

Global Literature in Tandem with Study Abroad: Cultivating Intercultural Competence for Preservice Teachers

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine how literature study and study abroad, in combination as methods of internationalization, influence preservice teachers' (PSTs) intercultural competence and potential future classroom practices. Elementary education PSTs studied abroad in Germany for five weeks. As part of the preparation, they read a German novel identified as global literature. While abroad, they saw the corresponding movie and had conversations with German peers to better understand it within its cultural context. Three sources of data - My Cultural Awareness Profile, a Germany Questionnaire, and a Critical Blueprint novel reflection essay - were analyzed. To better connect experiential learning abroad to future teaching, faculty guided PSTs to critically examine their pre- and post-responses. The findings indicate global literature is effective to begin to shift PSTs cultural perspectives. In combination, literature study and study abroad bring a global perspective to teacher preparation that can cultivate PSTs' intercultural competence.

Keywords:

internationalization of the curriculum, pre-service teacher education, short-term study abroad to Germany, Rosenblatt's transactional theory of reading, cross-cultural literary reading

Introduction

Globalization is an economic and social occurrence with a daily impact on human interaction with businesses, information, organizations, people, and services that move on an international scale. Globalization has transformed daily life and by extension the k-12 education system (Dantas, 2007; Stromquist & Monkman, 2014; Zhao, 2010). International

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testing programs (e.g., TIMSS and PISA) are “widely used to judge a nation’s quality of education and its future citizens’ ability to compete in the global market” (Zhao, 2010, p. 424). Global education is the teaching and learning approach used to help students understand the multiple perspectives of an interconnected world (National Council for the Social Studies, 2016) so they can participate in a global context. Yet, to prepare k-12 students to be competent global citizens, teacher educators need to prepare globally-minded and globally competent teachers (Marx & Moss, 2015).

Researchers have long called for the internationalization of teacher education (Alfaro & Quezada, 2010; Brewer & Leask, 2012; Kissock & Richardson, 2010; Longview Foundation, 2008; Merryfield, 2000; Ochoa, 2010; Rumbley et al., 2012; Zhao, 2010). One approach to internationalization is adding global literature as a means of exposing preservice teachers (PSTs) to other cultures, providing knowledge of the world, and offering the opportunity to gain multiple perspectives and develop intercultural competence (Fischer, 2001). Another approach with similar outcomes is studying abroad (Cushner, 2007). Study abroad has been substantiated as a high-impact educational practice (Association of American Colleges and Universities, 2018) linked to growth in intercultural competence (Stebleton et al., 2013). With intentionality and faculty guidance, a combination of these two approaches, could be transformative. Therefore, this study sought to examine how literature study and study abroad, in combination as methods of internationalization and with opportunities for guided critical reflection and intercultural discourse, influence PSTs’ intercultural competence and potential future classroom practices.

Literature Review

Internationalizing the Curriculum

Internationalization is “the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education” (Knight, 2003, p. 2). Approaches to internationalization vary. A common way for universities to internationalize the curriculum is to offer study abroad opportunities. There are several studies that substantiate the impact of study abroad for teacher education. Study abroad allows for global comparative education and multicultural experiences (Alfaro, 2008; Brown & Tignor, 2016; Doppen & Shahri, 2019). The experiences PSTs have while abroad impact their perceptions and dispositions towards their future diverse students (Medina et al., 2015; Pilonieta et al., 2017). A global perspective is elemental in preparing a globally competent teacher. Studying abroad increases the possibility of “developing global competence, intercultural competency, and cultural responsiveness” (Byker & Putman, 2019, p. 90). Byker (2019) found that development of global competencies and sense of global citizenship were connected to PSTs’ social and emotional learning while abroad. Additionally, study abroad influences PSTs’ identity as a global citizen and their concerns about global issues (Byker 2016; Byker et al., 2019; Byker & Xu, 2019; Dunn et al., 2014). These research studies around PSTs areas of growth related to being a globally competent teacher highlight the pedagogical value of study abroad for teacher education. Yet, education as a field of study is underrepresented in study abroad (Moss & Marcus, 2015). While 332,727 Americans studied abroad in 2016/2017, only 10,905 of those students were in the field of education (0.03%; Baer et al., 2018, p. 72).

While a focus on internationalization might come from institutional leadership, Helms and Tukibayeva (2013) suggest “efforts are needed by faculty” to internationalize

their course curriculum “from the ground up” (p. 4). Attention should be given to four levels of the curriculum – individual courses, academic program components, degree programs, and academic disciplines (Helms & Tukibayeva 2013). At the individual course level (where this study is situated), internationalization can include the transformation of coursework and activities to include readings, assignments, learning outcomes, and instructional methods that infuse global knowledge and awareness and intercultural competence.

Intercultural Competence

An emphasis on internationalizing the curriculum inherently brings with it a focus on intercultural competence (Deardorff, 2006; Deardorff & Jones, 2012). Intercultural competence is a process of developing proficiency in interacting with cultural diversity defined by “effective and appropriate behavior and communication in intercultural situations” (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009, p. 33). Intercultural competence is necessary for a globally competent teacher; thus, preparation within teacher education is imperative (Marx & Moss, 2011a).

Literature Study

The value of literature can be personal, such as for enjoyment, living vicariously, and the universality of life experiences, as well as educational, such as for enriching the content areas, critical thinking, and understanding a culture’s literary heritage (Huck et al., 2004). Literary texts, such as novels, contain and transmit social, historical, and cultural content (Ellis, 2018). Novels can serve as a cultural lens (Einbeck, 2002) allowing for developing and augmenting knowledge of the host culture, which is known to reduce anxiety when studying abroad (Gao & Gudykunst, 1990). Novels provides a “safe vantage point” for discussion of complex topics such as culture (Einbeck, 2002, p. 62). Thus, literature lends itself to internationalizing the curriculum (Pitts, 2017). Global literature, that is literature “set in a global context outside the readers’ own global location” (Short et al., 2016, p. 5) serves to help the reader understand the experiences of others who are culturally different from the reader and therefore behave, interpret, and experience life differently. Reading literature generates insight into the human experience within a cultural setting and allows readers to vicariously connect with another’s experience. Using global literature as an entryway into a culture before traveling abroad could help PSTs examine their own assumptions, begin to transform their frame of reference, and develop intercultural competence.

Global Literature and Study Abroad

While not specific to PSTs, Ellis (2018) used Swedish crime fiction novels as a venue for his students to understand political and societal issues and the theme of the foreigner before studying abroad in Sweden. His findings indicate students found the novels helped them understand the people and places and being the foreign other. Ellis’s research findings support the framework of using literature in combination with study abroad.

In the field of language learning, Fischer (2001) used Irish literary images of Germany to examine how literature plays a part in developing intercultural competence. Findings indicated literary texts “can be an excellent medium for the study of intercultural issues” (p. 233). Additionally, integrating literature and reader response in the language curriculum is an accepted practice (Amer, 2003; Gómez R., 2012; Paesani, 2011). Literature holds valuable cultural content, is beneficial for intercultural learning (Amer, 2003), and

can help students develop understanding about another culture (Scott & Huntington, 2002). Within the context of language learning, literary texts enrich the learner's cultural knowledge and promote intercultural competence (Gómez R., 2012; Rodríguez & Puyal, 2012). The research in these fields substantiate the value of using literature as an avenue for developing intercultural competence.

In summary, a study abroad program fits the definition of internationalizing the curriculum. At the course and curriculum level, global literature, also fits the definition. As a means of internationalization, studying abroad and reading global literature together expose students to other cultures, provide knowledge of the world, and offer the opportunity to gain multiple perspectives and thereby integrate international, global, and intercultural dimensions into a teacher education course. Yet just having course work and the study abroad experience is not enough for transformation.

Reflection, Discourse, and Action

Study abroad programs need to be “very intentionally organized...to facilitate transformative outcomes” (Hunter, 2008, p. 99). Hunter (2008) suggests “educators can encourage transformative learning by incorporating” critical reflection - necessary to increase PSTs's self-awareness and awareness of the world around him/her; discourse - the opportunity to engage with others so as to better understand the world; and action - the point where PSTs can consider their future classroom practices (p. 98).

Therefore, this study sought to answer the question: To what extent does literature study combined with studying abroad, and with opportunities for guided critical reflection and intercultural discourse, influence PSTs intercultural competence and their potential practices in their future classrooms?

Theoretical Framework

The reading process is transactional (Rosenblatt, 1978; 1983) - “a transaction between the reader and the text” (1983, p. 35) where the meaning of the text is created by the reader based on what he/she brings to the reading experience. According to Rosenblatt (1983), both the reader and the text have “social origins and social effects” (p. 27) and thus, both are “socially patterned” (p. 28). These patterns determine how a reader interprets and responds to the words and images in a text. Since readers have both efferent, what they “carry away from the reading,” and aesthetic, “what happens during the actual reading event,” responses to the reading experience (Rosenblatt, 1978, p. 24), the educational possibilities of literature lie within the reader's reactions (Rosenblatt, 1983). Naturally, a teacher cannot predict “the probability of any particular work having so profound” and transformative impact on the reader (Rosenblatt, 1983, p. 197). The role of the teacher is to lead the reader to critically reflect on the text and his/her responses. This reflection provides the reader with an awareness of his/her patterns of thinking and gives the reader an opportunity to recognize, accept, or reject such patterns (Rosenblatt, 1978). Rosenblatt's reader response theory was used as a lens to understand the value of reading global literature in combination with studying abroad to cultivate intercultural competence.

Methodology

Participants, Setting, and Activities

The 17 participants - two males (12%) and 15 females (88%) - were elementary education majors at a large urban university in the southeastern region of the United States. Their ages ranged from 19 to 26 years old (59% were 20- and 21-year-olds). The sample was one of convenience. All participants took the same five classes (15 credit hours). A multicultural course was delivered online and the other courses, related to science, social studies, reading, and language arts, were taught face-to-face by the two professors who traveled abroad with the students. The five-week study abroad experience took place in Germany.

As part of the reading and language arts courses (taught by the first author), PSTs were introduced to literature circle discussion groups (see Daniels, 2002). Three small groups were formed and role sheets (e.g., discussion director, word wizard, etc.) were used to scaffold conversations. The professor chose the novel *Why We Took the Car* by Wolfgang Herrndorf (2014). It is a contemporary realistic fiction story about Mike and Tschick who, in a stolen “Lada,” take an adventurous road trip across Germany, into trouble, among new friends, towards self-acceptance, and through to love. It was chosen because: it qualified as international literature, a type of global literature set, written and originally published in another country (Short et al., 2016); it was about Germany, written by a German, and first published in Germany by the title *Tschick* (Herrndorf, 2010); the novel was awarded the German young adult literature award (Arbeitskreis für Jugendliteratur, 2019); it had been translated into English; it was still read and studied in German classrooms; the German students at the host University were familiar with it; and published sources designated this novel as a thoughtful and relevant text (Johannes, 2018). (Unbeknownst at the time the novel was chosen, the movie serendipitously premiered the week after the PSTs arrived in Germany. German and American PSTs saw the movie together.)

Data Sources and Collection Procedures

There were three sources of data which were accessed for analysis after the semester ended and grades were posted. The My Cultural Awareness Profile (MyCAP; Marx & Moss, 2011b) is a 32-question instrument measuring four dimensions – Exploring the Global World, Learning about Different Cultures, Knowing Ourselves as Cultural, and Communicating across Cultural Differences. In this study, the first dimension, Exploring the Global World, was not given, instead, the Germany Questionnaire was given. The Germany Questionnaire was created based on Hubbard and Maloley’s (2013) workshop questions. It served the purpose of gauging participants’ pre- and post-knowledge and beliefs about Germany. A question added to the post-questionnaire was Did interactions with the German peers regarding the novel/movie provide a cultural perspective you did not have before? PSTs completed the MyCAP and Germany Questionnaire before traveling abroad and at the end of the semester after they returned.

The Critical Blueprint (Chambers, 1983) reflection was a course assignment. The purpose of the Critical Blueprint is to understand the reading experience, comprehend the story, and evaluate the text as part of a pedagogical process to determine how the text should or should not be read with and by students (Altmann, 1995). PSTs finished reading the novel and completed and submitted their essay before traveling abroad.

Data Analysis

Responses to the MyCAP questions were quantitatively analyzed using a Wilcoxon signed-rank test to determine if there were any statistically significant changes in mean responses between pre- and post-administrations. Descriptive statistics were calculated. Open-ended questions from the MyCAP, the Germany Questionnaire, and the Critical Blueprint reflection assignment were qualitatively analyzed. Categories that emerged from each instrument were cross-checked as a means to triangulate the data. To facilitate data organization and management, the HyperRESEARCH (ResearchWare, 2019) software program was used throughout all stages of coding. Successive passes through the data were made line by line using a constant comparison method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Data units varied from single words and brief phrases to full sentences, and codes were operationally defined. In the analysis of one of the MyCAP open-ended questions, Bank's (1993) dimensions of multicultural education were used as codes in an effort to acknowledge that cultural awareness is a process. Both researchers analyzed the data together and kept a detailed accounting of the coding process.

Results

This section presents the results from all data sources. Where applicable, a code book and data displays are provided, and results are supported by PSTs direct quotes in italics in order to understand their collective common experience.

MyCAP (Marx & Moss, 2011b)

Based on the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, there was a statistically significant decrease in mean scores between pre and post associated with the Knowing Ourselves as Cultural Dimension (see Table 1).

Table 1. Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test Results - MyCAP Dimensions

| Dimension | N | | Mean | | SD | | Minimum | | Maximum | |
|---|-----|------|------|------|------|------|---------|------|---------|------|
| | Pre | Post | Pre | Post | Pre | Post | Pre | Post | Pre | Post |
| Learning about Different Cultures | 15 | 15 | 1.93 | 1.76 | 0.49 | 0.49 | 1 | 1 | 2.5 | 3 |
| Knowing Ourselves as Cultural | 15 | 15 | 1.63 | 1.3 | 0.44 | 0.31 | 1 | 1 | 2.5 | 2 |
| Communicating Across Cultural Differences | 15 | 15 | 2.10 | 1.93 | 0.57 | 0.53 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 |

For a few salient questions, Table 2 provides the percentage of agreement before and after PSTs traveled abroad. Results revealed PSTs did not capitalize on their community's cultural diversity. PSTs indicated they were not familiar with cultural groups beyond their own (Question #7) and seemed to agree the best way to know other cultural groups is through travel (Question #3). PSTs responses remained virtually the same for how their cultural identity impacts how they see the world (Question #10) and how they communicate (Question #21); yet scores rose in response to how their cultural identity will impact their teaching (Question #13). Question #8 had 56% agreement before study abroad and 81% agreement afterwards; and simultaneously, PSTs open-ended responses indicated

they do believe a teacher's cultural identity can influence his/her perspective, teaching style, relationship to students, and content taught.

Table 2. Results of Pertinent MyCAP Questions

| Questions | Disagree/ Somewhat Disagree or Rarely/Not Often | | Somewhat Agree/ Agree or Sometimes/Often | |
|--|--|------|---|------|
| | Pre | Post | Pre | Post |
| | 1. Talking about common cultural characteristics is different from stereotyping. | 6% | 6% | 94% |
| 2. Culture is more about traditions, celebrations, and history than about core values. | 83% | 69% | 38% | 31% |
| 3. The best way to come to know other cultural groups is through international travel. | 0% | 0% | 100% | 100% |
| 7. I am not very familiar with a culture group other than my own. | 75% | 76% | 25% | 25% |
| 8. Curriculum should be culturally neutral, so it appeals to all children. | 34% | 19% | 56% | 81% |
| 10. My cultural identity does not really influence how I perceive the world and how I behave. * | 63% | 62% | 38% | 31% |
| 13. My cultural identity will impact my teaching. ** | 32% | 25% | 69% | 75% |
| 16. Helping students recognize their own cultural identity is essential for good teaching. | 0% | 0% | 100% | 100% |
| 19. To be an effective teacher, it is essential to learn about the cultural background of my students. | 6% | 0% | 94% | 100% |
| 21. My cultural identity does not really impact how I communicate with most other people. | 25% | 44% | 75% | 57% |
| 24. Only certain subjects that are taught in school require teachers to think about issues of culture. | 82% | 50% | 19% | 51% |

Note: Totals may not equal 100 due to rounding.

* 6% did not answer

** Response scale for this question was *rarely, not often, sometimes, often*.

For the open-ended question: "How might you incorporate cultural awareness into your teaching?", PSTs responses were categorized into Banks (1993) dimensions of multicultural education (see Table 3). Responses mainly aligned with dimensions of Knowledge Construction and Content Integration with a few responses aligning with the dimension of Equity Pedagogy.

Table 3. How to Incorporate Cultural Awareness into Teaching

| Code | Pre | | Post | |
|--|-----------|---|-----------|--|
| | Instances | Exemplar Quotes | Instances | Exemplar Quotes |
| Content Integration – focused on holidays and celebrations | 21 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Talk about different countries of the world and teach lessons on basic cultures, foods, language, and traditions of that country</i> • <i>Invite students of other cultures to present to the class</i> | 15 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Room decorations from around the world</i> • <i>Food/snacks/treats from around the world</i> • <i>Holidays around the world and words of the day in another language.</i> |

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|---|--|
| Knowledge Construction – allowing for multiple perspectives | 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Make the book [the class reads] written by someone of a minority culture</i> • <i>I will talk about different places, and actually take a virtual tour</i> | 9 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Cultural research projects</i> • <i>Travel the World activities- take students on virtual field trips, ask students to present on their cultures and bring in artifacts, invite parents into the classroom</i> |
| Equity Pedagogy – curricular modification for all to succeed | 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Making sure students could see themselves in the books</i> • <i>Building a good sense of community</i> | 2 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Be respectful to my students and their parents, but also make sure students can appreciate differences among cultures and communities</i> |

Another open-ended question was: “In what ways might a teacher’s cultural identity influence the way they teach?” PSTs’ responses fell into four themes – Perspective, Teaching Style, Relationship to Students, and Content to be Taught. There were not necessarily more instances from pre to post, but stronger and firmer ideas (see Table 4). For example, under the theme Content Taught, one quote from early in the semester indicated a PST felt a teacher’s culture “*can play a role in what [he/she teaches]*” whereas, after studying abroad, a PST felt a teacher’s culture “*influences [his/her] viewpoints and values which makes an impact on what [he/she finds] important and what messages [he/she emphasizes] while teaching.*”

Table 4. Influence of Teacher’s Cultural Identity on Ways They Teach

| Themes | Pre | | Post | |
|--------------------------|-----------|---|-----------|--|
| | Instances | Exemplar Quotes | Instances | Exemplar Quotes |
| Perspective | 11 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Because I am white and middle class, I have never lived as a minority.</i> • <i>A teacher may have preconceived notions about how other people are</i> | 7 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The teacher could be more biased towards a certain group of students</i> • <i>A teacher's cultural identity will influence the way they teach because it determines the way they think</i> |
| Teaching Style | 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>They might use teaching techniques such as the ones used on them growing up in the school they attended</i> • <i>A teacher may teach to all students as if their cultural identity is the same as hers, consciously or subconsciously</i> | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It influences their viewpoints, and values, which makes an impact on what they find important, and what messages they emphasize while teaching</i> • <i>How they gear their lesson</i> |
| Relationship to Students | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>They might have been brought up a certain way, so they treat some students differently.</i> | 6 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How they react to students or treat them</i> • <i>It determines the way they think and interact with everyone, including students</i> |
| Content to be Taught | 3 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>They may teach facts about the culture to which they belong</i> | 5 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The point of view the teachers brings through the lessons he/she teaches will be influence by their own culture</i> |

PSTs were asked to offer strategies they would implement to teach students from different cultural backgrounds. Responses fell into two themes - Educating Students and Educating Themselves. Three ways PSTs responded they would Educate Students was by Building Community (“*We will learn about every student’s culture....learn about each other and our families.*”); Integrating Culture into the Curriculum (“*Celebrate and appreciate all the cultures brought into our classroom!*”); and Considering Cultural Differences (“*I will consider cultural differences, and how these may impact the environment of my classroom.*”). With regards to Educating Themselves, PSTs realized they would have to learn about “*each students’ culture*” and “*background*” as well as “*reflect on [their own] prejudices . . . and work to overcome them.*”

Germany Questionnaire

The questionnaire asked PSTs to complete the sentence, “When I think of Germany, I think of” PSTs responses at the beginning of the semester fell into nine themes with Food being the most notable (see Table 5). Most of the responses to the second question on German stereotypes had negative connotations (*cold, serious, stern, alcoholics, anti-Semitic*), focused on punctuality (*always on time*), cleanliness (*clean*), and the environment (*environmentally friendly*).

Table 5. Pre and Post Themes of Responses to Question: *When I think of Germany...*

| Pre | | Post | |
|--------------------|--|--------------------------|---|
| Themes (instances) | Exemplar Quotes | Themes (instances) | Exemplar Quotes |
| Food (19) | <i>Bratwurst</i> <i>Beer</i> <i>Pretzel</i> <i>Strudel</i> | Food (25) | <i>Butter Bretzel</i> <i>Maultaschen</i> <i>Paying for water</i> <i>No ice</i> <i>Sparkling water</i> |
| Sites (13) | <i>Berlin Wall</i> <i>Castles</i> | Geography (11) | <i>Mountains</i> <i>Stuttgart</i> |
| Geography (8) | <i>Rhine River</i> <i>Heidelberg</i> | Personal Experiences (8) | <i>The friends I made</i> |
| People (7) | <i>Jews</i> <i>Blonde women</i> <i>Nazis</i> <i>Angela Merkel</i> | Transportation (6) | <i>Public transportation</i> <i>U-bahn</i> <i>Hauptbahnhof</i> |
| Language (4) | <i>Confusing language</i> | Sights (4) | <i>Beautiful buildings</i> <i>Beautiful parks</i> |
| Nationalism (3) | <i>Flag colors</i> <i>Soccer</i> | Customs (3) | <i>Cigarettes</i> <i>Paying for a bathroom</i> |

PSTs were asked why they should learn about Germany. Responses fell into five themes – Global Connection, History, Economy, Education, and Environment. Table 6 provides quotes for each. The responses before studying abroad seemed broad and general whereas the responses at the post data point were a bit more specific.

When asked if their ideas of Germany had changed, two PSTs (12%) responded their ideas had remained the same; whereas 88% of the PSTs affirmed their ideas had changed.

Their reasons for change fell into themes of Personal Experiences, Places Visited, and People Met. One PST concluded Germans “*are friendlier than [he/she] thought.*” Another conveyed the realization: “*I see how superficial our representations of other countries are.*”

Table 6. Why Learn About Germany

| Pre | | Post | |
|-----------------------|--|------------------------|--|
| Theme (instances) | Exemplar Quotes | Theme (instances) | Exemplar Quotes |
| Global Connection (9) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It's important to know about other countries</i> • <i>Strong government and good international political relationships</i> • <i>World powerhouse in engineering</i> • <i>We are allies with Germans and we should know about our friends</i> | Global Connections (8) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Advanced in health care</i> • <i>Understand there are differences and similarities to US</i> • <i>Expands their worldly knowledge and gives a different perspective than learned in history</i> • <i>Leave our American bubble and realize the world doesn't revolve around us</i> |
| History (4) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It contains a lot of history</i> | History (8) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>We only talk about Nazi Germany and that isn't fair</i> • <i>The country did not stop after the war</i> • <i>The country has history that impacts the world in modern day</i> • <i>Not an evil place like it was in WWII</i> |
| Economy (2) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Stable economy</i> • <i>Probably a lot more modern than we think</i> | Economy (4) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>They are a thriving global country</i> • <i>Hub of manufacturing cars</i> • <i>More than people learn in school</i> |
| Education (1) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Education system</i> | Education (4) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>It will help them become a better teacher</i> • <i>Advanced in education</i> |
| | | Environment (2) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>They are very proactive about recycling and using sustainable materials</i> |

For eight of the PSTs, interacting with German peers regarding the novel/movie provided a cultural perspective they did not have before and helped them appreciate the novel differently. For four PSTs, the German peers “*explained things [they] understand due to cultural differences,*” “*gave [them] some background [for] the ethnicities of the characters,*” “*helped [them] see [the German] culture,*” and therefore, “*the interactions in the book [made] more sense.*” For the rest of the PSTs, interactions with the German peers helped them realize how cultural differences led to different interpretations. One PST appreciated

hearing the German “*perspectives on the book which [were] much different than the American perspective.*” Another said the German peers “*perceived the [text] differently*” and “*weren’t phased by the sexual comments and drinking.*”

Critical Blueprint Reflection Paper

Based on analysis, five themes emerged, each composed of codes defined in Table 7, Interaction, Confusion, Responsibility of the Reader, Connection to Teaching, and Studying Abroad.

Table 7. Critical Blueprint Reflection Paper Analysis: Themes, Codes, and Definitions

| Theme | Code | Definition |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|
| Interaction | Connection to Character | Reader felt connected to character(s) |
| | Relatable | Reader relates to the story beyond the characters |
| | Engagement | Emotionally invested in the story |
| | Lack of Engagement | Not (emotionally or otherwise) invested in the story |
| | Motivation | Motivation to keep reading |
| | Disconnect | Not connecting with character(s) |
| Confusion | Confused by Plot | Reader had difficulty following the story line |
| | Content | Topics that came up in the story |
| Responsibility of the Reader | Type of Reader | Reader’s level of reading and reading experiences |
| | Purpose of Reading | Why readers read |
| | Text-to-Text Connections | Reader’s indication that the text reminded him/her of another text |
| | Awareness of Cultural Diversity | Awareness of differences in cultural aspects between the reader and text |
| Connection to Teaching | Aspects of Plot | Plot, events, themes, big ideas |
| | Appropriateness | Age/grade, vocabulary, sex |
| | Genre | Adventure, coming of age |
| | Methods | Literature circles, discussion groups, worksheets |
| | German Culture | Geography, history |
| Studying Abroad | Connection to Study Abroad | Reader made a direct connection to the study abroad program |

Interaction

Some PSTs connected with the characters, related to the plot, showed engagement with the text, and were motivated to read while others indicated a detachment with the novel. Several PSTs connected with the main character - “*As I was reading, I went on a ride*

with Mike.” Another connected with the family situation: “I connected with the drunken parent and divorce situation.” Another connected with young adult issues: “It reminded me of crushes, bullying, being the new kid, rebelling against parents, and wanting to escape reality.” PSTs were emotionally invested in the novel. One stated, “There are both happy and sad moments, as well as many where the reader does not quite know how to feel.” Another wrote: “During parts, I felt exposed, childish, and uncomfortable.” With regards to reading motivation, one PST confirmed: “The way it is written will keep you wanting to read more.” Yet, not all were as engaged. One indicated he/she did not feel “connected to any of the characters.” Another PST disclosed “[he/she] was not able to analyze the connections and metaphors.” Some “just wanted to get the required reading done.”

Confusion

Some PSTs indicated they were confused and “had a hard time following the story line.” Some PSTs were confused by the style of narration - “I just got really confused because of the flashback.” Several PSTs were not happy about what they felt was an “ambiguous ending.”

Responsibility of the Reader

To enjoy the novel, one PST believed, “a suspension of judgement is necessary.” Another PST realized: “if the reader is patient” and gives the novel “a chance, it would eventually all make sense.” Several PSTs allude to an awareness of a cross-cultural reading experience noting “it is a glance into another culture.” Another PST guessed, “[Americans] would be interested to know what a popular book in another country would look like.” One PST questioned: “[Is this book] seen as controversial to [Germans]?”

PSTs deemed several aspects of the novel as “inappropriate.” For most, the inclusion of “cursing, nudity, and references of sex” in a “coming of age” novel was scandalous. One PST noted, there were “inappropriate situations that made [him/her] uncomfortable.” Another PST felt “everything is raw, it’s not censored or glossed-over.” Another controversial aspect were issues of legality. Some pointed out that Mike and Tschick were often breaking the laws and “willingly committing crimes throughout their whole trip.”

PSTs reactions to the novel might have been based on the type of reader they are. Some PSTs admitted they were “not an avid reader.” “Based on [their] history as a reader, [they] would have not chosen this book.” Others felt they were a “sucker for a teenage love plot.” This novel had some PSTs reading outside of their usual pattern. One PST confessed: “I typically read books that have female protagonists, so reading a male-perspective book was different.”

Many PSTs made text-to-text connections, specifically to *An Abundance of Katherines* (Green, 2008), *Catcher in the Rye* (Salinger, 1951), *The Outsiders* (Hinton, 1967), *Holes* (Sachar, 2000), *The Lord of the Flies* (Golding, 1954), and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Twain, 1885), to name a few. The author deliberately intended for his novel to have a semblance to *Catcher in the Rye* and *Huckleberry Finn* (Passig, 2011). The other novels PSTs cited are also coming-of-age or road trip novels (Philpot, 2010) thereby grouping these books into the same “family tree” (Chambers, 1983, p. 183).

Connection to Teaching

Some PSTs suggested pairing the novel with themes in “social studies” related to “geography, language, and culture.” Several PSTs indicated they would “not introduce it to

students.” One indicated he/she did not “*see an educational purpose.*” Some were concerned about parents creating “*an uproar.*” Others were concerned about the content and felt “*students should know beforehand there will be parts that are sexual.*” Two PSTs could see the novel used in a “*12th grade English*” class because “*by [then, students] are more prepared for the truth.*” Another PST suggested teachers “*give a lesson on morals and ethics*” as a way to introduce the novel. It should be noted that in Germany this novel’s teaching grade range is 7th through 10th (Heck, n.d.).

Studying Abroad

Since the novel was read before traveling abroad, several PSTs expressed anticipatory feelings. One stated: “[the novel] *made me visualize what it will be like when I see Germany for the first time.*”

Limitations

The convenience sample and group demographics could be interpreted as a limitation; yet the participants closely reflected the education program (95% female) and U.S. teacher workforce (77% female; Snyder et al., 2019). Second, discrepancies across PSTs responses might indicate limitations due to social desirability. The fact that PSTs self-select to study abroad and the data were self-reported could be seen as a limitation. Three strategies were used to counter these issues: data was submitted anonymously or de-identified before analysis; the use of the MyCAP, an established tool with questions that are reverse coded, attempts to cancel out response bias; and all data sources were used to triangulate the findings and maintain the validity of the conclusions. Lastly, it might seem the adolescent novel choice was a limitation. However, the novel was not chosen for PSTs to teach but rather to read as adults experiencing participation in a literature circle discussion group for when they incorporate discussion groups in their future classrooms.

Discussion and Implications

The Germany Questionnaire results addressed how studying abroad influenced PSTs’ intercultural competence. The Critical Blueprint results addressed how literature study influenced PSTs’ intercultural competence. Yet, the comprehensive answer to the research question is most reflected in the MyCAP data which captured change in intercultural competence from the beginning to the end of the semester. In combination, literature study and study abroad bring a global perspective to teacher preparation that can cultivate PSTs’ intercultural competence.

Intercultural Competence and Future Teaching

While all facets of intercultural competence cannot be met in one program, some aspects of PSTs attitudes, knowledge, skills, frame of reference, communication, and behavior were affected. Connections between PSTs experiences abroad of cross-cultural friendships, bias awareness, cultural inequalities, and empathetic communication could be used as examples for PSTs to begin to consider creating equitable educational opportunities for all students.

Perhaps PSTs overestimated their cultural awareness before studying abroad and due to their experiences while abroad, realized they did not know as much as they thought they did. It is also possible while PSTs are taught the terms found in the questions (e.g., cultural identity, culturally neutral), they either do not fully comprehend them or have not

thought about them within a teaching context. To use assessment results for learning, faculty should guide PSTs to critically examine their pre- and post-responses to solve for themselves the connection between their knowledge, experience, and attitudes and their actions as future teachers. Additionally, creating opportunities for PSTs to develop knowledge of their own culture and, leveraging the University's diverse population, have intercultural interactions with diverse others before departure can support intercultural learning.

Global Literature Study Initiates Shift in Perspective

Reading and discussing the novel was effective in beginning to shift PSTs cultural perspectives. PSTs reactions to the novel allowed them to consider their own subjective cultural perspectives. PSTs conversations with German peers helped them realize how their cultural viewpoint influenced their interpretation of the text and of people and cultures outside of their own. Cross-cultural studies of reader response have concluded that cultural background, stereotypes, and the reader's prior knowledge influence the way a reader creates pictures in his/her mind's eye while reading and interprets what he/she reads (Auracher & Hirose, 2017). The findings of this study concur - a reader's cultural background influences the understanding, interpretation, and evaluation of the novel and its characters. Thus, there is value in the use of global literature to develop intercultural competence. More research is needed in this area of cross-cultural reader response to examine how the reading of literary fiction can help develop intercultural competence and how this new understanding can prepare PSTs for study abroad and maybe even influence their future teaching.

The intersection of cross-cultural reader response and cross-cultural conversations gets at the underlying premise to Rosenblatt's theory of transactional reading (1978; 1983) – the meaning of the text lies with the reader – and this is precisely a component of intercultural competence – to recognize how cultural perspective affects interpretation and understanding. The novel and the conversations it inspired served as a vehicle for shifts in PSTs frame of reference. It allowed PSTs to begin to develop a cultural fluency, that is “the ability to mediate between one's culture and that of the host country” (Einbeck, 2002, p. 60). Herein lies the power of global literature to serve as an intermediary in the development of intercultural competence.

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