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Digital Storytelling on Study Abroad Experiences as a Tool to Measure Intercultural Competence Nobuaki Takahashi (Modern Languages)

This presentation reports students' digital storytelling from their study abroad experiences as a tool to measure their intercultural competence or global understanding. In the globalized world today, it is crucial to educate people to have good grasp of global understanding in educational or professional settings, and one way to promote such personal growth is studying abroad. Through studying abroad, people can enhance not only their language skills, but also their global understanding skills. However, the assessments upon completion of studying abroad, tend to focus exclusively on the language proficiency, such as the placement test, or ACTFL's oral proficiency interviews, and the intercultural understanding components are often times left unassessed. This issue derives from factors such as the complexity of defining what "culture" is, the challenge of appropriately and accurately assess abstract idea of intercultural competence (Schulz, 2007). At Elizabethtown College, all the modern language majors are required to study abroad. However, the assessment has only been done on the language proficiency components as is the case for many institutions. There have been efforts and plans to come up with assessment tools to measure students' intercultural understanding acquired from study abroad experiences. Among a wide variety of options (questionnaires, surveys, journals, blogs/vlogs, etc.), digital storytelling was selected as one of the assessment components for its various merits such as that students can individually verbalize their own unique experiences and personal growth in their own words rather than pre-made survey questions. This is especially important and more effective as compared to pre-made survey questions as study abroad experiences can vary tremendously depending on the individuals and countries. Furthermore, unlike personal blogs/vlogs, a short (within 5 minutes) digital storytelling file can be used as a tool for their career, in their portfolio as their digital work that future employer can easily check (as compared to one semester worth of write-ups), or than the whole study abroad experience mentioned in just one line on their resume. The presentation demonstrates how the digital storytelling project was prepared and implemented, as well as discusses challenges and future plans, such as how to evaluate their digital work.

Learning Outcome(s): Critically consider how to assess complex, ambiguous, and abstract study abroad experiences appropriately and effectively. This presentation is exclusively on assessing students' intercultural and global understanding after studying abroad, but it can be applied to other field of assessment.