oder man kann sie lernen und ausprobieren. Während meiner Zeit hier in Deutschland habe ich mein Leben auch in anderer Weise verändert. In meiner Wohnung

habe ich keine Internetverbindung noch keinen Fernseher. In meinem früheren Leben habe ich fast jeden Tag Internet und Fernsehen benutzt. Ich schaue mir gerne Shows und Filme an und kann viele Stunden im Internet verbringen. Also habe ich beschlossen, in diesen sechs Monaten ein anderes Leben in Stuttgart zu erleben. Die Untersuchung hatte sehr schöne Ergebnisse. Jetzt verbringe ich mehr Zeit mit Freunden, ich habe einen neuen Lieblingssport gefunden, Bouldern, ich lese deutsche Bücher, und ich reise oft. Ich genieße diesen neuen Lebensstil und fühle mich glücklicher und gesünder.

[Because of this experience, I am more open to new ideas and lifestyles. I often thought earlier that my opinion is the best opinion. In a new country, a new environment with people of different backgrounds, I see that there are many ways to live and think. You can ignore these other perspectives or you can learn and try them out. During my time here in Germany, I changed my life also in a different way. In my apartment I have no internet connection nor TV. In my previous life, I used internet and television almost every day. I like to watch shows and films and can spend many hours on the internet. So I decided to live a different life in Stuttgart during these six months. The investigation/trial had very nice results. Now I spend more time with friends, I have found a new favorite sport, bouldering, I read German books, and I travel often. I enjoy this new lifestyle and feel happier and healthier].

Assignments like the one above are good ones to facilitate students' future successful cognitive frame shifting, associated with the very rarely achieved mindset of Adaptation. This final stage in the IDC enables deep cultural bridging across diverse communities using an increased repertoire of cultural frameworks and practices navigating cultural commonalities and differences.

Implications

The qualitative data taken from students' reflective essays and videos show promising results for this targeted plan of interventions to improve engagement for students while overseas. This is especially apparent when one can see how the students interact with their host culture, analyze differences, and reflect on how their experiences changed themselves. Yet not all student responses and reflections reveal deeper self-awareness and appreciation of other cultures, which could indicate a need for us to explain more clearly to the students the rationale behind our interventions. If the students have an understanding of why they are doing these tasks, this meta-awareness may lead to greater involvement and greater growth. It may also be an indication of weakness in our preparation prior to departure; after all, Paras et al. (2019) found that the quality and duration of pre-departure orientation were correlated with high gain in intercultural competence as measured by the IDI. Most importantly, it proves to us the importance of using a multi-pronged approach to measuring growth in intercultural competence.

Future goals for the IEP include IDI assessment across all programs for the next quantitative phase of our study, standardization of the assignments for all language branches of IEP to allow for better comparisons of the quantitative data and heightened pre-departure intercultural training. We plan to continue our interventions after the students' return so that their intercultural learning can continue. For instance, students benefited from a debriefing session with a trained IDI expert on campus who helped students to conceptualize their year abroad in cultural terms (e.g., introduced definitions of culture they could use and how they can identify cultural differences). He also challenged them to reflect on how they had changed

abroad, to practice speaking about their abroad experience and about the meaning of culture, cultural difference, and intercultural competencies. He then showed them how they could use the IDC to describe how the year abroad affected their approach to cultural difference and leverage their study abroad experience and specific skills they perceived to have gained in future job interviews.

The format of the interventions provides for a great deal of flexibility. The assignments can become part of other long-term programs as well as short-term programs. For stays of a few weeks to a few months, the important element to integrate is the contact with host nationals. Contacting clubs and associations in the destination area allows students to begin a new social network or at least familiarize themselves with the local area. Making a video to present comically some of their first impressions of cultural differences is a great language learning experience and an excellent way to address possible misinterpretations or stereotyping early in their stay. Interacting with local merchants in simple transactions will happen and should become an explicit learning experience. Some of the other interventions, such as comparing the study abroad site to the internship site, might not lend themselves to all stays abroad, but could be modified to become comparisons of language learning at the home institution and abroad, which can also be an effective way to ensure that students focus on their learning goals.

Conclusion

The potential for learning during study abroad is enormous, but sometimes the potential is not fully tapped. Our work shows that targeted interventions during study abroad can help students to maximize simultaneously their growth in language skills and intercultural competence. Designing interventions that prompt students to interact with the host culture using the target language and then reflect on the experience can lead to heightened appreciation of the experience abroad as a learning experience. This task-based approach gives students the opportunities to experience various aspects of the host culture and to look at all their experiences abroad as chances to learn.

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Appendix

FRN 315 and 316 French Internship Abroad

List of Tasks[3]

1. Discover your internship area. What will the town, region, city, or neighborhood of your internship be like? Do some Internet research to find out what it will be like and write a 400-word presentation of the area. Write it in the present tense. Include geography and climate. Write about popular activities in this area. Look on the town hall's website for information about "*la vie associative*" which will list the clubs and associations in the area. Pick out three that sound interesting to you and contact the club president about how to join. Take a screen shot of the email you sent as an appendix to your 400-word presentation. Find out about the public transportation system, market days, special events, and anything the area is famous for. Include anything else that is of interest to you about the area. Conclude with some ideas of how you think life will be like for you in this area.

Language goals: Write present tense description of a town, city, or area. Cultural goals: Investigate an area to understand how people live there and how life might be like for you there. ACTFL scale target range: Intermediate Mid-Intermediate High depending on level of detail and range of topics discussed.

2. Compare cultural differences. What are the differences you have noticed between French and American culture? Watch this video by the French Youtuber, Cyprien, in which he comments on his perception of the US: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LtMS5eOOeQQ

Then create your own three- to four-minute video in which you speak about 90% of that time, inspired by his style, in which you comment on your perceptions of French culture. Post to the Sakai forum. Comment on the videos of two other students.

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3. Please note the assignments are the same for all the languages except for small, culture-specific modifications.

Language goals: Oral description and comparison of cultural differences. Cultural goals: Become aware that perceptions of culture are themselves culturally situated. ACTFL scale target range: Intermediate Mid-Advanced Mid depending on level of detail and range of topics discussed.

3. Scavenger Hunt. Make audio and/or video recordings of yourself making local transactions. Buy bread or pastries from three different shopkeepers and record these transactions. Go to the local open-air market and buy three local products from three different merchants. Ask each merchant about the local specialties that they sell. Record these transactions, too. Ask three people at work about restaurants or cafés in the area that they like and also about clubs or associations that they belong to. Don't forget to record your questions and their answers. Go to one club or association (either one recommended by people at work or one you discovered in your earlier research on the area) and inquire about joining. If you join and participate, you will get bonus points for this assignment, but you have to provide audio or video evidence! After having done everything on this scavenger hunt list, make a video or audio of between 2 and 3 minutes in which you assess how well you were able to handle these tasks linguistically, how well you handled them culturally, and how challenging you found this assignment overall. Upload the scavenger hunt recordings to the Drop Box on Sakai. Post the video or audio assessment of how well you were able to handle these tasks linguistically to the Sakai forum. Comment on Sakai about the posting of two other students.

Language goals: Engage in everyday transactions. Cultural goals: Communicate with others in culturally appropriate ways. ACTFL target range: Intermediate Mid-Intermediate High.

4. Compare a typical day at your internship site to a typical day at your study abroad site. Begin by writing about three of your personal values or things that are important to you. Then write about three goals that you have for yourself during this year abroad. Write about a page or a page and a half comparison of a typical day at your internship site to a typical day at your study abroad site. Conclude with a paragraph in which you discuss which site (study abroad or internship) seems better for helping you attain your values and goals. Attach pictures of places you frequent now (work site, apartment building, bus stop, café, etc.) and include them as an appendix to this report.

Language goals: Written description and comparison of daily routines. Cultural goals: Reflect on personal values and goals and to what extent daily routines help to attain them. ACTFL scale target range: Intermediate Mid-Advanced Low depending on level of detail, verb tense usage, and range of topics discussed.

5. Interview a colleague about her/his biography. Create an eleven- to fourteen-minute interview video in which you ask a colleague at your internship site about her/his academic preparation, career path, and other questions about the biographical facts of this person. Ask spontaneous follow-up questions to some answers to get extra information and reformulate some answers to verify that you understood. Conclude your video with a short segment in which you talk about how this person's career path compares to yours or to that of someone else in the US.

Language goals: Ask questions to elicit information and demonstrate listening comprehension by asking follow-up questions or reformulating answers to verify that you understood. Cultural goals: Get to know a specific person at work and how she/he came to work at this place. ACTFL scale target range: Intermediate Mid-Intermediate High.

6. Write a technical description. Create a glossary of 35-50 technical words or expressions in French that relate to your internship. Then write a detailed 250-word description of a technical process or object that is part of your internship experience. Conclude with a brief paragraph reflecting on how being able to use the right technical language has helped you become part of the professional culture at work.

Language goals: Create a detailed, profession-specific description. Culture goals: Use the vocabulary related to your workplace in order to adopt the specific professional language. ACTFL scale target range: Intermediate Mid-Advanced Low.

7. Describe a cultural incident. For these purposes, a cultural incident is a moment when you did something that was not within the cultural norms and it created a moment of awkwardness, humor, unease, or conflict. Make a video in which you describe in detail what happened. Describe the context, narrate the incident step by step, describe how people reacted, and how you felt. Conclude by reflecting on what you learned from this incident. Post to the Sakai forum. Comment on the videos of two other students.

Language goals: Talk in the past about a specific cultural incident. Cultural goals: Describe host cultural behaviors and how they differ from your own culture's behaviors. Gain awareness of cultural differences. ACTFL scale target range: Advanced Low-Advanced High.

8. Photo Essay. Take pictures of five to six things that you feel are different or unusual in France. You can take pictures of a few big things, like a Gothic cathedral, but take most pictures of very small, everyday things like doorknobs, street signs, or bus passes. Then write a 500-word essay about these things. Start your essay with a general paragraph about cultural differences. In the next paragraphs, describe in detail what is different about the objects you photographed. Also, analyze what these differences might show about the values within French culture. Write about how these differences might make sense in the French context, but less so in the US. Conclude with a paragraph analyzing how small differences can reveal more profound ones between cultures.

Language goals: Write an essay describing various cultural products and analyzing what they show about cultural values. Cultural goals: Learn to place cultural products within a larger cultural context. ACTFL scale target range: Advanced Low-Superior, depending on detail and level of abstraction.

9. Describe how you have changed. Write a 500-word essay, describing the ways in which you have had to change during your time abroad. Write one paragraph, describing how your language skills have forced you to change the way you communicate. Include specific examples. Write another paragraph about how the local habits and customs have forced you to adopt new ones and to abandon, at least temporarily, others. Include specific experiences. Write a third paragraph about the ways you have had to change your outlook on the world and yourself because of these modifications. Add an introduction in which you summarize the main change or changes. Conclude with a paragraph in which you explain how you think these changes will affect you upon return to the US.

Language goals: Write an essay reflecting on the impact of the experience abroad. Cultural goals: Show how you have adapted to the local culture. ACTFL scale target range: Advanced Low-Superior, depending on detail and depth of reflection.