

Cultivating cosmopolitan, intercultural citizenship through critical reflection and international, experiential learning

Jane Jackson*

Department of English, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin, NT, Hong Kong SAR, China

This paper explores the notion of cosmopolitan, intercultural citizenship in relation to intercultural education and study abroad. As part of a larger investigation of the second language sojourn, the individual developmental trajectories of more than 100 Chinese university students were examined to better understand their language and intercultural learning and identity expansion. This paper presents an illustrative case study of a young woman who took significant steps toward a more sophisticated, cosmopolitan self through deep reflection and intercultural interaction in localized, global spaces. Critical cultural awareness and experiential learning (both at home and abroad) were key elements in her journey toward intercultural, global citizenship, intercultural communicative competence, and a broader, more balanced, sense of self.

本文从跨文化教育及海外学习的角度来探讨世界性，跨文化公民身份的概念。作为第二语言海外旅居大规模调研的一部分，本文着重研究了100多位中国大学生旅居过程中的个人发展轨迹，旨在更好地理解其语言及跨文化学习的过程及个人身份的发展。通过一个解析型案例，本文介绍一位青年女学生如何通过在本土化的国际空间中做深度自我反思，以及通过跨文化交际而获得显著发展，从而构建起更加成熟，世界性的自我身份。批判性文化意识和体验性学习（包括在国内和国外）成为她个人发展过程中的关键因素，帮助培养了她的跨文化全球公民身份，跨文化交际能力，以及更加广阔，更加平衡的个人身份。

Keywords: intercultural citizenship; cosmopolitanism; identities; intercultural education; critical reflection; study and residence abroad

Introduction

With accelerating globalization and increasing interaction between people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, the question of how to foster interculturality in young people preoccupies many educators today. At the tertiary level, mission statements now drive internationalization¹ efforts and, increasingly, direct faculty to propel students toward more responsible global citizenship and intercultural (communicative) competence.

*Email: jjackson@cuhk.edu.hk

In response, institutions are creating more opportunities for students to gain international exposure through education abroad. By 2025, the number of tertiary-level students having some transnational experience is expected to reach more than seven million (American Council of Education [ACE], 2006). Faculty-led micro-term or short-term sojourns² have become more popular and, increasingly, institutions across the globe are signing agreements to facilitate semester or yearlong exchanges of both faculty and students. We are also witnessing growth and diversity in international internships and work placement options. While these are encouraging developments, simply being present in the host culture does not ensure that the participants will seek out intercultural encounters, enhance their intercultural (communicative) competence (Bennett, 2009; Zarate, 2003), or experience identity expansion (Block, 2007; Byram, 2008a; Jackson, 2010). What steps can be taken to optimize the potential of international experience? How can educators foster intercultural citizenship and intercultural (communicative) competence in student sojourners?

This paper argues that carefully designed and sequenced intercultural education, which incorporates critical reflection and experiential learning in an international setting, can nurture the traits and attributes most commonly associated with ethical intercultural communication. After examining the constructs of intercultural (communicative) competence and intercultural citizenship, discussion centers on a curriculum that was developed for liberal arts students in Hong Kong in accord with the institution's internationalization policy. Credit-bearing elements link intercultural, experiential learning on the home campus with a short-term sojourn in the host culture. At the heart of this program is critical (inter)cultural reflection.

The individual developmental trajectories of more than 100 participants have been examined to better understand their language and intercultural learning and identity expansion over time and space (Jackson, 2008, 2010). This paper presents an illustrative case study of a 21-year-old woman who took significant steps toward a more sophisticated, cosmopolitan self through critical reflection and intercultural interaction in localized, global spaces. By examining this young woman's story, we gain understanding of the potential role that intervention (e.g. intercultural education, guided reflection, experiential learning) can play in the promotion of intercultural citizenship and intercultural communicative competence in second language sojourners.

Conceptualizing intercultural communicative competence and citizenship

The literature on intercultural (communicative) competence reveals differing understandings of what this entails (Deardorff, 2009). As this article focuses on 'foreign language' learners, Byram's (1997) conception, which combines notions of communicative competence and intercultural competence, is particularly relevant. In his model of intercultural communicative competence, the following '*savoirs*' depict the cultural knowledge and skills required for individuals to mediate successfully between cultures (e.g. build intercultural relationships) in a foreign language: (1) Intercultural attitudes (*savoir être*) – curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about others' cultures and belief about one's own intercultural attitudes; (2) Knowledge (*savoirs*) – of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and interlocutor's country; (3) Skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) – ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it, and relate

it to documents or events from one's own; (4) Skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*) – ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and to operate this knowledge in real-time communication; and (5) Critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*) – an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices, and products in one's own and other cultures and countries (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002, pp. 12–13).

Foreign language speakers who possess 'some or all of the five *savoirs* of intercultural competence to some degree' (Byram, 2009, p. 327) may be deemed 'intercultural speakers'. By engaging with 'complexity and multiple identities', these individuals strive to avoid 'perceiving someone through a single identity' (Byram et al., 2002, p. 5). Instead of affixing a rigid national identity label on their interlocutor, for example, they recognize that people have many facets to their sense of self and some elements are more salient than others. This is important as Kramsch (1993) cautions, even people who share the same nationality and social class may have different understandings of what this means.

Through intercultural contact and deep reflection, intercultural speakers become more aware of how they and their fellow citizens conceptualize, understand, and experience their own national identities and how this may impact on relations with others. They may then be more mindful of the constraints of a national identity label (e.g. stereotypes, lack of recognition of differing conceptions of citizenship among individuals) as well as the benefits that are promoted by governing bodies (e.g. sense of belonging/security). Moving from an ethnocentric to an ethnorelative³ perspective (Bennett, 1993), these individuals gradually display sensitivity to 'the multiple, ambivalent, resourceful, and elastic nature of cultural identities in an intercultural encounter' (Guilherme, 2002, p. 125).

The competencies of the 'intercultural speaker', especially the 'central concept of critical cultural awareness or *savoir s'engager*' (Byram, 2009, p. 327), resonate with those associated with cosmopolitanism (Guilherme, 2007; Starkey, 2007) and intercultural citizenship (Byram, 2008b). As intercultural speakers become more appreciative of other ways of being and the limitations of a national identity, they may gradually come to view themselves as more sophisticated, cosmopolitan members of an interconnected, global community. Instead of feeling under threat by cultural difference and the loss of a national identity, over time, some may incorporate both local and global dimensions into their sense of self and embrace their personal expansion.

Intercultural citizenship, which favors multiculturalism and equality, requires awareness and respect of self and other, the desire to interact across cultures, and the acquisition of the knowledge and skills that facilitate constructive, active participation in today's complex society. For Guilherme (2007, p. 87), this entails 'the control of the fear of the unknown (at the emotional level), the promotion of a critical outlook (at the cognitive level), as well as the enhancement of self-development (at the experiential level)'. Through education and international experience, Alred, Byram, and Fleming (2006), Byram (2006, 2008b, 2009), Guilherme (2002, 2007), and other interculturalists maintain that it is possible to cultivate the understanding (e.g. cultural knowledge, open mindset) and skills (e.g. culture-sensitive behaviors, culture-learning strategies) that characterize intercultural (communicative) competence and cosmopolitan, intercultural citizenship. To achieve these aims, it is important to employ 'a combination of both, the cognitive and the experiential and participative approach' (Byram, 2006, p. 191). Intercultural education of this nature differs from forms of intercultural

training that essentialize cultures and focus on the teaching of content, facts, and information about other nations (e.g. the dos and don'ts of intercultural contact with stereotypical people from a particular country).

The remainder of this paper centers on a program that was developed to promote intercultural communicative competence and intercultural citizenship in advanced English as an International Language learners.

A curriculum for intercultural learning and global citizenship

The home institution for the present study is a comprehensive research university in Hong Kong that is committed to enhancing the 'bilingual and multicultural dimensions of student education'. International learning opportunities are increasingly promoted with the expectation that participants will 'immerse themselves completely in a different culture and acquire the perspectives and skills to operate efficiently and independently in a new environment'. In particular, it is anticipated that they will 'develop the qualities they need to become effective in both work and personal life in an increasingly globalized world' (Lau, 2004, p. 2).

In line with the University's internationalization policy, the English Department established a program to provide English majors with the opportunity to become immersed in an English-speaking milieu. An expected outcome is that the participants will enhance their intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997; Byram & Zarate, 1997; Deardorff, 2009; Fantini, 2009) and be able to communicate more effectively and appropriately in the host language in a range of settings for a variety of purposes (e.g. informal social situations, service transactions). This program also seeks to cultivate the traits, behaviors, and mindset linked to the 'intercultural speaker' and cosmopolitan, intercultural citizenship (Byram, 2006, 2008b, 2009; Guilherme, 2002, 2007).

To achieve these aims, the program consists of credit-bearing pre-sojourn, sojourn, and post-sojourn elements that are integrated into the Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree in the home institution. Experiential learning⁴ and guided, critical reflection⁵ are core dimensions both at home and abroad. For most cohorts, the sojourn (a 5-week stay in England) has been subsidized by a university grant with the students and department covering the remainder of the costs.

In the semester preceding the sojourn, the participants take several courses that are specially designed for them: literary studies, ethnographic research, and intercultural communication. Each lasts 14 weeks, with 3 hours per week. In the literature course, the students read English novels and plays and attend the Hong Kong International Arts Festival to view and critique a production in English. This helps them prepare for the literary site visits and theatrical productions they will experience in England.

In a separate course, I introduce the students to the theory and practice of pragmatic ethnographic research so they will have the knowledge and skills necessary to more systematically investigate linguistic and cultural scenes, first in Hong Kong and then in England. Throughout the semester, the students gain first-hand experience with the tools of ethnographic research (e.g. participant observation; note-taking; diary-keeping; reflexive interviewing; the recording of field notes; the audio-recording, transcribing, and analysis of discourse) and become sensitized to the distinction between description, interpretation, and evaluation (Bennett, Bennett, & Stillings, 1977; Jackson, 2006; Roberts, Byram, Barro, Jordan, & Street, 2001).

After completing a series of skill-building tasks, they carry out a ‘home ethnography’ project, in which they investigate a linguistic/cultural scene (e.g. interaction of mahjong players). Small-group research advising sessions support their fieldwork and report-writing. This entire process serves as a trial run for their fieldwork in England.

In the intercultural communication course I emphasize the application of intercultural communication theory to practical communication problems that can arise when people from different cultures interact. Thus, the focus is on ‘subjective culture’, ‘the learned and shared patterns of beliefs, behaviors, and values of groups of interacting people’ (Bennett, 1998, p. 3). Activities in this interactive, experiential course consist of readings, lectures, observation and analysis of video clips, the language and cultural identity narrative, interviewing a study abroad returnee or current exchange student, the analysis of intercultural cases and critical incidents, discussions, simulations, and journal-keeping.

Early in the semester, the students write a narrative in which they explore the connection between language, culture, and identity, and reflect on ways in which their cultural background, attitudes, and communication style may impact on their interaction with people who have been socialized in a different environment. The students also make regular entries in an ‘intercultural reflections journal’. Optional guiding questions encourage them to think more deeply about the multifarious ways in which cultural differences may affect behavior. Ultimately, through critical reflection and analysis, the course aims to help students become more self-aware and open to diversity, as they learn how to communicate more effectively and appropriately in intercultural encounters.

During the 5-week sojourn in central England, the participants are enrolled in a fieldwork course that is credit-bearing at the home institution. The coursework integrates literary/cultural enrichment at the host university (e.g. drama workshops), with experiential learning in the community (e.g. ethnographic project). Formal and informal research advising sessions support the students’ fieldwork and language/intercultural learning. With the aim of gaining more exposure to the local culture and language, each student lives with a host family. On Sundays and most weekday afternoons, they have free time to explore their surroundings and investigate a cultural scene using the tools of ethnographic research.

Each week, a cultural studies specialist encourages students to ask questions about anything they have observed or experienced in the host culture that has caught their attention. In these debriefing sessions, they are impelled to move beyond stereotypes (e.g. rigid conceptions of English people) and consider multiple interpretations of behaviors, including their own. The students also record their observations and reactions to intercultural encounters in weekly surveys and a diary, a requirement of the fieldwork course. Guidelines encourage critical reflection and analysis, building on the journal-writing skills honed pre-sojourn.

Back in Hong Kong, in a credit-bearing capstone course, the students write an undergraduate dissertation linked to the ethnographic data they collected in England (e.g. Interaction in a charity shop) or they delve into a topic in English literature (e.g. Images of women in the writings of the Brontë sisters). In small groups, they are prompted to critically reflect on their research skills, sojourn/re-entry learning (e.g. linguistic, intercultural, academic, personal, identity development) and set goals for further expansion. The students also organize a sharing session for the next

cohort, which provides another occasion for introspection about the sojourn experience.

Intercultural competence and citizenship through study abroad: a case study

Since the inception of this program in 2001, 105 English majors have taken part, with each cohort ranging from 9 to 18. Through a series of ethnographic investigations and case studies, I have been tracking their language and intercultural growth (Jackson, 2008, 2010). Observing and interacting with the participants in informal and formal situations both in Hong Kong and England has afforded me insight into variations in their ‘whole-person’ development.⁶ For each cohort, many different types of qualitative and quantitative data (e.g. surveys before, during, and after the sojourn; transcriptions of pre- and post- semi-structured interviews; language and cultural identity narratives; pre-sojourn intercultural reflections journal entries; sojourn diaries; ethnographic conversations; digital images; field notes) have been entered into an NVivo database and triangulated to build up a detailed picture of their learning.

When reviewing the NVivo databases, one of the trajectories that caught my attention was that of Mira,⁷ a spirited 21-year-old. Her story illustrates the potential of intercultural education and international experience to bring about significant change in individuals in terms of their intercultural (communicative) competence and intercultural citizenship. What follows is her journey. When relevant, I draw comparisons and contrasts between her story and that of other participants to better comprehend her unique developmental trajectory.

Mira, the focal case participant

In the semester preceding the sojourn, I learned about some aspects of Mira’s personal life that had shaped her sense of self. While born in Hong Kong, she had spent much of her childhood with relatives in Mainland China and only returned as a teenager. In an interview she described her family in this way: ‘My parents immigrated from the Fujian province of China. They’re not rich and don’t know any English. Although they did not finish school, they hope that their children can study well and achieve a higher educational level.’ Similar to most of the participants, she was the first member of her family to attend university.

Mira was multilingual. In fact, she spoke four languages well: Mǐnnánhuà (a southeast Fújiàn and Taiwanese dialect), Putonghua, English, and Cantonese. While most of the participants started learning English in pre-school or primary school, Mira was not exposed to the language until the age of 13. This was also the time when she began to learn Cantonese. A very bright individual, she made remarkable progress during her secondary schooling in Hong Kong. After achieving a ‘B’ on her A-level⁸ examination in English, she gained admission to the Bachelor of Arts (BA) program in English language and literature at the home institution. On entry, she dreamt of becoming an English language teacher in Hong Kong.

Pre-sojourn

When I read the first part of Mira’s language and cultural identity narrative, I discovered that she had been plagued with uncertainty about her place in the world.

Feeling like ‘a rootless lotus leaf floating in water’, she sometimes saw herself as ‘belonging to no culture at all’. In postcolonial Hong Kong, many of her peers experienced similar feelings of bewilderment, as they felt buffeted between Eastern and Western values and conflicting loyalties (Jackson, 2008, 2010). In Mira’s case, her isolation from her parents and birthplace during her childhood and her return not long after the Handover⁹ may have exacerbated her confusion. In her narrative she wrote:

Not a long time ago, when thinking about my identity, the picture that appeared in my mind was a rootless lotus leaf floating in water. I did not know where I belonged to, nor did I know where I was going. But now, through writing this narrative and reading some books on identity as well as Chinese culture, I understand myself more. Now, the picture in my mind is a tree on shore, developing its roots. I perceive myself as an independent person with Chinese cultural background but not confined to a specific cultural identity. For example, I feel excited about the kisses of two French friends; I appreciate the English nobility, admire the implicit ways some Chinese express their selfless love, and adore the assertiveness and frankness of the Americans. As we can just live once and our lives are short, I want to experience more and put as little restrictions on myself as possible. . . . And as a result of growing up and having different experiences, my perception about who I am changes over time. I am now still a little bit confused about myself. But in the very near future, who knows? . . . This process of reflection makes me under a state of constant changing.

The act of writing pushed Mira to reflect more deeply on the people and events that were shaping her sense of self. Although she had no experience outside the Chinese world, she wished to explore other cultures and not restrict herself to a single identity. Her perception of selfhood as dynamic, coupled with a positive attitude toward cultural difference (*savoir être*), made her receptive to intercultural education and international experience. Acknowledging the impact of both traditional Chinese and Western values on her ‘sense of identity’, she depicted herself as ‘selective’ about what ‘social norms’ to adopt instead of ‘blindly’ adhering to those promoted in the home culture:

A person’s sense of identity is greatly influenced by the cultural background he/she grows up with. In my case, traditional Chinese culture played an important role during my early years. Later, Hong Kong culture and western culture also greatly influenced me. However, I am selective about what kind of social norms I would like to adopt. . . . Now I have a much clearer vision about what kind of person I would like to be. This, in turn, helps me act according to my inner, self-established moral standard instead of follow blindly with the majority. And my pressure of conforming to other people’s expectations is greatly lessened.

Mira’s ‘home ethnography’ project centered on a group of O’Camp (Orientation camp) ‘fathers and mothers’ – final-year undergraduates who met socially on a regular basis well after their initial task of helping freshmen was over. Through participant observation and ethnographic interviews, she became more familiar with the group members and the ties that bound them together. In a survey, Mira described the benefits of this experiential learning:

As I got to know the group better, I became much less self-protective. . . . I’m more sociable as a result of interacting with people who are different from me. I’m also becoming more tolerant and can appreciate different kinds of things. Furthermore, my observational skills are enhanced and I’m much more aware of different environments and their influence on behavior.

Before the sojourn, Mira set the following goals for her 5-week stay in England: '(1) to experience a different culture, (2) to interact with the local people, (3) to enhance my English standard, (4) to visit different places in England, (5) to become more independent, and (6) to enhance my interpersonal relationship skills' (pre-sojourn survey). Interestingly, most of her goals focused on her social development, intercultural interaction, and cultural exploration, rather than academic achievement. Open to personal expansion, Mira was generally upbeat about the challenges that lay ahead. In her intercultural reflections journal she wrote:

After the sojourn experiences, I think I will change into a different person. First of all, going abroad requires a person to leave his/her comfortable nest, and handle difficulties independently. Second, the process of trying to mingle with the local community makes a person open his/her mind and absorb new information coming from outside. As a result, the old values and thinking mold will be challenged, which evokes the need to rethink one's identity. If the process goes smoothly, the person will end up having a better understanding about the self and grow up spiritually. As I am quite reflective, and welcome challenges, I think I can gain more than what I have expected.

While excited about her first trip abroad, she was anxious about host receptivity: 'My major concern is will the local people be friendly towards us? As one of my main goals is to know more about the local culture through talking with locals, if they don't welcome foreigners, it'll be difficult to develop a sense of belonging to that country' (intercultural reflections journal). Mira also worried about her ability to adjust to 'the different communicational styles and lifestyle' of her hosts and wished to avoid 'bringing trouble to them'.

In the intercultural communication course, the students were prompted to reflect on ways to ease their transition to a new cultural milieu and make positive connections with host nationals. In a survey, Mira wrote: 'I aim to: (1) observe how sociable people interact and (2) observe myself to try to find out what my negative self-talks are, where they come from, and whether they are valid or not.' Her comments demonstrate awareness of the importance of critical self-analysis (e.g. identification of negative attitudes toward host culture), a crucial step in the path to intercultural (communicative) competence and citizenship.

The sojourn

After traveling in an airplane for the first time, Mira arrived at the host institution in central England and waited anxiously to be introduced to her host family. Even in this moment of intense vulnerability, she did not relinquish her desire to embrace change:

As more and more classmates went away with their host parents, I became more and more anxious. I felt like an orphan waiting to be picked up. I did not know what my host parents looked like. I did not know their characters or their likes and dislike yet much of my happiness for the coming five weeks depended on them. I was sweating. Finally, it was my turn. My host stood up slowly from her seat and smiled. Unlike my previous imaginations, she is thin instead of fat, and the color of her hair is dark blonde instead of yellow. I wasn't sure whether she'd be easy to get along with or not. My inner feelings were complicated. I felt helpless but also have the hope that the five-week sojourn will make me change. (diary)

In the community where she was housed there were very few Chinese people. For the first time, similar to most of her peers, Mira experienced life as a visible minority. Instead of withdrawing to the safety of her fellow sojourners, she sought opportunities for intercultural contact: 'When I interact with locals, I don't feel we're from different races. I just feel we're from different cultural backgrounds. This attitude is helping me develop a sense of belonging to the local community' (sojourn survey #1). To get the most out of her stay, she resolved to remain positive during the sometimes turbulent process of adjustment: 'Being a foreigner makes you see and experience many new things. You'll feel a bit uncomfortable due to the sudden change of environment but during the process of adapting to the local culture you'll find yourself more independent in the end' (sojourn survey #1).

When homesick or unhappy, she expressed her feelings in a diary entry or sojourn survey, talked to family and friends, or shared her frustrations in the weekly debriefing sessions. In the first sojourn survey, she wrote:

In the first week I experienced the greatest cultural shock and homesickness. The symptoms included thinking in Cantonese and wanting to phone my friends and family back home. I just let myself do what I wanted to at that moment (e.g. making phone calls), with an awareness that it is part of the process of adaptation. With more and more new experiences, I gradually began to feel safe and not so anxious about not being in a familiar environment.

Although a novice traveler, Mira displayed understanding of the 'stress-adaptation-growth dynamic'¹⁰ (Kim, 2001) that can gradually propel 'strangers toward greater control and freedom in the new environment' (p. 68). As had been discussed in the intercultural communication course, she recognized malaise as a natural part of the process of adjusting to a new environment.

Mira made good use of the observational skills that she had sharpened in the pre-sojourn phase. In her first sojourn survey, she wrote: 'The contrast between some of my behaviors and those of the local people make me much more aware of my own culture. The local people are more open and express themselves in a direct way, while I do not prefer to verbally express myself.' She was conscious of differing norms in the host culture (*saviors*) but did not feel comfortable appropriating local expressions. In her diary, she explained: 'The major obstacle I face is that I prefer to express my likeness or gratitude by action (e.g. helping them with the gardening) rather than talking (e.g. saying things like "it's very nice"). Misunderstandings are possible since the local culture values direct expressions.'

Mira went beyond noticing differences to actually trying to understand the reasons behind them (*savoir comprendre*). As this diary entry illustrates, her observational skills, evolving cultural sensitivity, and growing understanding of the host culture (*saviors*) enhanced her intercultural relationships:

I chatted with my host mother for a long time this afternoon, and found some cultural difference in our expressions. For example, she uses the pronoun 'he' to address her little dog, while people in Hong Kong use 'it'. Another major difference is that she often expresses her agreement or positive feelings by saying 'how lovely', 'how nice', 'it's wonderful!', or 'I love . . .', while I just nod my head, saying 'yes', or 'it's good'. Hearing my reply, sometimes she would look at me with puzzlement in her eyes. I think the different ways of addressing pets reflects that the English are more respectful of animals. They treat them like human beings. The second cultural difference reveals English

people's grateful attitude towards life. Expressing positive feelings helps establish a harmonious relationship between two parties. Furthermore, my host's puzzled look implies her inner question of whether I really like the discussed object or not. It also shows that ignoring cultural difference may cause confusion or even misunderstanding.

By the beginning of the second week, most of her peers had decided that their ethnographic project would focus on a cultural scene linked to their homestay. Mira, on the other hand, elected to volunteer in a hospice charity shop. While exploring the community, she had noticed a large number of stores that sold secondhand goods, a practice that was foreign to her. To satisfy her curiosity and gain broader exposure to the local culture, she aimed to learn more about this phenomenon.

Many people in Hong Kong frown on second-hand goods. And besides book stores, you can hardly find a second-hand shop in the city. However, the story is totally different in England. As a student from Hong Kong, I could not help but notice the large number of charity shops opened by various charitable organizations selling donated goods to raise funds. In the small town where my host family was situated, these kinds of shop were located not only in the side streets, but also the high streets. While visiting these shops, numerous questions arose in my mind: What kind of people make donations of used items? Why do they donate? Why do the customers buy second-hand goods? Is the staff paid workers or volunteers? What is the relationship between the shop staff? Attracted to find out the answers to these questions, I decided to become a volunteer in a charity shop and carry out a small-scale ethnographic study of the cultural phenomenon of charity shops. My host mother had a friend who was the manageress of a charity shop so I got the chance to work in the shop as a volunteer during the sojourn. (Final ethnographic report)

As a volunteer, she interacted with both staff and customers several times a week for just over a month. The instructors at the host institution noticed that she often spoke about her 'fieldwork' in class and seemed to be growing in self-confidence and knowledge about the host culture. The time she spent in the charity shop provided her with more opportunity to gain exposure to novel 'ways of being' (e.g. communication styles) and use English outside the academic arena. Reflecting on her intercultural experience, she offered the following advice to others who cross cultures:

First, you should open up yourself and try to adopt new cultural behaviors. During this process, you can gradually find out what behavior/attitude(s) you're reluctant to change due to your original cultural identity. Step by step, you can get close to the balance part by adapting to a new cultural identity while preserving part of the old one.

By balancing identity acts, Mira believed there could be the emergence of a new voice, a mix of the old and new, evoking Byram's depiction of the 'intercultural speaker'. Her words also resonate with Kostogriz's (2005) explanation of the 'production of thirdness' – the creation of 'new texts, meanings, and identities', which can occur 'on the boundaries between the self and the Other' (p. 198).

Later, Mira disclosed that she had 'been wearing a mask' when appropriating the communication style of others (e.g. 'expressing innate feelings explicitly'). Although it felt unnatural and insincere to her, she recognized the merits of trying new behaviors (e.g. expressions of politeness) and cultivating a positive attitude toward cultural difference (*savoir être*):

The experience of fitting in is more difficult than I expected, and thus brings about more excitement as well as growth during the process. People here have more expectation on one's attitude and they pay more attention to one's nonverbal language (especially the eyes) than Hong Kong people. And since I don't like hypocrisy (though I've already been wearing a mask), I need to work on my attitude in order to suit the local culture (which I truly like as most people are truly nice). I am learning to say 'thank you', 'It's great', and smile more. (sojourn survey #2)

A week later, she reflected further on her resistance to this direct way of expressing emotions. Critical self-awareness (*savoir s'engager*) compelled her to consider her attitude toward this cultural difference and, gradually, she became more at ease experimenting with English norms of appreciation (*savoir apprendrelfaire*). This helped her to feel more at home in the local community:

I've discovered that people in England often express their appreciation and understanding towards other people and expect others to behave in the same way. In the beginning, I didn't feel comfortable to do so because, first of all, I tend to keep my feelings inside instead of expressing them, and secondly, Chinese philosophy does not encourage people to express their feelings too directly. However, after three weeks of interacting with the local people, gradually, I am influenced by their cheerful personality and feel much more comfortable to express my appreciation. Now, I like to experiment with local cultural norms because they imply the local people's positive attitude towards life (e.g. when they get off the bus, they say 'thank you' to the driver and that makes everyone feel good. And I feel I've become more part of the local community. (sojourn survey #3)

Shortly after this survey was administered, I ran into Mira in the center of the small town where we were staying. She was beaming. She had just finished signing a petition related to animal rights and excitedly introduced me to a local woman who was part of this drive. In the charity shop, Mira was developing a growing awareness of social responsibility and this appeared to be having a profound impact on her as she seemed much more aware of issues related to equality and justice. By interacting with locals, and even signing their petition, she was also making a genuine effort to fit into the local scene.

By the end of the sojourn, Mira no longer saw herself as an introverted person with weak interpersonal skills; in her view, she had evolved into a more confident, cosmopolitan young woman. Through intercultural interaction and deep reflection, she had become a more flexible, competent intercultural communicator:

The first difficulty I encountered was to adjust to the local ways of communication. It motivated me to improve my interpersonal communicational skills. I observed the ways people interact with each other and tried to improve my attitude and style of communication. I've become more aware about how local people expect others to react and what kind of behaviors they consider as polite/impolite.

I think I've changed greatly during the sojourn. Through interacting with the local people, I've developed a much better understanding about my cultural identity and, during the process of adjusting to the local lifestyle, my intercultural communicational skills have improved and my self-confidence has been enhanced. I've become much more sociable. I also think I've become more sophisticated. (sojourn survey #4)

In her last sojourn survey, Mira enthused about her personal expansion. More aware of her place in the world, she no longer felt as if she 'belonged to no culture at all'.

My first trip to a foreign country has broadened my worldview. I jumped out from my own culture to see things from a different perspective. Before the trip, I was confused about my own identity and felt very uncertain about my cultural origin. Now I feel much more clear about this issue and much more comfortable with myself.

She had begun to appreciate her Chinese roots; equally significant was her steadfast desire to remain open to 'other good cultural values' rather than be confined to a single identity: 'Regarding my identity, I love my own culture and am greatly influenced by it. However, I am also open to the influence of the good elements in other cultures' (sojourn survey #4). Mira realized that she could cherish elements of other cultures without being disloyal to her original cultural group. This revelation contrasts sharply with those who found it difficult to adjust to a new cultural setting and became much more nationalistic and 'home-group' oriented in the face of adversity and stress (Jackson, 2008, 2010).

Post-sojourn

In her post-sojourn interview, which she elected to do in English, Mira talked at length about how the sojourn had transformed her. While abroad, she enhanced her intercultural communicative competence and social skills. When intercultural encounters did not go well, she did not automatically assume that the person from the other culture was a racist or was deliberately trying to annoy her:

When I felt uncomfortable, I wrote in my diary or took time to think about what happened, the reasons behind it, and possible solutions... My intercultural communication skills have improved. I do not jump into subjective conclusion that, if people from another culture do something I don't like or make me feel uncomfortable it's because they don't like me. I now think more about whether it's just a difference in communication habits. You know, just a cultural difference. (sojourn survey #1; interview)

With a more ethnorelative mindset than many of her peers, she put into practice what had been emphasized in the intercultural communication course.

Mira had also become 'much more comfortable' expressing herself in English: 'I feel the language is more a part of my life so I'll use it more, much more, I think.' As her cultural sensitivity grew, she expanded her repertoire of communication styles: 'My way of talking has changed in some situations. Previously, I didn't express my appreciation of other people very frequently but now I'm trying to do so, especially when I'm talking to westerners.'

Describing the sojourn as 'a turning point in her life', Mira believed she had evolved in many ways. She had become more self-assured and certain of her identity as 'an open-minded Chinese'.

Another surprise of the trip was my realization of my own identity. Before the sojourn, I focused too much on the negative part of Chinese culture and appreciated much of Western culture. However, during the trip, through interacting with English people, I became aware of our behavioral differences. By looking at the reasons behind them, I discovered I am deeply influenced by Chinese traditional values and I love Chinese culture very much. I also appreciate English culture, too. After this realization, I started to perceive myself as a Chinese who is open to the influence of other good cultural values... Spending time abroad has given me a different perspective on China and Hong Kong. I've also become more self-aware and independent. Therefore, the sojourn

was a turning point in my life. Though I only stayed there for five weeks, the memory will remain in my mind for the rest of my life.

Throughout her oral and written narratives, I discovered evidence of Byram's (1997, 2008b) *savoirs*, including the crucial element, *savoir s'engager*. Her journey of intercultural exploration and continuous critical reflection clearly had a profound impact on her. With an open mindset, she had made the most of the reflective and experiential elements embedded in the program (e.g. ethnographic project work, debriefings) and took further steps toward a more sophisticated, cosmopolitan self that incorporates both local and global elements.

I benefited a lot from the ethnographic project. I immersed myself into the community and interacted with the local people. While I was volunteering in the charity shop, I learnt how to build up a relationship with people from another culture. I became much more sensitive to the way people communicate with each other and things I should do or avoid in order to get along well with them... While my project was in development, I grew with it. Now, it has come to an end, but what I gained from this precious experience will always remain in my heart. (Post-sojourn ethnography survey)

While service-learning¹¹ was not a requirement of the fieldwork component, for her ethnography project Mira chose to do volunteer work in a charity shop. This not only gave her more exposure to the host language and culture, it enriched her knowledge of social issues and environmentally responsible consumer behaviors. She returned to Hong Kong with a broader worldview and more understanding of what it means to be a responsible member of the global, multicultural community.

Conclusion

What can we learn from Mira's story? First, it is important to acknowledge that her dynamic personality, childhood experiences, ability to deal with adversity, and zest for life make her an exceptional individual. Further, while many of her peers possessed very inflated self-assessments of their level of intercultural sensitivity, from the onset, Mira appeared to be more realistic about the state of her intercultural communicative competence. Acknowledging her very limited intercultural experience, she recognized the importance of cultivating the knowledge and skills associated with competent intercultural communication. Receptive to change, she was also willing to interact with locals in the community and embrace a broader sense of self. Similar to her peers, she experienced culture shock and identity misalignments but remained focused on her goals and made remarkable progress during her short stay in England.

This case study illustrates that a short-term sojourn can have a significant impact on participants *if* critical reflection and experiential learning (e.g. ethnographic research, service-learning) are embedded into the program *and* the individuals themselves are receptive to personal expansion and committed to enhancing their intercultural knowledge and skills. As well as agency, the degree of host receptivity (openness to 'newcomers') plays a vital role in how sojourns unfold.

Intercultural education can enrich the learning experience of student sojourners by providing a framework to help them make sense of cultural difference. To be most effective, individual and group reflection should be promoted before, during, and after a sojourn. As well as analyzing their cultural assumptions and level of intercultural sensitivity, participants may hone their comparative thinking skills, and become

more responsible for their language and intercultural learning. In the pre-sojourn preparation phase it is also essential for educators to guide students to set realistic goals for their language and intercultural learning.

As students grapple with emotional responses to the unfamiliar (e.g. the perspectives and practices of other cultures), educators can help them make meaningful connections between their intercultural encounters and course content (e.g. intercultural communication theory). By encouraging reflection on issues related to identity, diversity, and equality, students can become more aware of what it means to be a responsible, intercultural citizen in today's interconnected world. Without this scaffolding, sojourn outcomes are unlikely to be as positive as Mira's and dissatisfied, frustrated sojourners may even return home with heightened xenophobia.

By engaging in an experientially structured study abroad program, L2 sojourners may enhance their proficiency in the host language (sociopragmatic and strategic competence, fluency), while developing the knowledge, traits, and skills linked to intercultural communicative competence (Byram's 1997 *saviors*) and cosmopolitan, intercultural citizenship (Byram, 2006, 2008b; Guilherme, 2002). Mira's experience suggests that service-learning, in particular, may be a powerful means to foster deeper learning and civic engagement. It is also important to bear in mind that the benefits of intercultural education, international experience, and this ongoing reflective process may not be fully realized until long after the sojourn.

Postscript

Mira's journey toward intercultural communicative competence and intercultural citizenship did not end with this program. The short-term sojourn gave her the confidence she needed to venture abroad on her own for a longer period of time. For her third year of undergraduate studies, she joined a yearlong exchange program in Ireland, where I had the opportunity to visit her. After completing a BA in English and an MPhil in English Applied Linguistics, this 'intercultural speaker' fulfilled her dream of becoming an English language teacher in a secondary school in Hong Kong. She is now inspiring her own students to embrace personal expansion through intercultural interaction and international experience.

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Notes

1. 'Internationalization at the national, sector, and institutional levels is defined as the process of integrating an international, intercultural, or global dimension into the purpose, functions or delivery of postsecondary education' (Knight, 2003).
2. A faculty-led sojourn is directed by a faculty member(s) from the home institution who accompanies the students abroad. A micro-term sojourn lasts 3 weeks or less, whereas a short-term sojourn lasts 8 weeks or less (Forum on Education Abroad, 2009).
3. Ethnocentrism is defined as 'the worldview of one's own culture is central to all reality' (Bennett, 1993, p. 30), whereas the latter is linked to 'being comfortable with many

- standards and customs and to having an ability to adapt behavior and judgments to a variety of interpersonal settings' (Bennett, 1993, p. 26).
4. Experiential learning refers to 'a wide range of educational approaches in which *formal* learning (in institutional contexts) is *integrated with practical work and informal learning*' (Kohonen, 2001, p. 22). It entails 'learning from immediate experience and engaging the learners in the process as whole persons, both intellectually and emotionally' (Kohonen, 2001, p. 23).
 5. In this context, guided, critical reflection refers to the process in which a facilitator (e.g. teacher) prompts students to identify the assumptions governing their intercultural actions, locate the origins of the assumptions, question the meaning of the assumptions, and develop alternative, more 'context-sensitive' ways of acting in a particular intercultural event. This entails challenging familiar ways of thinking and being (e.g. McAllister, Whiteford, Hill, Thomas, & Fitzgerald, 2006; Mezirow, 1991).
 6. 'Whole-person learning' is concerned with the affective, psychological, and social development of individuals, not just their cognitive and metacognitive learning (Yorks & Kasl, 2002).
 7. A pseudonym is used to protect the identity of the focal case participant, whose journey is featured in this paper.
 8. In Hong Kong, the HKALE (Hong Kong Advanced Level Examination) is normally taken by secondary school students at the end of their 2-year sixth-form courses. (See <http://www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/hkale/> for details.)
 9. In July 1997, sovereignty over Hong Kong reverted from Britain to the People's Republic of China.
 10. Kim (2001) developed an integrative communication theory of cross-cultural adaptation, which views adaptation in a new environment as a process, involving, what she labels, the 'stress-adaptation-growth' dynamic. She maintains that experiencing stress (e.g. confusion, anxiety) can be beneficial when newcomers are pushed to develop a mindset and habits that are better suited to the new culture. Their desire to eliminate discomfort may gradually lead to greater functional fitness and psychological health in the host environment.
 11. Service-learning is 'a volunteer work placement combined with academic course work, within the context of a study abroad program. The learning is given structure through the principles of experiential education' (Forum on Education Abroad, 2009, p. 23).

Notes on contributor

Jane Jackson is Professor in the English Department at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. Her current research interests include intercultural communication, identity transformation, and international, L2 education. With the support of competitive research grants, she is investigating the language and (inter)cultural learning of education abroad students. She has published numerous book chapters and articles in peer-reviewed journals. Recent monographs include *Language, Identity, and Study Abroad: Sociocultural Perspectives* (Equinox, 2008) and *Intercultural Journeys: From Study to Residence Abroad* (Palgrave MacMillan, 2010). She is currently editing the *Routledge Handbook of Language and Intercultural Communication*.

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