Situated Learning – Foreign Sites as Learning Contexts

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ABSTRACT

As part of the globalization effort, study abroad has been researched in the fields of education, business, language, etc. However, what is not well-discussed is how foreign sites in study abroad programs can function as learning contexts to promote in-depth learning in various subject areas, which was the purpose of this study. Twelve participants from one public research university involved in study abroad programs were interviewed. Documents such as syllabi and travel plans relevant to participants' trips were also collected. The data were analyzed inductively. The findings show that foreign sites serve as learning context to support students' learning by (a) providing cues to understand new knowledge from different perspectives; (b) providing a context to understand the meaning behind words; (c) providing minute details tying facts towards abstract knowledge; and (d) creating a space for stimulating emotional attachments.

*Keyword*s: foreign sites, learning contexts, situated learning, socio-cultural learning, study abroad

INTRODUCTION

Study abroad has seen rising popularity among universities over the past decade due to its ability to provide not only cultural and academic opportunities, but truly help prepare students for a globalized world (Dolby, 2004; Kishino & Takahashi, 2019). As study abroad becomes a more significant component of universities, students are able to develop their knowledge of the international, social, cultural, political, and economic issues, providing greater options for international mobility and employability, and contributing to students' home country (Singh & Jack, 2018). While, universities have enthusiastically promoted study abroad programs and engaged students in globalization of higher education to develop their cross-cultural competence (Gopal, 2011), there are still challenges and issues in study abroad programs. For example, study programs mainly enhance participants' experience and culture related knowledge, not the academic and systematic knowledge (Long, 2013); Even though many universities have made educational policies regarding study abroad, they do not have clear policies about how to achieve those very same educational goals. For example, many universities in Japan "do not have clear educational policies related to accelerating internationalization through study abroad. In fact, only a few universities set clear educational goals related to study abroad and educational support" (Take & Shoraku, 2018, p. 49); and not all study abroad programs lead to the goals that the instructors, administrators and participants expect (Maza, 1963; Long, 2013).

Many scholars have studied the benefits of study abroad in areas such as language, culture, and awareness of globalization. With structured designs, and pre-established learning goals and work assignments, the study abroad programs provide benefits to non-cultural and language related programs

such as STEM and business programs which are typically not well developed regarding program design (Marijuan & Sanz, 2018; Pasquale, 2016).

This study will fill these gaps by investigating how the foreign sites were used to promote students' learning not only in language/culture related programs, but also in the programs which are not thoroughly studied, such as the programs of natural sciences, business, and architecture. The research question was: How can foreign sites serve as learning context to support students' learning?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Study Abroad in an Authentic Context

Study abroad is viewed as deepening language learning and creating cultural awareness. However, "it has been argued that simply studying abroad does not consistently or inevitably lead to increases in language proficiency or cultural competence" (Goldoni, 2013, p. 360). In order to deepen participants' learning, it is important for students to interact with the host community. However, not all study abroad experiences are as immersive and intensive as we expected. Often times, students are sent to attractive locations without utilizing the local context to conduct productive academic activities (Goldoni, 2013).

Study abroad programs highly value the form of immersion in learning (Doerr, 2015). That is, learners are immersed in authentic situations and are able to engage with the local culture of the host country. Rahmat et al. (2020) noted that by utilizing the local authentic context for planned activities to take place, knowledge is presented in an authentic situation. Learning that takes place in an authentic activity, context, and culture is situated learning (Lave & Wagner, 1990). As such, situated learning will be used as a theoretical framework for this study to guide data analysis.

Situated Learning

Situated learning has been applied in various fields, such as in education, business, science, etc. Situated learning emphasizes immersive learning in an authentic context (Brown et al., 1989; the Cognition and Technology Group at Vanderbilt, 1990, 1992). Situated learning relates to the topic of study abroad since the local sites in a foreign country provide an authentic learning context for learners.

The reason that we encourage learning in an authentic learning environment is because knowledge is generalized from real life. Knowledge is created in the process of transforming the concrete experience to the abstract conceptualization (Kolb, 1984). Knowledge is the abstraction and de-contextualization of the practical world. To understand the origin of knowledge, we need to immerse ourselves in a context where knowledge is originally generated.

Situated learning aims to learn knowledge in contexts which "reflect how knowledge is obtained and applied in everyday situations" (Stein, 1998, p. 1). Brown et al. (1989) stated that:

> All knowledge is, we believe, like language. Its constituent parts index the world and so are inextricably a product of the activity and situations in which they are produced. A concept, for example, will continually evolve with each new occasion of use, because new situations, negotiations, and activities inevitably recast it in a new, more densely textured form. So a concept, like the meaning of a word, is always under construction. (p. 33)

This indicates that knowledge is generalized and produced from the real world, and the meaning of a concept evolves when it is used in new situations. For example, the word "democracy" has different meanings and variations in different societies, depending on the cultures and real-world situations in a specific society (Alnufaishan, & Alrashidi, 2019).

Situated learning values knowledge that is associated with its environment. To learn context attached contents, we situate ourselves in a local context. For example, language "is always situated in activities that are bound to an environment with its accompanying physical, social, and cultural aspects" (Santos et al., 2016, p. 4). To learn context related language, we immerse ourselves in its practical context. Luo and Jamieson-Drake's (2015) study indicates that a practical context, such as a foreign context, can provide a valuable opportunity for individuals

> to learn a foreign language or reinforce foreign language skills, to gain exposure to and an understanding of a new culture, and to return with empirical knowledge, fresh insights, and perspective-taking skills that can hardly be obtained without leaving the campus and stepping out of the familiar environment and comfort zones. (p. 52)

This citation further shows how a practical context can expose students to the cultural and empirical aspects of knowledge in an authentic real-life context. Situated learning values an authentic learning environment since it helps students see easily how new knowledge is associated with the local environment.

Knowledge also resides in local entities such as local museums, churches, and cultural institutions. Situated learning provides learners opportunities to learn through activities "that are relevant to or rooted in their social and physical environment or school context" (Pitri, 2004, p.7). By understanding the root of how the local knowledge is formed and developed, learners "can access the social entities that embody the knowledge" that they want to learn (Chang, 2018, p. 128). The responsibility of the teachers is to provide purposeful and focused activities that utilize those local entities.

Anderson et al. (1996) pointed out the discrepancy between knowledge learned in classroom (theory) and the actual need outside of the classroom (practice) and emphasized the importance of addressing specific situations in which we learn knowledge. They claimed that whether knowledge should be context-dependent (implicit knowledge which can be understood by being associated to its context) and context-independent (explicit knowledge which can be understood without being associated to its context) relies on the types of knowledge learners will acquire. Based on other scholars' researches, Anderson et al. (1996) stated that "combining abstract instruction with specific concrete examples is better than either one alone" (p. 8). In other words, for learning complex tasks, it is not enough to only know the explicit procedures. It is also necessary to explore the social settings of the knowledge. Priest et al. (2016) reaffirms this by stating that "Situated learning shifts the focus from learning about the social world to learning in and through it" (p.362).

Situated learning values the authentic context/situations in a study abroad program. In designing learning activities, educators can "re-contextualize abstract concepts into specific problem situations" to provide students real life experience (Roberts & Sayer, 2017, p.294). In such an authentic environment, learners gain new knowledge by interacting with local people and sites. Knowledge is distributed in environments and is constructed through the process of interacting with people and solving problems with teams in an environment (Young, 1993). It is important to select complex and realistic space/situations which can provide students an opportunity to identify the components resonate to their projects and can inspire students the possible solutions to their problem (Young, 1993).

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate how foreign sites can serve as learning contexts to support students' learning. General qualitative research design was employed in this study since the

author has interest in participants' experience of attending study abroad programs. Qualitative method can be used "to answer questions about experience, meaning and perspective, most often from the standpoint of the participant" (Hammarberg et al., 2016, p. 499).

Twelve participants from one public research university in the Midwestern part of the United States were selected in this study (see Table 1). These participants were involved or attended the study abroad programs in eight countries, including ones focused on STEMS, business, social sciences, foreign languages, communication and journalism, humanity, and education. This group of programs covers the majority of the study abroad programs that were documented in the 2019 Open Doors Report (Fast Facts, 2019).

Since the participants attended different study abroad programs from this university, I will briefly introduce these different types of study abroad programs as part of the background information. Multiple study abroad programs are offered by this university, among which the faculty led programs, provider programs and consortia programs are the most popular ones. In faculty led programs, faculty members are responsible for recruiting students, dealing with logistical issues, and organizing students' study abroad activities; for provider led programs, outside organizations deal with all the logistic work, recruit students globally, and work with the faculty members to schedule the local activities. Faculty members design, manage and operate the study abroad activities for students. In consortia led programs, several universities in Indiana and the surrounding states share the faculty members and programs, deal with the logistical issues, and recruit the students and also faculty members who can lead the students to go abroad. The consortium has connections overseas to deal with the logistical arrangements. In this study, the majority of the participants were involved in faculty-led programs. Some attended all of the three programs. The countries they visited included Japan, India, Germany, Italy, England, Ireland and Spain. In this study, the majority of the study abroad programs for credits lasted for two to four weeks, with English as the instructional language.

Table 1

Participants

N	Name	Country/Cities Visited	Position
1	John	N/A	Director of Study Abroad
2	Penny	Germany	Assistant Professor, Department of Special Education
3	Dom	Italy	Professor, Department of Telecommunications
4	Nihal	India	Chair and Professor of Urban Planning
5	Kate	Rome/London	College of Business
6	Cat	Japan	4th year student of Japanese Language
7	Lisa	Japan	Instructor of Urban Planning President
8	Robert	India	Assistant Professor of Department of Anthropology
9	Joshua	Japan	4th year student of Urban Planning
10	Molly	Ireland	Assistant Professor of English
11	Lily	Spain	Assistant Professor of Spanish
12	Linda	Germany	Instructor of Elementary Education

The semi-structured interviews were conducted in my office, or in the participants' offices. The IRB protocols were obtained. Of the 12 participants, eight were faculty members, two were student participants and two were program directors. The majority of the participants are faculty members, Sargeant (2012) stated that "participants are selected who can best inform the research questions and enhance understanding of the phenomenon under study" (p. 1). Researchers select participants based on "the research questions, theoretical perspectives, and evidence informing the study" (p.1). In this project, I am interested in how

foreign sites can serve as a learning context to support students' learning. I wanted to select the participants who were involved in the university study abroad programs and who could provide evidence as it relates to the research question. If meeting those requirements, those participants can be selected, no matter if they were faculty members, students or program directors. The focal point is that these participants were involved in the activities in foreign sites.

The snowball sampling method was used to recruit the participants since it is cost-effective and practically convenient to recruit the participants who can provide the data needed for this study (Marcus et al., 2017). Specifically, I interviewed one director who was familiar with the university-wide study abroad programs and their main activities. I informed him of the participant selection criteria and asked him to introduce me to the participants. He introduced me to several professors. After interviewing these professors, they introduced me to other professors/instructors, as well as two students and one director whom they thought could provide me with the data for my study since they were involved in study abroad programs and had attended study abroad activities in foreign countries. For example, one director had led study abroad programs several times. Two students had visited multiple foreign sites and were involved in study abroad projects. They all provided rich data which were relevant to my research question and situated learning.

I selected the participants from one university instead of multiple universities since I used a single case study approach, which is less expensive and time-consuming compared with the multiple case studies approach. This approach enables the researchers to better study a group of people in one institution/organization, richly describe the target subject, and have a deep understanding of it (Gustafsson, 2017). The director I interviewed introduced that activities involved in the study abroad programs not only happen in this university I selected, but also in other universities in the nearby states too. This university was selected as it is a representative case, and the findings of this study can be applicable to other institutions or organizations too.

The findings are generalized mainly from participants' experience in study abroad programs. The student participants and program directors provided complementary data to strengthen the ideas provided by the faculty members. The faculty members were from education, urban planning, communications, anthropology, and foreign languages. The purpose of selecting the participants from different programs was to identify the common or unique features across the study abroad programs that are beneficial for students' learning.

Each participant was interviewed for about one hour. In the interviews, the participants were asked to describe their study abroad experience. This included their various learning activities, such as how such foreign context impacted students' learning, and how new knowledge and perspectives can be gained and created in a foreign context. Documents relevant to participants 'journey, such as pictures, syllabi, and field notes were also collected. The data were analyzed inductively, which included reading the raw data, identifying the categories by using the words or phrases to label the meaning of the data, and then clustering the categories with the similar meanings into broader themes (Thomas, 2006).

The author read through the syllabi and field notes, compared how the learning activities were designed and scheduled in these programs, and compared and coded the similarities or the differences in these learning activities. Such comparison reveals how much the different study abroad programs adjusted their course designs to represent the physical and cultural priorities of the foreign sites.

FINDINGS

This study aimed to find out how foreign sites served as learning contexts to support students' learning. Four themes generalized from the data will be presented below, which indicate that foreign sites serve as learning context to support students' learning by (a) providing cues to understand new knowledge from different perspectives; (b) providing a context to understand the meaning behind words; (c) providing minute details tying facts towards abstract knowledge; and (d) creating a space for stimulating the emotional attachments.

Providing Cues to Understand Knowledge from Different Perspectives

Knowledge is rooted in daily life practice. Foreign sites provided contexts for students to understand why people in other societies have different lifestyles and approaches of doing things. One participant expressed:

> When I took them over to a real German market, they couldn't believe the things that were "missing" from the shelves. It's like, "They don't have crackers, people. They don't know what crackers are. They don't do crackers. They eat bread" … So, those kinds of things and just the different kinds of foods I think was the biggest thing for the students.

One participant related, "Well, everybody eats cereal and eggs for breakfast, don't they? No, they don't. In fact, that's very much a western hemisphere breakfast, you know…". When students saw local people's different lifestyles and customs, they realized that there are different approaches to doing things. Things which are difficult to understand become easy to understand in that context since it provides the explanations which are missing in learners' original context. Some realized that "not everybody does it the way Americans do it," and students started to have a new appreciation for cultural differences.

One participant studying urban planning shared his surprising observation of how bicycles were used and managed in Japan, which is different from how it is in America:

> Besides Copenhagen, Japan is one of the top bicycle-friendly countries in the world… I was really surprised by the amount of bikes I saw and, there were bikes…every corner you could look at, bikes were locked up or they had bike elevators. Instead of parking garages, there were bike parking garages or there were escalators just for bikes to underground storage and, things you wouldn't necessarily see in the United States.

It was not just about the lifestyles and constructions which were different from America that surprised the participants. The different social, cultural and political systems in other countries also provided participants different perspectives to look at certain issues. One participant stated how students were surprised when the taboo political topics in America were openly talked about in Spain:

> Well, and it can also be liberating for students because in the United States, and especially in a place like here in the Midwest here, politics can be kind of a taboo topic, just like religion can be a taboo topic.
>
> Most of our students when they go to Spain they realize "Oh, you mean, I just met this person and all of a sudden it's okay that we're talking about gay rights and politics and religion and all that sort of stuff and they're interested, and they want to talk about this with me and that's okay."

When students were in America, they were taught to think in the American way, and they accepted the ideas from American perspective. The readings they were provided in school usually reflected the general Western point of view and may not have shown the uniqueness and specific aspects of the locals in other contexts. One participant noted, "The specific experience of the West is taken as common in general, and

other experiences are other... So, the students learn very soon, the West is also something like other places. Experience here is not general" [Note: It means that experience here is not the universal experience that also happens in other countries].

Studying abroad gives students an opportunity to see the other side of the world which are not covered in the western readings. When they worked with people in a foreign context, they became aware of a different perspective. One participant from the Urban Planning program said that local people who recovered from the tsunami in 2004 did not appreciate the houses given by the NGOs since the kitchen with the gas stove was not useful for them. He stated that:

> They keep breaking and making the houses because they don't like the houses and the Architects have given a nice little kitchen, 3 by 5, with a stove to use gas for cooking and all that…everything. But, people don't use gas because they don't have money to do that. They build another temporary kitchen to use firewood, right? … I want my students to learn what we give assuming our life is more superior to theirs—is useless, you know, because that is not how they live, and we cannot say how they live is inferior. That's how they live.

This participant showed his students that the architects' assumptions of what represent good homes with nice kitchens were not appreciated by the local people since they were not suitable for the local context. As architects, they needed to change their predetermined assumptions and cater to the needs of the local community.

One participant studying business talked about how situating in a foreign context provided students opportunities to observe the different working atmosphere in a foreign country and how it was influenced by different cultural and political system:

> Americans tend to work longer hours… students who would go to say, Spain or France, were like, "They take 3-hour lunch breaks. How do you get any work done?" and just conceptualizing what their life would be like, how that would be different, and how much you can or cannot voice your opinion in a business setting, as well as respecting the hierarchies.
>
> Some organizations in America have taken a much flatter approach, you know, "everybody's the same we are all one team." That's not necessarily the case of other places where like you might only speak to your supervisor and that's it, not any levels higher. So, just having an understanding and having an awareness that "not everybody works in the same way" was a big challenge for some of them to understand and grasp why it would be that different.

People's perspectives and assumptions are influenced by their daily routine and the context where they live. People's perspectives and assumptions are challenged when they are in a context where daily practices are different, and when people's assumptions/perspectives cannot be explained by the practices in a new context.

Providing A Context to Understand the Meaning Behind Words

People have different interpretations of the same story. Being in context helps people understand where the story is located and what meanings are behind the words. One participant stated that:

> When you go to places, people will tell you the story that you want to know… so, there's a whole mixture of different stories, you know, like you have to associated them for long enough to really get to know them, right? …You cannot just go and do a survey because …people will not be very honest about these things…they will like to tell me what I like to hear. I mean, that's (how) people relate to other people, right? …So, I think the students will have to learn how to kind of like, you know, understand people beyond the façade.

People's different interpretations of a different world community is not the same as what that community is really about. These interpretations were created under different agendas, circumstances, and mixed with people's different experiences. In order to see what a different world community is really about, students need to immerse themselves in that community, interact with local people, and translate their needs into the language that local people can understand. One participant said: "You cannot just go to the community and say, "What's the community like?" It takes a while to kind of like translate these things into something people can understand."

Another participant stated how interactions in a local foreign context helped students clarify the puzzles and understand local people and the meanings of the words:

I think it's really hard for students to understand speech patterns. Even though Irish people are speaking English, they are speaking very differently and, I'm an American, … I could give them [students] a glossary of what these terms mean, these slang terms, but it's so much easier if they go to Ireland and listen to Irish people speak or have interactions with them and they pick up on, you know, if someone says like their "gaffe"—they mean their apartment or their house…or if they say like they call someone a "punter"—they mean a lower-class person. But, they might not know what that means when they come across it in the literature and it's so much better than me explaining it if the way they interact with the language that is used differently.

This participant noted that even though they all spoke English, students noticed that due to culture difference, the same words can have totally different meanings, or the meaning can be expressed differently, such as "half one" instead of "one thirty." Being in the context helped students understand the meaning of words.

One participant noticed that students who had not attended the study abroad program were only interested in what the literature says, while those who attended the study aboard program were more interested in politics and history in newspapers and what was happening in the current foreign context. She expressed:

They [students attending study abroad program] were much more interested in talking about politics and history. So, they wanted to talk about things in Ireland that were going on right now that they were seeing in newspapers. They wanted to talk about the EU. My students [who did not attend a study abroad program] never want to talk about that—they always want to talk about the literature—they're interested in that, but they don't want to talk about problems that are happening in Ireland or they're not that interested in like the women's movement. They [students attending study abroad program] were seeing signs and they were walking around and seeing protests and busses, reading newspapers, and just kind of being around it, you know, talking to other people who came to class about things that were happening in Ireland right now.

Foreign context provided students studying abroad the living knowledge in daily life and helped them understand the meaning reflected in literature. Students attending study abroad programs had chances to interact with the local people to understand the history and culture in the literature, not just the "dead" knowledge reported in literature. What happened in the past still has some connections with current times in that local context? Those students who saw these connections in local community realized that such "history" was not too far away from their life, and it was actually part of the living experience in local community. They really brought that part of the living experience into their understanding of the history discussed in literature.

Providing Minute Details Tying Facts Towards Abstract Knowledge

Local foreign sites such as museums, churches, and parks serve as a context for learning. They introduced minute details that connect the dots of the facts towards abstract knowledge. Such context provides clues for learners to understand abstract knowledge in a living and practical context (Chang, 2018). One participant shared his study abroad experience in Japan and how the local context provided minute details which connected the dots of the facts to help him understand the abstract knowledge. He stated:

> A lot of times what you'll find is it's the same information repeated over and over and it's missing those minute little details that really make up what they're trying to say, or you overlook those. Whereas in study abroad, you see those minute details that actually create the outcome that you've been reading in the scholarly article and it just kind of clicks with you and makes sense. I think that's one thing that's really missing if you don't go on a study abroad.

This participant expressed that an experience in a foreign context really helped him to fill in the gaps for the articles he had read and put it all together. He also considered that experience in a foreign context really raised his learning to a new level, compared with only reading the abstract articles and giving his opinions about them. He explained:

> Most people just think "let's just paint down a stripe and we'll say bikes can go here" and you'll find that throughout the city, but you'll find areas where that doesn't necessarily work and you kind of just skip over that. People just look at it like it's a broad scope like there's bike lanes everywhere you go. Well, there's certain areas where you can't necessarily put bikes lanes in, but that article didn't necessarily cover when I got to that section. Whereas, when I went to Japan and I went to some of these areas or I stumbled across some of these areas by mishap, I was like, Wait! This doesn't necessarily work. ... One thing I noticed in the articles I was reading is that they kept saying that bike lanes are everywhere.

What this participant shared clearly showed the gap between reality and the abstract knowledge. Like this participant mentioned, in reality, "there are specifics in there." Such specifics or concrete details in an authentic context show something different compared with the generalized knowledge or abstract theories presented in the articles. But such specifics, which may include the flaws, are neglected a lot of times in the articles. This participant said that "knowing the flaws [in reality] is more important than knowing the perfect items [in articles] because knowing the flaws, you can figure out how to fix that. You can start changing things to make that 'perfect system' even better." Data from this participant show that it is important for students to learn in an authentic context since they can find out that these perfect ideas discussed in theoretical ideas actually will not always work in reality, and they need to be adapted based on the local context.

One participant shared her story about how students can better understand the poetry when it is situated in its historical context. She said that:

> I taught W.B. Yates' poetry and they [students] went to the associated jail, which is where some of the poems intersect with what was happening then at Easter, 1916 and, so the poems are in the jail, the museum there, and they got a tour, so they got to hear about some of the history of the jail. So, they could understand it in much better context. So, at the end of each week, they had to write a response paper and the response was connected to something they saw and something they read at the same time.

Students can better understand the poetry after they have experienced its historical site, since the site provided some historical background helping the students connect the scenes from the historical poem to

reality. These students can see that connection between history and current events, and they bring that to their learning.

Creating A Space for Stimulating the Emotional Attachments

One participant shared his experience of visiting the Hiroshima Atomic Bomb site and how that trip had great emotional effect on him and reinforced his understanding of such historical event. He stated:

> It's something that's hard to put into words right at the moment. You can read books and documentaries from what other people have done…but you won't know necessarily what that experience kind of emotionally will put on yourself. From the documentaries and things like that that I have read about Hiroshima, I had a lot of sympathy. I had sadness, but it's not until I got to experience it firsthand for myself that a whole, entire different sympathy and sadness hit me.

Different from the historical descriptions in literature, when students were in a foreign location, their senses (smell, feel, touch, etc.) were open to the environment. Emotionally students were attached to that local environment and their understanding of such an event was deepened due to their emotional involvement in the context. One participant shared his observation about how immersing in a local foreign site such as India made a difference in students' learning compared with learning from books:

> That it's something you cannot learn in a textbook, something you cannot learn in a video, right? Because when you immerse yourself in that culture, you know, you're hearing the noise, you're breathing in the pollution, you're smelling all the fruits and vegetables at the market. You go into a temple. You know you have to take your shoes off, so you feel that marble underneath your feet, you smell the incense burning, you see the Priests, you can smell the flowers offered, right? So, that is a whole different—you feel the heat, right, of the fires at the temples. You can't get that from any book.

Direct experience in a foreign context enabled students to fully use their senses to hear, smell, see and touch things in that environment, which strongly stimulated their emotions and their understanding of the local culture and environment.

> One participant explained how he tied his educational agenda to students' emotions in a local site:
> We had dinner at the hotel and some of the students just kept ordering food. So, they would order a dish, like a big dish, and then they would call the waiter over and order another dish. So, when I got the bill for dinner, it was quite expensive…much more than it should've been. So, I emailed the students that night before bed and just said, "We're visiting a country where 75% of the population lives on less than a dollar a day. I want you to think about that and be aware of the ways you're spending money, the ways that you are thinking about money, and just realize that we are so privileged to even be here." I think a lot of students really understood.

Without personal experience in a local foreign site and emotions triggered by the local poverty rate, it would be hard for students to make connections between their wasting of food and the poverty of the local site in India.

DISCUSSION

Knowledge is abstract. It is rooted in daily life routines and it indexes the world in which we live (Artemeva, 2008; Brown et al., 1989*). Foreign sites provide clues to understanding knowledge from different perspectives* since they are practical contexts of knowledge and they enable people to see practical aspects of knowledge through a different lens and form such as different ways of managing bikes in Japan or managing businesses in Europe. They provide practical explanations of the knowledge that is based on

local, social, cultural and economic situations, thus making different perspectives of knowledge much easier to understand. Such different perspectives were not just reflected in lifestyles, but also in social, cultural and political systems and how people responded to certain sensitive topics. Situating in a foreign site helps students break their universal way of looking at issues from the dominated American perspective and see the uniqueness of the specific aspects of the local population. "Expanding beyond our own worldviews and perspectives opens new horizons for engagement" (Fasching-Varner et al., 2018, p. 145).

According to Vygotsky (1978), people's higher mental processes are relevant to their social milieu, the tools they use, and their social interactions; "a higher mental function is socially acquired, mediated by social meanings, voluntarily controlled and exists as a link in a broad system of functions rather than as an individual unit" (Subbotsky, n. d., para. 4). Immersing in a foreign context provided students opportunities to see how the locals' way of thinking is highly mediated by their broad social, economic and physical environment (Pitri, 2004). For example, a functionally designed kitchen for people in one region can be seen as dysfunctional in another region due to different cultural and economic conditions. When people are in a foreign context, they see things significantly different. When people cannot explain the daily routines in a foreign country based on their original assumptions, they were emotionally shocked, and their old assumptions were disturbed (Mezirow, 1978), which triggers them to reexamine their old assumptions, and adapt their perspectives to cater to needs of the local community (Chang, 2017).

Abstract knowledge has multiple meanings based on its contexts. It can be interpreted differently in varied contexts and it is influenced by multiple agendas and situations. *Foreign sites can provide context to understand the different meanings behind words*. Through interaction with the local environment and people, students learn how meanings are interpreted in their local contexts. Knowledge is constructed through interacting with people (Young, 1993). The same story may have multiple meanings, depending on how people interpret them under different circumstances. The interpretations are also influenced by different agendas and situations. Students not having attended a study abroad program were significantly influenced by the ideas or perspectives in the literature that are guided by certain agendas or perspectives. By immersing in a foreign context, students interacted with local people and put themselves into others' shoes to truly understand the living knowledge from the local perspective, see the meaning from the local context, and feel the social, cultural and political dynamics from the local environment. They were able to understand the hidden meaning, the special situations and agendas, and the languages/terms local people use. All of these give them a much more complete story compared to the literature. Such full access to the local context helps students clarify the puzzles, identify the meanings of the story interpreted in various versions, and understand the process of how ideas are created and formed.

Foreign sites provide minute details in an authentic context which enables people to see the practical aspects of abstract knowledge and how the new knowledge is formed in practice, and what details have been cut out. Foreign sites as authentic contexts provide clues for learners to understand abstract knowledge in a living and practical context (Chang, 2018). Such concrete living experiences help learners see where abstract knowledge comes from, and what the flaws and historical background are in the abstract form of knowledge. In the process of generalizing new knowledge, such practical aspects of knowledge in specific contexts are often "trimmed," with the salient properties remained and reorganized into new structure (Dreyfus et al., 2001). Situated learning intends to immerse students in a context and to reveal to them the practical aspects of abstract knowledge so that they can see how the new knowledge is formed in the process of having the practical "leaves" trimmed, and what important details have been left out. Students thus have

a better understanding of such knowledge in an authentic context (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Stein, 1998), developing the ability to apply that knowledge in practice, and identify the solutions to the problems in the process of applying the knowledge in practice. Such experience in a foreign context raised students' learning to a new level since learners integrate their own thoughts and personal experience into the abstract learning rather than purely following the main ideas presented in the literature.

For situated learning, "learning and knowing are context specific" (Artemeva, 2008, p. 169). Different contexts allow learners to see how abstract knowledge varies in practice, and what can be avoided to execute knowledge successfully in a specific context. For example, a political topic avoided in one country can be discussed in another due to its context dependence. Within the authentic context, learners can see the multifaceted nature of cultural traditions and "the dialectical relationship between context and the individual's response to it" (Tsui & Ng, 2010, p. 373), thus helping learners see the rich choices influenced by cultural traditions and beliefs, and avoid conflicts and cultural stereotyping.

Foreign sites can create a space that stimulated the emotional attachments since these sites are foreign for students. Such foreignness can emotionally attract students' attention on the things which are new to them. Such emotional attachment also helps students build empathy with the local people and environment. Foreign context provides a space for stimulating the emotional attachments and emotional expressions— "neurophysiological arousal and cognitive processing that lea d to certain conclusions about the meaning of certain stimuli within one's environment" (Dirkx, 2008, p. 12). Experiencing the living knowledge in foreign sites triggers learners to retrieve the knowledge relevant to their emotional experience (Niedenthal et al., 2005). When involved in a foreign context, students have chances to fully use their senses such as smell, touch, and hearing to learn new knowledge from various facets. Such experience stimulates students' emotions and helps them pay more attention to the information that may otherwise be missed. What the senses connected, such as "breathing in the pollution", "feel that marble underneath your feet", and "smell the incense burning" also provided learners cues to the knowledge about local environment, local culture, history, religion, and political and economic conditions.

Significant emotions coordinate our behaviors and positively or negatively impact learning, and "conscious feelings help the individuals to voluntarily fine-tune their behavior to better match the challenges of the environment" (Nummenmaa et al., 2014, p. 646). Such embodied learning experience fully utilizes our body to senses and connects to the environment and helps us build empathy with the local people and environment, thus pushing us to modify our behaviors to better match the local environment. This is illustrated by one participant who helped students build empathy with local environment by comparing the local people's daily expenses and students' expenses in the restaurants, thus stimulating students' emotions to constrain their behaviors of wasting money. Such empathy "reaches beyond one's immediate surroundings and extends to those suffering in distant places" (Ikeda, 2010, p. 113).

IMPLICATIONS

To help students see different perspectives and challenge their taken-for-granted knowledge, instructors can select a learning site which is culturally and socially different from learners' familiar environments. Learning is "a socially organised activity that is inseparable from its sociocultural locus in time and space" (Tsui & Ng 2010, p. 364). For certain areas of knowledge, such as changing assumptions and learning different cultures, instructors can select a site which is foreign to students. The emphasis is "being there", anywhere which culturally and socially different from learners' familiar environments.

Knowledge "often becomes embedded not only in documents or repositories but also in organizational routines, processes, practices, and norms"(Davenport & Prusak, 1998, p. 5). To help students see the nuanced meanings of knowledge and how the meaning of knowledge is processed and formed, we can provide students opportunities to access documents, repositories, organizational routines, processes, practices, and norms which embody the meaning of knowledge that we expect learners to see.

Specific activities associated with the culture and history of knowledge provide the practical explanations of how knowledge is executed in different contexts. In designing a situated learning activity, we can select the situations/sites that contains the important components of a subject area (Young, 1993), such as famous buildings which embody components of the architecture knowledge that students are expected to learn.

Since knowledge is rooted in practice, the immersion into the local context enables learners to discover the particulars or the flaws out of the scope of the generalized knowledge. Situating in foreign contexts, students can document the origins of knowledge by accessing and observing its organizational routines, practice, and norms, describing the concrete details which are omitted in literature and finding out the significant parts that are not documented in literature.

However, not every local context entails such particulars. Not every location is effective for learning such subject-related knowledge, such as knowledge in natural sciences, business, architecture. Such knowledge is context based with specificity. It is derived from local people's interactions with their surroundings (Kassam, 2009), and is varied based on local economic situations, culture or politics. To understand the variations of such knowledge in practice, the sites selected need to entail the context specificity and variations of that knowledge in practice. For example, to study the hierarchical structure, we may select a site which employs such structure.

Immersing in an unfamiliar environment will not necessarily lead to conscious learning. Learning in an authentic context is not just about experiencing knowledge in context, but also generalizing knowledge from context (Kolb, 1984) and recreating knowledge in new context. The value of studying abroad is not just about the activity itself, but the detailed observation and analysis of the activity and transformation of the activity into learners' academic experience. It is not so meaningful to "simply transfer academic credits from one traditional discipline-based educational institution to another without intentionally utilizing the international experience itself as the basis for learning" (Montrose, 2015, p. 7). To create new knowledge, students can observe the concrete experience in foreign sites, reflect on such experience, compare the differences between such experience with the knowledge that they have learned from readings, and distill reflections into abstract concepts (Kolb et al., 1999). Such abstract concepts, or new knowledge might be different from the knowledge students have learned from readings. Observation, analysis and reflection of such experiences contributed to an in-depth understanding of knowledge. For example, observing how a bike lane was designed in Japan helped that particular student understands the flaws of the knowledge he had learned in the literature. To see how knowledge is produced, instructors can organize students to observe and analyze the activities in an authentic context, reflect on such process, and identify the important points, strategies, methods and procedures through various formats, such as writing reflection paper, personal journaling, photography portfolios, analytical papers, creating video diaries, and conducting case study project (Montrose, 2015).

To better support learners' learning, instructors can provide sites that can strongly stimulate students' senses and emotions. To stimulate students' emotions and their attention to certain type of knowledge,

instructors can let students immerse in the living environment of such knowledge and let students touch, feel, and smell the local environment and use their whole body to fully experience the new environment. Abstract knowledge is like a dried flower. Using senses (smell, feel, touch, etc.) to embrace the living nature of the knowledge in an authentic environment can make such knowledge alive and the living nature of the knowledge ignited. Such embodiment experience not only provides cues to the local knowledge, but also triggers learners' emotions associated with knowledge and help them easily capture and retain the knowledge when such knowledge becomes the dominant in the retrieval process (Niedenthal et al., 2005).

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This paper expanded our understanding of situated learning and study abroad programs by analyzing how foreign sites can serve as learning context that supports students' learning from various perspectives and providing the concrete suggestions of how to select an authentic learning site, how to organize learning activities in foreign sites, and how to stimulate emotions in foreign sites and build connections with local people and local communities.

Table 2

Summary of Findings, Discussions, and Implications

Findings	Discussions	Implications
Foreign sites provide clues to understand knowledge from different perspectives	Foreign sites are practical contexts of knowledge; they enable people to see the practical aspects of knowledge through different lens and forms and provide people practical explanations of the knowledge based on local social, cultural and economic situations.	To help students see different perspectives and challenge their taken-for-granted knowledge, select a learning site which is culturally and socially different from learners' familiar environments.
Providing a context to understand the meaning behind words	Abstract knowledge has multiple meanings based on its contexts. It can be interpreted differently in different contexts and is influenced by different agendas and situations. Immersing in foreign sites allows people to put themselves in others' shoes to truly understand the living knowledge from the local perspective, see the meaning from the local context, and feel the social, cultural and political dynamics from the local environment and see the hidden meaning, the special situations and agendas, and the languages/terms local people use	To help students see the nuanced meanings of knowledge and how the meaning of knowledge is processed and formed, we can select the sites that contain the important components of a subject area, or we can provide students opportunities to access documents, repositories, organizational routines, processes, practices, and norms which embody the social, cultural and/or political meaning of knowledge that we expect learners to see.
Providing minute details tying facts	Abstract knowledge is originated from the minute details in	To see how knowledge is produced, instructors can organize students to

towards abstract knowledge	practice. Foreign sites can provide students with such minute details that enables them to see the practical aspects of abstract knowledge and the important details that have been left out. Revealing such process enables students to easily identify the solutions to the problems in the process of applying knowledge in practice.	observe and analyze the activities in an authentic context, and reflect on such process and identify the important points, strategies, methods and procedures through various formats, such as personal journaling, videos, photography portfolios, etc.
Creating a space for stimulating the emotional attachments	Foreign sites create a space for stimulating the emotional attachments due to its foreignness. Such foreignness can emotionally attract students' attention on the things which are new for them and provide students a space to see and feel such differences. Such emotional attachment also helps students build empathy with the local people and modify their behaviors to match the local environment.	To stimulate students' emotions and their attention to certain type of knowledge, instructors can immerse students in a "foreign" or new place which embodies such knowledge and let students touch, feel, and smell the local environment and use their whole body to fully experience the new environment and reflect on such experience.

Note. Research purpose: Find out how foreign sites served as learning contexts to support students' learning.

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