Research Article

Writing for Intercultural Growth on Study Abroad in Australia

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Abstract

For students participating in study abroad programs in seemingly familiar environs, ongoing cultural mentoring is critically important. This study looks at intercultural development using both the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and qualitative analysis of reflective writing assignments. U.S. participants in a semester-long faculty-led program in Australia experienced significant intercultural growth as measured by the IDI. Four writing prompts were analyzed in terms of how well they correlated with student IDI Developmental Orientation (DO) scores. Written reflection reveals how students write about intercultural issues at different developmental stages. Some writing prompts were found to facilitate intercultural development, allowing students to 'write beyond' their DO scores. While sojourners effectively wrote about cross-cultural issues pertaining to the host environment, more ethnocentric thinking was revealed when asked to reflect on cultural conflicts in their home community. The findings illustrate that significant intercultural growth is achievable in a culturally and linguistically similar host country, and that carefully designed reflective writing prompts can both illustrate and facilitate meaningful intercultural growth.

Keywords:

Study abroad, Australia, intercultural development, reflective writing.

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Introduction

Study Abroad experiences are frequently viewed as a critical component in the development of intercultural awareness and skills in undergraduate education. Yet research has shown that the intercultural benefits of study abroad programs vary greatly. It has become clear that programs yielding demonstrated intercultural growth share some important traits, namely thoughtful and targeted interventions around intercultural experiences. Targeted reflective writing can serve as an effective means of facilitating intercultural development. An experiential/constructivist perspective wherein students participate in reflection to build cultural self-awareness facilitates intercultural development (Vande Berg et al., 2012). This study looks at the intercultural growth in students within a semester-long study abroad program in Australia. Pre- and post-experience measures of intercultural growth among 21 undergraduates are examined and compared to reflective writing samples. Qualitative thematic analysis of targeted written assignments illustrates the ways students write and think about intercultural issues while participating in a study abroad program.

Intercultural Development in Study Abroad

Much attention has focused on the perceived personal and educational benefits of study abroad. In particular, the development and assessment of intercultural competence has been studied extensively (Deardorff, 2006; Griffith et al., 2016; Leung et at., 2014; Vande Berg et al., 2009). One model frequently used to measure intercultural growth is Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity, or DMIS, which situates intercultural development on a continuum ranging from ethnocentric to ethnorelative orientations (Bennett, 1993). Numerous studies have utilized the associated tool, the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI), as a means of measuring intercultural development in sojourners in a variety of contexts, including semester-long programs (Hammer et al. 2003; Lou & Bosley, 2012; Spenader & Retka, 2015; Terzuolo, 2018; Vande Berg et al., 2009; Vande Berg et al., 2012).

In the Georgetown Consortium Study of nearly 1,300 sojourners, multiple variables were examined in terms of intercultural growth as measured by the IDI (Vande Berg et al., 2009). In that study, the average gain was a modest 1.32 points, with the strongest gains coming in semester-long programs, averaging a gain of 3.4 points (Vande Berg et al., 2009). Lou and Bosley point out that "gains in the range of eight points, however, reflect more significant changes in one's cognitive understanding and behavioral practice" (2012, p. 341).

Vande Berg et al. recommend that programs ensure well-designed experiential learning for participants, as well as interventions from a well-trained cultural mentor.

Mentorship for Intercultural Growth

Research clearly shows that students do not automatically experience intercultural development as a result of studying abroad. (Vande Berg et al., 2012). Rather, intercultural growth is a path "...not paved by experience alone. Education and training must accompany the experiences that fuel the learning" (Lou & Bosley, 2012, p. 338). In particular, cultural mentoring interventions have been shown to be valuable predictors of intercultural growth in study abroad (Engle & Engle, 2003; Vande Berg et al., 2012). Sanford's challenge/support hypothesis highlights the importance of helping students participate in situations that challenge them, while providing mentorship that supports their sense-making of those challenges (Sanford, 1966). Lou and Bosley point to the positive effects of ongoing "facilitated guidance from the instructor" during study abroad (2012, p. 354). Students who receive cultural mentoring during a program frequently show the greatest intercultural gains (Vande Berg et al., 2009).

Linguistic and Cultural Similarity

Some students choose study abroad programs because of the opportunities they afford for language learning. For many others, the sojourn does not necessarily involve learning a new language. Van Houten notes that there is a "codependence of language skills and cultural knowledge on learners' demonstration of interculturality" (2015, p. 163). She notes how one's ability to demonstrate intercultural competency will be limited by one's language proficiency level. When cultural mentorship, discussions, or reflective writing occurs in a student's second language, there is a risk that opportunities for intercultural growth, as well as a valid assessment of learning may be lost. For programs in which there is no new language to be learned, the opportunity to improve and demonstrate intercultural competence is enhanced because individuals already have proficiency in the language of the new cultural context. However, differences in language varieties, such as those found between U.S. midwestern and Australian varieties, must be noticed and adapted to in order for individuals to grow in their intercultural competency.

Together, the Anglophone nations of Australia, Ireland, New Zealand and the U.K. host nearly 20% of all U.S. study abroad participants (Open Doors, 2017). The degree of perceived cultural similarity between the U.S. and a country such

as Australia must also be considered. Ireland notes "The major obstacle for Americans studying abroad in developed economies, especially in English-speaking countries, is to become sensitive to the subtleties of foreignness" (2010, p. 27). Because students may not notice important cultural differences in these contexts, cultural mentorship is particularly important for facilitating intercultural development. Anderson, Lorenz, and White concur that "On low challenge programs there needs to be facilitation to guide students to see the difference and feel the discord in order for perspective shift to occur" (2016, p. 14). Anderson et al. go on to conclude that "the instructor must support and guide students through the incidents of cultural discord, in order to achieve the values and assumptions introspection that is necessary for the perspective shift required to enhance intercultural sensitivity (p. 17).

Facilitating Intercultural Growth Through Written Reflections

In addition to mentorship, critical to the development of intercultural sensitivity are experience and reflection. Vande Berg et al. point out that significant intercultural growth occurs "...when they are immersed in another culture and receiving meaningful intercultural mentoring and opportunities for reflection on meaning-making" (2012, p. 21). "Reflection is emerging as a key component of student development in study abroad" (Savicki & Price, 2017, p. 51). They go on to note that "experiences gain significance to the degree that students can ascribe meaning to them", and that those experiences that are not carefully considered, will likely not lead to meaningful growth (p. 51). Sharma, Phillion, and Malewski (2011) utilized critical reflection interviews to examine multicultural competency development in university students in a teacher education program with a study abroad component. Focusing on issues including identity development, perceptions of culture, and cross-cultural challenges, they found that having students engage in critical reflection helps "develop multicultural competencies by examining their beliefs and perceptions and questioning how their beliefs and perceptions shape their worldview toward self and other" (p. 20).

Facilitating meaningful written reflection requires both the creation of opportunities for such reflection, as well as teaching students how to undertake that reflection (Brewer & Moore, 2012). Student written reflection has the potential to function both as an assessment of student growth, as well as facilitate student learning itself (Earl, 2003). Within the field of educational assessment, this concept is known as washback: the ability of an assessment to not only assess, but also to foster additional learning. Essentially, completing the assessment becomes an act of learning (Bachman & Palmer, 1996). Within study

abroad, reflective writing promotes intercultural development while also creating written artifacts that can illustrate student thinking around interculturality.

Assessing Intercultural Development

Intercultural development in study abroad settings has been widely assessed, although both definitions and measurements of intercultural development vary (Deardorff, 2006). Intercultural scholars generally agree that intercultural competence can be measured, and recommend the use of qualitative methods, with weaker universal support for the use of standardized measurements (Deardorff, 2006). Engle notes that study abroad has seen a deluge of studies looking at quantitative measures of gains in sojourner programs, and cites limitations in studies using qualitative measures, particularly in that they tend to focus on consumer satisfaction. Preferred by intercultural scholars are the use of case study, interview, and mixed-methods approaches (Deardorff, 2006). The use of standardized competency measurements for intercultural development, such as the IDI, can be used alongside qualitative assessments, such as the analysis of written reflections, to inform our understanding of intercultural development. Therefore, the goal of this study is to achieve an in-depth understanding of how intercultural growth can be facilitated through writing prompts that are matched to the developmental orientation of the sojourner. Importantly, this study utilizes a mixed-methods approach that draws on the IDI to measure development, and a qualitative analysis of student writing to explain how such growth is promoted and manifested. By triangulating these data sources in this novel way, this study aims to deepen our understanding of how reflective writing both illustrates and facilitates intercultural growth.

Research Questions

1. When students are given writing prompts designed to target their IDI Developmental Orientation (DO), how closely do their responses align with their DO?
2. How do student narrative responses to targeted prompts both facilitate and reflect the development of ethnorelative orientations?

Method

This study uses a mixed-methods approach to examine the intercultural development of U.S. sojourners in Australia during a 17-week (semester-long) faculty-led program. Data was collected prior to students arriving in Australia, during the sojourn, and during the last week of the program.

Participants

The data came from 21 program participants. One additional student participated in the program and the study, but never submitted the final essay, so that student's data has been removed. The group was between the ages of 20 and 21 years of age (5 males, 17 females), and consisted of mainly third-year university students, with 2 second-year students as well. The participants came from a variety of academic majors and minors, and none had visited Australia prior to the sojourn. One student reported having lived abroad for over 10 years, add two others for less than 3 months. For the rest of the students, this was their first sojourn. All were native English speakers from the Midwest of the United States, were in good academic standing, and completed written applications and interviews with the faculty director before being chosen for the program.

Program Description

This semester-long program took place near Perth, Australia, with the first author serving as faculty director from the U.S. institution. Students lived in single and double rooms in a residence hall that also housed students from another U.S. university, as well as a few Australian students. All participants took two required courses: a seminar course taught by the faculty director, and an Australian history course taught by the host university faculty. The seminar course included 3 required in-person pre-departure sessions held by the faculty director and was designed to meet goals specific to intercultural and experiential learning. The seminar course met one evening per week for 3 hours throughout the program, and students completed the reflective journals and essays examined in this study as part of the seminar. For the remaining three courses, participants directly enrolled in courses offered by the host university.

The program also included 4 cultural excursions (e.g., learn to surf, attend an Australian-rules football match), as well as one major excursion to the Goldfields region. During this excursion, students and their faculty director spent 5 days on an Aboriginal-run station in a remote community in the outback. The group slept outdoors, cooked meals together, visited culturally significant sites and engaged in conversation with the Aboriginal hosts. This experience is the topic of the final essay assignment.

Data Sources

Both a standardized measurement of intercultural development and a qualitative analysis of student writing about intercultural issues are used in this mixed-methods approach.

For the standardized measure of intercultural development, version 3 (v3) of the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) was administered. The IDI is a 50-item Likert-scale instrument based on Bennett's DMIS (Bennett, 1993) designed to measure one's stance toward cultural differences and commonalities. The IDI places individuals along a continuum with ethnocentric stages (monocultural mindsets) on one end, and ethnorelative stages (intercultural mindsets) on the other (Bennett et al., 2003; Hammer, 2012). Table 1 illustrates the IDI scale in relation to the stages of development along with key characteristics of the stages. The resulting Individual and Group Profile Reports were also used to support student development via targeted interventions. The tool also assigns Leading and Trailing Orientations (LO and TO) scores. The validity of the IDI has been established in numerous studies, making it an appealing measurement tool for college-level study abroad programs (Hammer, 2012).

Ethnocentric Orientations	Denial Score: 55-69	Limited experience with other cultural groups Makes broad generalizations or stereotype about the 'other'
	Polarization Score: 70-84.9 Type: Defense Type: Reversal	Us vs. them: my culture is superior to others Us vs. them: other cultures are superior to mine
	Minimization Score: 85-114.9	Commonality is overestimated, differences underestimated
	Acceptance Score: 115-129.9	Recognize and appreciate patterns of cultural difference and similarity in own and other cultures Cultural interest and curiosity
Ethnorelative Orientations	Adaptation Score: 130-145	Ability to shift cultural perspective and behaviors in culturally appropriate ways

TABLE (1): STAGES OF INTERCULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND CHARACTERISTICS (SEE HAMMER, 2012, P. 120-124)

For the qualitative analysis of student writing, reflective writing samples were collected and analyzed as an assessment of intercultural development. This included two early experience assignments and two late experience assignments, all required as part of the seminar course taught by the faculty director. For ease of reading, these will be referred to as pre- and post- measures. Pre-measures included pre-test IDI, First Journal and First Essay. Post-measures

refer to post-test IDI, Last Journal, and Last Essay. The prompts were designed to target specific aspects of intercultural development. The early experience prompts were designed knowing the IDI profiles of the participants. The late experience prompts were designed before post-test IDIs had been taken and thus were designed without knowing student IDI post-test scores. Table 2 describes the prompts and the intercultural stage upon which each prompt was focused.

Assignments	Intercultural Stages in Focus
First Journal: First impressions of Australia	Cusp of Minimization
First Essay: What is my culture?	Minimization and shift towards Acceptance
Final Journal: Tensions in own culture	Cusp of Acceptance
Final Essay: Aboriginal experience	Acceptance and shift towards Adaptation

TABLE (2): WRITING SAMPLE TARGET STAGES

Procedure

Students completed the IDI two times as a part of this program. The pre-test was completed two to four weeks prior to arrival in Australia, and the post-test was taken during the final week of the program. All students received an explanation of the group profile as part of the seminar course on-site, and they were offered individual consultations as well. The first journal was assigned in conjunction with the pre-test group profile presentation.

The writing samples were assignments that students completed during the seminar course. Two samples were collected in the first 2 weeks of the program, and 2 were collected in the final 3 weeks of the program.

Data Analysis

The IDI pre and post-test individual and group scores were analyzed with two-tailed paired t-tests using SPSS version 25. Comparisons between IDI scores and writing samples were conducted using Spearman's correlations and chi-square analyses.

The writing samples were analyzed in terms of stages of intercultural development as described by Bennett's DMIS. The reliability of scales of the DMIS, which were used for coding the writing samples, has been established by

Paige, Jacobs-Cassuto, Yershova, and DeJaeghere (2003) as well as by Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman (2003). The first two authors, both IDI Qualified Administrators, did the qualitative analysis of the writing samples. First, each read through all four samples produced by three randomly chosen students. During this first stage, the focus was on confirming inter-rater agreement in assigned codes to establish the validity of the coding before proceeding with further analysis. Passages were highlighted when they were deemed to be illustrating salient features of intercultural development. Highlighted passages were coded in terms of the orientation (e.g., polarization), type (e.g., reversal), as well as characteristic (e.g., us vs. them). Each writing sample was assigned an overall developmental orientation rating (DO). In the case that two different orientations were present, the more prevalent of the two was assigned the rating of DO, while the other was considered to be either a trailing or leading orientation. Prevalence was determined either by the absolute number of instances of passages or by the relative length of passages within a sample. When substantial trailing orientations (TO) or leading orientations (LO) were noted in a sample, those were also coded. Thus, each sample received a DO rating, and sometimes a TO and/or LO rating as well. The first two authors met and compared their ratings, finding that the coding scheme worked well and that they had a general agreement in the first samples. These two authors then proceeded to analyze all samples according to the rating scheme. The scores agreed completely (DO, type and characteristic, TO and LO) or partially (meaning DO agreed, but type or characteristic identified was different) 88% of the time. For the remaining 12% of samples, the DO, TO and LO were reconciled through mutual re-examination and discussion in comparison to the IDI guidelines (Bennett, 1993; Hammer, 2012).

Numeric codes for developmental stages were assigned to writing samples (1 = Denial, 2 = Cusp of Polarization, 3 = Polarization (defense and reversal), 4 = Cusp of Minimization, 5 = Minimization, 6 = Cusp of Acceptance, 7 = Acceptance, 8 = Cusp of Adaptation, and 9 = Adaptation). In order to allow for comparison to the writing samples, IDI scores also received these same numeric codes, based on the DO, TO, and LO scores identified for each one by the IDI.

Results

In order to explore whether the targeted writing prompts elicited responses reflective of student developmental orientations (DO), and to examine how such writing facilitates and reflects ethnorelative thinking, it is important to begin with the IDI profile of the group.

Intercultural Gains Made by Students as Measured by IDI

While most of the group was operating in the stage of Minimization (n = 14), there was also a cluster of 5 students beginning in the Polarization stage. The two outliers consisted of one student on the Cusp of Polarization (IDI score = 69.42) and one student on the Cusp of Acceptance (IDI score = 114.03).

The post-test IDI was administered in the final week of the course, at the same time as students were writing their final journal. The group post-test profile indicated that the group had progressed further within the stage of minimization, with a group profile score of 103.86. This constitutes a significant group gain of 11.34 points. Related to the post-test DO scores, one participant was in Polarization, two in the Cusp of Minimization, nine in Minimization, three in the Cusp of Acceptance, five in Acceptance, and one in Adaptation.

Two students had a loss in their IDI score (-6.3 and -4.38), while the other 19 saw gains ranging from 2.423 to 43.234 points. The student who began the experience with the lowest IDI score, at the Cusp of Polarization, experienced the most profound gains. Seven participants made very significant gains of more than 20 points, with six participants finishing in Acceptance and Adaptation.

Students' intercultural development as measured by the IDI was analyzed using two-tailed paired t-tests. Table 3 displays the descriptive statistics for intercultural growth as indicated by the DO score, defense, and reversal. The change in DO score was significant ($t(20) = 4.71$, $p < .001$), as was the increased resolve of reversal orientations, $t(20) = 2.69$, $p = .014$. However, resolution of defensive orientations showed no statistical difference between pre- and post-measures, $t(20) < .001$, $p < .99$. This could be due to the relatively high pre-test scores on the defensive scale, with an average score of 4.27, which left little room for further resolution. The same phenomenon was noted in Anderson and Lawton's (2011) study.

Scale	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-test Mean (SD)	Possible Range
Developmental Orientation (DO) Score	91.10 (13.17)	103.86 (15.34)	55-145
Defense	4.27 (.54)	4.27 (.65)	1-5
Reversal	3.45 (.59)	3.86 (.65)	1-5

Table (3): MEANS, STANDARD DEVIATIONS, AND RANGES FOR PRE- AND POST-IDI SCORES AND RESOLUTION OF STAGES

Intercultural Development Reflected in Student Writing

The first research question examines whether writing prompts aligned with students' DO stages elicit intercultural reflections indicative of those stages. Writing prompts were crafted to enhance intercultural development by targeting specific stages of the DMIS scale, based on the IDI pre-departure Developmental Orientation (DO) profile of the group. The First Journal and First Essay prompted students to explore topics that would move them from the Cusp of Minimization into and through Minimization.

First Journal Prompt: Think about your first impressions of Australia and what cultural products, norms and practices you've witnessed. What are they? What reactions have you had? What sorts of beliefs and values might be behind Australian products and perspectives? How are your own values and beliefs shaping your reactions? Now consider what you've learned about the IDI. What aspects of the intercultural stages resonate with you? (Targeted stage: Cusp of Minimization)

First Essay Prompt: Begin your essay with a description of your own culture (about 1 page). Do you identify your culture in terms of race? Gender? Socioeconomic status? Describe your own beliefs and values compared to those of your friends and families, and of other groups in society. Spend the next part of your essay (about 1 page) describing cultural similarities and differences you've noticed as part of your international experiences. The final part of your essay (about ½ -1 page) should focus on how you are changing as a result of these cultural experiences. (Targeted stage: Minimization)

The Last Journal and Last Essay prompts targeted minimization and acceptance respectively. While the IDI scores of participants were not known at time the prompts were developed, it was presumed that students were making intercultural gains and that these reflections would be developmentally appropriate for the group. The Last Essay requires students to not only draw from their experience, but to also reference academic learning done as part of coursework in the program.

Last Journal Prompt: For your final journal entry, please think about what you've learned about different cultural groups in Australia and what this might teach us about cultural groups in the U.S. Please choose an issue in which you see two different cultural groups in conflict, and explore the cultural values and beliefs behind the different perspectives. Most cultural conflicts have multiple perspectives on each side of the issue, so don't limit yourself to just '2 sides of an issue', because there are probably more. If one of the sides you are reflecting on is

your own cultural perspective, try to really examine what the values and beliefs behind that perspective are, and try to notice potential flaws in your own views if you can. It's alright to be critical of cultural perspectives if you can demonstrate that you understand them first. Write about 1 page exploring the different facets of a current cultural conflict in the U.S. context.

Examples of cultural conflict issues you could explore include:

> *The Black Lives Matter movement*
> *Issues around Native American reservations, casinos, fishing and hunting rights, mining or drilling for natural resources, or other social issues*
> *Anti-immigration sentiment (Trump's wall proposal, for example)*
> *Quotas and Affirmative Action laws for jobs, schools*
> *Hollywood and the latest Oscars when no black actors were nominated for the major awards*
> (Targeted stage: Cusp of Acceptance)

Last Essay Prompt: Consider what you learned from your readings and discussions in all your courses, as well as your experiences during our week at the Aboriginal station.

Explore 2-3 issues related to cultures in contact. Think about topics in which there are 2 or more distinct viewpoints or experiences that would shape how people feel and act around an area. Describe the issue and the multiple perspectives, bringing in examples from your experiences and readings (be sure to cite sources as appropriate). You can explore history, but also think about the present day impact of these points of cultural difference or misunderstanding. Conclude your essay with some thoughts about what could be done to ease tensions or help bring about better understanding on both sides. (Targeted stage: Acceptance)

Analysis of the narrative samples revealed that the writing prompts did elicit responses similar to the targeted DMIS DO stages. The prompts were effective in their ability to facilitate student exploration of cross-cultural topics at both early Minimization and late Minimization, as well as the ethnorelative stage of Acceptance (see Table 4). Just as most students experienced gains in terms of their intercultural development as measured by the IDI, their later writing samples also exhibited movement towards ethnorelative orientations.

Sample	Targeted Stage	Written Sample DO average	IDI group DO
First Journal	Cusp of Minimization	Cusp of Minimization	Early Minimization
First Essay	Minimization	Cusp of Minimization	
Final Journal	Cusp of Acceptance	Minimization	Late Minimization
Final Essay	Acceptance	Acceptance	

Table (4): TARGETED WRITING LEVELS VS. ACTUAL WRITING LEVELS

Average scores for each writing sample further illustrate how each prompt performed relative to students' IDI scores. All writing prompts elicited samples that rated higher than the average IDI score, with the exception of the Last Journal. The two early-experience writing sample averages were only slightly higher than the IDI scores, while the last essay was somewhat higher. The trajectory of growth in average writing scores parallels the growth in IDI scores.
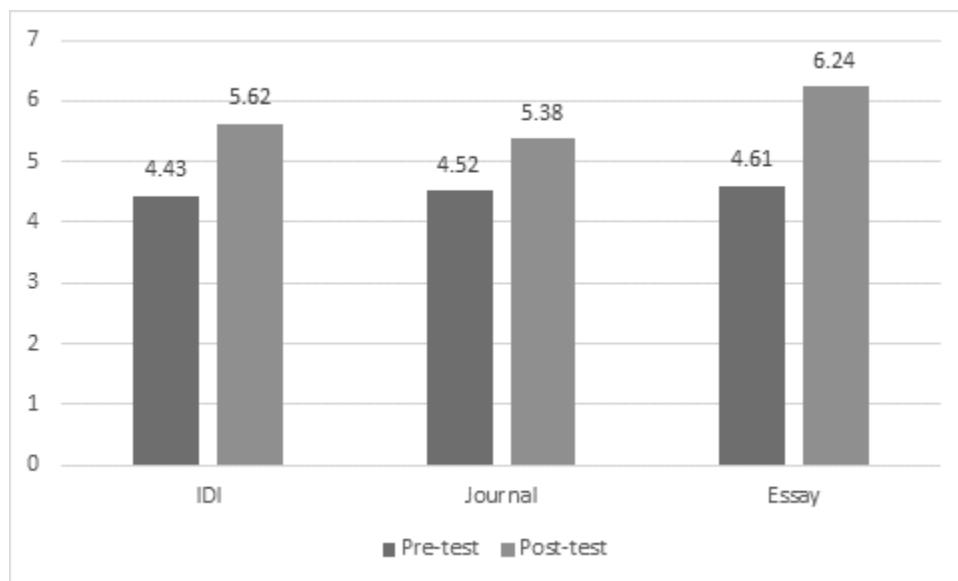

Figure (1): AVERAGE DO SCORE COMPARISONS

Pre-test IDI	First Journal	First Essay
4.43 Cusp of Minimization	4.52 Cusp of Minimization	4.61 Cusp of Minimization
Post-test IDI	Last Journal	Last Essay
5.62 Minimization	5.38 Minimization	6.24 Cusp of Acceptance

Table (5): AVERAGE DO SCORE COMPARISONS

One-tailed Spearman's correlations were used to explore the relationship between IDI scores and writing samples, with α = .10. Tables 6 and 7 illustrate how pre- and post-test IDI scores correlate with early and end of program writing samples.　While some writing samples reflected the developmental orientation of the students, there was also variation. Notably, the earlier writing samples were significantly related to the pre-test IDI scores, while the later writing samples did not.

Measure	Pre IDI DO	First Journal DO	First Essay DO
Pre IDI DO	-	.348*	.353*
First Journal DO		-	.432**
First Essay DO			-

Table (6): SPEARMAN CORRELATIONS BETWEEN EARLY EXPERIENCE MEASURES (N = 21)
* P < .10 (1-TAILED); **P < .05 (1-TAILED)

Measure	Pre IDI DO	First Journal DO	First Essay DO
Post IDI DO	-	.10	.23
Final Journal DO		-	.20
Final Essay DO			-

Table (7): SPEARMAN CORRELATIONS BETWEEN LATE EXPERIENCE MEASURES (N = 21)
* P < .10 (1-TAILED)

As pre-test IDI increased, so did scores on early writing samples. This indicates that the prompts used at the start of the study abroad program elicited writing samples that were more closely aligned with students IDI scores than the two later writing prompts.

Additionally, we analyzed whether trailing and leading orientations indicated by the IDI were exhibited in writing samples. An analysis of the resolution of trailing polarization, both reversal and defense, was done using a Chi-Square analysis. As shown in Table 8, a significant relationship between the frequency of trailing orientations indicated by IDI scores being detected in writing samples was only found in two cases: trailing reversal was indicated in the first essay samples, while trailing defense was indicated in the final journal. The other writing prompts failed to elicit evidence of trailing polarization in a significant way.

		Chi-Square Value	df	*P*- value (2-sided)
Trailing Reversal: Pre-test IDI vs. early writing samples	First Journal	1.155	1	.283
	First Essay	2.01	1	.157*
Trailing Defense: Pre-test IDI vs. early writing samples	First Journal	1.373	1	.241
	First Essay	.463	1	.496
Trailing Reversal: Post-test IDI vs. later writing samples	Last Journal	1.400	1	.237
	Last Essay[1]	-	-	-
Trailing Defense: Post-test IDI vs. later writing samples	Last Journal	2.10	1	.147*
	Last Essay	.175	1	.676

Table (8): CHI-SQUARE STATISTICS BETWEEN WRITING SAMPLE AND IDI SCORES: TRAILING ORIENTATIONS
*SIGNIFICANT AT LEVEL OF P < .10

The First Essay prompt, which asked students to notice cultural similarities and differences and to reflect on how they are changing, elicited responses that reflected Trailing Reversal. The last journal also elicited responses reflecting trailing orientations, in this case, defense. This journal asked students to consider cultural conflict within the U.S., causing some students to revert to unresolved defensive stances.

How Writing Prompts Reflect and Support Intercultural Development

The second research question looked at how intercultural development was evidenced and facilitated in student writing compared to Developmental Orientation scores measured by the IDI. Writing prompts have potential to challenge student thinking and expose less developed aspects of their intercultural mindset. Challenging prompts can highlight trailing orientations. At the same time, prompts can provide opportunities for new ways of thinking about intercultural issues and can facilitate more ethnorelative perspectives.

Writing prompts were designed to target different stages of intercultural development, beginning with Minimization in the early samples, and targeting Acceptance in the later assignments. In general, the writing samples usually reflected the level of intercultural sensitivity development that was indicated by the student's IDI, and the correlation between the early writing prompts and IDI

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[1] No trailing reversal orientations existed on the Last Essay

score was statistically significant (see Table 6). In some cases, students "wrote beyond" their development orientations, as measured by the IDI. In other cases, the writing reflected "unresolved" trailing orientations. A qualitative analysis of the writing samples provides examples of student reflection on intercultural issues, illustrating their intercultural development in meaningful ways. What follows are analyses and examples from each of the four writing assignments.

The First Journal prompt asks students to provide initial reflections on cultural differences, reflecting on their first impressions of Australia and how their own values and beliefs might be shaping their reactions. This prompt also followed a presentation of the IDI group profile, and students were invited to reflect on what they learned about intercultural development. These kinds of reflections are indicative of students in the stages of Polarization and early Minimization, in that students are asked to recognize and name differences, and then to begin the process of making sense of them. At the time of the first journal assignments, 19 of the 21 students found themselves either in Polarization or Minimization according to their pre-test IDI scores. Of the two outliers, one was on the Cusp of Polarization, and the other was in Acceptance.

First Journal scores ranged from Polarization to Acceptance, and they were generally slightly higher than IDI scores. Scores either matched IDI scores exactly (n =12), or indicated students were one stage more developed (n = 5) or less developed (n = 4) than was indicated by IDIs. In 4 cases, students wrote 'below' their IDI stage, and in 5 cases, students wrote 'above' their IDI stage.

Examples of journal responses that illustrated students 'writing beyond' their pre-test IDI scores included responses from 3 students who had some of the lowest IDI pre-test scores. For example, Bo's pre-test IDI was 72.1 (Polarization with both Defense and Reversal), but his first journal exhibited mainly traits of Minimization. In his response below, he identifies cultural differences and makes some generalizations indicative of Minimization. This response does not include evidence of an 'us vs. them' stance one would expect from someone with both Reversal and Defense orientations.

> Having class, or lecture, only once a week is also a very big change from the daily class schedules I have grown up with. Having gone through orientation, I have got the impression that they take class more serious here, while at the same time give off a very laid back, chill vibe about class, as well as life in general. (Bo, First Journal)

Another example of 'writing beyond' one's IDI score was found in Ingrid's first journal where she examines the issue of time.

> One thing that has become apparent to me is the difference in time. As a student from the US, I am used to everything being done in M-time

(monochronic). This means that we follow strict deadlines, and when a party starts at 8pm, it actually starts at 8pm. However, here in Australia, while they are still a culture that could be categorized as following M-time most of the time, they seem to be mixed with P-time (polychronic) as well. P-time countries are generally more relaxed in terms of time and scheduling, and focus more on people and relationships than strict deadlines and sticking to scheduled plans. (Ingrid, First Journal)

Ingrid's analysis exhibits the nuance and relativity indicative of someone in Acceptance. She pulls in a theoretical framework that she likely learned at some point in her coursework and relates it to what she's observed in Australia. Ingrid's First Journal was rated higher than her pre-test IDI score of Minimization (108.45). Ingrid's leading orientation was Acceptance, and this first assignment allowed her to stretch her thinking by using a cultural framework to understand differences in behaviors and values between two cultures. Ingrid's First Journal also exhibited some trailing Reversal, which was also indicated in her IDI.

For most students, the writing stage matched the IDI DO stage. The following excerpt comes from Alexa who had a pre-test IDI score at the beginning stages of Minimization (89.83). Her response also references cultural differences related to time, but the analysis makes generalizations indicative of Minimization. She is thinking about how values are reflected in behaviors, but her response lacks the nuance that was found in Ingrid's response.

I expected that Australia and Australian culture would be fairly similar to the United States, which I have found to be true to the most part with a few exceptions, the first of these being their relaxed attitude towards time in social situations. I was surprised by this cultural norm since they place such emphasis on timeliness when it comes to their academics. This seems to reflect Australian values that are extremely considerate of time when it comes to academic and work but are much more relaxed in social situations that reflect their laid back attitudes that they are famous for. (Alexa, First Journal)

The majority of student First Journal samples mirrored their pre-test IDI scores, just as Alexa's did. Additionally, students' trailing orientations as indicated in their pre-test IDIs were also evidenced in several of the Journal 1 writing samples. Reversal was found in several of these journals, and in some cases, journals were coded at a developmental stage lower than students' pre-test IDI scores. An example of a student 'writing below' her IDI score was seen in Aileen's first journal. Her pre-test IDI placed her in the stage of Minimization (88.65) with trailing Reversal, but in her journal, Reversal was the dominant

stage. Her strong word choice emphasizes the Reversal in her orientation, and her critique of her own cultural group.

> I'm definitely feeling like I could fit into the reversal polarization portion due to the anger and hatred I currently have towards America for the limited and guarded information it provided me throughout my education. (Aileen, First Journal)

Likewise, Stella's First Journal did not exhibit her pre-test IDI stage of Minimization (101.63). Rather, her writing reflected a developmental orientation of Polarization with both Defense and Reversal, and trailing Denial. This is in contrast to her IDI, which exhibited some trailing Reversal, but neither trailing Defense nor Denial.

> I just feel American culture is normal; we don't have special clothing or foods or activities. We wear whatever is in style, we eat anything and we work and play. I understand that what I just stated is a culture in itself, but it's not how I think of culture. I think of culture as something creative and beautiful and spiritual, nothing like American culture. (Stella, First Journal)

Stella's response exhibits the difficulty she has in seeing differences in communication and behavior as 'cultural', and later her Reversal shines through in her rejection of 'American culture' as culture.

While more than half of students had their First Journals scored at the same developmental orientation level as their pre-test IDIs indicated, we saw some variability in terms of 'writing beyond', trailing orientations, or more ethnocentric orientations. The first journal prompt was effective in showcasing learner orientations, while also revealing both trailing and leading orientations for most students.

> *First Essay Prompt: Begin your essay with a description of your own culture (about 1 page). Do you identify your culture in terms of race? Gender? Socioeconomic status? Describe your own beliefs and values compared to those of your friends and families, and of other groups in society. Spend the next part of your essay (about 1 page) describing cultural similarities and differences you've noticed as part of your international experiences. The final part of your essay (about ½ -1 page) should focus on how you are changing as a result of these cultural experiences.*

In this first essay, students are asked to hone in on how they make sense of their own culture. This is a major hallmark of moving towards ethnorelativism. Students in the stage of Minimization will struggle somewhat

to attain what Bennett describes as a "major conceptual shift" towards self-awareness (p. 45, 1993).

The first essay was assigned during the second week of the program. When compared to the pre-test IDI scores, 17 of the 21 samples were found to exhibit intercultural reasoning that was at the same developmental stage, or at a higher stage than what was indicated by the pre-test IDI (n = 11 matched exactly; n = 6 were higher). For the remaining 4, the First Essay samples were scored at a lower developmental stage than their IDI-indicated stage, in one case the difference was just a sub-stage, and in the other 3 cases, it was a full stage lower.

Like the First Journal, the writing prompt elicited more ethnorelative thinking from many students than was indicated in their pre-test IDIs. As in the First Journal, Ingrid 'wrote beyond' her IDI-indicated level of Minimization, and her First Essay was coded Acceptance, with no trailing orientations. Her response illustrates cultural self-awareness, and an acknowledgement that alien behaviors are indicative of cultural difference. She wrote:

> While I have not received an explanation on why this is so different from American culture, I would guess that lifelong learning is also a strong cultural value. In America, it seems that many of us are interested in getting a degree and being "done", rather than continuing on a path that includes personal education for ourselves beyond what is expected. This way of thinking, as well as the more relaxed, relationship based interactions, are things that I wish we took more time to acknowledge and implement in American society. (Ingrid, First Essay)

Ruby also 'wrote beyond' her pre-test IDI developmental orientation of Minimization with trailing Reversal. Her First Essay was scored as Acceptance with trailing Reversal and Minimization. Here response below illustrates her metacognitive approach to resolving her reversal mindset:

> One specific conversation that I had with two British women about United States gun laws consisted mainly of these women saying how ridiculous it is that the US still hasn't banned guns because of all of the mass shootings that occur in the US. Outwardly (as well as internally) I agreed that they had many valid points, but I also wanted to offer rebuttals to their arguments. I figured that as Europeans they were more cultured and worldly than I was, and that any arguments that they made were probably right and more valid than my opinions would be anyway. Reflecting on this conversation now, I realise that I was only idolizing the European way because I didn't want to be perceived as the "ugly American" that thinks America is the best country in the world and all the other countries are backwards and wrong. In the process, though, I

denied my own culture and contributed to allowing the stereotypes of Americans to live on. (Ruby, First Essay)

Ruby's reflection on her struggle to engage in a challenging cross-cultural debate illustrates how she is working to resolve her tendency toward Reversal, while also alluding to a more ethnorelative mindset in which she is increasingly curious about cultural differences, although she is unsure as to how to adapt.

More than half of the students' First Essay samples exhibited developmental orientations that closely aligned with their pre-test IDI scores, including evidence of trailing orientations. Ashley's pre-test IDI score of 96.3 put her in the stage of Minimization with some trailing reversal and leading acceptance. Her First Essay exhibited both Minimization and some leading Acceptance, including these statements:

I want to be seen as more than just an American, and I would presume that people of other cultures would feel the same way. We are all far more than what our race or our homeland says about us. We are all humans with unique experiences in life that shape who we are. (Ashley, First Essay, coded Minimization)

One example came from a woman...from New Zealand who assists in running a canyoning company that my pre-travel group participated in. She made a variety of comments to a Chinese man in our group showing that she believed assumed racial stereotypes to be fact, like bad driving, squinty eyes and eating egg rolls...I was just fascinated by their exchange and observing how their cultures interacted. If I chose to attribute this behavioral norm among certain individuals to their nationality, I could determine if this attitude comes from possible historic roots which could include Māori and British conflicts during settlement that perhaps set a tone of bluntness in the language of the people of New Zealand. However I believe it is too soon to assume that being frank is a cultural norm to the people of New Zealand and Australia. (Ashley, First Essay, coded Acceptance)

The first example from Ashley's essay illustrates a tendency towards universalism, highlighting commonalities that exist between us. Her second story recounts an observation involving racial stereotyping and an unwillingness to draw generalized conclusions about New Zealanders. This second example was coded as Acceptance, as it recognizes both commonality and difference in cultures, and shows an interest in understanding cultural differences.

While the two early experience prompts performed similarly to the IDI scores and to each other, the end of experience prompts elicited more varied

samples. When compared to post-test IDI scores, the end of experience prompts had more variability. The Last Journal brought out more trailing orientations and seemed to challenge students the most of all prompts, while the Last Essay allowed students to 'write beyond' their IDI scores more so than any other prompt.

In this last journal, which occurred during the penultimate week of the course, the prompt targets a topic that probes students' ability to process cultural difference at the ethnorelative stage of acceptance. Students are asked to explore how cultural conflicts are informed by a multitude of perspectives that are shaped by differing values and beliefs. This prompt aims to elicit thinking around cultural issues in students' own culture, but drawing on lessons learned in the program. To facilitate this, the instructor provides scaffolding to students by identifying some example topics. Analysis of writing samples found that 9 student Last Journal samples indicated a stage lower than their post-test IDI. Six students had writing samples that mirrored their IDI stage, and 6 student samples indicated a stage of development that was higher than their post-test IDI scores.

The Last Journal prompt allowed some students to 'write beyond' their IDI stages, such as in the case of Diana, whose post-test IDI placed her in minimization, but whose writing indicates ethnorelative thinking.

> What I've learned from my time in Australia is that the Aboriginal people and their struggles with the colonization of Australia are very similar to that of our Native Americans and the Colonization of the United States. Today, Native Americans experience poverty and high suicide rates on reservations. This is also very similar to the places where Aboriginals reside. I think that Americans who do not live on reservations think that this is a problem that is perpetuated by them, as I think they can be looked at as a group that just gets drunk and gambles all the time. Therefore, how do we help them? I also think that some people could take the view that we, those whose ancestors took the land from Native Americans, can be the one to blame for this problem because we changed the way that their culture lives and works. (Diana, Last Journal)

Mackenzie's response below also illustrates thinking in the stage of Acceptance, which matches her post-test IDI score. She also considers issues related to indigenous rights in the Australian and U.S. contexts:

> As the Aboriginals were taken from their homes they often lost a sense of their cultural identity, lost a piece of who they were. And that is not easy to regain. As for the Native Americans, my research led me to find that as forced relocation progressed for them, many tribes lost aspects of their traditional lifestyles, which centered on community living and

hunting and gathering. Clearly there are many similarities between the Aboriginal Australians and the Native Americans in the U.S. Although the history of Aboriginals in Australia does not appear to be talked about often, I think the history of Native Americans is discussed even less in the states. I do not know hardly anything on the topic of Native Americans and this is not even discussed much, or at all, in social science or history courses in high school. Coming from my own perspective, I wonder what the reasoning is why we are not taught more in our classes. Do Americans try to forget about the Native American past like Australia used to ignore the Aboriginal history? How come Australia has days to commemorate Aboriginals and days to apologize for their mistreatment, yet the U.S. has no such days? (Mackenzie, Last Journal)

The Last Journal had a tendency to elicit trailing orientations in many students and was more frequently scored 'below' students IDI scores than any other writing prompt. Recall that the Final Journal was also found to significantly elicit trailing Defense (see Table 8). Michelle's post-test IDI score of 87.26 places her at the start of Minimization, with trailing Polarization both in Defense and Reversal. Her final journal, which describes her thoughts on a protest organized by Black Lives Matter, was scored at the level of Polarization: Defense. In her response, an 'us vs. them' posture is apparent, with consideration only given to one side of this social movement.

I really hated this protest because they caused many people to miss their flights going home to see family members, as well as cause people to not be able to pick up their family from the airport... I think the protest was extremely selfish and disrespectful to people, especially during the holiday time of the year. (Michelle, Last Journal)

In Beatrice's Last Journal, she addresses immigration issues. She begins with the following statement comparing the U.S. to Australia, which we coded as Minimization. In this statement, she overemphasizes a commonality, while underestimating differences. The response trivializes the two reasons she gives for resistance to immigration in two different contexts.

Australia was a very anti--immigration country, even though, like the United States, the country was 'created' from past immigration. The difference between the issues with immigration in Australia and in the United States is fear of change and fear of terrorism. (Beatrice, Last Journal)

She goes on to provide the following explanation for the White Australia policy of immigration:

> Australia has a very strong national identity and loyalty. The White Australia Movement was based on the idea that immigrants would have a very difficult time adapting to life in Australia and wouldn't be able to conform to the ideal Australian identity... (Beatrice, Last Journal)

The excerpt above was coded as Defense, as it shows a lack of understanding of the role of racism in explaining the past immigration policy. Beatrice's response seems to suggest she has accepted this rationale for Australia's past immigration policy, rather than confronting multiple perspectives on the policy. The final journal had a tendency to expose more ethnocentric thinking as well as trailing defense among students, indicating that this prompt was more challenging for intercultural reflection.

In the Last Essay, completed just before the end of the course, students process their Aboriginal cultural experience in the outback through writing. The prompt is aimed at eliciting thinking that reflects an ethnorelative stance. The essay requires drawing both on lived experiences and cognition (via research) to explore the dynamics of cultural issues, characteristic of someone in the stage of acceptance. There is also an opportunity for students to show characteristics of thinking within Adaptation.

The Last Essay samples were found to generally indicate students' actual IDI scores (in 9 cases), or a more advanced stage of intercultural development (in 9 cases). (In three cases, the essay samples were lower than the IDI.) Betty's essay illustrates her ability to write 'beyond' her IDI stage of Minimization. In the excerpt below, she describes how she thought about and navigated a health crisis that occurred during one of our walking tours in the outback.

> The Aboriginal traditional medicine relies mostly on the idea of the spirit, and therefore, treatment for health problems focus on helping the spirit. With modern medicine, the focus is on science and the "germ theory," ... I experienced this clash myself when one of my peers felt sick during our outback tour. As an EMT back in the states, my first action was to check her pulse and get her past history, whereas [our hosts] first instinct was to pray over her. It really made me stop and think about how different perspectives can be over things I believe are extremely straightforward. Was a certain treatment better, or is simply based on preference of the patient? Laws need to be followed in order to keep a cohesive country, but Aboriginal law is a foundation of their culture. Furthermore, does the Australian government have a right to push their laws on the Aboriginals when some are inconsistent with their traditions and beliefs? (Betty, Last Essay)

Tyler's essay mirrors his IDI stage of Acceptance with trailing Minimization. He considers historical and cultural perspectives on land rights.

Land rights are seen as two very different things for whites versus blacks. Through Aboriginal culture, different groups had priority to different land, and that was known among them. Also when someone died, they knew they couldn't live on that land and had to respect the burial grounds. Once the white population came in, all the land was seized and the Aboriginal culture was basically left with nothing. The white culture views land as a commodity that is purchased for a certain price. Aboriginals are 'born from the land' and land is a sacred symbol to them. (Tyler, Last Essay)

The Last Essay prompt required students to triangulate their personal experiences with the academic knowledge gained from their coursework. In doing so, students were pressed to think critically about multiple perspectives, which allowed most of the students to produce reflections at or beyond the developmental levels indicated by their IDIs. In just 3 cases was student writing scored at a lower developmental level than the students' post-test IDI scores (see Table 5). Unlike the Last Journal, this prompt has the majority of students writing at or above the level indicated by their IDI scores.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study set out to explore how targeted writing prompts could facilitate intercultural development in study abroad, and in what ways student writing reflected the DMIS compared to student IDI scores. Using a pre- and post-test model, we analyzed gains in IDI scores and in writing scores, according to the stages of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennet, 1993). We found an average gain of 11.34 on the IDI, significantly higher than has been found in other studies of semester-long programs (Terzuolo, 2018; Vande Berg et al, 2009). A combination of academic coursework, cross-cultural experiences, and facilitated cultural reflection provided the necessary framework for significant intercultural development. Targeted writing prompts focused student attention on specific aspects of intercultural development appropriate for their developmental orientations, supporting their movement towards a more ethnorelative intercultural stance.

The writing assignments were used as a means to develop student intercultural knowledge and skills. The prompts were designed to elicit thinking about cross-cultural issues that were at or somewhat above students' stages of intercultural development as measured by the IDI. The two early experience prompts were designed with the group IDI profile in mind, and those writing samples were found to be most strongly reflective of students IDI DOs. However, the two late-experience prompts were less closely aligned with actual DOs,

which could be due to those prompts being designed without direct knowledge of the students' DOs at the time. While the Last Journal elicited narrative responses reflecting Minimization and seemed to really challenge students, we found that the Last Essay seemed to propel students towards more ethnorelative thinking. We attest that the fact that students' reflections in the Last Essay were primarily at the stage of Acceptance while their DOs indicated they were primarily at the stage of Minimization is strong evidence that carefully designed prompts can elicit more interculturally developed ways of thinking in students. When students are given scaffolds and requirements to include multiple perspectives and to draw on their coursework, their writing can show greater intercultural knowledge than their IDI score reflects. Writing prompts that require students to attend to multiple cultural perspectives, and to cite reputable sources, produced more ethnorelative samples, as exhibited in the final essay (see Table 5). This may be expected, as supporting ideas through research requires a more thoughtful approach, producing better ethnorelative reflections. In contrast, asking students to simply share their opinions or reactions to situations is likely to produce a more 'gut reaction', which will be more illustrative of students' implicit views, or less thoughtful reactions to cultural difference.

We found that students have a more difficult time displaying ethnorelative thinking when asked to analyze cultural conflicts in their home setting. The final journal prompted students to consider cultural conflicts in the US, and for most students, their writing was deemed less developed than what the IDI indicated. This suggests that it is relatively easier for students to think about cross-cultural issues in communities they do not belong to, that is to say, it's easier to apply a multicultural mindset to an analysis of a cultural conflict that one is not personally attached to. Writing prompts that require students to draw on both academic learning from coursework, as well as lived experiences allow students to make sense of intercultural experiences and can facilitate intercultural growth. In our analyses, we found that most students wrote at or beyond their IDI scores when pressed to consider an intercultural issue from multiple perspectives, and they were required to draw from academic coursework. However, a limitation to this study is that we did not gather data related to non-targeted writing prompts. Future research should examine how intercultural development is reflected in non-targeted written assignments as a point of useful comparison. Additionally, future studies could examine the role of targeted discussion prompts and other kinds of reflective activities as effective tools in the development of ethnorelative mindsets.

While standardized measures of intercultural development, such as the IDI, provide valuable information and serve as a valid and reliable point of comparison, the qualitative analysis of student reflective writing provides further insights into how students process interculturality. The use of reflective writing within a study abroad context can have a significant impact on the development of intercultural mindsets. By examining student thinking around cross-cultural issues, we can better understand how U.S. students experience and reflect on Australian culture(s). For programs in which there seems to be less pronounced cultural difference, carefully designed experiences and opportunities for targeted reflection based on IDI can facilitate intercultural development. Indeed, all study abroad programs can benefit from ongoing cultural mentorship that includes a component of reflective practice, with reflective writing serving as particularly useful for academic and intercultural learning and assessment purposes.

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