STUDY ABROAD OUTCOMES ON COLLEGE STUDENTS: A GROUNDED THEORY

APPROACH TO MEASURING INTERCULTURAL AND MULTILINGUISTIC

COMPETENCY

A THESIS

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Abstract

The purpose of this exploratory research study was to examine intercultural competency gains from college students' study abroad experiences and to examine their perceptions of multilingualism. By drawing from multiple theories on intercultural competency and multilingualism and related research on studying abroad, measures of intercultural competency and multilinguistic competency were developed and explored. This research was conducted using a mixed-methods, grounded theory approach to answer the following research question: What is the relationship between intercultural competency and multilinguistic competency among college students who have studied abroad? A total of 27 current Colorado College students participated in this study, 27 in phase one where students answered a 63-item questionnaire distributed via an electronic survey, and two in the focus group second phase to collect qualitative data. All findings pointed towards a strong, positive relationship between the measures of intercultural and multilinguistic competency ($r = .695$), with an academic language course taken while abroad strengthening the relationship ($r = .760$). Immersion in the culture and language and forming relationships with locals were both noted by focus group participants as having an impact on their self-perceptions of multiculturalism and multilingualism. More research needs to be conducted with larger sample sizes to further support the findings of this study. Moreover, there are policy implications for colleges and universities to ensure quality study abroad programs that attract more diverse student populations, allow the students to participate in different study abroad opportunities throughout the academic year, and come back with resources to further maintain their learning outcomes.

Keywords: study abroad, intercultural competency, multiculturalism, multilingualism, multilinguistic competency, immersion, language, culture

Study Abroad Outcomes on College Students: A Grounded Theory Approach to Measuring

Intercultural and Multilinguistic Competency

As narratives are told about anywhere in the world, spread internationally, and more easily than ever due to growing digital spaces, people can see the world and decide where they want to explore. From 2017 to 2019, an increase of 1.6% occurred (341,751 to 347,099 students) for undergraduate students who studied abroad (IIE, 2020). With the number of students who participate in study abroad programs increasing year by year, the types of programs offered have increased to more variety in location, subject, and length. Short-term study abroad has remained a welcoming possibility for many students to travel with less financial and time commitments. Some undergraduate institutions are even structured to foster more short-term abroad experiences, like Colorado College where the present study was conducted. Colorado College is a small, liberal arts college that operates under the Block Plan, an unusual structure that breaks the academic year into eight 3-and-a-half week courses ("The Block Plan," 2022). Some of these courses, or "blocks," can be taken while abroad, therefore providing multiple blocks for short-term study abroad programs to take place.

The COVID-19 pandemic has drastically changed the ability of American college students to study abroad. Yet as border closures are beginning to open, one can expect students to continue to pursue the goal of studying abroad. Regardless of the reason a student decides to go abroad and what courses they (used as a singular pronoun) will take, if the country uses a foreign language there is both an expectation and a need to learn enough of the local language to communicate with other members of society and be comfortable getting around. According to the IIE's Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange (2020), 6.9% of students studied abroad specifically for Foreign Language and International Studies. Therefore,

researchers need to closely examine how students interact with and learn from the new cultures they experience and live in surrounded by new languages. Through these interactions and experiences, while studying abroad, a student can grow their intercultural competency (Williams, 2009; Perry et al., 2012; Nguyen, 2017; Bain & Yaklin, 2019).

For the sake of this research, intercultural competency can be broadly defined as "the ability to adapt behavior and communication to intercultural contexts using a variety of skills and knowledge" (Nguyen, 2017, p. 110). Closely related to intercultural competency is the concept of multiculturalism, but here these two terms will be used interchangeably. Understanding multilingualism is imperative to this study, so it will be defined here as the use of and/or competence in more than one language (Clyne, 2017). The degree to which an individual uses or feels competent in their multiple languages will vary, yet they can still identify as multilingual or as having multilinguistic competency.

Although not all students who go abroad are doing so with the desire to come back fluent in a foreign language, studying abroad for a language is still a drive for many young adults, and becoming multilingual and multicultural is expected after living abroad for some time. Importantly, studying abroad has been supported across the world by multiple different educational institutions and researchers as it provides the individual with "increased international awareness… the top-ranked benefit of an international experience abroad" (Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2014). As more students go abroad and come back with new learning outcomes, more research can and should be done on how studying abroad contributes to both intercultural competency and multilingualism.

The purpose of this exploratory research study was to examine intercultural competency gains from college students' study abroad experiences and to examine their perceptions of

multilingualism. By drawing from multiple theories on intercultural competency and multilingualism and related research on studying abroad, measures of intercultural competency and multilinguistic competency were developed and subsequently explored for further analysis. This research was conducted by attempting to answer the following research question: What is the relationship between intercultural competency and multilinguistic competency among college students who have studied abroad?

Theoretical Frameworks

The guiding framework of this study combines models of intercultural competency and multilingualism. First, a basis of Williams's (2009) Reflective Model of Intercultural Competency grounded the key variables measured and terms used (i.e., intercultural competency and multilinguistic competency). Then, a new approach was taken to apply this model to existing conceptualizations of multilingualism to develop a similar Reflective Model of Multilinguistic Competency. Intercultural and multilinguistic competencies gained from college study abroad experiences could then be explored and subsequently measured to identify possible relationships.

Looking at student gains in intercultural competency and student perceptions on how they feel they have changed after a study abroad experience is a primary focus of research on study abroad learning outcomes. The Reflective Model of Intercultural Competency is a framework outlined by Williams (2009) to gather primarily qualitative data from college students who have studied abroad about their perceptions of their intercultural competency. Williams breaks intercultural competency into three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The cognitive dimension explores an individual's knowledge about cultural norms, behaviors, values, and issues while also being open to new information and perspectives. The affective dimension describes someone's open-mindedness to new values and having respect and cross-cultural

empathy, which informs their flexibility to adapt to new situations. Finally, the behavioral

dimension defines an individual possessing critical skills like problem-solving or

resourcefulness, as being interculturally competent. Looking at these three dimensions together,

one can assess someone's gains in intercultural competency with the desired outcomes of having

an increase in understanding of international and cultural issues, flexibility, and open-

mindedness and curiosity, all of which go into what students call becoming a more global person

(Duff, 2015).

One commonly used theoretical framework for research on outcomes of undergraduate

students who studied abroad is Mezirow's (1991) Transformative Learning Theory. Although not

directly drawn from for this research, this theory grounds much of the recent work on short-term

study abroad experiences, which is relevant here as such shorter trips are becoming increasingly

common among current undergraduate college students, especially at the institution where this

research was conducted (Rowan-Kenyon & Niehaus, 2011; Biber, 2020; "Global Education,"

2021). Transformative Learning Theory (TLT) is founded on the concept of "disorienting

dilemmas," defined as "experiential activities or thought-provoking scenarios and the

opportunity for new perspectives to be developed" (Perry et al., 2012, p. 681). These disorienting

dilemmas are seen as catalysts for change, and one major disorienting dilemma is studying

abroad. Many situations throughout college students' study abroad experiences are bound to be

unexpected. Studying abroad is culturally disorienting, but it can also at the same time be

linguistically disorienting if there is a foreign language used in the country where the student

studies abroad.

When elaborating on TLT, Perry, et al. (2012) neglect the specific role that language

plays in many disorienting dilemmas abroad. Their article uses the term "meaning making" (p.

680) when discussing how students reflect on their disorienting dilemmas abroad, but they never explicitly mention the word language. While the focus in TLT is on how a college student interprets and explains what happened to them while studying abroad, meaning-making unique to their native language affects how they go through narration and critical reflection. Language influences how one thinks, processes new information, and explains their thoughts and emotions (Duff, 2015). Because people need language to interpret what happened to them during study abroad, language then must play a significant role in TLT.

Before this study, no measures have been specifically conducted on multilinguistic competency. To measure multilinguistic competency in this study, an innovative approach was taken to establish a Reflective Model of Multilinguistic Competency drawing from the aforementioned model of intercultural competency. Clyne (2017) makes it clear that multilingualism can and does contribute to multiculturalism. Because the model of intercultural competency used here has three dimensions (cognitive, affective, behavioral), those same three dimensions will be applied to multilinguistic competency. The cognitive dimension refers to listening, speaking, and writing proficiency in more than one language. The affective dimension revolves around knowing how to use modes of respect within multiple languages, and overall, respectfully using more than one language with an open mind. The behavioral dimension is about problem-solving skills and resourcefulness specifically used when communicating effectively in multiple languages. Moving forward with this model, the present study will address the need to explore and find the unknown, possible relationship between intercultural and multilinguistic competency.

Intercultural Competency

Bain and Yaklin (2019) elaborated on how students in study abroad programs can become more interculturally competent: "Learners are challenged best to change their life perspectives and overcome biases through reflection, active learning, and placing [themselves] in uncomfortable situations" (p. 2). This is essentially the concept of going outside your comfort zone which occurs in study abroad experiences. Studying abroad presents many new opportunities for reflection on one's already held beliefs and allows for new global perspectives to foster. Recent studies (e.g., Nguyen, 2017) have been using and adapting the Intercultural Effectiveness Scale (IES) created by Mendenhall et al. (2012) to measure intercultural competency among college students who participated in a study abroad program. Broken into dimensions similar to Williams's model, such as self-awareness, global mindset, and relationship interest, this measure is another way of describing study abroad outcomes in intercultural competency. Trends in increasing intercultural competency scores were measured among Nguyen's (2017) participants, and these gains were maintained in a follow-up three months later.

Other studies observing intercultural competency from students who studied abroad draw directly from TLT (Mezirow, 1991; Perry et al., 2012). Elola and Oskoz (2009) used blogging as a tool for students to reflect on their experiences from studying abroad and compared results to students who stayed in the United States. The researchers argued that there is a difference in intercultural competency between a student who takes a foreign language class at home and a student who is studying abroad in a country immersed in a foreign language. Notably, a positive effect on the affective dimension of intercultural competency was shown among students who studied abroad since students who remained at home were not confronted with "daily experiences [that] forced them to cope with diverse aspects of the target language" (Elola & Oskoz, 2009, p. 470), resulting in increased coping strategies. This could be seen as a positive

effect on those students' multilinguistic competency, showing there may be a relationship between the two concepts.

Short-term Study Abroad

Research on study abroad experiences for college students has often made distinctions between short-term trips, meaning as short as a couple of weeks to a month, to long-term trips, such as a semester or year-long programs. Arguments have been made about the more significant and long-lasting outcomes and gains from longer study abroad experiences, as the more time one spends in a foreign culture and/or surrounded by a foreign language, the more one will come to understand how to navigate such a place (Kim, 2015). Despite this, intercultural competency gains and language proficiency gains are still evident in shorter abroad programs (Mapp, 2012). Bain and Yaklin (2019) argued that "an effective study abroad experience provides a rich cultural experience regardless of the length of stay… students can be culturally enriched even on short-term trips" (p. 3). Geyer et al. (2017) found that short-term study abroad programs impacted college students' leadership skills and future career aspirations, which are related to and influenced by a new desire for multiculturalism after living in another culture.

Colorado College continues to operate its block-abroad and half-semester study abroad programs to provide students with multiple opportunities throughout the year to fulfill study abroad goals. However, it is important to note that longer immersion is often needed for long-lasting learning outcomes, chiefly language learning (Kim, 2015). According to Rowan-Kenyon and Niehaus (2011), short-term study abroad programs can still have powerful impacts on the students if the students extend what was learned while abroad to life at home, essentially carrying on those learning experiences and integrating their new knowledge into their lives in some way.

The Link Between Language and Culture

Language is not only a part of one's overall identity but also specifically a part of one's cultural identity (Watson & Wolfel, 2015). An American college student may enter a study abroad experience monolingual, knowing only English, but willing to explore and use the foreign language(s) of where they study abroad. A different student may already be bi- or multilingual, with any number of second languages (L2), before they embark on a study abroad program. Being involved in the local culture is just as important as studying the country's language(s) as the two intersect continuously and influence each other. Because language and culture are so intertwined, language also has a significant role in one's understanding and appreciation of another culture.

Isabelli-García et al. (2018) demonstrated that studying abroad can be viewed as a significant experience where "L2 identity development is likely to be observable in students' narratives of their experiences" (p. 461). The study abroad experience is therefore seen as more than just a language learning environment since culture plays such a large role in understanding how to use a new language. Immersion is a huge factor in a student's L2 identity, which can be influenced by homestays or specific cultural excursions and activities.

One key area of research regarding study-abroad outcomes for college students has started to focus on the interrelationship between language and culture. While intercultural competency gains from study abroad experiences have been measured, where language fits in with these results has not been concretely determined yet. Watson and Wolfel (2015) explicitly explored this unknown relationship by looking at the gains in both language proficiency and intercultural competency after college students went on a semester abroad. Results showed an average score increase in language proficiency gains along with statistically significant gains in

intercultural competency across languages (M = 5.53, p = .001, M = 3.85, p = .006). The key influence on this relationship was what the researchers called "socialization aspects" (Watson & Wolfel, 2015, p. 57), such as the amount of time spent interacting with the native speakers of the country where the student studied abroad. These unique situations involve both intercultural and multilinguistic learning, showing how both competencies can increase in the same scenario and affect each other.

Multilingualism and Multilinguistic Competency

Duff (2015) asserted that multilingualism is closely tied to one's identity. Mitchell et al. (2020) recently conducted a study on postgraduates reflecting on their long-term study abroad experiences. They were specifically interviewed on their maintenance of the foreign language they studied during their time abroad. The participants' linguistic self-concepts, that is self-identifying as multilingual or not, were closely examined, with consideration of possible "different language selves" being associated with each language they use, coming together to create one "superordinate ideal multilingual self" (p. 329). The researchers argued that such a sense of self leads to a higher motivation to continue to learn more languages or improve their varying language proficiencies after immersion abroad. The follow-up results demonstrated this assumption, as "…whether claiming bi- or multilingual status or not, it seemed that most participants were thinking of themselves positively as bilingual or multilingual users, and no longer learners" (p. 339). Some participants even noted an interest in continuing to learn and use more languages to maximize their international and professional status. Having a clear multilingual identity coupled with high intercultural competency allows one to participate in globalization.

Barkhuizen (2017) also touched on the linguistic self-concept as a conception of an individual's multilingual identity or multilinguistic competency shaped specifically by study abroad experiences. He argued that a student's personal development is enhanced by a study abroad experience full of new, disorienting situations (Mezirow, 1991; Perry et al., 2012), particularly when a foreign language is involved. Increased international awareness (Egron-Polak & Hudson, 2014) and the dimensions of intercultural competency (Williams, 2009) are relevant to these findings as students who sought after and participated in study abroad strived for personal growth after using the L2 in social interactions. Both an individual's intercultural competency and multilinguistic competency are key aspects of their personal development during and after these study abroad experiences.

Students have demonstrated an appreciation for multilingualism in addition to multiculturalism, as they "mention humility about their lack of language skills, appreciation for those who are trying to learn a new language, and confidence in their own skills and ability to learn" (Williams, 2009, p. 300). To have conversations with locals when abroad in a country where the student is studying a foreign language requires at least some understanding of that language. One significant factor for an individual growing their multilingual linguistic self-concept is having developed close personal relationships with the people in the country/culture where they studied abroad, also known as socialization aspects (Watson & Wolfel, 2015). Students noted a desire to be around others who are multilingual; because of the close relationship between language and culture, this also means surrounding themselves with people who feel more multicultural like themselves. For undergraduate college students, the study abroad experience "confirms their sense of self as distinctive language people, heightens their sense of self-efficacy as multilingual users, and strengthens their emotional attachment to

languages" (Mitchell et al., 2020, p. 340). This point can be seen as closely related to all three

dimensions of the Reflective Model of Multilinguistic Competency drawn from Williams's

(2009) Reflective Model of Intercultural Competency.

When college students participate in a study abroad program, they are required to

mentally challenge their cultural and social norms as they are presented with a new environment

and culture. A key part of growing one's intercultural competency while abroad in a country that

uses a foreign language is understanding that language to a significant enough degree to further

understand cultural norms and what is acceptable in speech, such as manners of respect or

nonverbal communication. Thus, one can see how language plays a role in intercultural

competency gains when someone studies abroad surrounded by not only a foreign culture but

also a foreign language. Notably, in Williams's (2009) subsequent study using her Reflective

Model of Intercultural Competency, language was identified as playing a key role in the

behavioral dimension of students' intercultural competency gains after studying abroad:

"Students also find that trying to communicate in a foreign language requires resourcefulness,

such as using non-verbal gestures [and] rephrasing" (p. 300). Therefore, an exploration of

multiple language use, gains, and related identities can and should be conducted in study abroad

research. Some researchers have begun to consider looking at intercultural competency and

multilingualism more closely together, as suggested by the term "intercultural communicative

competence" (Byram, 2009, p. 325), yet an exploration of the two competencies as separate

variables with possible relationships between them is still to be conducted. In the present study, a

new approach was taken through the development of multilinguistic competency based on the

model of intercultural competency. These two measurable variables were explored to answer the

research question: What is the relationship between intercultural competency and multilinguistic competency among college students who have studied abroad?

Method

To address the research question, a mixed-methods, grounded theory design was used in this research study to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) is appropriate for this research as it is used to study some phenomena while exploring new relationships found in data to form new hypotheses. For this study, the phenomenon was college study abroad in a country where the predominant language(s) are foreign to the student, and through examination of this phenomenon, the aim was to discover new relationships between intercultural competency and multilinguistic competency. Data collection occurred in two phases, with quantitative data being primarily gathered in phase one and qualitative data being primarily gathered in phase two. By collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, possible answers to the research question were attempted to be found.

Participants

Participants included 27 current undergraduate college students at Colorado College at least 18 years of age, 27 in the first phase of data collection and two in the second phase drawn from the sample of participants in phase one. As of 2022, the college reported that 70-80% of students study abroad for academic credit at least once before they graduate ("Global Education"). Although no participant demographic information was collected in the first phase, one female and one male student participated in the focus group in phase two of data collection. Colorado College's population is 55.0% female, 43.2% male, and 1.8% other gender identities ("Diversity," 2020). Participants were initially recruited in two ways: 1) Purposive and convenient sampling via text messaging through personal connections with the researcher, and 2)

Submission of a Blueforms request of all current Colorado College students who have studied abroad at least once while attending the undergraduate institution. Before any data collection with adult participants began, IRB approval was received via the Colorado College IRB Interaction Research Exemption Determination Form. All participants in phase one were required to read and agree to the Colorado College IRB Online Survey Consent Form before participating, and participants in phase two had to read and sign the Colorado College IRB Standard Consent Form before taking part in the focus group. No personal identifying information was collected from the participants throughout both phases and complete anonymity was utilized to protect confidentiality in all recorded data.

Instruments

In phase one of data collection, a questionnaire was created to gather primarily quantitative data. The questionnaire began with two categorical questions on whether the participant studied abroad more than once or not, and if they took an academic course on the language of the country/countries they studied abroad. Then, participants answered a total of 60 5-point Likert scale statements ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." The first 30 statements correlated to intercultural competency while the last 30 correlated to multilinguistic competency. To further break the competencies down in data analysis, 10 statements were made per each dimension of intercultural competency and multilinguistic competency. Additionally, two yes-no questions began the questionnaire to ask if the student had studied abroad more than once and if the student took an academic course in the foreign language of the country where they studied abroad. One short response question asked participants in what place(s) they studied abroad. See Appendix A for the full 60-item questionnaire.

The reliability of the scales used in the questionnaire was tested for all scaled items, including each of the three variables under intercultural competency and under multilinguistic competency (six total), each of the variables separated by during and after study abroad agreement (12 total), and total intercultural competency and total multilinguistic competency. All the scales used for measuring intercultural competency and multilinguistic competency in the present study had good internal consistency, with Cronbach alpha coefficients all exceeding the threshold of .7. Notably, the Cronbach alpha coefficient for total intercultural competency was .958, and for total multilinguistic competency, it was .935.

In phase two of data collection, a set of open-ended questions were used in the focus group to collect qualitative data about each participant's experiences in college study abroad and personal outcomes. All questions allowed participants to give answers in their own words with as much time as needed to fully respond. Due to the nature of a focus group, participants were able to take time to reflect or add more to their responses after hearing what the other participant said.

The dependent variables measured were intercultural competency and multilinguistic competency, totaled and broken down into the three dimensions, cognitive, affective, and behavioral, and during and after perceptions. The independent variables were times studied abroad (more than once or only once), an academic course on the language of the country taken, and location of study abroad.

Procedure

An online survey using Qualtrics© administered the questionnaire for phase one of data collection. Participants received access to the online survey through e-mails or text messages. Completion could be done using a mobile phone or computer. The survey began with an online consent form that confirms they are at least 18 years of age and willing to participate.

Participants then answered the closed-ended questions, one short response question, and the

scaled agreement questions. The survey used skip logic to ensure that certain questions were

only presented to the survey taker based on what they have previously answered. At the end of

the survey, participants could enter their email, voluntarily, if they wished to be contacted for

phase two of the research. Also, at the end of the survey, participants could provide their email to

be entered in the drawing for an incentive.

　　　　Before participants took part in the focus group, they had to read, sign, and return a

consent form emailed to them that confirmed they are participating voluntarily and are at least 18

years of age. The focus group was conducted virtually online using Zoom. The researcher posed

open-ended questions to the participants, offering time for reflection and discussion between

participants. Participants were not required to have their cameras on as only the audio of what

they shared in response was necessary for data collection. Audio from the focus group was

recorded through Zoom software and later transcribed using Temi©. Any names of the

participants mentioned were substituted with simply "participant" to protect confidentiality.

Data Analysis

　　　　After data from the questionnaire was collected, it was exported from Qualtrics© to IBM

SPSS for data clean-up, scale reliability testing, and statistical data analysis on the scaled

questions and categorical grouping data. From this point forward, all data reporting on

intercultural competency will use the abbreviation IC and all data reporting on multilinguistic

competency will use the abbreviation MC. Six totals from the scaled responses were created after

assigning numerical values to each of the five possible responses (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 =

Strongly Agree): total IC score and total MC score, total IC during and after, and total MC

during and after. High, low, and mean scores of total IC and total MC were then calculated.

Categorical data of the independent variables (studied abroad once or more than once, taken an academic course on the foreign language of the country when studied abroad, location studied abroad) was analyzed. Relationships between the total scores (the dependent variables) were then analyzed: total IC to MC correlation; during and after IC and MC correlations (during IC, after IC; during MC, after MC; during IC, during MC; after IC, after MC). Partial correlation was also conducted to look at possible relationships between variables when controlling for some of the categorical, independent variables.

Once the focus group was finished, a transcript was created from the audio recording. The transcript was read through so errors could be fixed and filler words like "um" or "uh" could be removed (Appendix B). Direct quotes that stood out were highlighted to then later be coupled with relevant statistical data. The qualitative data gathered in the phase two focus group was used to support the quantitative data gathered in phase one.

Results

Out of 27 total participants who completed the online questionnaire, five stated they studied abroad more than once, leaving 22 participants who only studied abroad one time while at their undergraduate institution. Twenty-one (21) participants reported they took an academic course on the foreign language of the country they studied abroad, leaving seven participants who did not take any academic courses on their study abroad country's language(s) (Table 1).

Table 1

Frequency Data on Categorical Variables

Students Who Studied Abroad More Than Once	Students Who Studied Abroad Only Once	Students Who Took an Academic Language Course While Abroad	Students Who Did Not Take an Academic Language Course While Abroad
5	22	21	7

Participants went to countries all over the world for their study abroad experiences, with popular destinations being Italy (*n* = 6), Spain (*n* = 5), and Germany (*n* = 4). Other countries were studied abroad in by either two participants or only one (Table 2).

Table 2

Study Abroad Destinations

			Countries*				
Italy	Spain	Germany	Czech Republic	Denmark	Hungary	Thailand	Brazil
6	5	4	2	2	2	2	1
China	Ecuador	France	Greece	Peru	Portugal	Russia	Serbia
1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1

[a]Some student participants studied abroad more than once, so the total number under countries exceeds the total number of participants.

Once intercultural competency (IC) and multilinguistic competency (MC) were totaled for all participants, preliminary analyses were performed to check for violations of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. Because the sample size was less than 50, normality will be assessed by referring to the Shapiro-Wilk Sig. values. The Sig. value for total IC was .029, a result less than .05 which indicates a violation of normality among this data. The Sig. value for the total MC score was .344, a non-significant result greater than .05 which indicates normality among this data. Therefore, when testing the correlation between these two total variables, a non-parametric correlation was used.

An assessment of the high, low, and mean scores for all participants in both intercultural competency and multilinguistic competency was conducted. The lowest possible score for total intercultural or multilinguistic competency would be 30, if a participant strongly disagreed with every scaled item, while the highest possible score would be 150 if a participant strongly agreed

with every scaled item. For total intercultural competency, the lowest score was 94, and the

highest score was 150. The average IC score among participants was 132.00 For total

multilinguistic competency, the lowest score was 90, and the highest score was 150. The average

MC score among participants was 121.15 (Table 3).

Table 3

High, Low, and Average Total Scores for IC and MC

	High	Low	Average (Mean)
IC	150	94	132.00
MC	150	90	121.15

The relationship between total IC and total MC was investigated using the Spearman rho

correlation coefficient. Because a violation of the assumption of normality was found, analysis

was continued using non-parametric correlations. There was a strong, positive correlation

between the two variables, $r = .695$, $n = 24$, $p < .001$, with a high IC score associated with a high

MC score (Table 4).

Table 4

Correlation Between IC and MC

			IC	MC
Spearman's rho	IC	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.695[*]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<.001
		N	24	24
	MC	Correlation Coefficient	.695[*]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.
		N	24	27

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Partial correlation was then used to explore the relationship between total IC and total

MC, while controlling for whether the participant took an academic course in the language of the

country in which they studied abroad. There was a strong, positive, partial correlation between

total IC and total MC, controlling for *academic course* taken on the country's language, r = .760,

n = 21, p < .001, with a high IC score being associated with a high MC score. An inspection of

the zero-order correlation (r = .655) suggested that controlling for *academic course* on the

country's language taken had an effect on the strength of the relationship between these two

variables (Table 5).

Table 5

Partial Correlation Between IC and MC Controlling for Academic Language Course Taken

Control Variables			IC	MC
-none-	IC	Correlation	1.000	.655
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	<.001
		df	0	22
	MC	Correlation	.655	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	<.001	.
		df	22	0
	Academic Language Course Taken	Correlation	.253	-.235
		Significance (2-tailed)	.233	.238
		df	22	25
Academic Language Course Taken	IC	Correlation	1.000	.760
		Significance (2-tailed)	.	<.001
		df	0	21
	MC	Correlation	.760	1.000
		Significance (2-tailed)	<.001	.
		df	21	0

Totals were also calculated of intercultural and multilinguistic competencies broken

down between participant perceptions during and after their study abroad experiences.

Preliminary analyses were performed for all four totals to check for violations of the assumptions

of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity. Because the sample size was less than 50,

normality will be assessed referring to the Shapiro-Wilk Sig. values. The Sig. value for total IC

score during study abroad was .029 and for total IC after study abroad it was .006, both results

less than .05 which indicates a violation of normality among this data. The Sig. value for total

MC score during study abroad was .404 and for total MC score after study abroad it was .450,

both non-significant results greater than .05 which indicates normality among the data.

Therefore, when testing correlations between IC and MC during or after totals, non-parametric

correlations were used.

The relationship between total IC during study abroad and total IC after study abroad was

investigated using Spearman rho correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were performed to

check for violations of the assumptions of normality, and since a violation was found, analysis

was continued using non-parametric correlations. There was a strong, positive correlation

between the two variables, $r = .692$, $n = 24$, $p < .001$, with a high IC score associated with a high

MC score (Table 6).

Table 6

Correlation Between During IC Total and After MC Total

			During IC Total	After IC Total
Spearman's rho	During IC Total	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.692[*]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<.001
		N	25	24
	After IC Total	Correlation Coefficient	.692[*]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.
		N	24	25

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between total IC during study abroad and total MC during study abroad

was investigated using Spearman rho correlation coefficient. Preliminary analyses were

performed to check for violations of the assumptions of normality, linearity, and

homoscedasticity, and since a violation was found, analysis was continued using non-parametric

correlations. There was a medium-strength, positive correlation between the two variables, $r =$

.425, $n = 25$, $p = .034$, with a high IC score associated with a high MC score (Table 7).

Table 7

Correlation Between During IC Total and During MC Total

			During IC Total	During MC Total
Spearman's rho	During IC Total	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.425[*]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.034
		N	25	25
	During MC Total	Correlation Coefficient	.425[*]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.034	.
		N	25	27

*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between total IC after study abroad and total MC after study abroad was

investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. There was a strong, positive

correlation between the two variables, $r = .784$, $n = 25$, $p < .001$, with a high IC score associated

with a high MC score (Table 8).

Table 8

Correlation Between After IC Total and After MC Total

		After IC Total	After MC Total
After IC Total	Pearson Correlation	1	.784[*]
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<.001
	N	27	25
After MC Total	Pearson Correlation	.784[*]	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	
	N	25	25

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The relationship between total MC during study abroad and total MC after study abroad was investigated using Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Because preliminary analyses checking for violations of the assumptions of normality found a violation, analysis was continued using non-parametric correlations. There was a strong, positive correlation between the two variables, $r = .636$, $n = 27$, $p < .001$, with a high IC score associated with a high MC score (Table 9).

Table 9

Correlation Between During MC Total and After MC Total

			During MC Total	After MC Total
Spearman's rho	During MC Total	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.656[*]
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	<.001
		N	27	27
	After MC Total	Correlation Coefficient	.656[*]	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	.
		N	27	27

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

To explain and elaborate on the quantitative findings, quotes from the qualitative findings in the focus group will be used in support. The participants, referred to as Participant 1 and Participant 2, each provided rich narratives and self-perceptions on their study abroad experiences while answering the various questions. Participant 1 studied abroad for a semester in Italy, lived in an apartment in Florence yet traveled across the country on the weekends, and took one academic course on the Italian language. Participant 2 took one Colorado College summer block-abroad in Italy without an academic course taken specifically on Italian; she also

participated in one semester-long program in Germany, following one academic course on the

German language. As both the quantitative and qualitative data were first being looked over,

many questions were posed about the possible relationship between intercultural competency and

multilinguistic competency: How does learning another language while studying abroad affect a

college student's intercultural competency? In what ways does understanding and respecting

another culture (intercultural competency) appear through studying a foreign language while a

student is abroad?

Because a strong, positive correlation was found between total IC and total MC ($r =$

.695), it can be said there is a relationship between intercultural competency and multilinguistic

competency. Both participants in the focus group were asked about their perception of this

possible relationship. Participant 1 said, "I think multilinguistic competency leads itself to

intercultural competency because attempting to speak in someone's language is a part of being

culturally respectful and aware." This participant is noting the role language has on

understanding another culture and how that influences one's intercultural competency, which is

supported by Watson and Wolfel's (2015) findings. Participant 2 said that she thinks the two

competencies are connected, but not that "one is dependent on the other." She went on to

elaborate on the specific aspects of intercultural competencies, such as the affective dimension,

that one can only understand to a significant enough degree if someone lives in a foreign culture

and speaks the local language, rather than just studying both the language and culture in the U.S.

This participant's perspective is directly in line with what Isabelli-García et al. (2018) explored:

immersion. Both participants went on shorter-term study abroad programs, the blocks abroad,

but Participant 2 also went on a semester program. Immersion can occur in short- or long-term

study abroad programs, as asserted by Kim (2015), Geyer et al. (2017), Mapp (2012), and Bain

and Yaklin (2019), and the focus group participant still felt immersed in all their experiences.

Importantly, Participant 1 argued, "I think language is definitely a part of culture and you

can't totally immerse and give yourself over to a culture without attempting to speak." Clearly, to

feel culturally immersed in a foreign country when studying abroad, the perception is that

learning the foreign language furthers that immersion and connection. Participant 1 said it

contributed to his sense of being a "global citizen,' and that "if I wanted to travel and have a

connection to another place it would be important for me to speak their language and be able to

form relationships with people there." He mentioned a few times a friendship he developed with

a local café barista he saw and spoke with daily, something he noted as forever memorable from

his semester-long study abroad experience. Nguyen (2017) found through Mendenhall et al.'s

(2012) IES that this relationship interest is a key component of growing one's intercultural

competency. Building relationships with the locals primarily using their language also increases

one's multilinguistic competency and creates a personal connection for using that language as it

resulted in something meaningful. These socialization aspects were also noted by Watson &

Wolfel (2015) as imperative in their study for the students growing their multilingual linguistic

self-concept, so it makes sense this was an important part of the study abroad experience

highlighted by the participants in the focus group. Participant 2 emphasized her want to learn the

local language to a high enough degree to speak with people in both Italy and Germany and be

able to get around because she "understood the power of it and how useful it is."

The partial correlation between participant perceptions of their intercultural competency

and multilinguistic competency while controlling for an academic language course taken showed

that this variable affected students' intercultural competency ($r = .760$). Participant 2 said that

directly studying the local language "makes you feel a little bit more like you're closer to the place that you're in." Similarly, Participant 1 said it allowed him to "have more meaningful interactions, create more relationships that I otherwise wouldn't have, and feel more at home," which is supported by Elola and Oskoz's (2009) findings. While learning a new language contributes to someone's multilinguistic competency, what is interesting about what both participants said is that it also affected their sense of globalization and belonging in more than one place. Because the research design used for this study was grounded theory, the possible relationship between the measured variables, intercultural and multilinguistic competency, was unknown; however, looking at both relationship building while abroad and academic language courses taken, one can see strength in the relationship between the students' competencies.

Because multilinguistic competency scores were high for all participants (121.15), one can assert that the participants' sense of a multilingual identity changed after their study abroad experience(s). Additionally, both participants in the focus group stated they felt more multilingual after their time abroad in a country surrounded by a foreign language. Participant 2 entered her study abroad experiences already considering herself multilingual, with English and Spanish being the languages she speaks and uses. She did note that she felt "a little bit more multilingual afterward," having spent months in Italy and Germany for two different programs, although she noted she would not add German to her multilingual identity due to a lack of interest. This participant's linguistic self-concept is multilingual, so the concept of "different language selves" (Mitchell et al., 2020, p. 329) can be applied to this perception of her approach to the different languages she knows and has studied. It would be interesting to explore in the future how students who have studied abroad and studied foreign languages feel about this concept and how they would put together their multilingual identity.

On a different note, participant one stated, "I have more of a multilinguistic identity, even though I'm not bilingual." He made this unique distinction between multilingual and bilingual which could indicate a feeling of not being fluent enough in the language he studied abroad (Italian) to use such a label for languages he speaks and uses regularly. He later noted his ability to translate for his friends who spoke and understood much less Italian, showing he still felt more like a multilingual user as a result of his semester-long study abroad program. Fitting the role of a translator can be seen as taking on a more international, globalized role in society, as argued by Mitchell et al. (2020), especially when coupled with identifying as a multilingual user, as this participant did.

Important to the name of the theoretical framework grounding this research is the word "reflective" (Williams, 2009). Hence, the survey questions were broken into participant perceptions of their IC and MC during their study abroad experience(s) and *after* those experiences. Participant 2 said something that stood out as a powerful, self-reflective moment:

> I feel like you don't realize how immersed you are until you leave… I felt more
> multicultural or multilingual after I left because I was bringing those things that were a
> part of my life when I was living abroad home with me and thinking about them.

She compared how she felt while abroad to after when at home and having brought new learnings home with her and realized a new sense of multicultural and multilingual identity (Duff, 2015) brought back. The quantitative findings also support this as when looking at correlations between during and after IC and MC scores, the strongest correlation was between after IC and after MC ($r = .784$), showing again how reflecting on and interpreting disorienting dilemmas like studying abroad experiences (Mezirow, 1991; Perry et al., 2012) results in a greater sense of both intercultural and multilinguistic competency. Williams (2009), Rowan-

Kenyon and Niehaus (2011), Perry et al. (2012), and Barkhuizen (2017) all support this reflective nature of how one grows their multilingual identity after study abroad experiences.

Limitations

This study is limited to one group of students at one undergraduate institution. The college population the sample was drawn from has a majority of White female students, although no demographics were collected from the 27 participants in phase one of data collection so no assumptions can be made about the race or gender of phase one participants. Regardless, due to the small sample size, these results cannot be generalized to other populations.

The COVID-19 pandemic beginning in late 2019 drastically changed how all people around the world travel and interact with others. Because of major border closures, international travel, including studying abroad, came to a halt. Therefore, statistics on United States' undergraduate student participation in study abroad presented in this study focused on data gathered *before* the pandemic. Although the world is slowly allowing more international travel and study abroad programs to now continue almost as before, there was a great change in how many college students were able to study abroad from 2020 through 2022. As a result, many of the limitations in this study stem from issues related to the pandemic. The sample size was particularly small because the pandemic limited students at Colorado College from being able to embark on a study abroad trips for over a year. While the college population itself is quite small, the population of total current students who studied abroad, who were all sent the questionnaire to take, was also small, limiting the quantity and variety in responses.

Given academic and time constraints, only two participants were able to take part in the phase two focus group; it would have been more beneficial to this research if more students could have participated in this part of data collection so more narrations of study abroad

experiences could be heard. Also given various time constraints, no pre-tests or post-tests of intercultural competency and multilinguistic competency were able to be conducted or subsequently evaluated to compare across results. In future research at this undergraduate institution on study abroad experiences, it would be interesting to have a more longitudinal study on student gains in intercultural and multilinguistic competency. These limitations prompt the question of if similar results would be found in future studies where researchers used a large sample size drawing from a larger undergraduate population, or across multiple institutions.

Implications

There are many implications this research study has for undergraduate college students' intercultural and multilingual identities in addition to policymaking. As the world increasingly recognizes globalization and multilingualism as important characteristics of the workforce, adults growing their intercultural and multilinguistic competencies early is crucial, and studying abroad in college is an ideal time for relevant experiences. Mitchell et al. (2020) noted in their study that years after their study abroad experience, while only a few participants entered language-centered careers (e.g., teaching a second or foreign language), many more participants found ways to weave and maintain their multilingual identity in their workplace. Supported also by the participants in the focus group who demonstrated their importance of having both a multicultural and multilingual identity, it is clear that study abroad programs promote such identity building.

With high intercultural competency being associated with high multilinguistic competency, one can imply that more study abroad programs should be structured around learning a foreign language in addition to a foreign culture. The two are intertwined, and since results showed that the relationship between intercultural competency and multilinguistic

competency becomes stronger when an academic language course is taken while the student is

abroad, more research should be conducted to explore this relationship further. Since many

undergraduate institutions require students to take courses in one foreign language to some

degree, one possible implication from the results of this study is having students take their

required foreign language course(s) abroad.

There are also a few important policy implications from the results of this study. Student

participants noted benefits in having both intercultural competency and multilinguistic

competency, which grow for the individual through a study abroad experience. However, a major

component of studying abroad that results in positive outcomes and changes in a student's

intercultural competency is the quality of the program (Bain & Yaklin, 2019). Faculty at colleges

and universities may desire a strong academic, linguistic, and cultural impact from study abroad

trips for their students, but the programs must be first intentionally planned and organized for

any student gains to be significant. Some policy initiatives have begun across the country to

encourage more participation in quality study abroad programs, such as the Senator Paul Simon

Study Abroad Program Act (2019). This Act not only aims to increase participation in study

abroad but in the diversity of its participants and destinations. This can relate to promoting more

language learning for students abroad in various countries that do not use English nearly as much

as in the U.S., which in turn brings students back with more multilinguistic competency.

Recommendations for Future Research

Because of the small sample size and other related limitations, more research specifically

exploring the relationship between intercultural and multilinguistic competency needs to be

done. To further support the findings of this study, it would be interesting to discover if similar

results are found when using the same scaled questions in this study but at larger undergraduate

institutions and thus a larger sample size. The sample size could even be drawn from multiple undergraduate institutions, some that promote short-term study abroad, and others that promote more long-term programs.

In Williams' (2009) study using the Reflective Model of Intercultural Competency, students expressed wishing they knew certain aspects about study abroad benefits earlier, showing a need for a new study abroad policy. Research on what resources college faculty need to provide specific information on study abroad benefits to all students and outreach for increased participation of as many students as possible is needed in the future. It is also important to carry the reflection process from the individual level at their own time to implement structured reflection spaces for students after they come back from study abroad experiences (Rowan-Kenyon & Niehaus, 2011). Research is needed on future developments of curricular and co-curricular spaces at undergraduate institutions to help students engage in reflective dialogues so they can continue to build on their intercultural and multilinguistic competencies after studying abroad, which could be done through language or global education/study abroad departments. Colleges and universities must avoid sending students off on a study abroad trip that limits intercultural perspectives and multilingual identity growth due to superficial touristic travel that is seen in some programs (Mitchell et al., 2020). With the right resources and more research findings to support the results from this study, studying abroad can be structured as more culturally and linguistically challenging for the students, which will bring them home with a stronger sense of both intercultural and multilinguistic competency.

Conclusion

Moving forward, more research on study abroad experiences needs to be conducted not only on intercultural competency, which has been the focus for many years, but also on

multilinguistic competency, and how those two concepts relate. Both intercultural and multilinguistic competency were strengthened by immersion and forming relationships while abroad, as noted by the focus group participants. Results showed that the relationship between intercultural competency and multilinguistic competency is strengthened by an academic language course taken while the student is on their study abroad trip. Despite many of the study abroad experiences reported being done through short-term programs, findings showed high scores of competency measures in addition to their strong, positive relationship. The quantitative findings were all supported by narratives told and perspectives held by the focus group participants. What undergraduate students with goals of study abroad can hope for now are more steps taken to ensure quality study abroad programs with many opportunities throughout the academic year to embark on their journey of becoming more multicultural and multilingual.

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Appendix A

Phase One Questionnaire

While in college, have you studied abroad more than once?

◯ Yes

◯ No

While you studied abroad in a country/culture that used a foreign language, did you also take at least one academic course on that language?

◯ Yes

◯ No

Where did you study abroad? (If you studied abroad more than once, enter all places.)

_____

You will now respond to statements about your **college study abroad experience(s)** on a 5-point Likert scale to indicate how much you personally agree with them, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." You are encouraged to avoid selecting "Neither Agree nor Disagree" for most accurate results for the present research study. Make sure to read each statement carefully.

When I studied abroad, …

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I was open to new information and perspectives.	○	○	○	○	○
I learned about new and different cultural norms from my own.	○	○	○	○	○
I recognized the values of the people in that country/culture.	○	○	○	○	○
I understood how to behave and how not to behave in public.	○	○	○	○	○
I continuously learned from those I encountered and met.	○	○	○	○	○

After I studied abroad, …

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I felt more open to new information and perspectives moving forward.	○	○	○	○	○
I gained a more global perspective.	○	○	○	○	○
I felt more comfortable about approaching new cultures in the future.	○	○	○	○	○
I understood more about differences across cultures.	○	○	○	○	○
I felt more passionate about issues in countries/cultures other than my own.	○	○	○	○	○

When I studied abroad, …

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I was able to adapt to and be flexible in new situations.	○	○	○	○	○
I remained open-minded throughout new experiences and encounters.	○	○	○	○	○
I respected the people and places and respected the overall culture of where I stayed.	○	○	○	○	○
I remained empathetic for the people in a culture different than my own.	○	○	○	○	○
I willingly and excitedly approached new situations.	○	○	○	○	○

After I studied abroad, …

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I felt I had more flexibility when it comes to new situations.	○	○	○	○	○
I felt I had more open-mindedness for new experiences moving forward.	○	○	○	○	○
I felt more respect for people from other countries/cultures.	○	○	○	○	○
I understood more how different cultures approach respect differently.	○	○	○	○	○
I believe people should approach new situations in new cultures with respect and empathy.	○	○	○	○	○

When I studied abroad, …

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I remained resourceful in new situations.	○	○	○	○	○
I developed relevant problem-solving skills when presented with new problems.	○	○	○	○	○
I learned how to best approach people in the country/culture when looking for help.	○	○	○	○	○
I used my growing understanding of the country/culture to solve issues in creative ways.	○	○	○	○	○
I worked on my decision-making skills to best handle new situations in the foreign country/culture.	○	○	○	○	○

After I studied abroad, …

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I continued to use the problem-solving skills I gained when abroad at home.	○	○	○	○	○
I felt a greater sense of overall resourcefulness.	○	○	○	○	○
My decision-making skills in new situations improved.	○	○	○	○	○
I felt I had more creative thinking when presented with issues.	○	○	○	○	○
I felt I could more quickly and cleverly respond to problems or moments of uncomfortableness.	○	○	○	○	○

When I studied abroad, …

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I spoke in the language of the country/culture as much as possible.	○	○	○	○	○
I worked on my listening skills when around people who spoke the language of the country/culture.	○	○	○	○	○
I practiced my writing in the language of the country/culture.	○	○	○	○	○
I learned how to use nonverbal communication in conversations with people in the country/culture.	○	○	○	○	○
I felt my proficiency in the language of the country/culture improved over my time abroad.	○	○	○	○	○

After I studied abroad, …

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I felt I was a better listener in multiple languages.	○	○	○	○	○
I had improved my writing skills in multiple languages.	○	○	○	○	○
I continued to improve my speaking skills in the language I learned while abroad.	○	○	○	○	○
I had an increased vocabulary in multiple languages.	○	○	○	○	○
My overall listening, speaking, and writing proficiency in the foreign language I learned while abroad improved from before I went abroad.	○	○	○	○	○

When I studied abroad, …

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I used respectful tones in conversations with people who spoke the language of the country/culture.	○	○	○	○	○
I made an effort to use correct formal tenses, when necessary, in conversations using the language of the country/culture.	○	○	○	○	○
I remained patient in conversations with those who only spoke their country's/culture's language(s).	○	○	○	○	○
I made an effort to pronounce words and use language structures correctly in writing and speaking.	○	○	○	○	○
I understood what may be respectful in my country/culture will not be the same in situations in the country/culture where I was abroad.	○	○	○	○	○

After I studied abroad, …

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I had a greater understanding of how to be respectful in multiple languages.	○	○	○	○	○
I picked up on different ways to formally speak to people, when necessary, in multiple languages.	○	○	○	○	○
My respect for people around the world who speak different languages than me grew.	○	○	○	○	○
I felt more open-minded when it comes to learning how to use respect in multiple languages.	○	○	○	○	○
I could make connections between modes of respect in my country/culture and those in other countries/cultures.	○	○	○	○	○

When I studied abroad, …

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I did not give up in moments of uncertainty or confusion with the language(s) of the country/culture.	○	○	○	○	○
I worked on my problem-solving skills when communicating in the country's/culture's language was difficult.	○	○	○	○	○
I found creative ways to best communicate to people who spoke the foreign language(s) of the country/culture.	○	○	○	○	○
I remained resourceful to solve issues with people who spoke the foreign language(s) of the country/culture.	○	○	○	○	○
I learned there is more than one way to communicate effectively with someone who speaks a language different than mine.	○	○	○	○	○

Q18 After I studied abroad, …

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I adapted my problem-solving skills I had gained when abroad for use in other multilingual interactions.	○	○	○	○	○
I approached new situations and conflicts involving foreign languages more confidently.	○	○	○	○	○
I felt I had more creative ways to solve issues with people who spoke languages other than mine.	○	○	○	○	○
I had more resourcefulness for approaching situations with multiple languages involved.	○	○	○	○	○
I knew I could use more than one solution to solve problems in situations where I lack an understanding of another language.	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix B

Focus Group Transcript

Researcher:

Tell me about your study abroad experience experiences.

Participant 1:

I studied abroad this past fall for the whole semester in Florence, Italy, through Syracuse university. It was basically 10 weeks, normal classes, travel on the weekend.

Participant 2:

Okay. Do I say all of them? I mean, I guess that they all count. I did a block, so like three and a half weeks, in the summer of 2019 in Italy, and then I did a semester in Germany in the fall of 2019. Then, I did a whole year in London, for my junior year, the 2020 to 2021 academic year.

Researcher:

Okay. Why did you study abroad?

Participant 1:

I wanted to learn another language to some extent as well as I could. I wanted to enjoy and learn about another culture. I wanted to get out of the U.S. and meet new people from other schools and eat a bunch of good food.

Participant 2:

For me I think different ones had a different purpose. I'd never been to Europe before the first time I went to Italy in 2019. I always knew I just wanted to go travel and kind of see other parts of the world while I was in college. And then Italy was always a place I was interested in and having taken some of the language was what pushed me to do that program. And then I did Germany because I wanted to just travel a little bit. I wasn't too interested in German as much, but it definitely was more about like traveling, getting to experience new cultures, making new friends, like having more global friends. And then the one that I did in London was more kind of career- like academic-based. And that one was more of just I got an opportunity to go to a really good school and also a really cool place. But for the most part that was a little bit more academic focus than the previous ones that are more about me trying to travel around and see new places.

Researcher:

Not including the London program, both of you decided to go to countries and cultures where a foreign language was spoken. So why did you choose to study abroad in a country or culture where a foreign language was spoken?

Participant 1:

I think it's just an important part of being like a global citizen. I don't know when tourists come to the U.S., we kind of expect them to speak English. And I felt like if I wanted to travel and

have a connection to another place that it would be important for me to speak their language and be able to form relationships with people there. And I wanted to have access to more of the world.

Participant 2:

I think for me, I always wanted to learn new languages. And I understood the power of speaking a new language because English was not my first language. So, I think that speaking Spanish first actually helped me understand a little bit more of Italian, and probably what influenced me doing Italian. But overall, I think I wanted to learn a new language fluently because I understood the power of it and how useful it is. And then secondly, why I chose Italy and chose Italian was because it was a little bit more familiar for me than a different language, but overall, it was definitely just wanting to know a new language. Cause I know how useful and important that can be.

Researcher:

Just curious, how much German did you learn while you were there?

Participant 2:

I would say I did but I didn't, I mean, I think in like language classes, I was like a two or something. It was like enough that I could do mostly my daily kind of stuff. But it was more of like the stuff that I'd practiced of "I'm on the bus, I have to say this I'm at the grocery store." And that was just because I didn't really like German, but like Italian, I felt completely different with and is why Italian, I can understand and speak a lot more of it, but also some of it is from like background knowledge of Spanish. But German, I just didn't really vibe with. So, I didn't learn as much of it.

Researcher:

You didn't take an actual course on German?

Participant 2:

Yeah, I did, but it was beginner two or something like that, and also wasn't something I put a ton of effort and time to do on my own.

Researcher:

Okay. And [Participant 1], you took a class on Italian while you were in Italy?

Participant 1:

I did.

Researcher:

Okay, so tell me about an experience you had while abroad where you had to use language, and that can be anything you think about.

Participant 1:

The most memorable one was every morning I went to the same coffee shop and would talk to the barista, and kind of developed a friendship with him. And that was just a daily thing for me. And I would be so excited to go back and see him again. Like that's something I'll always remember from that trip. And I'm super glad that I took the time to learn some Italian before going so that I could have that.

Researcher:

Awesome.

Participant 2:

Trying to think. I think it was probably kind of similar, more day-to-day things that it was useful for. So I didn't know what was wrong with the bus system when I first got there, but I remember when I first got there, I didn't speak any German at all. I was trying to get on the bus to go to school or something and I could not figure it out. And someone who was the bus driver didn't speak English, but someone behind him did and he explained it to me. And then by the end of the semester, I actually understood what he was trying to tell me. Like one time I overheard him saying the same thing to somebody else in German. And then I understood what was going on. So, I would say kind of interactions like that, where it was more of daily life of like I'm at the grocery store, or like getting on the bus, or anything. I think I was never to the point where I was conversational that I could have a conversation with someone in German, but it was more of just everyday kind of things were made a little bit easier by the fact that I could understand basic, like, you know, "Hi, excuse me, this is what your total is," kind of things.

Researcher:

Cool. How did studying or learning the language of that country affect your whole experience abroad?

Participant 1:

I think it kind of ties into my answer from the last one – being able to have more meaningful interactions, create more relationships that I otherwise wouldn't have, and feel more at home. And I think Italians like it when you make an effort. So, it just improved my experience, and my interactions were probably more pleasant than people who go and only speak English.

Participant 2:

I would say some of the same as well. I think maybe not as much of like made my connections stronger or anything like that, but more of just made my everyday life easier. Like even if I didn't know as much to just always approach them speaking German if I had a question about something or I was ordering at a restaurant or anything. And I think people like that as well, they're also supportive of trying to help you, if you do say it wrong or something like that. And also, just made my getting around a lot easier. And this is maybe outside of the scope of the question, but I also noticed when I was in Italy this past summer, where I do speak more fluently than I do German, people would say things to me and make comments and I would understand them, like this girl told me she liked my outfit and that makes you feel a little bit more like you're closer to the place that you're in and you're not just kind of like aimlessly wandering around and

it feels a little bit more home. So, I would say it definitely helped kind of ease everyday interactions, but also feel like you belong in the place a little bit more.

Researcher:

Do you think your study abroad experience or experiences contributed to maybe a new sense of multilinguistic identity for yourself? Or if you already felt like you were multilingual, just somehow it changed that identity? Why or why not?

Participant 1:

I would say it did cause Italian is the second language that I speak. I had only taken Latin before, which I was always terrible at and could never speak. So, it did help me feel like I have more of a multilinguistic identity, even though I'm not bilingual. But studying abroad absolutely helped improve my Italian and form connections with Italian people, which is why you learn language.

Researcher:

Okay. So, you wouldn't consider yourself bilingual?

Participant 1:

Correct.

Participant 2:

I would say some of the same as well. I think for me the difference was like learning Italian in a classroom versus when I was there, I wasn't taking a class, but it was more using it. And then in Germany I was learning [German] while I was there. And I think both of those things are very different. Like you obviously feel a lot more invested in it and you learn a lot more things from daily interactions or speaking to people rather than just in the classroom. So, I think it definitely added to me feeling a little bit more bilingual. Like even if now I don't remember a ton of German, I can still kind of pick it up. I know if someone in public is speaking it versus before I would have no idea. Um, so sometimes I think that kind of added to feeling that way. Um, I guess, I don't know if I, I guess, yeah, I do describe myself as multilingual or bilingual. I would say even if I'm not completely fluent in either German or Italian, I still think there are skills there when it comes to picking it up, like if I were back there or learning a new language, that are now ingrained into my brain. Like, I didn't know how much Italian I knew until I was in person speaking it. And people understood me and said I had a good accent, versus just learning it in a classroom where you're just doing it for two hours a day and then you go home. So, I would say I did feel a little bit more multilingual afterwards.

Researcher:

And so, if you were to kind of identify the languages as part of your multilingual identity, would you consider English, Spanish, Italian, and German?

Participant 2:

Maybe not the German. I have realized I have no interest in like trying to speak German ever again.

Researcher:

Okay. Well, you both said that you did feel like you grew your multilingual identity to some extent. So, if you could give me an example, if you can think of one of your experiences abroad where you felt like it grew that multilinguistic competency.

Participant 1:

I guess just one night while I was out with a friend they were trying to talk or meet a local guy and I was able to help translate and help facilitate that.

Researcher:

So, you played the role as a translator?

Participant 1:

Yeah.

Participant 2:

I kind of had something similar, like I just remember my friends at the grocery store and the attendant was asking them something and they had never taken an Italian class. They were just fresh out of America. But I was able to translate what the attendant was asking her for. But also, I'd say another thing is just now I can eavesdrop on people's conversations and that was kind of fun. And this was in Italian I would say more than German. But I think that's interesting when you're out and about, you're not in a classroom, you're just doing it yourself, and I can even without thinking about it just pick up on someone's conversation and it's not as a deliberate act. It's like you're in a classroom and you hear a recording and you're writing it down, versus you're just in public, you hear someone speaking, and you already in your head translate it and you know what they're saying.

Researcher:

I'm curious, [Participant 2], like in the UK. Yes, it's English, but it is a different version. Would you say that you picked up certain like slang words or you know they call certain things just a completely different word. Like, did you pick up stuff like that there and like start using that?

Participant 2:

Oh, a hundred percent did, because I felt weird saying the American way of stuff. I think I always try to fit in a little bit. Like the trash can is called a bin. I think it was more a personal choice of just keeping up with the lingo and stuff like that. Also just came from times with my roommates, I'd called something an eggplant, they're like "an aubergine." So, it was like a little bit of both bullying, like soft bullying, but also me wanting to immerse myself even if it was just English. But yeah, I also picked up on stuff like that.

Researcher:

Okay, so I'm not going to provide you any definitions of these terms. So basically, just think of what you know about it. What do you think the relationship is between intercultural competency and multilinguistic competency?

Participant 1:

I think multilinguistic competency leads itself to intercultural competency because attempting to speak in someone's language is a part of being culturally respectful and aware. It's hard to be interculturally competent if you just go and speak English, I don't know.

Researcher:

Yeah, no, that was great.

Participant 2:

I would say they're connected, but I don't think one is dependent on the other. I think culture goes along with language, but there are also some more behaviors or common practices that someone might not pick up on having not been in a country. So, I think that can come from someone being fluent in a classroom. I remember the Germans are very direct and people think they're mean, but they're just very straightforward, or like Italians are very loud and people think that that's aggressiveness, but I mean it is aggressiveness, but more of you could think someone's screaming at you when they're just really happy to see you. I think those are kind of more intercultural competencies that you would understand more on a cultural living-there scenario. You don't necessarily have to understand the language to do that, but at the same time you can understand the language and not understand more of these cultural things, and also how you as an American that might have different practices fit into that. So, I would say they're a little bit separate, but definitely do lean on each other. You can kind of have one without the other is how I think of it.

Researcher:

Yeah. I guess just to maybe clarify and expand on that, like if you're not in the country, maybe they are more separate. You only focus on the language and not the culture, one or the other, but if you're actually studying abroad there, they become more maybe intertwined and inseparable. [Agreement from participants picked up.] And I guess more broadly, what do you think the relationship is between language and culture?

Participant 1:

I think language is a primary form of expression, which is like a big part of culture. But yeah, I do see how they are separate. You can learn language and still be disrespectful of a culture and vice versa. You be respectful of someone while not knowing how to speak their language. But I don't know. I think language is definitely a part of culture and you can't totally immerse and give yourself over to a culture without attempting to speak.

Participant 2:

I would say the same. I think culture and language are very interconnected. And your language informs the culture and kind of the words that you use and how you express yourself. Certain languages are firmer and have very good rules. Others are a little bit looser and that also influences how the person speaks and how they develop a character as a whole. So, say those two things are very connected. I think also that influences what kind of words they use, what they do, what they have words for in that language versus others. I think all of that is like super connected.

Researcher:

Sort of a long question: describe any situation or situations where your understanding of the language in the place where you studied abroad helped you to understand a cultural aspect, such as a tradition, norm, or habit.

Participant 2:

I would say if anything more of understanding the history of something was more useful to understanding a cultural norm or practice or how people are in a certain country. So, the only thing I think of something that maybe I hadn't experienced, like why people do certain things. I just understood the history of something rather than the language itself, helping me understand that.

Researcher:

Maybe to prompt some more thinking, I don't know if this would necessarily count, but you know, it's a norm in Italy to use the formal form of address or verbs. But not just for people that are older than you, but people in grocery stores or more people that have some position [of power] where you're just a customer, and I didn't know that right away. But then as I listened to how people my age addressed people seemingly my age who worked at maybe a bar or the grocery store is when I realized, oh, I'm supposed to use the formal form as well for these people. And so, I then did that.

Participant 1:

Yeah. I definitely noticed the guy at the coffee shop would use the formal, third person when he would address me or take my order. So, then I started doing that.

Researcher:

Okay, cool. That's great.

Participant 2:

I would say that actually reminds me of the kind of cultural "respect your elders" thing, which also reminds me of the formal and the informal, like in Italy you have when you speak to older people, that's also the same. It's like if there's an old lady on the bus, you're expected to give up your seat and give it to them in Germany. They don't have a formal and an informal, but they very much have a everyone's the same thing. So, you're not expected to see an old lady and give up her seat for her. Like that's not considered rude to. And it's also because their formal and informal also, like it's more of yes, like an older person, but it's like not super strict in terms of who it is. So in like a grocery store or something like that, you, if they're of your age, you still would just kind of like, you wouldn't use it or you would also only use it if it's like, like a, a person close to you. Like if it's your grandmother, not just like a random old person. So, I think actually that I make that connection now of maybe why that is that within the language, it's actually informed that we're all the same and it's more of like, "I know you as a person that I would talk to you like that, not you're just older than me." So automatically you get this positioning of being like, "I have to speak to you formally."

Researcher:

Okay. Interesting. Yeah. I was wondering if German had like that kind of similar thing or not. If there's anything else you want to add or share about maybe your sense of intercultural competency or your identity as a multilingual individual, now will be the time to do that. Otherwise, we can just move on to the last question. Anything else you want to share about your study abroad experience that you think is valuable?

Participant 2:

I feel like you don't realize how immersed you are until you leave. Like when you come back home and you're like, oh wait, all the things I used to do, I don't do anymore. Or find yourself thinking about certain things that don't apply anymore, because you're in a different country, but they're instilled in your brain. I think for me I felt more multicultural or multilingual after I left because I was bringing those things that were a part of my life when I was living abroad home with me and thinking about them. And that's when I realized it wasn't really as much when I was there. It was more of when I left, and I had something to compare it to.

Researcher:

Yeah. If you remember when you took the survey that I sent out, there were all of these questions during abroad, and then after abroad. And I kind of, I haven't looked at the data yet, but I kind of wanna see if there was kind of like an increase in that sense of, you know, a multicultural, multilingual identity after you came home. Um, as you like reflect on your experience and also something you mentioned, um, I think it's called like reverse culture. Shock is like, everyone talks about culture shock. Like when you first go there and everything's different, but actually when you come home and you've gotten used to a new place, then it's like, whoa, I have to get again now used home. And I definitely experienced that too. [Participant 1], anything you want to add?

Participant 1:
Not particularly.

Researcher:

Okay. Then we can wrap it up. I just have one final question. Did you enjoy your study abroad experience/experiences? Why or why not?

Participant 1:

Yeah, it was the best semester of college for me. I made awesome friends from other schools and in addition to the short-term pleasures, like food and gelato and wine and all of that stuff, it's the relationships with other college kids and people from Italy that are what I'll remember and think back fondly on. When I think of study abroad, I mean it kind of made the college experience.

Participant 2:

I would say yes as well. I think it was definitely some of the friends that I made that I have now, even if I didn't end up loving German and being like, "Oh yes, I want to keep doing this and move here." That's still a learning experience. And I also got to travel a lot when I was there. There's lots of things about German culture that I really do appreciate. And I wouldn't have learned that without being there. So, I think while the language itself was not as great as I

thought it was going to be, there were still lots of aspects of living in Germany, interacting with people there, and a lot of the friends that I made, that I really do like, and kind of inform how I go through life now or how I decide what I like and what I don't like when I think of places I want to live in the future or even want to travel to. So, I'd say I had a great time in Germany overall and I really enjoyed the experience.

Researcher:

Okay. Well then that will be all!