Community Engagement through International Service-Learning: How a Foreign Student can Become a Social Actor in the Host Society

Lavinia BRACCI, Jules Martin BELLA OWONA & Eliza J. NASH
International Center for Intercultural Exchange,
Siena Italian Studies, Italy

Abstract: From the medieval period, Siena's history has been marked by significant attention to service to others. Founded in this context, the International Center for Intercultural Exchange has created a set of educational programs for international university students using the pedagogy of service-learning. The International Center is also dedicated to research on educational outcomes resulting from the relationship between foreign students and the host country's third sector. This paper will illustrate, through excerpts taken from student reflective writing journals, how a foreign student can become a functioning social actor in the host society through international service-learning and community engagement.

Keywords: Service-learning, social acting, RICA model, cultural immersion, intercultural competence

1. Introduction

The International Center for Intercultural Exchange (International Center) at Siena is an organization based in Siena (Tuscany), Italy, that is composed of several distinct units that share a common mission and work towards promoting intercultural exchange both in Italy, the U.S and around the world through a commitment to service-learning and community engagement. From the general observation of the high level of intercultural sensitivity developed by students participating in service-learning, in 2004 the International Center faculty started working on the development of an instructional approach called Full-immersion: Culture, Content, Service (FICCS) (Bracci & Filippone, 2009) with the goal of achieving high quality student learning outcomes. In 2005, the International Center became part of the International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership (IPSL) and introduced the pedagogy of service-learning in its courses. In 2008 the International Center faculty developed the Reflective Intercultural Competence Assessment Model (RICA) (Biagi et al. 2012) to measure the unique competence resulting from the use of the FICCS approach: Reflective Intercultural Competence, or RIC (ibid.).

The FICCS approach, it should be mentioned, has been created and can be applied only in a context of second language acquisition (full-immersion where the students actually live in the country where the language is spoken) as opposed to foreign language acquisition (which is done in a classroom or through programs most often in the context of the student's home country).

The present article is part of a more comprehensive study conducted by the RICA team to assess Reflective Intercultural Competence levels through student reflective writing journals. The results of the study confirm how service is the component of the FICCS approach that leads

most directly to "social acting," the highest level of Reflective Intercultural Competence in the RICA scale, because it facilitates the integration of students in the host society. In other words, the student acts as a member of the host society through experiencing the social and cultural realities of the community. It was also observed that a student's intercultural motivation towards the host culture plays a significant role in the development of RIC and students involved in a greater amount of service-learning, therefore possessing a greater intercultural motivation, progressed at a faster pace than students with a limited service experience.

2. Background

In teaching Italian language and culture in Italy today, we cannot overlook the importance of stimuli that are present throughout the territory. Today, more than ever, the different linguistic and cultural stimuli that the students receive represent a continuous and everlasting source of occasions to compare and appreciate their first linguistic and cultural realities (L1 and C1) in relation to the newly acquired linguistic and cultural system (L2 and C2). Within this rich and, at times, conflicting panorama of the host society, the Italian language student should know how to orient herself in order to gain the most from the various learning opportunities presented to her. For this reason, after a lengthy and direct observation of the various behaviors and needs of the language learners, we realized that there was a need for a unique didactic approach aimed at developing Reflective Intercultural Competence. The International Center faculty developed the principles that inform the FICCS approach starting from the theoretical findings of Cummins (1979), through the various communicative methodologies in second language acquisition (for a brief overview, see Serra Borneto, 1998), and the use of humanistic-affective approaches in the application of CLIL principles (Content and Language Integrated Learning) (Coonan, 2002, 2006), integrated with the guidelines of the essential pedagogy of service-learning. There is a growing and rich research literature on service-learning around the world which has also informed how service has been incorporated into FICCS. This includes: the work and publications of the International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership (IPSL), which has supported international service-learning programs worldwide since the mid-1980s (see, for example, Chisholm, 2000, 2004; and Tonkin, 2004); the long-term research initiatives on service-learning conducted by the Center for Service and Learning at Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis (IUPUI) (see Plater et al., 2009 and Bringle et al., 2011); the U.S.-based Corporation for National Service (Furco, 1996); and the United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia (United Board, 2002), to name a few examples.

Service-learning unites academic study and volunteer community service in such a way that the one reinforces the other. A key aspect to service-learning is its focus on structured reflection, in which students are asked to analyze critically what they learn from the service just as they are asked to analyze the information and ideas garnered from their academic study. In the FICCS approach, the students are asked additionally to reflect on the joint impact of their service and academic study on their growth toward intercultural competence.

Service-learning has taken hold in many postsecondary institutions and programs world-wide since the 1980s, and The International Center has given high priority to its development in the FICCS approach. It is an international movement that offers new approaches to teaching

and learning and to the civic engagement of institutions of postsecondary education. It provides students with an education that meets high academic standards while also delivering meaningful service that makes a difference in the well-being of society, particularly for communities and persons on the socioeconomic margins. Since service-learning is an international movement, it promotes not only local commitment, but also an understanding of the interrelatedness of communities and societies across the world.

At the International Center students offer voluntary service in associations, institutions, and centers in which the presence of a volunteer (not necessarily a specialized volunteer) is requested to alleviate and reduce the need of that community (from serving meals at the soup kitchen and teaching English in schools to assisting volunteers in ambulance services, distributing clothing donations, or working in retirement homes). In exchange, the student receives the opportunity to live inside the host society and to experience it first hand, thus gaining a richer intercultural perspective. The work carried out by the student in the field is the determining factor to observe, reflect upon, and learn something more about the L2 and C2. It is the *exchange currency*, so to speak, the barter "work = learn" that from practice turns to theory, from the hands to the mind. In addition, the student finds herself having to adjust to a new cultural and linguistic context and by doing so goes through an intercultural experience, since the socio-anthropological and linguistic profile of the host community likely differs from her own background. The service experience is coupled with a Socio-anthropology course that provides the theoretical and scientific framework to observe and decipher the signs of the host society, as well as a Reflective Writing class (that forms a central part of the FICCS curriculum) which facilitates the student's interpretation of the various intercultural encounters. The support and collaboration of all teachers involved is essential for this type of experience to be successful.

The development of RIC helps the student to become a global student, a student without borders. In the movement of peoples and merchandise that characterizes our time, the student studying abroad can no longer limit herself to the acquisition of solely academic notions. As a global student she becomes to all effects a social actor, performing her own role on the complex stage of a world in which the cultural and linguistic diversities meet and clash in a continuous intertwining. Today the economic and social phenomenon of globalization — intended in its meaning as the compression of space and time — affects profoundly every human action, bringing together and, at the same time, distancing societies and communities.

With the FICCS approach, we think that the learner of the 21st century can benefit both from her academic studies and from the direct exposure to the social host so that she gets effectively closer to another world, acknowledging and appreciating its various cultural dimensions and values.

3. Theoretical Framework: The FICCS Approach

All students at the International Center learn Italian language and experience its culture with the FICCS approach. FICCS is the International Center's institutional approach, developed by its core team of instructors. In describing the elements of the acronym, a definition of full-immersion is first in order. Full-immersion is seen as the way in which the student's cultural

and linguistic study experience is carried out in the host society. The student's experience takes place abroad; it foresees accommodations in a home-stay, it familiarizes the student with the social structures of the community at hand, it introduces the student to characteristic places of the host community and to people who work and live in that community, all of which combine with the student's personal processing of the experience (both during and after the study period). The student should return to her home country conscious of the fact that she has tested herself in a series of social and cultural contexts through the use of the language. But most importantly, full-immersion for SIS is the successful unification of guided and spontaneous acquisition in language learning.

Guided acquisition (Klein, 1986, De Marco, 2000), in terms of language learning, is when the learning takes place in a formal and organized environment such as the classroom. The learners are, in fact, students who are taught by at least one instructor. In this case, the instruction is carried out in standard Italian and is generally adapted to the learner's language level. Guided acquisition also generally implies a metalinguistic study (and therefore a comparative analysis of the native language L1 and the foreign language L2) which isn't always present in spontaneous acquisition, or rather, it may be, but in a subconscious and non-structured manner. FICCS employs guided acquisition in language courses, content courses, metalinguistic study, and comparative analysis between Italian and English, or whatever the L1 may be.

Spontaneous acquisition (or learning) happens in cases where a speaker acquires a foreign language (L2) in the context in which the language is spoken, without receiving, or having previously received, any form of formal instruction for that given language. This is namely the case of immigrants who are consistently exposed to a normal (not simplified) and varied Italian (more or less formal, more or less geographically or dialect-influenced). Studies on the spontaneous acquisition of the Italian language carried out at the Universita' di Pavia under the guidance of Anna Giacalone Ramat (2003) have illustrated the various learning phases associated with spontaneous acquisition, which have led to the production of innovative didactic material for formally educated language learners because the learning sequence in spontaneous acquisition is now considered to be the most natural (2003). FICCS employs complex spontaneous input from the experience in social environments, from the service the student does in the community to which "traditional" students are not normally exposed, from the host-families, and from the activity-specific lexicon deriving from the service experience.

Underlying this approach is the process of reflection, which we borrowed from the pedagogy of service-learning and which we consider to be the main tool for the acquisition of Intercultural Competence or, better yet, what we call Reflective Intercultural Competence (RIC). Reflective Writing is the place where the students integrate and analyze their own experience in the community with class learning. Achieved through writing (which gives structure to the activity), reflection is the natural link between experience/service and learning, the hyphen that unites the two as reciprocal and inseparable. Reflection, moreover, is the way critical thinking and meaning take place before, during and after the international service-learning experience (Ash & Clayton, 2004; Ash, Clayton & Atkinson, 2005; Bringle & Hatcher, 1999, Eyler & Giles, 1999). Figure 1 represents RIC acquisition at the International Center.
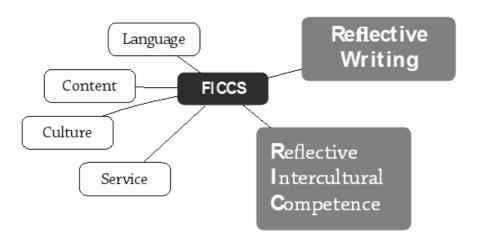
Figure 1. Graphic Representing RIC Acquisition at the International Center

While there are plenty of tools to assess language and content, it is more difficult to assess RIC, which is the main competence acquired by FICCS students. RIC is a competence gained through a structured and guided reflection process; it implies a conscious elaboration of intercultural encounters thus allowing a full engagement of the student. The objective is that the student becomes a social actor in the host culture (C2). Reflection is a tool of both assessment and self-assessment, since it creates the appropriate outcomes to be assessed, and at the same time it develops in the students the ability to reflect, which will become useful in future intercultural encounters. The resulting competence is nothing but intercultural competence with this ability to reflect. Paraphrasing Bennett (2009), "Knowledge becomes competence through the process of reflection."

The introduction of a structured reflective process ensures that the FICCS student produces appropriate outcomes in the form of an individual journal to which we can apply our Reflective Intercultural Competence Assessment model (RICA), enabling us to properly evaluate RIC. With this model the evaluation of the development of RIC is possible thanks to a wide variety of explicit intercultural reflections provided by the journals. Our overall aim is to analyze RIC within the FICCS approach. Furthermore, RICA can be successfully applied to other contexts given the following conditions: full-immersion in a C2 where FICCS criteria are present (language courses, content courses taught in the second language, preferably home-stay experience, service opportunities) and the implementation of reflective writing exercises through a Reflective Writing course.

Through the main dimensions of FICCS (language, service, content, culture) the experience and the reflection upon the experience are linked, a step that is necessary in developing an intercultural sensitivity. The FICCS approach provides the essential tools and knowledge to develop RIC. The Reflective Writing course is how the students understand and slowly absorb the C2 in a deep and lasting way through continuous observation, comparison and reflection aimed at intercultural communication.

As previously mentioned, reflection represents the link between experience and learning and unites the two opposite poles of acquisition: the academic and the experiential. Through reflection the student creates her own understanding with an intercultural perspective. Students must submit weekly entries (concerning one or two prompts and any other relevant aspect of their overall experience) and share them as much as possible with their peers during Reflective Writing sessions. These sessions represent a moment when all intercultural encounters (both the positive encounters and the more challenging ones) come to light. During the Reflective Writing course, we also discuss the reasons that lead to different manifestations of culture shock with the aim of transforming the clash with a second culture into a more complicated but richer perspective from which to understand the C2. Following the teachers' input, the student is stimulated and encouraged to reflect on the many new values and situations she will encounter while dealing with the host family, Italian friends or the volunteers at the service agencies (the several actors of the C2 stages). The goal is to develop a reflective consciousness that lays the foundation for the building of Intercultural Competence using reflection as a tool of both assessment and self-assessment.

The role of the Reflective Writing (RW) instructor is a delicate one and implies a deep cultural sensitivity. The instructor is a key reference point and represents the social actor par excellence. She is the perfect bridge between two cultures or, even better, has a multicultural identity herself. She facilitates the students' process of decoding and encoding all cultural signs. In RW class the teacher is dealing with two different types of students: students who are enrolled in a service-learning semester (S-L students) and non S-L students whose main focus is not service-learning even though they are doing a few hours of service a week. The first are deeply engaged in the host society while the others are less involved in the C2.

In the case of S-L students the instructor is "overwhelmed" by their reflections; therefore she needs to contain and channel this "stream of consciousness" providing the appropriate keys to interpret the C2. In the case of non S-L students the instructor needs to stimulate observations and reflections drawing their attention to the most important cultural elements.

4. "S" for Service

Before we examine how the foreign student becomes a social actor, explaining the innovative pedagogical steps taken at the International Center, it is important to illustrate briefly the context in which this international service-learning takes place. Siena, the city in Italy where our Center is based, has a long tradition of service that dates back to Medieval times. Due to its geographic location along the Via Francigena, the major pilgrimage route from Canterbury to Rome, the city of Siena found itself responding to needs of pilgrims as well as its own citizens from the 11th century.

Figure. 2 Image of the Via Francigena

In the Golden Age of Siena's Medieval Period a number of volunteer institutions were founded of which the most important are the Hospital Santa Maria della Scala (founded in 1090) and the Arciconfraternita della Misericordia (1250), which provided services to pilgrims and citizens alike.

Santa Maria della Scala, now turned into a museum, was one of Europe's first hospitals. Its main functions were caring for pilgrims, looking after orphans and abandoned children, as well as poor and sick people. Abandoned babies were often left at the doorsteps of the Hospital. Meticulous records were kept of the details relating to each child, so that the original parents might later be able to find them (Sordini, 2010). Meals were served three times a day to the poor and needy. The sick were also given free meals and treatment. When in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Hospital became a training ground for doctors, there was a unique emphasis on using a more hands-on learning approach. There were several sponsors among the wealthy citizens of Siena, who financially supported the Hospital with bequests and donations of various sorts.

Another important institution, the Arciconfraternita della Misericordia di Siena, traces its roots to the year 1250, when it was founded as another hospital and charity organization (at the time called Casa della Misericordia) for the needy under its founder Beato Andrea Gallerani. One of the important functions of the volunteers of the Misericordia was to take away the dead during the Black Death in Siena, which badly ravaged the city's population. Another important function of the Misericordia, like Santa Maria della Scala, was to provide assistance and hospitality to pilgrims of the Via Francigena (Arciconfraternita della Misericordia di Siena, 2012). Unlike Santa Maria della Scala, the Misericordia continues to be an important volunteer organization today with its services covering disaster relief, ambulance transport, funeral services and much more.

In Siena as in many areas of Tuscany this intense history of volunteerism and service has led to a widespread culture of solidarity that probably can be identified as the key to the success of volunteering associations in Tuscany in responding to community needs. The same spread

of volunteer organizations (one of the highest in Italy: 6 for every ten thousand inhabitants compared to the national average of 3.6.) confirms the commitment of Tuscan people to the practice of service. In the case of Siena, the tradition of service continues to evolve within the city and its surrounding areas, which is now home to approximately 300 volunteer organizations. Other factors that may explain the consistent development of volunteerism in Tuscany are the contained urban dimensions of most cities, the political administrative continuity for several decades and a widespread presence of intermediary supporting organizations such as parishes and cooperatives. This panorama makes Siena a perfect location for an intercultural/service-learning program such as those offered by the International Center.

The service component of the FICCS approach, we have observed, is the one that leads most directly to social acting, the highest level of Reflective Intercultural Competence, because it facilitates the integration of the students in the host society. In other words, the student acts as a member of the host society through experiencing the social and cultural realities of the community.

5. The RICA Model

Now the question that arises from what we are saying is: "How do we measure the integration of our students into Italian society?" In order to assess RIC we have created a specific assessment tool called the Reflective Intercultural Competence Assessment (RICA) model. The RICA model follows in the tradition of developmental models, which have in common a recognition that competence evolves over time, either individually or relationally, or both. Recognizing both the rich traditions in developmental psychology and the more recent developments in understanding personal relationships, developmental models draw attention to the prospect that relationships are capable of becoming more competent through ongoing interaction that produces greater co-orientation, learning and incorporation of respective cultural perspectives. Furthermore, just as adults are generally considered more interactionally competent than infants, due largely to the learning process that provides for stages of growth to build sequentially upon one another, developmental models often attempt to identify the stages of progression that would mark the achievement of more competent levels of interaction (Spitzberg & Changnon, 2009). A presumption of the King and Baxter Magolda (2005) model as well as of the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) by J. Bennett & M. Bennett (1986) is that over time interactants progress from relatively ethnocentric understandings of other cultures to a more ethnorelative comprehension and appreciation. In these models "as one's experience of cultural difference becomes more complex and sophisticated, one's potential competence in intercultural relations increases" (Hammer et al., 2003, p. 423).

The main difficulty in describing the development of RIC is that it is linked both to the individual's background and to her present experiences in the C2, since the same encounters lead to different sensitivities in students that have different abilities, expectations, fears, and certainties. Despite these individual variations, the experience of the FICCS students can be traced along the same path with a different pace based on their intercultural motivation. A fundamental assumption therefore is that personal motivation affects in a considerable way the acquisition of RIC: the S-L students will reach higher levels of RIC more easily and sooner in

comparison with non S-L students.

In the tradition of other developmental models, the RICA model is divided into six core levels:

1) **Pre-contact:** students are immersed (physically and/or mentally) in their own culture and they can have different perceptions about the C2: prejudice, negative and positive stereotypes, total lack of exposure, lack of interest, strong excitement for the new adventure, positive expectations.

2) **Contact:** students have their first superficial contact with the C2; it is mostly a phase of observation where students can be anchored to their own culture C1 by varying degrees.

3) **Culture Shock:** precipitated by the "anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse" (Oberg, 1954). Students manifest contrasting emotions and feelings such as euphoria, disorientation and refusal of their C1 and/or the C2. There can be times of frustration mostly due to language barriers and to the difficulty to adapt.

4) **Superficial Understanding:** students dwell in a sort of limbo, where they start to notice and reflect upon the first cultural differences; they can show proper cultural behaviors in the form of routines and automatic and subconscious actions. There can continue to be times of frustration mostly due to language barriers and to the difficulty to adapt, as seen in level 3.

5) **Deep understanding:** students can show several attitudes based on their personalities, expectations and previous experiences such as flexibility, respect, appreciation, suspension of judgment, overcoming of some prejudices. Sometimes a new perspective about their background and past experiences can result. Often the student comes to feel "at home" also in the C2, acknowledging a developing dual/plural identity.Also, a growing sensitivity for differences inside the C2 might be developed, as well as a sensitivity for differentiating among various C2s.

6) **Social Acting:** the full achievement of RIC. When the student reaches this stage, she changes her role. She is no longer a spectator but instead is an actual actor on the stage of the C2; therefore, in this stage the competence becomes fully active and the final transformation of knowledge into competence takes place.

The primary forms of source material used in the RICA model come from the journals kept by the students throughout their involvement with the FICCS curriculum. The criteria used to choose suitable journals are:

– Substantial reflective content: less observations or descriptions and more reflections concerning intercultural encounters;
– Well-structured journals: weekly reflective entries that allow us to trace students' RIC development without time gaps.

In order to respect the students' privacy we have selected only those journals whose authors

signed a release form. In addition, names and other references are replaced with fictional initials. Eventually a code is assigned to each journal.

Journal reading and analysis are carried out by the RICA team (comprised of the Reflective Writing instructors as well as other faculty specialized in the development of this model) in two phases: individual reading and group reading. In the individual reading phase each one of the team members reads and analyzes the journals on her own, highlighting relevant reflective excerpts and assigning a RICA level to each of them. In the second phase the individual analyses are compared and completed by the team. After a group discussion the more representative excerpts are chosen and a RICA level is assigned to each week.

6. Excerpts from Student Journals

In this section of the paper we will present excerpts of students' reflective writing journals that have been assigned the highest RICA level in order to illustrate how service-learning brings about the appropriate type of reflection which indicates, as closely as possible, the development of Reflective Intercultural Competence. We have organized them according to each service site that they refer to. As previously mentioned, students volunteer at a number of service sites; however, for the purpose of this paper five service sites have been selected (representative of the previously-mentioned four areas in which students engage in service) that have provided the appropriate reflective outcomes to illustrate our point: Mensa dei Poveri (daily soup kitchen), elementary schools (where students teach English), Casa di Riposo (home for the elderly), Misericordia (ambulance transport service) and the Laboratorio (center for the physically/mentally disabled).

6.1. Mensa dei Poveri

The soup kitchen is located at the Convent of San Girolamo and it provides a very important service to the city of Siena. The volunteers assist in distributing meals to Italians and immigrants in need. In the same structure there is also a center for the collection and distribution of donated clothing for the less fortunate. Student volunteers help the sisters both in the soup kitchen and at the clothing distribution center.

> "Being back in Siena is really weird, but good. Seeing my family was great, especially my host mom again. I was so excited to give her a hug and to tell her a little bit about my break. (…)
> And… going back to the soup kitchen was great! I missed it. I love being there with the other volunteers and the people in the soup kitchen are the best. It was nice to see "the regulars" from the soup kitchen after going almost 2 weeks… BAH! I think that when I leave Siena, the soup kitchen will be the volunteer placement that I will miss the most. I always feel happy when I go there and I wish I could go… 8 DAYS A WEEK!"

Comment: The student has been assigned the highest of the Reflective Intercultural Competence in this entry, which was written after a 2-week break out of Siena. He clearly

expressed how integrated he was in the Sienese community especially through service. When going back to service at the soup kitchen he was pleased to see the "regulars" which indicates how familiar this place had become to him and most of all he expressed how comfortable and "happy" he feels there and how much he will miss it once he will have to go back to his own country.

6.2. Elementary Schools

Students of the International Center offer essential hours of mother-tongue English language instruction in several elementary schools in and around the city of Siena. The "English Project" is open to all elementary schools in Siena. The objectives of the project are to provide creative and interactive English lessons by native speakers.

> "One of my favorite parts of doing service anywhere is the look of recognition I get from the people I have helped when I return for a second or third time. Last week, I had two of my third grade students have their mom pull over on their way to school so they could say good morning to me. Last week I also had my crazy kindergarten students remember my name without my having to tell them. In the class I am observing, the students always ask me when I am coming back and greet me with warm smiles and questions about the United States."

Comment: This scene of Italian children on their way to school asking their mother to pull over the car because they wanted to greet this student who volunteers in their English class epitomizes the student who has become a social actor, in this case, the children's English teacher.

6.3. Casa di Riposo

Italy's elderly population is currently one of the highest in the world, and Siena is no exception. The "Poggio al Vento" elderly center is home to more than 30 residents. The International Center students can work with Italian volunteers to assist the elderly as well as organize activities and events. At the home for the elderly, students work alongside the Italian volunteers to assist residents as well as organize events and activities.

> *"Questa settimana è andata bene per me. Lunedì, mio fratello è venuto con me, merco-ledì Melissa e Gwen sono venute alla casa di riposo ... Mi è piaciuto farli vedere i luogi in cui lavoro, e le persone che aiuto. Mi sentivo orgoliosa perché il laboratorio e la casa di riposo sono luogi dove riesco ad essere responsabile, so come tutto funziona, e insomma sono a questo punto brava quando lavoro lì. Ero orgoliosa che ler persone che sono importanti a me potrebbero vedermi così."*
> ("This week went well for me. On Monday my brother came with me, On Wednesday M. and G. came to the Casa di Riposo... I like showing them the places I work and the people I help. I felt proud because the Laboratorio and the Casa di Riposo are places

where I am able to be responsible, I know how everything works and well, I'm really good at working there. I was proud that the people that are important to me could see me this way.")

Comment: This student has reached a level of total confidence in the two services sites she mentioned because she knows how everything works and people there trust her with responsibilities. She proudly brings her "host-brother" and some friends to see her volunteer working environment.

6.4. Misericordia

With medieval roots, the Misericordia volunteer organization is unique to Italian and to Sienese culture and offers a number of services to the city of Siena. Among those, and the most popular among International Center students, is the ambulance transport and emergency service. In fact, the Misericordia coordinates ambulance services thanks to the Italian and foreign volunteers who work on the ambulances. Students can obtain certifications of varying levels in order to volunteer on these ambulances thanks to a special agreement between the Misericordia and two administrative units of the International Center (Fondazione Ulisse and Siena Italian Studies). Once certified, students can volunteer at a minimum of 3 hours a week up to a maximum of 10 hours per week.

"Our last transport on Monday was an older woman who was going from the main hospital in the city to another. When we got there, she was laying on the bed in the hallway. When we removed her sheet to transfer her, we saw that she wasn't wearing pants and was wearing only a pair of adult underwear — she also had a catheter and waste bag attached to her. This was the first transport I had done where the person seemed so helpless and for some reason it really got to me. I hated that the woman looked so sad and that there was such a lack of privacy concerning her needs. It made me realize that one day we all could be just like this woman. I think it's great that the Misericordia runs a service like this, but it also makes me sad to think that because of aging and human nature we will all need something like this someday. Watching this stranger have to deal with these outcomes was hard enough, let alone knowing that I will have to watch my loved ones go through the same thing. The redeeming part of all of this was that when we got to the second location, a nun was waiting for her arrival. As soon as we arrived, she took the woman's face in her hands and offered her words of comfort. At least the woman wasn't alone in her pain — someone was praying for her. I'm not sure why this experience touched me deeply, but it did. I can't forget the look in the woman's eyes as she stared at me from the stretcher. I guess it was just a reminder of how fragile life can be. It also showed me that while service can be hard, we must be willing to do it to help those in pain and so that we can carry the hope that one day someone will return the favor to us."

Comment: This excerpt is an example of empathy, the students identifies herself with the elderly Italian lady she's transported which shows a good level of integration.

6.5. Il Laboratorio

At "Il Laboratorio" students work with the mentally and/or physically disabled, carrying out activities and assisting the disabled.

> *"Questa settimana sento che i miei posti di servizio erano diverso. Sento che io essere piu' accettano di le altre persone che io lavoro con. Tutti parlano con me molto e dammi un bacio o abbraccio quando io sono arrivato. Sento che i altri volontari sentano felice quando io arrive ai miei posti. Questo fammi sentire importante come io sono una parte dei miei posti; specialmente al laboratorio. Sento che io posso parlare con i altri volontari migliore e senza paura."*
>
> ("This week I feel like my service places were different. I feel more accepted than other people I work with. Everybody talks to me and gives me kisses when I arrive. I feel like the other volunteers feel happy when I arrive at my places. This makes me feel important and as if I am a part of those places, especially at il laboratorio. I feel like I can speak better and more confidently with the other volunteers.")

Comment: The student is describing the exact time when the transition from being an observer to becoming an actor took place in her experience.

7. Developing RIC

In order to provide a further illustration of the progress a service-learning student makes in the development of Reflective Intercultural Competence, Table 1 is provided below that shows the path, week by week, of one service-learning student – as seen through her journal. In the first column the week is indicated (1-10), the second column is the RICA level and the motivation for the assignment of the level by the RICA team, and the third column shows the excerpts from that week's journal entry.

Table 1. The Progress of a Service-Learning Student in Developing Reflective Intercultural Competence
(Please note that the student's Italian has not been corrected but was left as it was written by the student.)

Week	RICA Level	Excerpt
1	Contact, Level 2: Examples of first superficial contacts with the host culture (city and host family)	"Although it was interesting to see a different part of Siena, I think more information could have been helpful." "I have been fortunate to have a family to speak some Italian, and to have a roommate who speaks good Italian and a family who speaks good English (although usually they don't)."

Week	RICA Level	Excerpt
2	Superficial Understanding, Level 4: Student starts adjusting/ showing proper cultural behavior/ habits	"Although it is challenging living with a host family, I am enjoying learning more about my host family and their values and customs. I've learned to turn off the lights always when I'm not using them, and breaking my habits from living in Asia of always taking off my shoes."
3	Deep Understanding, Level 5: Student shows genuine appreciation of their environment, people, transportation, host family	"I like that I begin to recognize the people on my bus, or who cross my path during the day, and that it is little enough that you can easily find people you know." "Although Florence was great fun, I was happy to come 'home' to Siena."
4	Superficial Understanding, Level 4: Student's statement indicates that they noticed and have thought about clear cultural differences with the C2	*"Anche in Italia, come e cose mangia e molto importante. Mangiane non e un obbligo ma e cosa di divertisi. La famiglia mangia insieme e la madre cucina di solito. La cena e un momento per chiaccierare, parlare con la famiglia."* ("Also in Italy, how and what is eaten is very important. Eating is not an obligation, but it's something to have fun. The family eats together, and the mother usually cooks. Dinner is a moment to chat, talk with the family.") *"L'americano medio mangia velocemente e mangiare e un obbligo. Di solito, la famiglia non mangia insieme, ma da solo."* ("The standard American eats fast and eating is an obligation. Usually the family doesn't eat together, but alone.")
5	Social Acting, Level 6: Student is fully integrated in all the main aspects of life in the community relating to the host-family, colleagues at service sites, bartender, bus driver etc.	*"Questo avvenimento mi e importante perche lo che io sembro che io incluso in questa communita. Adesso, io consco la famiglia che mi ospiti, l'amica da mensa dei poveri, la donna che lavora all caffe vicino a fontebranda, l'autista, ed altre persone che usa il mio autobus. Sono contento qui, perche benche non posso parlo bene, io conosco molte persone che mi support. Sono contenta, e felice da Siena, e io sembro fortunata per abito in la citta piu bella in tutta del mondo."* ("This event is important for me because it seems that I am included in this community. Now, I know the family that hosts me, the friend at the mensa dei poveri, the woman that works at the coffee house close to Fontebranda, the driver, and other people that use my bus. I am content here, because even though I cannot speak well, I know many people that support me. I am content, and happy about Siena, and I seem lucky for living in the most beautiful city in the world.")

Week	RICA Level	Excerpt
6	Social Acting, Level 6: Student fits in at all her service sites feeling confident, accepted and trusted by everybody	*"Quando sono andata al Mensa Dei Poveri, mi sento felice, perche ho Saputo che cosa ho dovuto fare. Ho parlato piu con le donne che laboranno li, e noi abbiamo rendeto molto. Mi sento piu confotare di parlare con persone che mangiano li, e il mio frase preferito ha diventato 'tutto posto?"* *Anche all laboratorio mi sento piu relessante percho io ho potuto parlare con le persone li. Anche ho capito piu che il laboratorio e una communita per persone con disabilita per si senta secure, non un luogo con una lista di attivita per finire.* *Mi sento piu felice alla scuolo e ho preparato piu. Ho capito che con i bambini e piu importante che loro provano parlare non solo disegnare."* ("When I went to the Mensa dei Poveri, I felt happy, because I knew what I had to do. I talked more with the women that work there, and we laughed a lot. I feel more comfortable talking with the people that eat there, and my favorite phrase has become 'tutto a posto? [all good?])' Also at the Laboratorio I feel more relaxed because I can talk to people there. Also I understood more that the Laboratorio is a community where people with disabilities feel secure, not a place with a list of activities to finish. I feel happier at the school and I prepared more. I understood that with children it is more important that they try to speak, not just draw.") *"Poi, quando sono andata al liceo mi sento piu fidicuoso (confident) perche ho capito piu il sistem nella classe. Ho realizzato che tutto situazione posso ridere, e se sono state felice, loro ha sequiata mi."* ("Then, when I went to the high school, I feel more confident because I understood the system in the class. I realized that I can laugh in every situation, and if I'm happy, they will follow me [be happy as well].")
7	Superficial Understanding, Level 4: Student makes a superficial cultural comparison based on a plain observation	*"Pero, la cosa che ho visto, che e state molto diverso e la moda di qui loro mangiano. Il primo giorno che ho mangiato con loro, sono supresato quando ho visto che non c'e' il cibo negli zaini di bambini, come negli stati uniti, ma solo i piatti."* ("But the thing I saw, that it is very different is the way they eat. The first day that I ate with them, I was surprised when I saw that there was no food in the children's backpacks, like in the United States, but only plates.") *"Questo e molto diverso di che cosa scceso negli stati uniti. Di solito, i bambini portano il pranzo da casa, e mangiano i cibi freddo, come un panino con verdura cotta."* ("This is very different from what happens in the United States. Usually children bring lunch from home, and eat cold food, like a sandwich with cooked vegetables.")

Week	RICA Level	Excerpt
8	Superficial Understanding, Level 4: Student makes a plain comparison over differences with the host culture on a common class procedure admitting their understanding is still very basic	*"Anche e interessante nelle scuole in Italia che professori si chiamano gli studen e cognome."* ("It is also interesting in schools in Italy that professors call the students by their last name.") *"Ogni volta che sono andata all scuola italiana, incluso asilo, elementario o liceo, ho notato qualcosa nuova. Penso che non posso capire questo sisteme quando sono qui, ma voglio imparare piu, di capire come questo sisteme funzione."* ("Every time I went to the Italian school, including kindergarten, elementary or high school, I noticed something new. I think that I will not be able to understand this system while I'm here, but I want to learn more, to understand how this system works.")
9	Social Acting, Level 6: Student's title "Things we have learned from Italians" rather than "Things that Italians do" clearly indicates that they are not spectators of such cultural behavior but actors	*"CHE COSA ABBIAMO IMPARATO DAGLI ITALIAN I"* (What we've learned from Italians): *Chi se deve asciugare i capelli se non vuole morire* (That hair must be dried if you don't want to die.) *L'olio e importante per titti i piatti* (Olive oil is important in all dishes.) *Il riscaldamento non e un diritto, pero una scelta* (Heating is not a right, but a choice.) *Che la cena insiema non deve essere mancata* (That dinner together should not be missed.) *Lentiche fanno bene per una persona* (Lentils are good for people.) *Se vuole essere sentito, parla piu alto* (If you want to be heard, you must speak louder.) *Che ci sono tanti modi per esprimere il rispetto agli altri* (That there are many ways to show respect for others.) *Che si puo sopravivere senza l'internet* (That it is possible to survive without internet.) *Che si deve alzare quando sale un anziano in autobus* (That you must stand up when an elderly person gets on the bus.) *Che si deve sempre spegnere le luci quando parte da una stanza* (That lights must be turned off when you leave the room.) *Che tempo libero va bene senza niente da fare* (That it is ok to have free time and nothing to do.) *Che si deve sempre indossare le patofole a casa* (That slippers must always be worn in the house.) *Che forse e meglio vivere su momento che salvara il corpo per dopo* (That maybe it is better to live the moment than to save the body for later.)

Week	RICA Level	Excerpt
		Che si puo bere l'alcol senza diventare belligerante (That one can drink alcohol without getting drunk.) *Se fa male la gola, indossa una sciarpa a letto* (If your throat hurts, wear a scarf to bed.) *Ne essere in ritardo ne essere in aticipio essistono* (Neither being late nor being early exist.) *Che Bob Dylan e il cantante migliore* (That Bob Dylan is the best singer.) *La tutta non esista, solo la tutta di alta moda* (Sweatsuits do not exist, only high fashion sweatsuits.) *Che i biscotti per colazione non e solo il sogno di ogni bambino* (That cookies for breakfast is not only every child's dream.) *Il umorismo e compassione si traduccono bene in ogni lungua e culture* (Humor and compassion translate well in every language and culture.)
10	Social Acting, Level 6: Student acknowledges that volunteering has been the means that made them feel as a part of the community, implying that their actions and not mere observation have been the key to fitting in the community	*"Questo servizio ha aiutatomi nel sentire come una parta della communita a Siena."* ("This service has helped me feel like a part of the community in Siena.")

8. Conclusion

We have seen how the city of Siena's centuries-old tradition of service to others has provided the International Center for Intercultural Exchange today with a perfect setting for the implementation of the institutional approach it has created, especially with regards to service.

The reflections generated by our students concerning their volunteering experience, channeled through the Reflective Writing classes and written down in their journals, are a rich source of material to monitor each student's level of Reflective Intercultural Competence.

Through the excerpts provided, one can see the type of reflection that indicates a Reflective Intercultural Competence. These are excerpts of students that truly became social actors in the host society thanks to their dedication to service-learning, which provided the right conditions and stimuli to foster the development of RIC.

9. Future Research Directions

This study provides the International Center with the beginnings of what will become several research efforts in the future. Research is currently underway on teacher training regarding the FICCS Approach, as well as the use of FICCS in other contexts through a project funded by the Lifelong Learning Programme of the EU called EUFICCS, which is experimenting the exportation of FICCS to two other European contexts: those of Portugal and Spain. Additionally, research will also be dedicated to the linguistic outcomes of FICCS students, as we observed some time ago that a greater language competence results from the acquisition of RIC. A further area of study will focus on the varying age groups of learners participating in programs offered at our Center and the impact that this factor may have on each group's development of RIC, from undergraduate students, to students who have completed their secondary education but have not yet begun their university education, to graduate students who we will begin hosting from Spring 2013 through a program of the International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership. Finally we would like to dedicate some research to whether or not it is feasible to apply some principles of the FICCS approach beyond a strictly academic setting.

References

Arciconfraternita della Misericordia di Siena. [Archconfraternity of Mercy of Siena] (2012). Retrieved from http://www.misericordiadisiena.it/la_storia-id-p41.php

Ash, Sarah L. & Clayton, Patti H. (2004). The articulated learning: An approach to reflection and assessment. *Innovative Higher Education, 29*, 137-154.

Ash, Sarah L.; Clayton, Patti H. & Atkinson, Maxine P. (2005). Integrating reflection and assessment to capture and improve student learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning, 11*(2), 49-60.

Balboni, Paolo E. (1994). *Didattica dell'italiano a stranieri [Didactics of Italian language for foreigners]*. Rome: Bonacci.

Balboni, Paolo E. (2007). *La comunicazione Interculturale [Intercultural Communication]*. Rome: Carocci.

Bennett, Milton & Bennett, Janet. (1986). A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity. International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 10(2), 179–196.

Bennett, Milton & Bennett, Janet. (2004). Developing intercultural sensitivity. In D. Landis, J. Bennett & M. Bennett (Eds.), *Handbook of intercultural training* (pp. 147-165). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publishing.

Biagi, Fiora; Bracci, Lavinia; Ruiz-Coll, Juan Carlos & Bella Owona, Jules M. (2012). Reflective intercultural competence (RIC) & its assessment: The RICA model. In Eliza J. Nash, Lavinia Bracci and Nevin C. Brown (Eds.), *Intercultural horizons: Best practices in intercultural competence development* (pp. 61-82). Newcastle Upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press.

Bracci, Lavinia & Filippone, Antonella. (2009). *L'educazione riflessiva interculturale:*

L'approccio FICCS allo studio della lingua e cultura italiana [Reflective intercultural education:The FICCS approach for the study of Italian language and culture]. Rome: Carocci.

Bringle, Robert G.; Hatcher, Julie A. & Jones Steven G. (Eds.). (2011). *International service learning: Conceptual frameworks and research.* Sterling, Virginia: Stylus Publishing.

Chisholm, Linda A. (2000). *Charting a hero's journey.* New York: The International Partnership for Service-Learning.

Chisholm, Linda A. (2004, rev. 2007). *Declaration of Principles.* New York: The International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership.

Cummins, James. (1979). Linguistic interdependence and the educational development of bilingual children. *Review of Educational Research, 49*(2 Spring), 222- 251. Washington DC: American Educational Research Association.

Cummins James. (1984). *Bilingualism and special education: Issues in assessment and pedagogy*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Coonan Carmen M. (2002). *La lingua straniera veicolare [The vehicular foreign language].* UTET Libreria, Torino.

Coonan, Carmen M. (2006). Il Quadro e gli scenari curricolari: la proposta CLIL [The Framework and curricular scenarios: The CLIL proposal]. In Mezzadri M. (Ed.) , *Integrazione Linguistica in Europa – Il Quadro comune di riferimento per le lingue [Linguistic Integration in Europe – The common Framework of reference for languages] (*pp. 143-164). UTET Università, Torino.

De Marco, Anna (Ed.) (2000). *Manuale di glottodidattica [Manual of glottodidactics]*. Rome: Carocci.

Ellis. Rod. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Eyler, Janet & Giles, Dwight E. (1999). *Where's the learning in service-learning?* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Furco, Andrew. (1996). Service-learning: A balanced approach to experiential education. In Barbara Taylor (Ed.), *Expanding boundaries: Service and learning* (pp. 2-6). Washington, DC: Corporation for National Service.

Giacalone Ramat, Anna. (Ed.) (2003). *Verso l'italiano [Towards the Italian language]*. Rome: Carocci.

Hammer, Mitchell R; Bennett, Milton J. & Wiseman, Richard L. (2003). Measuring intercultural sensitivity: *The intercultural development inventory. International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 2,* 675-695.

King, Patricia M. & Baxter Magolda, Marcia B. (2005). A developmental model of intercultural maturity. *Journal of College Student Development, 45*(6), 571-592.

Klein, Wolfgang. (1986). *Second language acquisition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Marsh, David & Langé, Gisella. (1999). *Implementing content and language integrated learning: A research-driven TIE-CLIL foundation course reader.* Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, Continuing Education Centre.

Marsh, David. (2002). *CLIL-Emile, The European dimension.* Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä.

Oberg, Kalvero. (1954). *Culture shock.*   The Bobbs-Merrill Reprint Series Np. A-329.

Plater, William M.; Jones, Steven G.; Bringle, Robert G. & Clayton, Patti H. (2009). Educating globally competent citizens through international service learning. In Ross Lewin (Ed.), *The handbook of practice and research in study abroad: Higher education and the quest for global citizenship* (pp. 485-505). New York: Routledge.

Serra Borneto, Carlo (Ed.). (1998). *C'era una volta il metodo [Once upon a time there was the method].* Carocci, Roma.

Serragiotto, Graziano. (2003). *CLIL – Apprendere insieme una lingua e contenuti non linguistici [CLIL – Learning language and non-linguistic content together].* Perugia: Guerra.

Serragiotto, Graziano. (2000). Il fattore culturale nell'insegnamento della lingua [The cultural factor in teaching language}. In Roberto Dolci & Paola Celentin (Eds.), *Formazione del docente di italiano a stranieri [Training the teacher of Italian language for foreigner] (pp.* 110-115). Rome: Bonacci.

Sordini, Beatrice. (2010). *Dentro l'antico ospedale [Inside the old hospital]*. Colle Val D'Elsa: Edizione speciale Fondazione Monte dei Paschi – Protagon.

Spitzberg, Brian M. & Changnon, Gabrielle. (2009). Conceptualizing intercultural competence. In Darla K. Deardorff (Ed.), *The SAGE handbook of intercultural competence* (pp. 2-47). Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

Tonkin, Humphrey (Ed.). (2004). *Service-learning across cultures: Promise and achievement. A Report to the Ford Foundation.* New York: The International Partnership for Service-Learning and Leadership.

United Board for Christian Higher Education in Asia and International Christian University. (2002). *Service-learning in Asia: Creating networks and curricula in higher education.* Tokyo: International Christian University.

Author Note

Lavinia Bracci is founder and director of Siena Italian Studies and the International Center for Intercultural Exchange. She has most recently co-authored a book on the FICCS (Full-Immersion: Culture Content and Service) instructional approach that she developed with the core team of instructors at SIS for the development of reflective intercultural competence entitled *L'educazione Riflessiva Interculturale: L'approccio FICCS allo Studio della Lingua e Cultura Italiana* [Reflective Intercultural Education: The FICCS Approach in the Study of Italian Language and Culture]. She has also published several articles on language learning and intercultural competence development,as well as co-edited a volume on the Intercultural Horizons conference held in Siena in May 2011.

Jules Martin Bella Owona holds a degree in teaching Italian Language and Culture from the Università per Stranieri di Siena, as well as a B.A. in Bilingual Studies French/English and M.A. in English Language Studies from the University of Yaounde, Cameroon. He has recently co-authored a paper on the RICA Model with colleagues at the International Center for Intercultural Exchange. He currently teaches Reflective Writing at Siena Italian Studies and

the International Center, and has contributed in the elaboration of some aspects of the FICCS approach.

Eliza J. Nash is a founding partner of Nove Culturae Ventures LLC, and the Associazione Culturale Ulisse, which collaborates with the International Center for Intercultural Exchange to organize study and cultural experiences in Siena, Italy. She currently serves as the Intercultural Development Coordinator at the International Center for Intercultural Exchange, working on the development and implementation of future study programs, conferences and publications. She has most recently co-edited a volume from the Intercultural Horizons conference in 2011, published by Cambridge Scholars Press.