

Reducing culture shock through PAL (Pre-arrival learning)

Research shows us that the more prepared a student is for living and studying abroad the more they will benefit from the experience (Storti , 1990). Without such preparation, the stages of culture shock (Oberg, 1960) are more likely to be adverse and enduring. The presenter has drawn on both personal experience and research to develop an online, English for Living Abroad course. The rationale for the course was to help international students better understand their cross-cultural experience. It is based on two categories of cultural encounter, as identified by Storti; behaviour which seems strange and inexplicable to the international student and student behaviour which is perfectly acceptable at home but appears inappropriate abroad.

The English for Living Abroad course is delivered through a system called PAL (Pre-arrival learning) which students access, two months prior to their study abroad programme commencing. PAL includes other resources such as an online assessment tool, a General English course, and a 'Welcome Tour'. It helps students to be better prepared socially and psychologically for their living abroad experience. At the same time it builds the student's relationship with the institution in which they are going to study, because the resource is accessed through the school's or institution's branded website.

The focus of the presentation will be on the contents and structure of the English for Living Abroad course. It will include examples of cultural knowledge from everyday life, for example discussing daily routines, using the bathroom and making small talk, as well as provide models of language which students can use in their initial days of living and studying in an English-speaking environment. There will also be a brief explanation of the online delivery process.