研　究　論　文

Enhancing Critical Reflection upon Intercultural Experience through Imagery

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Abstract

This study explores the extent to which critical reflection upon intercultural experience can be enhanced through imagery in the form of visual representation (Porto, 2013) using the *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters* (Byram, Barrett, Ipgrave, Jackson, and Mendez Garcia, 2009) in a two-stage study. Student reflections centred upon wide-ranging intercultural experience including relationships with foreigners. Expressed through language and image, they indicate (1) increasing degrees of critical reflection and personal development that may also involve overcoming stereotypes, and (2) the capacity for the use of imagery to stimulate and elicit hidden detail that is not necessarily expressed through language.

Keywords: language, imagery, critical reflection, intercultural experience

1.   Introduction

Intercultural experience can leave an indelible mark on the memory that can change a life forever. This point is well illustrated in the extract presented below from an open lecture given by Dr Julia Newton-Howes AM, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of CARE Australia at the National Australia Museum on 27th June 2014. On Australia Day this year, she became a Member of the Order of Australia in recognition of her significant service to aid organisations, and particularly to women, as she dedicated much energy to ensuring that gender, equality and women's empowerment were central to CARE's programs. What inspired her to follow this path through life? Here is her story:

> I grew up in Zimbabwe, and it was one of my father's wild flights of fancy that took the family off to India where I happened to be born but we came back fairly shortly afterwards. I wanted to tell you a story about an incident that happened about 18 months before this photograph was taken. I came from a happy family with loving parents and at this age I had just started school. We had just moved to Bulawayo. This was a new city, a new adventure, and I had the usual kind of excited and loving childhood. For some reason I wasn't at school that day, but my older brother and sister were both at school. I was at home with my mother, and we were still unpacking from our big move.
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> Someone came to the door that day who really had a profound influence on my life. There was this knock at the door, and I went with my mother to see who it was. When she opened the door, there was a young woman there, a young African woman with a baby strapped to her back. She looked at my mother with absolute desperation in her eyes - desperation and I think fear - and she said to my mother, 'I am so hungry. I have no food. I can't feed my baby. Please help me.'
>
> I watched as my mother went to the kitchen and she invited the young woman to sit down. She cut some thick slabs of bread, put it with some cheese and meat and made a cup of tea, and gave it to the woman, who ate some and wrapped some up to take with her - and she left. But something from that very brief encounter has really never left me.
>
> Why did I find it so confronting? Because, as a child, I looked to my parents for everything: for love and care, for food and warmth, for safety and security. My parents were always in control, and I thought all adults were like that. Yet here was a woman - an adult, a mother - who clearly wasn't in control. She couldn't feed herself or her baby. I found that so confronting and shocking. It left me with a lot of questions: what sort of world allowed this to happen; what had happened to this woman that had left her in these desperate circumstances; and why wasn't someone else doing something about it?
>
> I think that young woman who I met so briefly has been something of a beacon throughout my life and in some ways set me on a course, a journey that has resulted in me spending the last two and a half decades of my life working on issues of poverty and aid and development. The path to how I got here certainly wasn't a straight one. But many times when I have had to make a decision, when I have thought about where I want to go and what's important to me, I have thought back to that young woman. I can still see her in my mind's eye, and she has helped me to make those decisions (Newton-Howes, 2014).

The extract presented above not only recounts the speaker's story, but also serves to illustrate how critical reflection can be brought to bear upon experience in order to review one's life course with a view to possibly setting a new course for the future in informed and reflective ways. However, intercultural experience may be good, bad, or a mixture of the two, and while Newton-Howes' experience illustrates the positive course a life may follow, the possibility that intercultural experience can nudge lives in more negative directions cannot be denied. Thus, it seems worth encouraging students to reflect upon their intercultural experience as part of intercultural education that aims to help students improve themselves, their lives, and the world around them. This article reports a study that aimed to do that by using the *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters* (AIE) (Byram, Barrett, Ipgrave, Jackson, and

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Mendez Garcia, 2009) as a structural framework. However, as this tool was developed for use in foreign language education, it focuses on language use, and does not take into consideration the role that one's own memory-based imagery can play in critical reflection, although there is a version that focuses of the analysis of externally-based images.

Thus, the study explores the extent to which critical reflection upon intercultural experience can be enhanced through imagery in the form of visual representation (VR)(Porto, 2013) using the AIE in a case study based upon action research. In the next section, the AIE will be reviewed and the VR concept will be reviewed, before an overview of the study is presented in the following section.

2.   LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The *Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters*

Developed by the Council of Europe, the AIE is one of a set of freely available educational tools that aims to encourage students to think about and learn from their own intercultural encounters in the past that have made a strong impression or had a long-lasting effect on the users. "In discovering what underlies these encounters, users become more aware of their experience and reflect on their reactions, thereby developing their intercultural competences" (Byram, Barrett, Ipgrave, Jackson, and Mendez Garcia, 2009).

> The Autobiography of Intercultural Encounters is a concrete response to the recommendations of the Council of Europe's White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue "Living together as equals in dignity" (http://www.coe.int/dialogue), Section 5.3 "Learning and teaching intercultural competences", paragraph 152:
>> "Complementary tools should be developed to encourage students to exercise independent critical faculties including to reflect critically on their own responses and attitudes to experiences of other cultures." (Byram, Barrett, Ipgrave, Jackson, and Mendez Garcia, 2009: 2).

> An intercultural encounter can be an experience between people from different countries or it can be an experience between individuals from other cultural backgrounds in the same country, for example, from other regional, linguistic, ethnic or religious backgrounds (Byram, Barrett, Ipgrave, Jackson, and Mendez Garcia, 2009).

When using the AIE to develop understanding and competences for the future by reflecting critically on their experiences, users select and describe specific intercultural encounters, analyse their experience on an individual basis, and identify different aspects of their current intercultural competences to further stimulate the development of their competences. The general approach taken in the AIE has been commonly used in intercultural education outside foreign language education as reported by Lebedko (2013) in her review of the use of the critical incident technique in intercultural education prior to showing through her study how this technique can be used to help overcome stereotypes. An overview of the twenty-page AIE document is presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1

The encounter	
Title	Give the encounter a name which says something about it…
Description	What happened when you met this person / these people?
Time	When did it happen?
Location	Where did it happen? What were you doing there?
Importance	Why have you chosen this experience?
The other person or people	
Who else was involved?	Write something about them…
Your feelings	
Describe how you felt at the time by completing these sentences?	My feelings or emotions at the time were… My thoughts at the time were… What I did at the time was…
The other person's feelings	
Imagine yourself in their position…	How do you think the other people felt in the situation at the time? How did you know? What do you think they were thinking when all this happened?
Same and different	
Thinking about the similarities and differences between the ways in which you thought and felt about the situation and the ways in which they thought and felt about it…	were you aware at the time of any similarities and, if so, what were they? were you aware at the time of any differences and, if so, what were they?
Looking back at the situation…	are you aware now of any other similarities, and if so what are they? are you aware now of any other differences, and if so what are they? How do you see your own thoughts, feelings and actions now?

Talking to each other	
When you think about how you spoke to or communicated with the other people, do you remember that you made adjustments in how you talked or wrote to them?	Did you already have any knowledge or previous experience which helped you to communicate better?
Finding out more	
There may have been things in the experience which puzzled you and you tried to find out more at the time.	If you did so, how did you do it?
Using comparisons to understand	
People often compare things in other groups or cultures with similar things in their own.	Did you do this? Did it help you to understand what was happening?
Thinking back and looking forward	
If, when you look back, you draw conclusions about the experience, what are they?	

2.2 The visual representation

Defining a VR as "the visual representation of textual content including the combination of words, phrases, and/or sentences with visual information in different formats of varying complexity (such as charts, tables, graphs, grids, mind maps, flowcharts, diagrams, drawings, and the like)" Porto (2013: 221) suggests that the VR can be used to investigate and instruct on the cultural dimension of foreign language reading, combined with a follow-up interview, to address stereotypes and consequently foster critical cultural awareness in the foreign language classroom.

In Porto's (2013) study, the participants were asked to read a text and then portray it visually and in words in any format (such as charts, tables, graphs, grids, mind maps, flowcharts, diagrams, drawings, and the like), although they were not allowed to produce a purely VR (only drawings) or a traditional text in paragraph format. They were thus required to combine language and image. Through the exploration of a single case, Porto (2013) shows how "its pedagogic value lays in the fact that it can be used as an instructional tool to address stereotypes in the foreign language classroom and consequently foster critical cultural awareness (p.244), particularly by aiding the investigation of and instruction on the imaginative and emotional dimension of cultural understanding, and also by encouraging the development of criticality, reflexivity and critical cultural awareness.

The VR may lend itself well to the exploration of the role of language and image in critical reflection upon intercultural experience, so this technique was used in the study described in this article, which aims to showcase Japanese students' use of the VR to structure their reflections on intercultural experience in the English language classroom.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

The study reported in this article explores the extent to which critical reflection upon intercultural experience can be enhanced through imagery in the form of VR using the AIE in a case study based upon action research. In the previous section, the structure of the AIE and the concept of the VR were reviewed, and an overview of the study will now be presented. Considering the research challenges outlined above, the following research question was investigated in this study

- To what extent can critical reflection upon intercultural experience be enhanced through imagery in the form of VR using the AIE?

The plan was developed and conducted by a teacher-researcher from the United Kingdom based in Japan. The study was conducted in the latter third of a fifteen-week English language course aiming to develop ICC in an Oral Communication class at a university in southern Japan. The students under consideration in this study include fourteen consenting Japanese students (thirteen female and one male). The composition of the group was out of the control of the teacher-researcher as students could register freely for the course without permission. While we do not know the students' reasons for taking the course, they had access to the syllabus before registering for the course. In the syllabus, students were informed that the aim of the fifteen-week course was to help them to develop their intercultural communicative competence as they learned about on a culture other than their own.

To introduce the activity, the teacher made a presentation about her own intercultural experience in South Africa using the AIE as a structural framework, and by drawing a VR on the board as she spoke. Student activity took part in two stages. In Stage 1, students were given time to discuss their own intercultural experience and asked to complete the autobiography with an accompanying VR for homework. In Stage 2, students were given time to compare their AIE reports and discuss the extent to which they had followed the structural guidelines of the AIE, and then asked to complete the autobiography for a second time with a new accompanying VR for homework.

Qualitative data analysis was conducted initially through reading to obtain a general sense of the information

before it was analyzed in detail and organized into coded segments bearing the theoretical background to the study in mind. The coding process was used to generate and describe emerging themes that were then interpreted. These stages are generic to qualitative data analysis regardless of research design (Creswell, 2003; Hopkins, 2002). The total written data stock amounted to 16801 words, an overview of which is presented (by student) in Table 2 below, although the large size of the Stage 2 data set can partly be accounted for by the fact that the students incorporated the AIE itself into their work. The VRs were analysed separately.

Table 2

Student	Stage 1	Stage 2
S1	170	581
S2	264	698
S3	161	1457
S4	356	1549
S5	317	1037
S6	260	694
S7	426	1209
S8	211	805
S9	227	769
S10	252	757
S11	291	792
S12	299	846
S13	152	1301
S14	251	669
Sub-total	3637	13164
	TOTAL	16801

4.   DATA PRESENTATION

As noted above, students were given time to discuss their own intercultural experience and asked to complete the autobiography with an accompanying VR for homework in Stage 1. Then, in Stage 2, they were given time to compare their AIE reports and discuss the extent to which they had followed the structural guidelines of the AIE, and then asked to complete the autobiography for a second time with a new accompanying VR for homework. An overview of their AIE titles is presented in Table 3 below, where it can be seen that in Stage 1, only three students gave their AIE a title. Further, despite having seen the teacher illustrate a VR on the board during class, none of them completed this task for homework satisfactorily. While one student submitted a set of printed images downloaded from the internet, the others all submitted either single photographs, or a set of two to five. Also, none of the students followed the AIE structure, choosing instead to report their intercultural experiences in freestyle story fashion. Thus, in Stage 1, both the VR and AIE activities failed. However, in Stage 2, all students followed the AIE structure and submitted a satisfactory VR. Thus, this data presentation section will be split into two main sections focusing first on the AIE without VR (Stage 1), and then on the AIE with VR (Stage 2).

Table 3

Student	AIE title (Stage 1)	AIE title (Stage 2)
S1	none	Various Aspect
S2	none	none
S3	none	Encounter with the ALT
S4	My teacher	My teacher
S5	Manners of Speaking	Speaking of Manner
S6	none	The pen pal who is in California
S7	none	Where are `we` going?
S8	none	Speaking English fluently
S9	none	Rice
S10	International communication	Chinese custom and Japanese custom
S11	none	My American teacher
S12	none	My intercultural chance
S13	none	Encounter with my ALT teacher
S14	none	none

4.1 AIE without VR (Stage 1)

In their AIE, the fourteen students reported wide-ranging intercultural experiences centring on relationships with high school English teachers from different countries (S1, S3, S4, S11, S13), host families (S2, S9), foreign students (S5), pen pals (S6), first encounters of western civilisation (S7), observations of other Japanese students in

international settings (S8), travel experiences (S10, S14), and serving foreign customers at work (S12). Selected data presented in Table 4 below shows that students reported wide-ranging learning experiences rooted in a range of positive and negative aspects of their experiences. A complete AIE from S12 is presented by way of example under the Table 4, which will be discussed further below.

Table 4

Student	Situation	Central reflection(s)
S2	Establishing a relationship with unsociable host brother in Canada homestay	I had been thinking that all foreigners were sociable, but I understood that not all of foreigners be sociable.
S12	Serving cigarettes to an Indian at a convenience store	The one chance to communicate with him broke my stereotype.
S13	Communication with an Scottish English teacher (ALT) at high school	Thanks to her, I'm interested in foreign cultures and languages. I'd like to learn many other country's cultures.
S14	Shopping experience in Taiwan	I learned that there are various style even if relationship between customer and clerk.

Data 1

I believe the chance to communicate with people from different cultures is very important from my experience. I do my part time job at a convenience store. Many convenience stores sell cigarettes and each a pack of cigarettes has the number because it is easy for us to sell the people it. For example, when a person says, "44 cigarettes please", I pick 44 cigarettes up and give it to him or her. It is very simple work. An Indian person often comes to the convenience store where I work, and he buys a pack of cigarettes. At first, I thought he was an Indian, not Japanese; he did not smile and could not speak Japanese well, so I could not communicate with him but I found it was a stereotype. One day, the cigarette's number he always buys changed, but he did not know that. I knew he can speak English from his talking at his cell phone and his talking to himself in English, and I study English in Saga University, so I thought "I have to tell him that in English". It was a chance to communicate with him. I remember the pack of cigarettes he buys, so saying "the number changed and this is your cigarettes!" I gave him the cigarettes. That time, he smiled and said, "Thank you!" Also, we could talk something in English pleasantly. I knew he have nice smile and, he is very kind person. I found my stereotype was wrong. Nowadays, when he buys the cigarettes, he always tells me "Thank you" with his nice smile, and I say "Thank you", too. The one chance to communicate with him broke my stereotype. It is a valuable experience for me, so I think opportunities to know other people are very important.

4.2 AIE with VR (Stage 2)

While all students submitted a satisfactory VR in Stage 2, there were varying degrees of complexity ranging mostly from one-stage to seven-stage representations (see Figure 1 below for a three-stage VR) used to illustrate developments in the situations concerned, with some complex diagrams in which the stages were not clearly identifiable (see Figure 2 for a complex VR). There were also varying degrees of complexity in the interrelationships between the parts, in the amount of wording provided to describe what was happening, and in the use of colour. Although the purpose of the colour was not explained by students, and does not appear in the black and white print in this article, the teacher had used it to distinguish thoughts and feelings when demonstrating VR development in class.
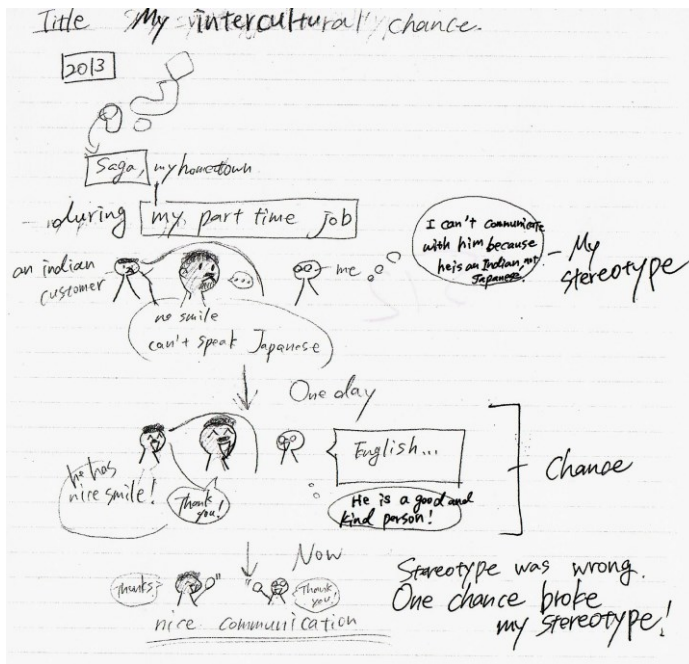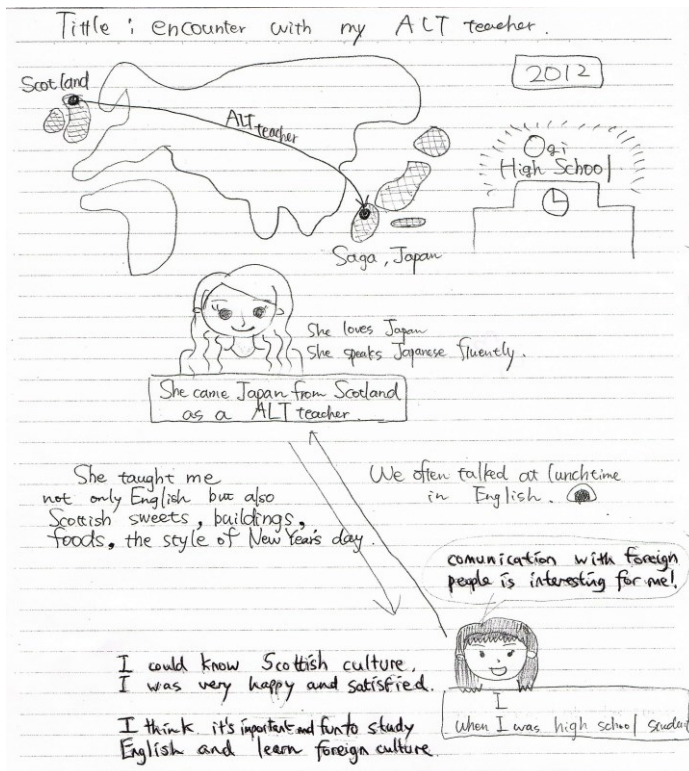
Figure 1

Figure 2

Although all students submitted a satisfactory AIE in Stage 2 using the structural framework given, a complete version cannot be presented here due to space limitations. Instead, let us consider differences between S12's AIE (Stage 1) presented in Data 1 with the AIE (Stage 2) highlighting some new information with reference to the Stage 2 VR, by way of example.

The first stage of the encounter described in Figure 1 starts in the boxed label indicating that encounter took place when S12 was working at her part-time job in her hometown of Saga in 2013 when an Indian customer asked to be served. In the thought bubble, S12 indicates that her stereotype was that she could not communicate with him because he was "Indian, not Japanese". In fact, this detail did not appear in the AIE as can be seen in Data 2 below. However, Data 2 reveals that she felt "uncomfortable" (underlined) perhaps because he did not smile or speak Japanese, both of which were emphasised in the VR in Figure 2 in which darker skin colour was also added to the image, although it was not mentioned in the AIE.

Data 2

Write something about them...

♦ He is an Indian and he cannot speak Japanese well.

What was the first thing you noticed about them? What did they look like? What clothes were they wearing?

♦ He is an Indian.

Were they were male/female, or older/younger than you, or did they belong to a different nationality or religion or region, or any other thing you think is important about them?

♦ He is male and older than me. He belongs to a different nationality

My feelings or emotions at the time were

♦ <u>Uncomfortable</u>

The second stage starts with the top vertical arrow indicating that on a later day, the Indian man smiled and said thank you, perhaps because she spoke English with him whereas she had not in the first stage, and she realised that he was a "good and kind person". The third stage starts with the bottom vertical arrow indicating that nowadays, they communicate nicely with smiles and thanks. In her VR, S12 recognises that this one intercultural encounter had broken her stereotype. Further, S12 resolved to be more active, communicate in English and exercise good judgment in the future as Data 3 shows (underlined).

Data 3

Did the experience change you? How?

♦ Yes, it broke my stereotype.

Did you decide to do something as a result of this experience?

♦ Yes. <u>I decided I try to be more active.</u>

What did you do?

♦ <u>I communicate with many people in English.</u>

Will you decide to do something as a result of doing this Autobiography? If so what?

♦ <u>Yes, there are cases that stereotype is wrong. It is important to judge true or false carefully.</u>

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

As suggested in the introduction, critical reflection can be brought to bear upon experience in order to review one's life course with a view to possibly setting a new course for the future in informed and reflective ways. The Stage 1 data presented above suggest a lack of critical reflection on the part of students evidenced by the failure to both produce a VR and reflect critically within the AIE structure provided. The Stage 2 data suggest an increase in critical reflection evidenced by the production of a VR combined with critical reflection within the AIE structure provided. As noted in the introduction, intercultural experience may be good, bad, or a mixture of the two. The data generated by S12 illustrates the transformation of a negative situation into a more positive one with more detail emerging in Stage 2 than in Stage 1 partly through the vehicle of the AIE and partly through the vehicle of the VR, each of which shed slight on different and previously hidden aspects of S12's experience. Notably, the use of imagery in the VR (and only in the VR) revealed firstly, that S12's stereotype was rooted in her perception of the man as being "Indian, not Japanese", and secondly, that the darker skin colour added to the image was also relevant. Further detail could be ascertained if S12 were to be interviewed following Porto's (2013) research approach. S12's personal development in response to the experience as evidenced particularly between the second and third stages of her VR, and more recently as evidenced in her AIE. Finally, this study also supports Lebedko's (2013) assertion that critical reflection on intercultural experience can also help remedy the negative effects of stereotypes. Thus, overall, it seems worth encouraging students to reflect upon their intercultural experience as part of intercultural education.

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