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Who's afraid of culture shock? Emotions of university students preparing to study abroad

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TITLE

Who's afraid of culture shock? Emotions of university students preparing to

RELEVANT SIG

Study Abroad

FORMAT

Research-oriented Oral Face-to-face presentation (25 minutes, including Q&A)

Short English description

KEYWORDS

study abroad, emotions

First-time presenter?

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ABSTRACT

In both academic and popular literature, culture shock is frequently presented as a universal, uniform, and linear process involving discrete stages; a journey from cultural and linguistic insecurity to one of mastery and competence. To what extent does this tidy conceptualization reflect reality? How do Japanese university students actually feel as they prepare to study abroad, and how well do these feelings conform to the culture shock model? To explore these questions, this small-scale study asked a class of Japanese university students about the emotions they felt as they prepared for their study abroad experiences, and the emotions they anticipated experiencing while abroad. Students were then asked to attribute these emotions, identifying possible antecedents. It was found that, while there is indeed truth to the idea that many students begin their study abroad with deep-seated linguistic insecurity, this anxiety is balanced by a host of other emotions, many of which hint strongly at students' confidence in their own linguistic and cultural competence. While the culture shock model identifies real generalizable patterns, the linearity, universality, and orderliness which

it often implies were found to be rough approximations at best of a far more complex and interesting picture.

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