

# International students' intercultural competence and the role of higher education host institution.

## A qualitative analysis of video-logs.

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# The issue

## State of Art

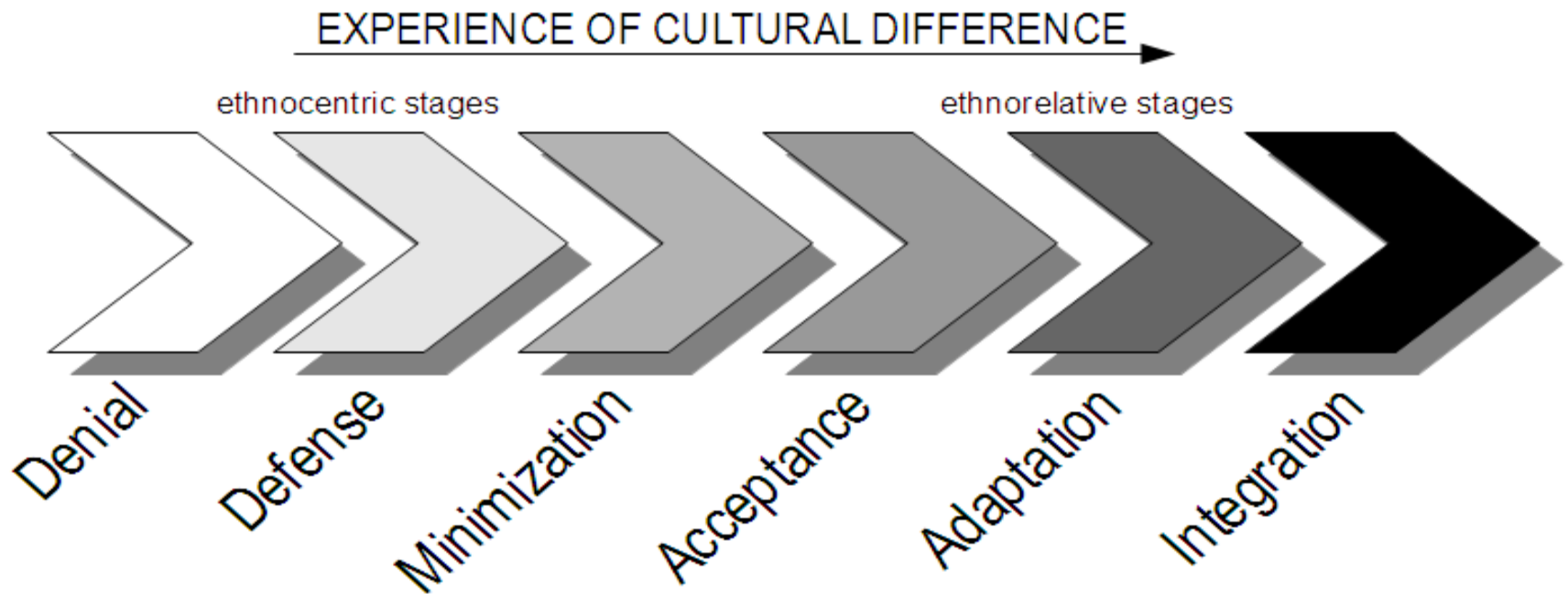
- number of colleges and universities offering study abroad programmes has significantly increased (McAllister & Irvine, 2000).
  - Objective: developing students' intercultural competence (Anderson et al., 2006).

## However ...

- students' gains in intercultural competence hardly ever assessed (Anderson et al., 2006; Gillespe, 2002).
- international students have specific needs: if not addressed, students might feel disappointed (Sherry et al., 2010).
- traveling abroad not necessarily means greater cultural sensitivity (Anderson et al., 2006).
- what reflection on efficacy of teaching practices and support to teachers' professional development ?

# Introduction to DMIS

## Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity



Adapted by Mark Sample from Bennett, M. J. (1993). Towards Ethnorelativism: A Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity. In R. M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the Intercultural Experience* (pp. 21-72). Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.

# Research Question

- Exploring differences in attitudes across two groups of students enrolled in higher education programmes in Italy.
  - Acculturation index → through Vancouver Acculturation Index
  - Worldview (Bennett's DMIS) → video-logs

# Method: participants

Undergraduates, around 20-24 years old

- 7 US students (5 girls and 2 boys)
  - American study abroad programme in Italy,
- 23 international students (15 girls and 8 boys)
  - Erasmus Mundus Master programme

# Method: Measures

## Vancouver Index of Acculturation

- 20-item questionnaire
- 9-point Likert-type scale
- Identification to
  - Host culture
  - Heritage culture
- values, social relationships, and adherence to traditions

## Video-log

- produce one video-log on a culturally-relevant experience, to be discussed in class.
- longer than 1 minute and shorter than 2
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- 
- I often participate in my *heritage cultural traditions*
- I would be willing to marry an Italian person.
- I enjoy Italian entertainment (e.g. movies, music).
- 
- describe a cultural incident,
- describe an experience in which you behaved like an Italian

# Results:

## VIA

Group	Scores	N	Min	Max	M	SD
American Students	Heritage	7	55	88	72.00	11.86
	Host	7	45	83	59.86	12.44
	Total	7	108	171	131.86	20.31
International Students	Heritage	23	39	86	64.61	13.98
	Host	23	37	84	59.17	11.20
	Total	23	84	168	123.78	21.14

- No differences bwn groups
- Heritage score > Host score ( $Z=-2.51, p<.05$ )

# Results

Name	Description	VIA	Stage/Videolog	Key-sentence
C	American girl	Heritage: 55 Host: 53	<a href="#">Defense</a>	<i>It shows the modernization of Italy: in the US there would have been clear signs</i>
M	American girl	Heritage: 88 Host: 83	<a href="#">Acceptance</a> (behavior)	<i>when I greet Italians I try to do that, but I am still uncomfortable</i>
T	Flemish girl	Heritage: 65 Host: 53	<a href="#">Acceptance</a> (relativism)	<i>where I live, I have never experienced this before, we are more shy and more ashamed of ourselves</i>
X	Canadian-Chinese girl	Heritage: 86 Host: 64	<a href="#">Acceptance</a> <a href="#">/Adaptation</a>	[speaking dynamically and expressively with her hands]



# Plot analysis by Colette Daiute (CUNY)

Defense	Acceptance	Acceptance	Adaptation
High point not connected to the complicating actions nor resolved with strategies; Narrates mostly complicating actions, with a result (ending) but no resolution strategies to address the issue of not being able to figure out the train system as a cultural difference	Resolutions related to the high point of mutual mis-understandings and attempts to understand.	A situation she's not used to but she's open to and likes, although she resolves that she won't change back home	Narrative develops interactively with complicating actions & resolution strategies

- **Acceptance:** Both of these narratives develop around cross-cultural conflicts and the speaker addresses inter-subjective relations in attempts to resolve, if not in an ultimate resolution or ending
- **Adaptation vs Defense:** These narratives contrast in several ways, especially in the difference around presence or absence of resolution strategies to address cultural differences, but also in the plot arc of one compared to the list of complications in the other.

# Discussion

- By focusing on a cultural incident, students are asked to **reflect** on ways of thinking and behaving, and whether they are improving their cross-cultural knowledge and skills
- Addressing students' intercultural competence might enable higher education institutions – and educators in general - to improve their **scaffolding approach** in relation to both national and international students.
- It is crucial that students experience **cultural unfamiliarity**, and that teachers explicitly address it; in this sense, we believe that video-logs should be used in interaction with an analysis of students' identification with the host culture and the heritage culture