

Reimagining the Familiar:

Managing Student Expectations of 'Familiar' Identities and Languages

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Session Outline

- Definition of Terms
- Pre-Departure Mindsets
- Case Study: Ireland Context
- Case Study: Spanish Language Heritage Learners
- Implications for Practice



Key terms

- Erikson - Ethnicity is the "*classification of people and group relationships*" (2002: 4)
- Anderson/Gellner - Nationalism as an imagined community is primarily a political principle
 - It is essentially a sentiment, a movement - something intangible
- Hobsbawm - Traditions are, at some point, established or invented
 - Invented Traditions can include those most recently invented, and easily traceable, to those more long standing events
- The study abroad experience can both challenge and conflate these issues for the heritage seeking student.



Pre-Departure Mindsets: Obstacles to Learning



Romanticization of Host Country



- Incomplete knowledge allows room for embellishment and misconceptions
- Unbalanced portrayal of ancestral home by relatives
- Host country viewed through the lens of tourism marketing and media representations

Overestimated Familiarity



- Shared cultural norms with the “west”
- Specific shared cultural norms regarding food, traditions, language, etc.
- Poor understanding of created identities and traditions
- No urge to prepare for time abroad

Knowledge is Static or Regionalized



- Lack of knowledge or oversimplification of political or ethnic history
- Lack of respect for regional differences
- Static knowledge of the country, from parents or grandparents

Hyphenated Identities



- Alternate identities very common in the US and emphasized over an American identity
- Source of pride for heritage students
- Point of differentiation from their peers
- Parental support or challenge for heritage seeking
- Lack of a theoretical framework for identity formation

Irish American Identities and Study Abroad in Northern Ireland



Complexity of Conflicting Messages

- The Gathering

- 'come home' narrative – direct appeal to the American audience
<http://youtu.be/cW3StGvNYzI>
- The 'begorrah' image
- Most pre-departure student research would have uncovered this
- Arrivals 'played up' to it

- Post-Recession

- Contemporary, European culture
- Post-national, technologically and industrially driven country
- Still 'connected' to USA
<http://youtu.be/9wmlZE11nSo>



Profiles

- Student 'A'

- Deeply rooted Irish American background
- Pre-existing family connections to Irish republicanism (primarily Sinn Féin)
- romantic, biased view of The Troubles
- struggled with meeting Orange Order (comparative language used by OO to equate IRA with Al Qaida) and learning of local conflicts within Sinn Féin

- Student 'B'

- Deeply rooted Irish American background
- Strong family connections to midlands region of Ireland
- Struggled with being 'the Yank' in the family
- Concerned with returning to USA with new perspective on the northern conflict, concepts of 'victim', and Irish republicanism



Profiles cont.

- Student 'C'
 - Strong self identification with Ireland, but not from vibrant Irish American background
 - Radical socialist and liberal political views
 - Firm supporter of Sinn Féin upon arrival
 - Immersed themselves in many Sinn Féin linked events
 - Dismayed by behaviour at 'Rebel Night'
- Student 'D'
 - Aware of Irish American heritage before arrival & investigated family origins pre-departure
 - Upon arrival realised significance and difference between Scots Irish & Gaelic Irish
- Student 'E'
 - No stated Irish American ancestry
 - Was told to 'support his own kind' during conversations with family back home



Cultural Events – perceptions, impact, discussions

- Saint Patrick's Day – Belfast/Dublin
 - Pre-event discussion & Post-event debrief
 - Tourism (The Gathering) in Dublin, tourism (local conflict) in Belfast
 - “It’s much bigger back home”
- Music
 - Concerts and bands in America versus sessions and groups in Ireland
 - Temple Bar tourism





*Latin @ Heritage-Language Learners Abroad:
Linguistic Self-Esteem and Identity Within a Cross-Cultural Context*

Ken Yanes

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Point of Departure

I would love to travel the world, go to Spain, see all of Latin America... but I speak – you know – ghetto Spanish.

– Former advisee at City College, CUNY



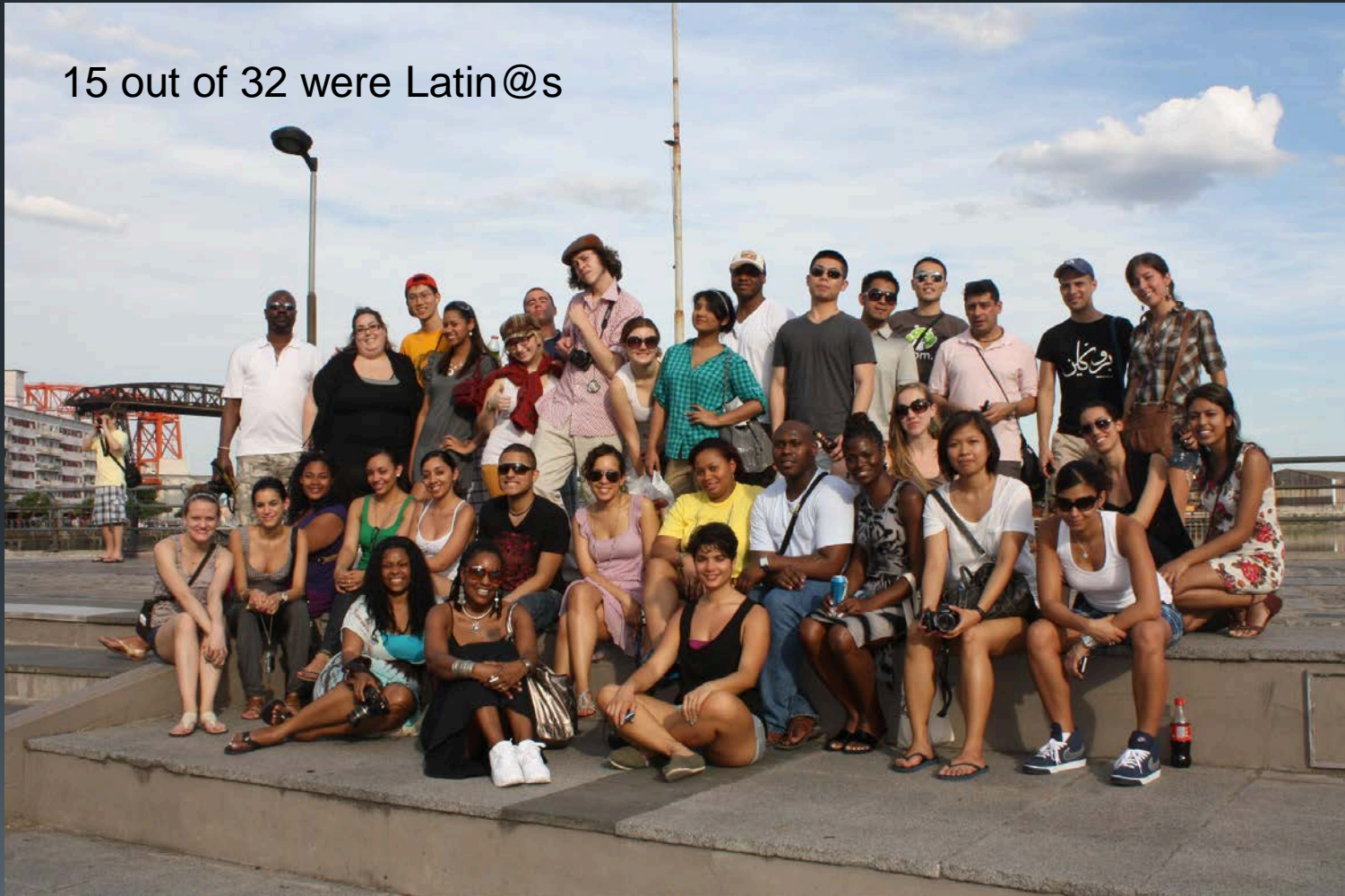
Summer Program in La Rioja, Spain, July 2010

7 out of 14 were Latin@s



Winter Program in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Jan 2011

15 out of 32 were Latin@s



Motivation



- Social issues affecting linguistic self-esteem and identity within Spanish-speaking communities
- Latin@ heritage-language (HL) learners within the margins of home and U.S. cultures
- Self-prescribed “poor command” of heritage language
- Underrepresentation of Latin@s in study-abroad enrollments
- Need to document HL learners’ linguistic self-esteem and identity during pre-departure and reentry

Questions



- Does studying in a Spanish-speaking country help or hinder the linguistic self-esteem of Latin@ heritage-language learners?
- Does such an experience change or reinforce a Latin@ heritage-language learner's sense of identity through language? Do they identify themselves as Latino, Latin American, or even Spanish because of cultural and language hybridity?
- Does academic performance improve with exposure to language instruction in a Spanish-speaking country? Can the measurement of academic performance correlate to the nature of the learner's linguistic self-esteem?

Language Ideology & Self-Esteem



- Every utterance as “act of identity”
- Language ideologies and “verbal hygiene”
- A global pan-Hispanic community?
- Who are HL learners?
- When HL meets L2
- Defamiliarization of an intimate language
- Linguistic self-esteem correlated to language proficiency?

Identities of HL Learners

- Standardization and stigmatization
- Hyphenated varieties (Chicano Spanish, Spanglish) flourishing outside la RAE and national language policy
- Language as artifact and performance
- Lack of motivation and low linguistic self-esteem in academic contexts
- How can study-abroad programs address these issues and foster a validating learning environment?

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE: PRE-DEPARTURE



- Discuss identity and hyphenated identities
- Educate students about regional differences and historical background.
- Help students identify gaps in knowledge and understanding of the host context.
- Highlight differences and de-romanticize the host culture
- Connect participants with students from the host country before departing.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE: ON-SITE



On-site

- Allow for students to connect with in-country family
- Allow space for guided reflection and discussion: shifting identities, emotional reactions, cultural differences.
- Draw connections between historical pre-departure content and student experience.
- Create cognitive dissonance by bringing cultural differences to their attention and create meaningful and varied cultural experiences.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE: RE-ENTRY

Re-entry

- Opportunity to discuss increasingly changing identity upon re-entry (reverse culture shock)
 - How has their identity shifted?
 - What have you learned?
 - How do you feel about the US now that you have come back?
- Pre-Departure and Re-entry questionnaire