Using Experiential Learning Theory to Promote Student Learning and Development in Programs of Education Abroad

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Study abroad programs are rich with possibilities for meaningful and transformative learning. By living, studying, and working in an unfamiliar culture, students are challenged to make sense of the novelty and ambiguity with which they are regularly confronted. As a result of this sense-making process, students adopt new ways of thinking, acting and relating in the world. For students who move mindfully through the study abroad experience, it has the potential to change their worldview, provide a new perspective on their course of study, and yield a network of mind-expanding relationships.

On the other hand, programs that do not adopt a holistic approach to student learning can become little more than a glorified vacation. At best, the students report having fun or being "satisfied" with the experience, and return home unchanged. They engage in the experience at a surface level, maintaining distance from the physical, social or intellectual tensions of the learning endeavor. At worst, carelessness places students in harm because they have engaged in dangerous or high-risk behaviors.

The difference in these two scenarios is a programmatic emphasis on the student's learning and development, and a model of shared responsibility for learning. Attention must be paid to designing a learning experience that helps students fully absorb and integrate their experiences at increasing levels of complexity. Additionally, everyone involved in the study abroad experience – campus administrators, faculty, homestay families, and the students themselves – should understand the learning process and how they can skillfully intervene to maximize learning.

We suggest that experiential learning theory (ELT; Kolb, 1984) provides a model for educational interventions in study abroad because of its holistic approach to human adaptation through the transformation of experience into knowledge. Accordingly, this chapter focuses on *how* students learn and the role of the educator in that process. The first part provides an overview of ELT and its key concepts--the cycle and spiral of learning from experience, learning styles, learning spaces, learning flexibility, and the experiential learning theory of development. Part two offers guidance to study abroad educators on the use of these concepts to maximize student learning and development.

Experiential Learning Theory

Experiential learning theory is a dynamic view of learning based on a learning cycle driven by the resolution of the dual dialectics of action/reflection and experience/abstraction. ELT draws on the work of prominent 20th century scholars who gave experience a central role in their theories of human learning and development – notably William James, John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, Jean Piaget, Lev Vygotsky, Carl Jung, Paulo Freire, Carl Rogers and others - creating a dynamic, holistic model of the process of learning from experience and a multi-dimensional model of adult development. Integrating the work of these foundational scholars, Kolb (1984) proposed six characteristics of experiential learning:

1. Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes. Although punctuated by knowledge milestones, learning does not end at an outcome, nor is it always evidenced in performance. Rather, learning occurs through the course of connected experiences in which

knowledge is modified and re-formed. As Dewey suggests, "…education must be conceived as a continuing reconstruction of experience: … the process and goal of education are one and the same thing" (1897, p. 79).

2. All learning is re-learning. Learning is best facilitated by a process that draws out the learners' beliefs and ideas about a topic so that they can be examined, tested and integrated with new, more refined ideas. Piaget called this proposition constructivism—individuals construct their knowledge of the world based on their experience.

3. *Learning requires the resolution of conflicts between dialectically opposed modes of adaptation to the world.* Conflict, differences, and disagreement are what drive the learning process. These tensions are resolved in iterations of movement back and forth between opposing modes of reflection and action and feeling and thinking.

4. Learning is a holistic process of adaptation. Learning is not just the result of cognition but involves the integrated functioning of the total person—thinking, feeling, perceiving and behaving. It encompasses other specialized models of adaptation from the scientific method to problems solving, decision making and creativity.

5. Learning results from synergetic transactions between the person and the environment. In Piaget's terms, learning occurs through equilibration of the dialectic processes of assimilating new experiences into existing concepts and accommodating existing concepts to new experience. Following Lewin's famous formula that behavior is a function of the person and the environment, ELT holds that learning is influenced by characteristics of the learner and the learning space.

6. Learning is the process of creating knowledge. In ELT, knowledge is viewed as the transaction between two forms of knowledge: social knowledge, which is co-constructed in a socio-historical context, and personal knowledge, the subjective experience of the learner. This conceptualization of knowledge stands in contrast to that of the "transmission" model of education in which pre-existing, fixed ideas are transmitted to the learner.

The Cycle of Experiential Learning

ELT defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Knowledge results from the combination of grasping and transforming experience" (Kolb, 1984, p. 41). Grasping experience refers to the process of taking in information, and transforming experience is how individuals interpret and act on that information. The ELT model portrays two dialectically related modes of grasping experience—Concrete Experience (CE) and Abstract Conceptualization (AC) -- and two dialectically related modes of transforming experience—Reflective Observation (RO) and Active Experimentation (AE). Learning arises from the resolution of creative tension among these four learning modes. This process is portrayed as an idealized learning cycle or spiral where the learner "touches all the bases"—experiencing (CE), reflecting (RO), thinking (AC), and acting (AE)—in a recursive process that is sensitive to the learning situation and what is being learned. Immediate or concrete experiences are the basis for observations and reflections. These reflections are

assimilated and distilled into abstract concepts from which new implications for action can be drawn. These implications can be actively tested and serve as guides in creating new experiences (Figure 1). Evidence from experiential learning research in international contexts supports the cross-cultural applicability of the model (Kolb & Kolb, 2011b&c; Joy & Kolb, 2009).

Insert Figure 1 about here

Learning Style

Learning style describes the unique ways individuals spiral through the learning cycle based on their preference for the four different learning modes - CE, RO, AC, & AE. Because of one's genetic makeup, particular life experiences, and the demands of the present environment, a preferred way of choosing among these four learning modes is developed. The conflict between being concrete or abstract and between being active or reflective is resolved in patterned, characteristic ways. Previous research has shown that learning styles are influenced by culture, personality type, educational specialization, career choice, and current job role and tasks (Kolb & Kolb, 2005b; Kolb, 1984).

Much of the research on ELT has focused on the concept of learning style using the Kolb Learning Style Inventory (KLSI) to assess individual learning styles (Kolb, 2007). While individuals who took the KLSI show many different patterns of scores; nine consistent styles have been identified based on individuals' relative preferences for the four learning modes (Eickmann, Kolb, & Kolb, 2004; Kolb & Kolb, 2005a&b; Boyatzis & Mainemelis, 2000). Four of these style types emphasize one of the four learning modes—Experiencing (CE), Reflecting (RO), Thinking (AC) and Acting (AE) (Abbey, Hunt & Weiser, 1985; Hunt, 1987). Four others represent style types that emphasize two learning modes, one from the grasping dimension and one from the transforming dimension of the ELT model—Imagining (CE & RO), Analyzing (AC & RO), Deciding (AC &AE) and Initiating (CE &AE). The final style type balances all four modes of the learning cycle—Balancing (CE, RO, AC &AE; Mainemelis, Boyatzis, & Kolb, 2002).

These learning style types can be systematically arranged on a two dimensional learning space defined by Abstract Conceptualization – Concrete Experience and Active Experimentation – Reflective Observation. This space, including a description of the distinguishing characteristics of each style, is depicted in Figure 2.

Insert Figure 2 about here

ELT argues that learning style is not a fixed psychological trait but a dynamic state resulting from synergistic transactions between the person and the environment. This dynamic state arises from an individual's preferential resolution of the dual dialectics of experiencing/conceptualizing and acting/reflecting. "The stability and endurance of these states in individuals comes not solely from fixed genetic qualities or characteristics of human beings: nor, for that matter, does it come from the stable fixed demands of environmental circumstances. Rather, stable and enduring patterns of human individuality arise from consistent patterns of

transaction between the individual and his or her environment…The way we process the possibilities of each new emerging event determines the range of choices and decisions we see. The choices and decisions we make to some extent determine the events we live through, and these events influence our future choices. Thus, people create themselves through the choice of the actual occasions that they live through" (Kolb, 1984, p. 63-64).

Learning Flexibility

Another important aspect of learning style is learning flexibility, the extent to which an individual adapts his or her learning style to the demands of the learning situation. As we have seen above, learning style is not a fixed personality trait but more like a habit of learning shaped by experience and choices—it can be an automatic, unconscious mode of adapting or it can be consciously modified and changed. The learning style types described above portray how one prefers to learn in general. Many individuals feel that their learning style type accurately describes how they learn most of the time. They are consistent in their approach to learning. Others, however, report that they tend to change their learning approach depending on what they are learning or the situation they are in. They may say, for example, that they use one style in the classroom and another at home with their friends and family. These are flexible learners.

Learning flexibility is the ability to use each of the four learning modes to move freely around the learning cycle and to modify one's approach to learning based on the learning situation. Experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting each provide valuable perspectives on the learning task in a way that deepens and enriches knowledge. This can be seen as traveling through each of the regions of the learning space in the process of learning. Learning flexibility can help us move in and out of the learning space regions, capitalizing on the strengths of each learning style. Learning flexibility broadens the learning comfort zone and allows us to operate comfortably and effectively in more regions of the learning space, promoting deep learning and development.

The flexibility to move from one learning mode to another in the learning cycle is important for effective learning. Research on flexibility using the Adaptive Style Inventory (ASI; Boyatzis & Kolb, 1993) found that individuals who balance the dialectics of action-reflection and concrete-abstract have greater adaptive flexibility in their learning (Mainemelis, Boyatzis, & Kolb, 2002). Individuals with high adaptive flexibility are more self-directed, have richer life structures, and experience less conflict in their lives (Kolb, 1984).

Learning Space

If learning is to occur, it requires a space for it to take place. The great potential of study abroad learning experiences is that they offer a rich variety and depth of learning spaces. While, for most, it first conjures up the image of the physical classroom environment; the concept of learning space is much broader and multi-dimensional. Dimensions of learning space include physical, cultural, institutional, social and psychological aspects. In ELT these dimensions of learning space all come together in the experience of the learner. This concept of learning space builds on Kurt Lewin's field theory and his concept of life space (1951). For Lewin, person and environment are interdependent variables where behavior is a function of person and

environment and the life space is the total psychological environment, which the person experiences subjectively. To take time as an example, in many organizations today employees are so busy doing their work that they feel that there is no time to learn how to do things better. This feeling is shaped by the objective conditions of a hectic work schedule and also the expectation that time spent reflecting will not be rewarded. Teachers objectively create learning spaces by the information and activities they offer in their course; but this space is also interpreted in the students' subjective experience through the lens of their learning style.

Since a learning space is in the end what the learner experiences it to be, it is the psychological and social dimensions of learning spaces have the most influence on learning. From this perspective learning spaces can be viewed as aggregates of human characteristics. "Environments are transmitted through people and the dominant features of a particular environment are partially a function of the individuals who inhabit it" (Strange & Banning, 2001). Using the "human aggregate" approach, the experiential learning space is defined by the attracting and repelling forces (positive and negative valences) of the poles of the dual dialectics of action/reflection and experiencing/conceptualizing, creating a two dimensional map of the regions of the learning space like that shown in Figure 2. An individual's learning style positions him/her in one of these regions depending on the equilibrium of forces among action, reflection, experiencing and conceptualizing. As with the concept of life space, this position is determined by a combination of individual disposition and characteristics of the learning environment.

The KLSI measures an individual's preference for a particular region of the learning space, their home region so to speak. The regions of the ELT learning space offer a typology of the different types of learning based on the extent to which they require action vs. reflection, experiencing vs. thinking thereby emphasizing some stages of the learning cycle over others. A number of studies of learning spaces in higher education have been conducted using the human aggregate approach by showing the percentage of students whose learning style places them in the different learning space regions (Kolb & Kolb, 2005a; Eickmann, Kolb & Kolb, 2004). Figure 3, for example, shows the ELT learning space of the MBA program in a major management school. In this particular case, students are predominately concentrated in the abstract and active regions of the learning space, as are the faculty. This creates a learning space that tends to emphasize the quantitative and technical aspects of management over the human and relationship factors.

Insert Figure 3 about here

The ELT learning space concept emphasizes that learning is not one universal process but a map of learning territories, a frame of reference within which many different ways of learning can flourish and interrelate. It is a holistic framework that orients the many different ways of learning to one another. The process of experiential learning can be viewed as a process of locomotion through the learning regions that is influenced by a person's position in the learning space. One's position in the learning space defines their experience and thus defines their "reality". In our recent research we have focused on the characteristics of learning spaces that maximize learning and development and have developed principles for creating them (Kolb &

Kolb, 2005a). For a learner to engage fully in the learning cycle, a space must be provided to engage in the four modes of the cycle—feeling, reflection, thinking, and action. It needs to be a hospitable, welcoming space that is characterized by respect for all. It needs to be safe and supportive, but also challenging. It must allow learners to be in charge of their own learning and allow time for the repetitive practice that develops expertise.

The Spiral of Learning and Adult Development

In ELT, adult development occurs through learning from experience. This is based on the idea that the experiential learning cycle is actually a learning *spiral*. When a concrete experience is enriched by reflection, given meaning by thinking and transformed by action, the new experience created becomes richer, broader and deeper. Further iterations of the cycle continue the exploration and transfer to experiences in other contexts. In this process learning is integrated with other knowledge and generalized to other contexts leading to higher levels of adult development.

Zull (2002) explained a link between ELT and neuroscience research, suggesting that the spiraling process of experiential learning is related to the process of brain functioning: "…concrete experiences come through the sensory cortex, reflective observation involves the integrative cortex at the back, creating new abstract concepts occurs in the frontal integrative cortex, and active testing involves the motor brain. In other words, the learning cycle arises from the structure of the brain" (p. 18). Humberto Maturana (1970) also arrived at the concept of a spiral when he searched for the pattern of organization that characterizes all living systems. He concluded that all living systems are organized in a closed circular process that allows for evolutionary change in a way that circularity is maintained. He called this process *autopoeisis,* which means "self-making," emphasizing the self-referential and self-organizing nature of life. Applying the autopoeisis to cognition, he argued that the process of knowing was identical to autopoeisis, the spiraling process of life (Maturana & Varela, 1980).

Progress toward development is seen as increases in the complexity and sophistication of the dimensions associated with the four modes of the learning cycle—affective, perceptual, symbolic and behavioral complexity - and the integration of these modes in a flexible full cycle of learning. The concept of *deep learning* describes the developmental process of learning that fully integrates the four modes of the experiential learning cycle—experiencing, reflecting, thinking and acting (Jensen & Kolb, 1994; Border, 2007). Deep learning refers to the kind of learning that leads to development in the ELT model. The ELT developmental model (Kolb, 1984) follows Jung's theory that adult development moves from a specialized way of adapting toward a holistic integrated stage that he calls individuation. The model defines three stages: (1) *acquisition,* from birth to adolescence where basic abilities and cognitive structures develop; (2) *specialization,* from formal schooling through the early work and personal experiences of adulthood where social, educational, and organizational socialization forces shape the development of a particular, specialized learning style; and (3) *integration* in mid-career and later life where non-dominant modes of learning are expressed in work and personal life.

Development through these stages is characterized by increased integration of the dialectic conflicts between the four primary learning modes (AC-CE and AE-RO) and by

increasing complexity and relativism in adapting to the world. Each of the learning modes is associated with a form of complexity that is used in conscious experience to transform sensory data into knowledge such that development of CE increases affective complexity, of RO increases perceptual complexity, of AC increases symbolic complexity, and of AE increases behavioral complexity (Figure 4). These learning modes and complexities create a multi-dimensional developmental process that is guided by an individual's particular learning style and life path.

Insert Figure 4 about here

Students have the opportunity to build these complexities abroad, and may benefit from an educator's skilled guidance. Affective complexity arises from increasingly meaningful interactions with diverse people, especially when students are attuned to how they feel in the context of these relationships. Increases in openness to experience, sensitivity to beauty and aesthetics, bodily awareness, and the ability to be fully present in the moment also contribute the development of affective complexity. Students develop perceptual complexity as they learn to notice detail, attend to multiple stimuli, and to embrace a multiplicity of viewpoints. The ability to locate one's self amongst an array of external data also contributes to perceptual complexity. The classic indication of advances in symbolic complexity is the mastery of a new language. However, symbolic complexity can also be developed as students organize their experience in to pre-existing knowledge structures and begin to engage in systems-thinking, understanding interconnections between stimuli, analysis, and model-building. Finally, development of behavioral complexity occurs as students experiment with new, culturally relevant practices. Greater behavioral complexity is associated with increased flexibility in executing actions that match demands of the environment.

Using Experiential Learning in the Design and Conduct of Education Abroad Programs

Since their emergence in the early 1970's, the principles and concepts of experiential learning outlined above have been used to create curricula and conduct educational courses and programs in K-12 education (McCarthy, 1987), undergraduate education (Mentkowski, 2000), and professional education (Reese, 1998; Boyatzis, Cowan, & Kolb, 1995). Experiential learning approaches have been implemented in virtually every discipline from accounting to zoology (Kolb & Kolb, 2006). Many of the non-traditional educational innovations that have flowered during this period have used experiential learning as their "educational platform"—college programs for adult learners, service learning, prior learning assessment, and outdoor adventure education. Similarly, experiential learning principles and concepts provide theoretical grounding to the practice of education abroad. In the following section, we offer some considerations for adopting experiential learning as an educational approach and crafting experiences that promote student ownership of the learning process abroad.

Becoming an Experiential Educator

To apply principles and practices of ELT is to become and experiential educator. For many this requires a reexamination of one's teaching philosophy and teaching practices. Those who think of experiential learning as techniques and games miss the deeper message that the foundational scholars of experiential learning were trying to convey. The practices of experiential learning are most effective when they are expressions of this fundamental philosophy captured in the following four propositions.

- Educating is a relationship. In the midst of the multitude of educational theories, learning technologies, and institutional procedures and constraints, it is easy to lose sight of the most important thing—teaching is above all a profound human relationship. We can all think of teachers who have had a major impact on our lives and in most cases this involved a special relationship where we felt recognized, valued, and empowered by the teacher. Parker Palmer (1997) described the courage necessary for a teacher to fully enter into learning relationships with students as a willingness to expose one's inner world; to honor students as complex, relational beings; and to masterfully weave these worlds together with the course content.

- Educating is holistic. It is about educating the whole person. Educating the whole person means that the goal of education is not solely cognitive knowledge of the facts, but also includes development of social and emotional maturity. In ELT terms it is about facilitating integrated development in affective, perceptual, cognitive and behavioral realms. Rather than acquiring generalized knowledge stripped of any context, learning is situated to the person's life setting and life path (Lave & Wenger, 1991). John Dewey (1897) put it well "I believe that education which does not occur through forms of life that are worth living for their own sake is always a poor substitute for genuine reality and tends to cramp and to deaden."

- Educating is learning-oriented. The crisis in American education has led to an excessive emphasis on performance and learning outcomes often resulting in rote memorization and "teaching to the test" while ignoring broader developmental activities such as music and the arts. This is in strong contrast to the experiential learning view stated at the outset of this chapter that it is the *process* of learning that should be the primary focus. Education should focus on how students are arriving at answers by focusing on fundamental concepts, the process of inquiry, critical thinking and choiceful creation of values.

- Educating is learner centered. ELT scholars put forward a constructivist view of knowledge and learning that emphasizes the importance of organizing the educational process around the experience of learners. This entails meeting them "where they are" in their understanding and building their confidence and competence to the point where they become independent, self directed learners.

The Teacher's Role in Experiential Learning

Adopting an experiential approach to teaching at first can be challenging and a bit unsettling. About this, one teacher said, “Actually, teaching was easier before I learned about experiential learning. My main focus was to collect and organize my course material and present it clearly. I had never thought much about how the students were reacting and their thoughts about the material.” Another said, “In the beginning I had a lot of concerns about losing control. Using experiential exercises brings up surprising stuff and makes me have to think and react on my feet.” Ultimately, however, the experiential approach becomes far more enriching and rewarding. An experienced teacher reported, “I was beginning to get really bored presenting the same material year after year. Experiential learning has opened up conversations with the students about their experience and ideas and now I am actually learning new things along with them.”

Teaching around the learning cycle and to different learning styles introduces the need for adjustments in the role one takes with learners. The Teaching Role Profile (Kolb & Kolb, 2011) was created to help educators understand their preferred teaching role and plan for how they can adapt to teaching around the learning cycle. The self-report instrument is based on the assumption that preferences for teaching roles emerge from a combination of beliefs about teaching and learning, goals for the educational process, preferred teaching style, and instructional practices (see Table 1). Although referred to as “teaching” roles, this model is not limited to individuals in a social position of teacher or professor. This framework can be extended to individuals in educational systems who have teaching roles as advisors, administrators, student affairs professionals, peers, tour guides, and or homestay parents.

Insert Table 1 about here

A teaching role is a patterned set of behaviors that emerge in response to the learning environment, including students and the learning task demands. Each teaching role engages students to learn in a unique manner, using one mode of grasping experience and one mode of transforming experience. In the facilitator role, educators draw on the modes of concrete experience and reflective observation to help learners get in touch with their own experience and reflect on it. Subject matter experts, using the modes of reflective observation and abstract conceptualization, help learners organize and connect their reflection to the knowledge base of the subject matter. They may provide models or theories for learners to use in subsequent analysis. The standard setting and evaluating role uses abstract conceptualization and active experimentation to help students apply knowledge toward performance goals. In this role, educators closely monitor the quality of student performance toward the standards they set, and provide consistent feedback. Finally, those in the coaching role draw on concrete experience and active experimentation to help learners take action on personally meaningful goals. These roles can also be organized by their relative focus on the student versus the subject and action versus knowledge as illustrated in Figure 5.

Insert Figure 5 about here

Highly effective educators do not rely solely on one role. Rather, they organize their educational activities in such a manner that they address all four learning modes—experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting. As they do this, they lead learners around the cycle; shifting the role they play depending on which stage of the cycle they are addressing. In effect, the role they adopt helps to create a learning space designed to facilitate the transition from one learning mode to the other as was shown in Figure 1. Often this is done in a recursive fashion, repeating the cycle many times in a learning program. The cycle then becomes a spiral with each passage through the cycle deepening and extending learners' understanding of the subject.

Hunt (1987) suggested that a learning spiral is shared between individuals in human interaction. People relate to one another in a pattern of alternating 'reading' and 'flexing' that mirrors the experiential learning process. When one person is *reading* – receiving feedback (CE) and formulating perceptions (RO) – the other person is *flexing* – creating intentions based on those perceptions (AC) and acting on them (AE). As the exchange continues, both parties alternate between reading and flexing. Based on the actions they take, educators can activate different learning modes in students based on their patterns of reading and flexing (Abbey, Hunt, & Weiser, 1985).

Selecting the appropriate role to enact at the appropriate time is an art. Educators must consider multiple factors in the moment-to-moment choices they make about how to respond to students. Educators must balance the learning mode they intend to elicit with signals students send about how they expect the educator to behave (Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, & Snock, 1964; Gaff & Gaff, 1981). Selection of a teaching role is also impacted by role-specific identity - one's self-knowledge specific to certain educational settings - such that educators have a tendency to assume roles that align with their preferred teaching role and learning style (Nicoll-Senft & Seider, 2010). Finally, aspects of the learning space also influence teaching role selection, particularly physical configurations, temporal constraints, and instructional norms associated with various disciplines.

As mentioned above, educators can gain flexibility in enacting the four teaching roles. Just as students can gain proficiency in integrating multiple learning modes, educators can gain flexibility in shifting fluidly among the four teaching roles. First, narrowly defined assumptions about teaching and learning tend to result in an imbalance in teaching role enactment. Challenging one's current beliefs about the purpose and process of education could lead to an expanded philosophy that naturally encapsulates more teaching roles. This also applies to students who have their own beliefs about education. The extent to which students are encouraged to understand the learning process and their own learning styles and teaching role preferences will determine the possible range of effective teaching roles.

Second, empathy is important for responding appropriately to the role requirements of a learning situation (Mead, 1934). Empathy is the ability to sense others' feelings and perspectives, and take an active interest in their concerns (Boyatzis, 2009). In an educational context, this begins with understanding the class composition – age, gender and learning styles; selected major/minor or concentration; previous exposure to course content; students' previous work experiences; future career goals; and any other variable that might affect academic performance. Empathic responses are even more likely when the teacher gets to know each

student as an individual. Information available through these interpersonal relationships allows the teacher to adapt their teaching role to the developmental needs of the students, as well as monitor optimal levels of challenge and support (Sanford, 1968).

Third, educators can use mechanisms to facilitate smooth transitions between teaching roles. The first mechanism is to explain the experiential learning cycle and four teaching roles up front so students understand how to respond when they perceive changes in a teacher's behavior toward them. Another mechanism is to establish predictable patterns of role shifting. This can be accomplished by displaying an agenda for each class so that students can follow along and anticipate role shifts. Class routines also assist with establishing predictability. For example, opening each class with a guided writing exercise or quiz helps students assume the appropriate learning mode. A final mechanism deals with utilizing changes in physical location. Physical movement between different spaces, such as large group instruction and small group breakouts or the classroom and the field, often cues a change in learning mode and facilitates smooth teaching role transitions.

Fourth, team teaching is a method to achieve enactment of all four teaching roles. Team teaching must go beyond simply taking turns leading class (such that each faculty member is present for one class per week rather than two). Teaching teammates should work closely together using complimentary strengths to perform all of the educator roles. This allows all roles to be present in the learning system. It also provides role modeling for teachers to learn from one another. In the instance that team teaching is not an option, teachers can engage students as teachers and ask them to play these roles in a peer capacity.

In summary, the four teaching roles – facilitator, expert, evaluator, and coach – provide a holistic framework for implementing experiential learning. Teaching role selection is influenced by desired student learning mode, student signals, one's teaching identity, and demands of the learning space. Because teaching roles are fluid rather than fixed, mechanisms for shifting among the roles can be employed. Effectively shifting between roles offers a relational way to intervene in student learning.

Using ELT to Promote Ownership of the Learning Process

ELT calls for full engagement of students in the learning endeavor. Thus, in addition to the teaching role, consideration must be given to helping students take ownership of the learning process when designing study abroad programs and course activities. One way to do this is to *educate students on the experiential learning cycle and their own learning style preferences.* Surprisingly, many students have not thought about what learning is and do not understand their unique way of learning. Without explicit awareness, unconscious beliefs or "lay theories" govern the way individuals engage in the learning process (Molden & Dweck, 2006). In particular, Dweck and her colleagues have examined the differences between those who see their abilities and attributes as fixed and those who believe that they can incrementally learn and change themselves. Those individuals who believe that they can learn and develop have a *learning identity*. The learner faces a difficult challenge with a "mastery response" while the person with a fixed identity is more likely to withdraw or quit. Learners embrace challenge, persist in the face of obstacles, learn from criticism and are inspired by and learn from the success of others.

The fixed identity person avoids challenge, gives up easily, avoids criticism and feels threatened by the success of others. Not surprisingly, students with a learning identity, regardless of their tested intelligence, are more successful in school than those with a fixed identity (Kolb & Kolb, 2009b).

Educating students on experiential learning and their learning style helps develop a learning identity. 'Learning to learn' interventions have led to increased classroom motivation and reversed a decline in grades (Blackwell, Trzesniewski, & Dweck, 2007), as well as significant improvements in adolescents' achievement test scores (Good, Aronson, & Inzlicht, 2003) and higher grades among college students (Aronson, Fried, & Good, 2002; Hutt, 2007). It is our contention that an understanding of the experiential learning process will empower students to feel more capable and be more effective at maximizing learning opportunities abroad.

The second strategy for empowering involvement in the learning process is to *create engaging learning environments using a variety of instructional methods.* Curricula that emphasize active involvement, a variety of learning activities, and an element of choice tend to engender personal investment in learning. A word of clarification must be offered here. Popular practice suggests that curriculum should be designed to match the learning style of learners. While this idea is recommended by many learning style models other than ELT and is the basis for testing the validity of the learning style concept for some researchers (Pashler, et. al., 2008); it is *not* the recommended approach in ELT. The ELT approach is to build curriculum around the cycle of learning in such a way that all learning modes are used and all styles of learning are engaged. In this way, every program, course, or class session has something to engage and connect with learners of every style. Learners are also encouraged to develop learning style flexibility and to move freely around the learning cycle.

Svinick and Dixon (1987) describe a comprehensive instructional model to deal with the constraints and challenges instructors and students encounter as they adopt experiential learning as an instructional design framework. They offer an instructional design model that incorporates a broad range of learning activities that leads students through the full cycle of learning, thus giving teachers a rich array of instructional choices, as well as the benefit of offering students a more complete learning experience gained from multiple perspectives. The model is also useful in responding to the one of the key challenges of the experiential methods - the understanding of the role of the student in the learning process. As the model in Figure 6 suggests, teachers are able to design the learning activities based upon how much student involvement would be appropriate given the time constraint most instructors face. Activities at the outer rim of the learning cycle allows for a greater student involvement, while those close to the center involve limited student participation.

Insert Figure 6 about here

Third, students take ownership of learning by *building diverse learning relationships*. ELT defines learning relationships to be connections between one or more individuals that promote growth and movement through the learning spiral, ultimately inspiring future learning and relationship building. A connection is constituted by an interaction or series of interactions,

which build toward a deeper relationship. Similar to Fletcher and Ragins' (2007) description of the development of a mentoring relationship through a series of small 'episodes,' learning relationships evolve as learning interactions increase in quality and frequency. Each interaction carries with it a sentiment, or emotional charge, which sets the tone for learning. Interactions characterized by compassion, mutual respect and support build the trust and positive emotional resources necessary to create space for learning – even when learning is challenging. Such growth-fostering relationships have been found to cultivate an increased sense of vitality; ability to take action; clarity about self and the relationship; sense of self-worth; and desire to form more connections in both parties (Miller & Stiver, 1997).

In the context of study abroad, possibilities for learning relationships are vast. Professors, staff, peers, homestay families, roommates, internship supervisors and coworkers, tour guides, local citizens, and even tourists represent individuals who might comprise a student's network of learning relationships abroad. Within this network, study abroad educators are uniquely positioned to intervene in student learning through holistic relationships with students that extend beyond the walls of the classroom. In fact, Nevitt Sanford (1968) suggested that one of the environments where authentic student-faculty relationships are best fostered is on foreign campuses. "In those relatively small communities abroad, many [students] learned for the first time what intellectual fellowship is and how rewarding a teacher can be when he is encouraged to reveal himself as a person. Students have an opportunity to see him in a variety of roles – as husband, father, traveling companion, gourmet, connoisseur of the arts, and member of a complex human community" (Sanford, 1968, p. 172). Meaningful relationships abroad not only ease the adaptive challenge of living abroad, they also facilitate transformative learning and the development of cultural competence.

Conclusion

Study abroad programs are rich with opportunities for growth and development. These learning opportunities are best realized through an intentional process of transforming experience into knowledge. This chapter illuminated one such process by highlighting the fundamentals of experiential learning theory – the cycle of experiential learning, learning styles, learning flexibility, learning space, and the EL theory of development or learning spiral. In order to catalyze the application of theory to practice, the latter half of the chapter introduced key propositions for becoming an experiential educator, a discussion of teaching roles, and ideas for inspiring student ownership in the learning experience. It is our hope that these concepts will assist educators in intervening masterfully in the learning process in study abroad experiences, thereby maximizing student learning.

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Figure 1. Experiential Learning Cycle

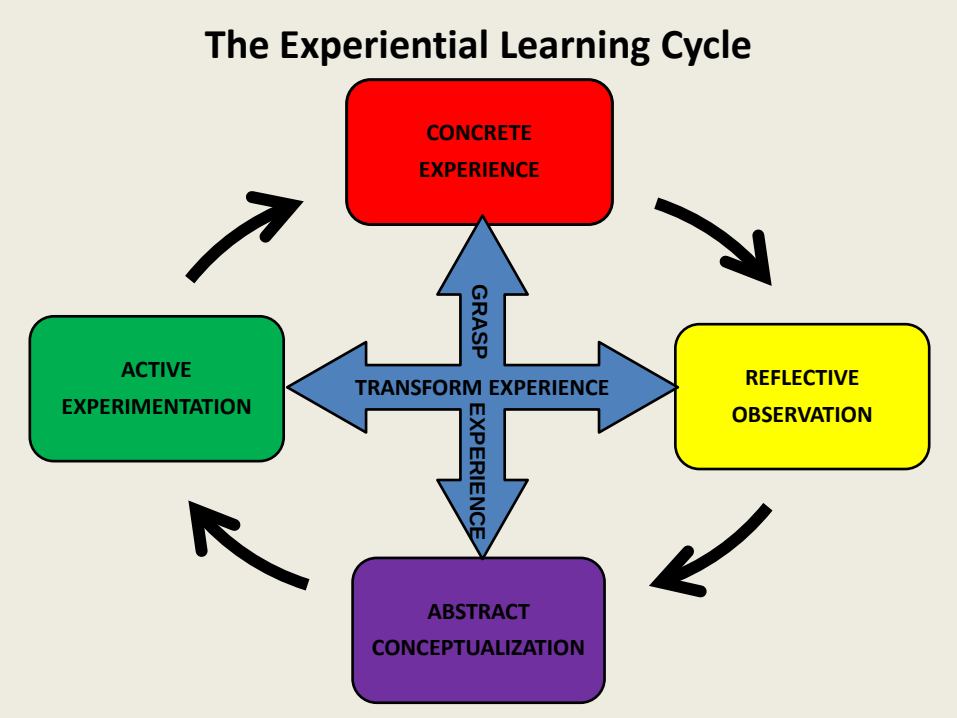


Figure 2. Distinguishing Characteristics of Learning Style Types

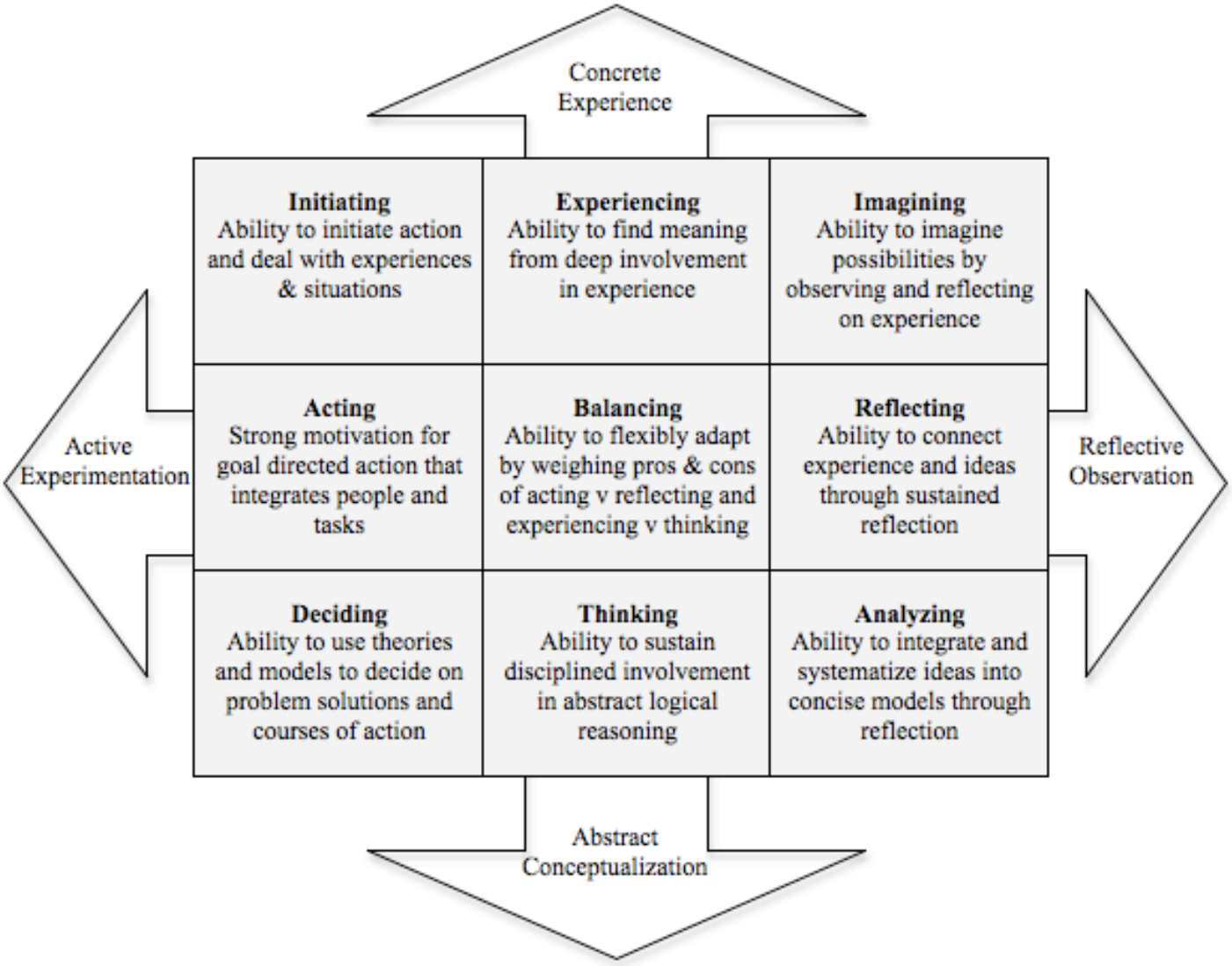


Figure 3. The ELT Learning Space of an MBA Program

Learning Styles of MBA Students (n = 1286)

	Concrete Experience		
Active Experimentation	Initiating 10.1%	Experiencing 6%	Imagining 5.1%
	Acting 13.5%	Balancing 10.2%	Reflecting 9.3%
	Deciding 12.7%	Thinking 17%	Analyzing 16%
	Abstract Conceptualization		Reflective Observation

Figure 4. ELT Theory of Development

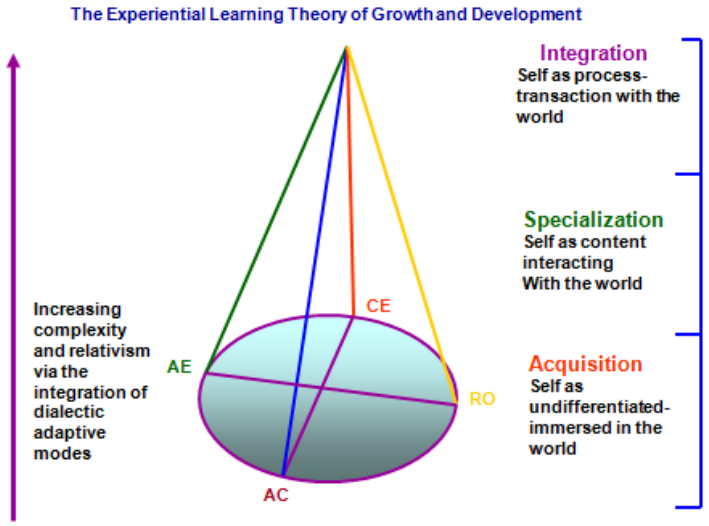


Figure 5. Experiential Learning Cycle and Teaching Roles

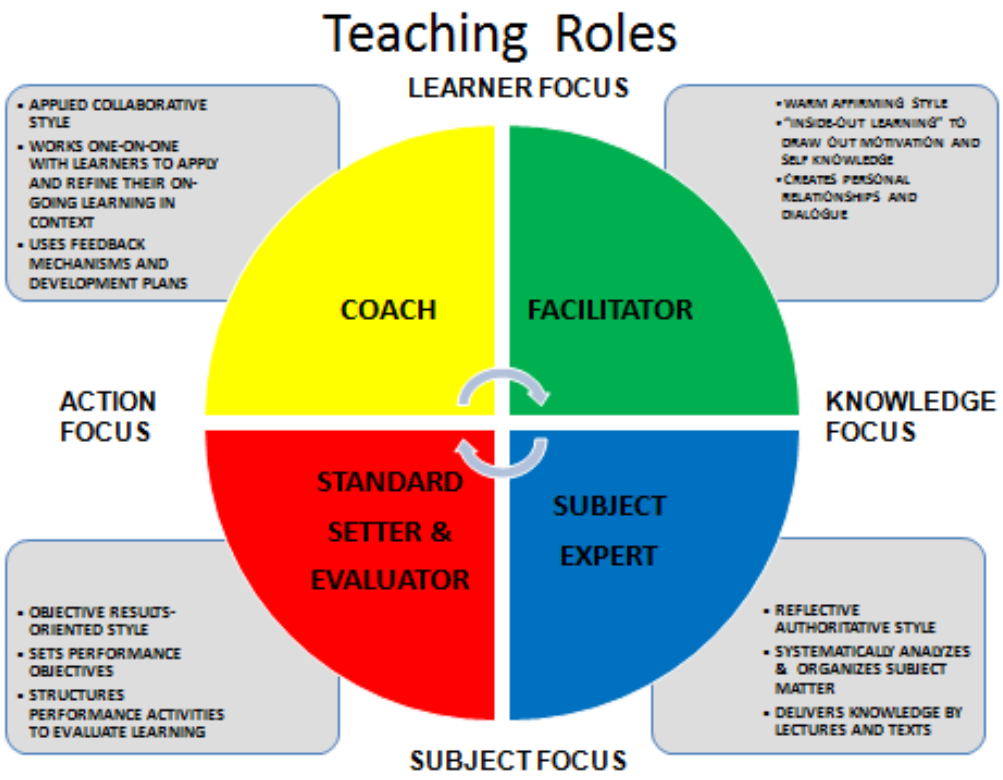
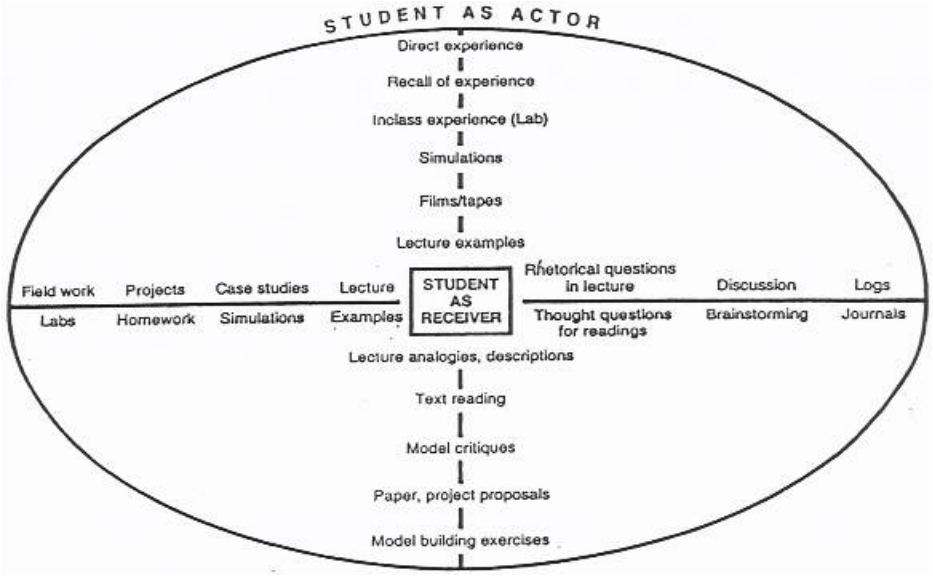


Figure 6. Instructional Activities by Student Involvement



Adapted from: Svinick, M. D., & Dixon, N. M. (1987). The Kolb model modified for classroom activities. *College Teaching, 35*(4), 141-146.

Table 1. Examples of Beliefs, Goals, Styles, and Practices Associated with Teaching Roles.

Educator Role	Beliefs: *"Learning occurs best when…"*	Goals: *"My students develop…"*	Style: *"As a teacher, I prefer to be…"*	Practices: *"Instructional forms I often use include …"*
Facilitator	it begins with the learners experience	Empathy & understanding of others	Creative; warm; affirming	Class discussion, journals, personal stories
Expert	new concepts are integrated into existing mental frameworks	Analytic & conceptual abilities	Logical; authoritative	Lectures, readings, written assignments
Evaluator	clear standards and feedback are provided	Problem solving skills	Structured; outcome-oriented; objective	Laboratories, graded homework assignments
Coach	it takes place in a real-life context	Ability to work productively with others	Applied; collaborative; risk-taking	Field projects, role plays, simulations