

ABSTRACT (Dr. Terry Mannerter)

My Wisconsin Teaching Scholar 2005-2006 research question is, *How do students acquire intercultural communicative competency during a study abroad experience?* During the past 10 years I have been taking students on a study abroad program to Mexico. In order to make the program better and provide more specific course goals and objectives for students, I decided to examine the issue of student learning in a study abroad situation, specifically how students become competent in cultural communication as the result of spending a period of time in a second country/culture. In order to gain an understanding of the more general issue of how students learn in an unfamiliar situation, I examined the theories of many scholars, especially Jack Mezirow's idea of transformative learning and Michael Byram's theory of Intercultural Communicative Competence. The course has traditionally consisted of three parts: fall seminars that provide background knowledge of Mexico, a 21 day field study component in central and western Mexico, and a reflective term paper after returning to the US. Therefore, I developed three instruments that will provide me with a clearer vision of how university level students acquire competence in surviving/adapting/thriving in an unfamiliar situation: a pre-post content exam (corresponding to the fall seminars as well as the field study and reflective period), a pre-post student values questionnaire (corresponding closely to my WTS question of how student attitudes/behaviors change as a result of a study abroad experience), and a term paper grading rubric (corresponding to the components of the reflective term paper written and submitted at the end of the course). I have already administered the pre-post content in a prior course, so I will be able to compare the results of student improvement with future classes. I will administer the pre-post values questionnaire for the first time during the 2006-2007 class. The term paper grading rubric was developed through coding of student papers from prior classes, and will also be used each time I teach the course. Along with a group of colleagues in foreign language education, I have tested the rubric by reading and scoring past term papers. The results of these three assessment tools will provide me with a clearer overall vision of how students achieve certain aspects of intercultural communicative competence as a result of the field study abroad, and will help me to achieve at least a partial answer to my WTS question as well as to redesign my curriculum in order to maximize student growth in this area. I hope to be able to collaborate with other instructors of study abroad programs in the future in order to better understand and assess student learning in any study abroad situation.

Dr. Terry Mannerter
Modern Language
UW-River Falls
2005-06 Wisconsin Teaching Scholar