

Halla Ortery

Communication Sciences and Disorders

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1. Provide an introduction and overview of your study abroad experience.

Australia has always been a destination that has intrigued me. Before I started my adventure and exploration of the culture in Australia, I had very general stereotypes. With narrow knowledge, I believed that everyone lived near the ocean and knew how to surf, they were extremely laid back, and were similar to someone living in the United Kingdom. Once I arrived in Australia, I learned that I was very wrong.

Australia is made up of a diverse people and climate. I was living in Lismore, which is located in New South Wales. Lismore is a tropical city that is predominately hot and humid but rains every month for at least 4 days straight. Southern Cross University is situated on a hillside and is filled with a diverse mix of internationals and Australians. Throughout campus you can see heaps of wildlife such as a wallaby, lizards, snakes, and even koala bears. Almost every day there is something happening on campus to get you involved and interacting with other students. Within my classes was also a diverse age range of students, from students who just graduated high school to parents who were going back to school after being in a job for a few years. Class sizes were small which allowed you to make that personal connection with your professor, similar to UW-Eau Claire.

Through traveling I realized just how big Australia was. I explored the majority of the east coast, traveling to Sydney, Whitsundays, Brisbane, and Melbourne. I also ventured outside of Australia to New Zealand and Bali. During my travels I was able to learn more about the Aboriginal tribes, experience somewhat diverse climates, and get to know my friends whom I shared the experience with even better. Visiting each new place is when I got to really explore and appreciate Australia and the individuals who live there. Australia showed itself to be far more than the stereotype I had placed upon it.

2. Using one to two examples, explain how your study abroad experience advanced your knowledge and understanding of the world's diverse cultures, environments, practices and/or values.

Australians are extremely laid back. This statement is something I always associated with Australians. While studying at Southern Cross University, I couldn't have found this statement to be more accurate. From how they go about their daily lives, to attending school, to experiencing the world they just take everything in stride. My first day in Australia I went to the grocery store

and I encountered a man walking around with no shirt or shoes on. Now, in America this would not be acceptable. However, no one in the store even seemed to notice that he wasn't wearing either piece of clothing. Throughout my time abroad I saw this scene time and again and eventually became accustomed to it and even took advantage of it after days at the beach.

Another area I observed this mindset of just going with the flow was in the age of my classmates. The majority of my classes were split in age, the older average was around 34 and the younger average was 21. At UW-Eau Claire, I have only encountered roughly 4 older adults in my classes at the most. Upon getting to know my classmates further, the majority of the older students were attending class because in their younger years they had taken time to travel the world, others had just gone right out of high school into entry level jobs, and still others were there to further their degrees. Although some of these answers were the same as what you would hear from older students in the United States, taking time off to explore the world isn't one you commonly hear.

In the United States, I have found that if an individual doesn't go right into some form of college, or the military, the general population will assume that they are not going anywhere with their life. In other countries around the world, including Australia, it is encouraged that students take time to explore before going into college. Around the United States, opportunities for study abroad are present however they are not encouraged enough. Some programs don't even allow time for a student to explore. I believe that in order to become a well-rounded person, an understanding of the world we live in is essential. Studying abroad allows students to explore a different part of the world and being to have a better understanding of how other people live. Australian lifestyle allows for this exploration and growth.

3. Describe how your study abroad experience has impacted your knowledge and understanding of global systems, institutions, and relationships of power?

Throughout my education I have learned a lot about the history of the United States. However, I gained limited knowledge of other countries such as Canada, England, and Australia. Throughout my time in Australia, I came to find out that every other part of the world had just as great of an understanding of American history as I did. It was extremely eye opening to realize that the world knows so much about America but we don't take very much time to learn about any other country.

While studying in Australia, I took a class called Australia, Asia, and the world. This

class explored how Australia as well as Asia were as independent continents, how they were together, and how they were situated and viewed by the rest of the world. One of the major topics of this course was "Globalization and Borders post September 11". When looking at the syllabus, I was a bit shocked to see this as a topic for a class discussing Australia and Asia. I knew that September 11 was a memorable day for everyone in the United States, but I didn't realize how much it had impacted other countries. Fear of terrorists grew in Australia just as it did in America. Discrimination also climbed.

Being brought up in the United States, I feel that I have not been exposed to virtually any other countries in the classroom. It is interesting to understand that the power that America has is noticed around the world and it is seen as important enough to teach in the classrooms. If this is the case, why aren't we equally open minded and knowledgeable about the world around us? Other countries emphasize learning about how the United States works, and the current events in our country, yet the majority of American citizens are vastly undereducated on international countries.

4. Identify and describe how a decision (or lack of a decision) made by people in your home community or country has impacted your host community or country. Or, if you prefer, identify and describe how a decision/lack of a decision made by people in your host community/country has impacted your home community/country.

Australia and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) was created in 1914-1915 during the Great War. In 1951, this alliance signed a security treaty with the United States called ANZUS. The signing of this treaty was to help the security of the Pacific. This decision to create an alliance has brought Australia into many wars including the war in Iraq and Afghanistan.

On September 11, there were eleven Australians also killed. There was an outpouring of sympathy from Australia for the United States and they were greatly affected. I was fortunate enough to have experienced the 100th anniversary of ANZAC day. ANZAC day is one of Australia's most commemorative occasions, which marks the anniversary of the first military force fought in World War I by Australia and New Zealand. This day gave a little insight to the history of bravery in Australia. Every year it is a huge day that honors those who have died. All in all, treaty between Australia and the US has meant that Australia has been one of our allies and supporters in numerous wars, and has allowed us to be successful.

5. Explore how your study abroad experience has impacted your professional or career

goals or aspirations. What skills did you develop or enhance during your study abroad experience that might be transferable or beneficial in your future workplace?

As a Speech Pathologist, I will be working with a diverse group of students. Studying abroad helped broaden my understanding of what these needs might be and how to approach them. Australia help me realize when approaching a new student I need to recognize and respect their background. Students of different background may have a different set of customs and understanding these customs will allow me to treat them in a more effective manner.

Working with individuals who may have a different approach to a task is something everyone encounters in the work place. Living on campus, I was interacting with people from places like Canada, Italy, England, Japan, and various states around the U.S. Everyone coming from a different walk of life and with a completely different perspective. It was challenging at times to coordinated trips and events because everyone had a differing viewpoint. In the end, it took teamwork and collaboration to make the ideal trip that allowed everyone to have an enjoyable time. I plan to take this into my career as a guiding point on how to interact with other coworkers to get the best out come by including everyone in the process.

Before living and studying in Australia I didn't think it was a possibility with my future profession to work in another country. Being a speech pathologist, I will be helping individuals speech or learn to communicate to allow them to live a more carefree life. When thinking about where I would work in the future, another country seemed impossible because I would first have to learn how to teach individuals how to say words properly within their own accents. Through further exploration, I have found several programs in Australia as well as the United Kingdom that are looking for speech pathologists from around the world including America. There is no mention of the variation of accent in the application. Living in Australia helped me to rediscover my dream of living and working to help people in different parts of the world.

6. Study abroad can be a transformative learning experience, in which students learn more about themselves and the world in which they live.

a. Describe a disorienting dilemma you experienced while abroad and why you found it disorienting.

While in Australia, I was fortunate enough to be able to do lots of traveling. Some of my travels led me outside of Australia, allowing me to add layers to the cultures that I was

experiencing. When planning it was important to plan it out to the best of your abilities while trying to get a lay of the land. Planning the trips to Bali and New Zealand were the most difficult because they were for roughly 10 days and it was a longer flight to get here. I found it disorienting once in a new location because it took a few days to figure out the way back to the hostel or to a certain attraction.

b. Describe how the dilemma challenged your previous knowledge of the world's cultures, environments, practices, or values.

Traveling challenged my previous knowledge of the world's cultures especially in Bali. It was an extremely eye opening experience to realize that the Balinese people relied solely on tourists. They have created a life around creating products to sell, different ways of transportation, and just things they use to make sure that the tourist is happy. Balinese people lived in extremely modest homes and lived lives that were mostly untouched by technology. Very few people owned cars, but rather mopeds flooded the streets.

I didn't think that Bali would have such an impact on me, but it realized how fortunate I am. I was a visitor in their culture so they were doing whatever they could to accommodate me. Many tourists who travel to this area just look at it as this luxury getaway. Because of my Australia, Asia, and the World class I had some understanding of how to approach vacations. I went into this trip looking for a way to get involved rather just observing from afar. I wanted to get to know and understand the culture better rather than just going to all of the major attractions to check things off of a list. Although I didn't have the opportunity to get as involved as I would have appreciated I was able to begin to understand how I will approach my future travels and interactions with new cultures.

c. Explain how the dilemma helped you to understand how your decisions and the decisions of others have global implications.

My experience in Bali helped me to fully realize that without tourists Balinese people wouldn't have nearly enough money to survive. It also made me realize that how you view a situation depends on where you come from. Going into Bali with more of an open mind I had a different experience than the other two girls that came with me. By marketing Bali as an exotic destination, the people who venture there are looking for an escape from reality. They aren't necessarily looking to get indulged in the culture but rather the beaches and the luxury aspect. Marketing Bali this way creates a culture that is dependent on the rest of the world. A country

that is so flushed with poverty, has amazing experiences but only for those who can afford it.

7. Finally, please attach two pictures, with captions, that illustrate what was important and meaningful about your experience.

It is extremely difficult to pick just two pictures to describe my experience. It was filled with friends, adventure, lasting memories, and a change in my view of the world. It is clique to say that this experience completely changed me but it did. Coming out of this experience I am filled with a newfound self-confidence, a greater appreciation for the world around me, a better understanding that everything is achievable with the right mind set, and friends around the globe. I went into this experience not knowing any of the people very well and coming out of it with friends who challenge me to think deeper into the meaning of why things are, express myself in a way that is truer to what I believe rather than what society wants me to think, and helped me to laugh more than ever before.

The first picture I have chosen is a photo of just a small portion of the friends. We are surrounding the sign at the entrance of our university. Australia wouldn't have made me grow nearly as much if I wasn't located at this university. The classes I was able to take, such as Australia, Asia, and the world, allowed me to explore and begin to understand the history as well as the present relationships between Australia and the rest of the world. I was able to interact with such a diverse range of people, get involved through different events such as open mic night as well as social sports, and adapt to a different style of learning. I was fortunate enough to go to a school that welcomed many international students and had advisors that were always willing to help. Karen, the international coordinator, was the woman that made this entire trip possible for me. Three weeks before I was due to leave for Australia, I found out that I had thyroid cancer and would have to have immediate surgery. It pushed back my original departure date and the advisors at UW-Eau Claire as well as Southern Cross University were skeptical of me going. Being a bit strong headed, I was still completely determined to go. My doctors gave me the clear to go but Southern Cross still had to give the OK for me to come. By me traveling to Australia they were accepting the possibility that I may need to have follow up and that something further or something could possibly go wrong. Karen helped to reassure the other coordinators that everything would be fine, and that if anything were to happen it would fall on here. Nothing happened and I was able to start my adventure. We met every week so that she could check up

on me to see how I was doing. I will be forever grateful that she believed that everything would work out for the best and gave me the opportunity to come study there.

The second picture I have attached is of me sitting on a railing at the top of Wollumbin also called Mount Warning. The picture was taken shortly after I finished the uphill part of the 9km hike return. There are a few things this picture symbolizes to me. First, everything you put your mind to you can accomplish. This was one of the toughest hikes that I had done on the trip, post surgery it was even more difficult. There were many times that I wanted to quit and thought I wasn't going to make it to the top. However, reaching the top was one of the most rewarding things I have ever done. Second, there are no boundaries to the goals that I have. Having the clouds behind me makes it appear that there is no end, that it is just endless. I believe that the directions my life can go are endless. I have the opportunity to navigate where it is going to take me and just be ready for the adventure that lies ahead. Finally, the University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire 'I'm A Blugold!' sign helps me remember where my journey started. If it weren't for this amazing institution my life would not be on the path that it is. Dreams are continually encouraged at Eau Claire and I am so grateful that my dream of traveling and studying in another country is one of them. Whenever we would go places I would bring this sign and hold it in front of me with the landscape behind me. Some people would stop to ask what it meant and it was amazing to be able to tell them that I am a Blugold!



