

# 7 Rethinking study abroad and intercultural competence

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## Abstract

Due to competing demands of university students, short-term study abroad trips are on the rise (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005; NAFSA, 2003, 2019). The present study is the only study that has explored a trip of less than one week and the ways in which L2 participants have developed their intercultural competence daily. Like in Allen (2010), this study was small in scale, since only two second language (L2) learners of Spanish studied abroad. In addition, this study used Merriam's (1998) case study framework to illuminate the case of two L2 learners and their short-term five-day study abroad experience. Analyses of surveys and Deardorff's (2012) Intercultural Competence (IC) self-reflection, coupled with field notes, revealed that participants' daily fluctuations of up to 18.7% did occur, thus demonstrating IC's dynamicity (Deardorff, 2012). Not only is a short-term study abroad of less than one week practical for university students, but this study also suggested that a non-traditional short-term study abroad can be a valuable tool to an L2 learner's IC development.

**Keywords:** foreign language higher education, intercultural competence, qualitative research, second language teaching and learning, study abroad.

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## 1. Introduction

Cultures is one of the five standards for language learning (ACTFL, 1996, 2015), and having the ability to study abroad is advantageous in order to facilitate language learning and develop IC, the ability to interact in an L2 effectively and appropriately (Bennett & Bennett, 2004), and increase knowledge of the L2 culture (Anderson, Hubbard, & Lawton, 2015; Anderson & Lawton, 2011). In addition to being valued by universities (Anderson et al., 2015), study abroad makes a job applicant more desirable for employment (Franklin, 2010; Hart Research Association, 2010; Kumaravadivelu, 2008).

However, due to course demands, scheduling conflicts, and the increase in travel expenses (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005; NAFSA, 2003), a shorter-term study abroad trip can be an alternative to a semester or year-long one. This type of experience can still be valuable to university students (Brubaker, 2007; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2009; Donnelly-Smith, 2009; Kartoshkina, Chieffo, & Kang, 2013) and give L2 learners “significant exposure to the target language and culture” (Savage & Hughes, 2014, p. 118). Typically, a short-term study abroad can last as short as a few weeks to as long as a few months (Kartoshkina et al., 2013).

Although there are studies that have examined short-term study abroad (Brubaker, 2007; Czerwionka, Artamonova, & Barbosa, 2014; Donnelly-Smith, 2009; Jackson, 2011; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005; Shiri, 2015; Williams, 2009), the current study is the only one that has explored a study abroad trip of less than a week and the ways in which L2 learners develop their IC during its duration.

## 2. Literature review

### 2.1. Study abroad

Due to the increase in globalization and interconnectedness of our world, many students have been encouraged to study abroad (O’Rourke & Williamson, 2002). Collaborative learning is valued and in many ways learning has become

international and “gone global” (Kahn & Agnew, 2017, p. 53). In study abroad experiences, L2 learners develop knowledge of the L2 country and culture (Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Shiri, 2015) and become more interculturally competent as they are able to effectively communicate in a variety of situations abroad (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Shiri, 2015).

Having access to native-speakers is crucial during any study-abroad program not only for language development but also for cultural growth (Castañeda & Zirger, 2011). Since short-term study abroad programs are just that, short, it is important that such programs have guidance (Brubaker, 2007) and direct cultural engagement since there is limited time for interactions to occur organically (Ingram, 2005). With these interactions, coupled with data collected before and after a study abroad experience (Czerwionka et al., 2014), students have shown to have meaningful contact with native speakers that support language and cultural development (Castañeda & Zirger, 2011; Wang, 2010).

In the past, short-term study abroad has been considered less valuable than programs that lasted a semester or a year (Davidson, 2007; Dwyer & Peters, 2004; Freed, 1990; Ingram, 2005). However, the number of those traveling for shorter time frames has been on the rise (Institute of International Education, 2018), and studies have shown that short-term study abroad can provide valuable experiences to students and support their development (Castañeda & Zirger, 2011; Félix-Brasdefer & Hasler-Barker, 2015; Levine & Garland, 2015; Serrano, Llanes, & Tragant, 2016; Shiri, 2015). Some university coursework even includes a short-term study abroad component during which students can work on interdisciplinary projects over a two-week period (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005).

According to NAFSA (2019), although there was an increase of students from the United States who studied abroad for credit in the 2016-2017 academic year, the total number of students only represented 1.6% of university students and only approximately 10% of graduates from the United States. Of these study abroad experiences, those lasting eight weeks or less have shown to be on the rise (Jackson, 2011). According to the Institute of International Education’s

(2018) Open Doors report, out of the total 332,727 university students from the United States who studied abroad in 2016-2017, summer term programs had the highest percentage of participants with 38.5% while semester programs came in with the second highest number at 30.7%. Of these 300,000+ students, almost 62% had a study abroad experience of eight weeks or less. This was an increase from 58.1% in 2010-2011, when data of this duration was first reported. Of these programs of eight weeks or less, approximately 17% of these students have participated in study abroad experiences lasting less than two weeks. This percentage has also been on the rise from 11.6% in 2010-2011<sup>2</sup>.

## 2.2. Intercultural competence

There are several IC frameworks and many perspectives on the IC construct (Moeller & Nugent, 2014; Schulz, 2007; Stemler, Imada, & Sorkin, 2014). Bennett's (1993) developmental model of intercultural sensitivity offers a framework that explains how individual thoughts and feelings about culture create cultural difference. As a person becomes less ethnocentric and more ethnorelative, in turn, he/she becomes more interculturally competent. Byram's (1997) seminal work details the necessary attitudes, knowledge, and skills to successfully interact with people of an L2 culture.

Expanding upon Byram's (1997) work, Deardorff's (2006) process model of IC focuses on (1) attitudes, (2) knowledge and comprehension, (3) skills, (4) internal outcomes, and (5) external outcomes. Theoretically, the first three elements of attitudes, knowledge and comprehension, and skills lead to an individual's internal outcomes. In turn, external outcomes are developed and visible to others in intercultural situations (Deardorff, 2006, p. 2012).

## 2.3. Theoretical framework

Even though some consensus has been reached about how to define IC (Deardorff, 2006), there are a variety of ways to assess IC and to date, it is difficult to say

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2. Since no detailed information about January term programs was in the data, they were not factored into the summary of the programs of less than two weeks.

which is the best assessment (Braskamp, Braskamp, & Merrill, 2009; Stebleton, Soria, & Cherney, 2012-2013).

For this study, the researcher chose to utilize Deardorff's (2012) IC self-reflection, which was developed from her process model (Deardorff, 2006). Not only does this self-reflection center around 15 items that are critical in developing IC, but it also has not been used to assess students during a study abroad experience. In the first part of this self-reflection, the participant is asked to rate him/herself on 15 categories of IC on a five-point Likert scale (1=poor; 5=very high) while in the second, he/she is asked to elaborate on situations that required one or more of the 15 categories of IC.

Deardorff's (2012) 15 categories include the following: (1) respect, (2) openness, (3) tolerance for ambiguity, (4) flexibility, (5) curiosity and discovery, (6) withholding judgment, (7) cultural self-awareness/understanding, (8) understanding others' worldviews, (9) culture-specific knowledge, (10) sociolinguistic awareness, (11) skills to listen, observe, and interpret, (12) skills to analyze, evaluate, and relate, (13) empathy, (14) adaptability, and (15) communication skills. According to Deardorff's (2006) process model, respect, openness, tolerance for ambiguity, withholding judgment, and curiosity and discovery fall under the attitudes component. The categories of cultural self-awareness/understanding, understanding others' worldviews, culture-specific knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness fall under knowledge and comprehension, while the skills to listen, observe, and interpret, and skills to analyze, evaluate, and relate are grouped under skills. Internal outcomes include flexibility, empathy, and adaptability, and external outcomes encompass communication skills.

Although Deardorff's (2012) 15 categories can be grouped under her process model (Deardorff, 2006), they are not defined in much detail. Therefore, for this study, the researcher adapted definitions from Lenkaitis, Calo, and Venegas-Escobar (2019)<sup>3</sup>.

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3. The adapted definitions are available upon request from the author.

## 2.4. Research questions

Due to the increasing number of students who are participating in short-term study abroad and the importance of becoming interculturally competent in our globalized world, this study explored the ways in which participants' IC developed daily over a 5-day study abroad trip. Not only did this study use an assessment that has not been studied for study abroad, but it also examined a duration that has not been researched. Therefore, this study will answer the following Research Questions (RQs):

- RQ1: Is a five-day study abroad experience sufficient to improve IC?
- RQ2: In what IC categories, as per [Deardorff \(2012\)](#), do participants show growth?
- RQ3: In what ways do participants' perceptions change over the course of a five-day study abroad?

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1. Participants

After having participated in a Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) project that partnered L2 learners of Spanish from a university in the USA with L2 learners of English from a university in Mexico, there was an opportunity for students from the USA to travel to Mexico. Two L2 learners of Spanish applied for this short-term study abroad experience and both were chosen to travel to Mexico with their course instructor to meet and interact with personnel from the partnering institution.

Both participants were registered students of a first semester intermediate Spanish course during the time of the COIL project. Participant 1 (P1) was 19 years old and Participant 2 (P2) was 20 years old. Neither participant

had studied abroad before and like in Allen's (2010) small-scale study of six intermediate-level students, this study was small in scale because only two L2 learners of Spanish studied abroad. In addition, this study used Merriam's (1998) case study framework to illuminate the case of two L2 learners and the short-term study abroad experience that they each participated in over the course of five days.

Students in study abroad programs are often not prepared to maximize their learning (Goldoni, 2015) and time while abroad (Jackson, 2008). Students may only be able to experience superficial cultural experiences since they have the tendency to remain in an L1 peer group or treat the experience as a vacation (Allen, 2010). However, through the structured and adult-accompanied itinerary that the L2 learners kept, the researcher was able to guarantee that participants interacted with native speakers, limited their use of English and maintained conversations in Spanish, and had meaningful cultural opportunities for L2 learner development (He, Lundgren, & Pynes, 2017, Shively, 2015; Tomaš, Farrelly, & Haslam, 2008). Activities included tours of the partnering institution, dinner at traditional Mexican restaurants, visits to national parks, and time spent in the homes of a faculty member and student.

### 3.2. Procedure

Due to the fact that having multiple measures is crucial to assess development during a study abroad experience (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003; He et al., 2017), several were taken during this study. Prior to traveling to Mexico, participants completed Deardorff's (2012) IC self-reflection<sup>4</sup>. Participants rated themselves on a five-point Likert-scale (1=poor; 5=very high) for each of Deardorff's (2012) 15 categories of IC listed and then had the opportunity to write about situations where they used one or more of the 15 categories of IC. In addition, background information was gathered from both participants in a ten-question survey via surveymonkey.com, including a language skills self-assessment (1=not proficient at all; 10=very proficient).

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4. The pre-survey questions are available upon request from the author.

During the trip, participants completed Deardorff's (2012) IC self-reflection daily<sup>5</sup>. Participants also reflected on their experiences while in Mexico each day in a six-question survey. They answered questions about their daily experience in Mexico and aspects of the Mexican culture and language. Participants commented on the aspects of the Mexican culture that they liked the best as well as those that they liked the least. Finally, upon returning to the United States, participants completed Deardorff's (2012) IC self-reflection as well as a seven-question post-survey<sup>6</sup>, similar in structure to that of the pre-survey, including a language skills self-assessment.

In conjunction with these daily assessments, the participants' Spanish professor had the opportunity to observe the two L2 learners in a variety of situations; both formal and informal. Her field notes of these two participants were also used for analysis (Jackson, 2011).

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Deardorff's (2012) IC self-reflection

#### 4.1.1. 15 categories of IC self-rating

Since there were 15 categories listed that participants rated themselves on and each rating was on a five-point Likert scale, there was a possible total 75 points (15 aspects times five). Results showed that both participants improved their IC score from before to after the short-term study abroad experience. However, these self-ratings also indicated that IC is distinct to each individual person (Deardorff, 2012). Table 1 details participants' self-ratings of Deardorff's (2012) 15 categories before, during, and after travel using the scale, as given by Deardorff (2012) of one (poor) to five (very high).

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5. The daily questions are available upon request from the author.

6. The post-survey questions are available upon request from the author.

Table 1. Deardorff's (2012) 15 categories of IC self-rating before and after travel<sup>7</sup>

	Pre		Day 1		Day 2		Day 3		Day 4		Day 5		Post		Average	
	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
Respect	4	5	3	5	4	5	3	5	4	4	4	5	4	5	3.7	4.9
Openness	3	5	3	5	4	5	3	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	3.6	5
Tolerance for ambiguity	3	4	2	4	3	4	3	4	4	3	3	0	3	4	3	3.3
Flexibility	3	5	4	4	4	5	3	5	4	0	3	5	3	5	3.4	4.1
Curiosity and discovery	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4.9	5
Withholding judgment	3	5	2	4	2	4	1	4	3	4	3	3	3	5	2.6	4.1
Cultural self-awareness/ understanding	3	4	3	4	3	4	2	4	4	4	4	0	3	5	3.3	3.6
Understanding other's worldviews	4	4	3	5	3	4	2	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	3.6	4.4
Cultural specific-knowledge	4	2	4	3	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	5	4	4	3.6	3.7
Socio-linguistic awareness	4	4	3	0	3	3	2	4	3	4	4	0	3	4	3.3	2.7
Skills to listen, observe, and interpret	4	4	5	4	5	3	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	4.9	3.9
Skills to analyze, evaluate, and relate	3	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	4.7	4.4
Empathy	3	5	4	5	3	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	3	5	3.6	5
Adaptability	4	4	3	4	3	4	2	5	3	5	3	5	3	5	3	4.6
Communication skills	4	3	3	4	2	4	1	3	3	3	2	5	3	5	2.6	3.9
Total (out of 75)	54	64	52	60	52	63	48	65	58	58	56	57	55	71	53.6	62.6

7. If a zero is listed, the participant did not rate himself/herself on this aspect of IC on the given day.

For example, out of 75, P1 rated himself 54 on all aspects of IC before leaving for Mexico and upon returning to the United States, a 55. Therefore, as a percentage, P1’s rating increased a mere 1% from 72% to 73.3%. Meanwhile P2’s rating before the study abroad was 64 out of 75 and after it increased seven points to 71. Therefore, before the study abroad she rated herself 85.3% on IC while after she rated herself 94.7%.

When specifically looking at daily fluctuations, the data revealed that both positive and negative fluctuations from -9.3% to +18.7% emerged, thus showing the variability of IC and the way in which L2 learners’ feelings can vacillate when it comes to their IC development. Increases were noted in certain categories on certain days, while participants indicated decreases on other days. Also, some categories remained consistent over a few days. **Table 2** shows the percentage of IC fluctuation that occurred daily.

Table 2. Overall intercultural competence daily fluctuations in terms of percentage

Pre		Day 1		Day 2		Day 3		Day 4		Day 5		Post		Overall (from pre to post)	
P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2	P1	P2
54	64	52	60	52	63	48	65	58	58	56	57	55	71	54→ 55	64→ 71
-	-	-2.7	-5.3	0.0	+4.0	-5.3	+2.7	+13.2	-9.3	-2.7	-1.3	-1.3	+18.7	+1.3	+9.3

4.1.2. *Open-ended response on IC*

**Participant 1**

Prior to the short-term travel, P1 mentioned “keeping an open mind is crucial” and “using an objective lense [sic]... will allow me to remove what ever [sic] prejudices I may have about foreign cultures”. Although P1 mentioned that he needed to “work on organically communicating”, he also mentioned the following

on Day 1: “I find it hard (sometimes) to contribute when I am not directly spoken to... I feel that I am making progress”. More than once throughout the short-term study abroad, P1 mentioned comments that included him saying he needs to not be afraid to make mistakes and that he needs to leave his “comfort zone” (Day 1), put himself “out there” (Day 2), and on Day 5 to become “a contributor more”. Even though he indicated that he had “envy” because others were able to “enter conversation so easily”, he also wrote, “I find my listening comprehension increasing a lot”. Nonetheless, by the last full day in Mexico, P1 started leaving his “comfort zone” more as he became more confident in trying to communicate with the Mexican people and commented that “I try to use Span[ish], but for vital info, I still need English”. Upon returning to the United States, P1 commented, “[g]aging [sic] the situation helped my interactions. Processing what I’d like to say first helped, but led to me ‘over thinking’ my spanish [sic]. Being culturally aware means more than just speaking but also interacting”.

## **Participant 2**

P2 indicated in her open-ended response prior to the short-term study abroad that “it is important to first observe someone from another culture, to learn more and to see how it would be appropriate to talk to them”. She proceeds to comment that she “would really like to observe to learn the culture and see how the other culture interacts with itself and with others like myself”.

On Day 1, P2 commented that

“I’m still learning culture-specific knowledge about Mexico, however, I find more now that I am less afraid to ask what something means if I don’t understand. This is because I obviously need to understand whomever I’m talking with in order to learn/gain more cultural-specific knowledge”.

Throughout the trip, P2 mentions specific situations and makes connections between the L1 and L2 cultures. She writes,

“I try to imagine how I look as I’m doing something so I can be self-aware and not make any alarming facial expressions when talking to someone from another culture. I usually just try to reflect/mirror what whomever I’m talking to is doing”.

On the last evening in Mexico, P2 reflected on her experience and understood that she may have misinterpreted some things and made a realization that interactions may be different based on people’s backgrounds by writing,

“[i]n hindsight, I may have thought something was said a little maliciously or with offense because I was nervous about whether or not I understood everything or whether or not I would be able to respond well. Also, I recognize that we spent time primarily with mid-upper class, educated people. I believe this factor is similar reflection on the people that we’ve met to how our socio-economic status affects us in the U.S.”.

Upon returning to the United States, P2 reflected on her experience and what she plans on doing post-study abroad. She even incorporated Spanish at the end of her open-ended response to note that her observation was obvious. She wrote,

“I became more appropriate in my reactions by watching how they responded to me. I plan to further develop my intercultural competence by video chatting... to learn more about their culture. Also, I plan on learning more vocabulary. I found that I really couldn’t understand the meaning of a phrase if it was with vocabulary that I didn’t know... obvio”.

## **4.2. Researcher-created pre- and post-surveys**

### *4.2.1. Language skills self-assessment*

Participant self-ratings before and after their short-term study abroad, using a ten-point scale (1=not proficient at all; 5=very proficient) on the four language skills – speaking, reading, listening, and writing – showed some changed. [Table 3](#) summarizes the participant self-ratings.

Table 3. Language skills self-assessment before and after travel

	Participant 1			Participant 2		
	Before	After	Change	Before	After	Change
Speaking	5	6	+1	6	7	+1
Reading	6	7	+1	7	7.5	+0.5
Listening	5	5	0	6	6	0
Writing	7	6	-1	8	8	0

#### 4.2.2. Study abroad objectives

Upon being asked what they wanted to gain from the trip, both participants indicated that they wanted to improve their language and culture skills. P1 mentioned that he wanted to expose himself in a country “where English is not the primary language used”, while P2 wrote that she wanted “an increased ability to speak Spanish, a heightened understanding for the Mexican culture and an appreciated group of new long-term friends”. When reflecting about the trip, P1 stated that “[y]es I gained a lot from this trip. Being exposed to the language 24/7... developed my Spanish skills greatly”. P2 indicated that she “learned so much about the culture and got to experience the land and people there”.

### 4.3. Researcher-created daily surveys

#### 4.3.1. Coding

In addition to the open-ended response as per [Deardorff’s \(2012\)](#) IC self-reflection, participants also answered researcher-created questions daily. Open-ended answers were coded both deductively and inductively by units of instances. An instance consisted of a word, a phrase, a sentence, or group of sentences ([Bohinski<sup>8</sup> & Leventhal, 2015](#)), since intercultural learning or development is not quantified for a specific word count.

8. Prior to a name change due to marriage, Chesla used her maiden name, Bohinski, for publications.

Data were independently coded by the two coders. A 92.2% agreement rate (Kappa=0.70 with  $p < 0.001$ ) was achieved after initial coding. Subsequently, coders worked together to reconcile the remaining differences.

4.3.2. *Deductive approach*

All open-ended responses were coded using a deductive approach, using Deardorff’s (2012) 15 categories of IC. In this way, the researcher was able to explore participants’ IC and changes that occurred before, during, and after the short-term study abroad and use this data to complement the participants’ self-ratings on Deardorff’s (2012) 15 categories.

The results indicated that participants concentrated on specific aspects of their IC in their written responses. Not only did they focus on being open to the L2 culture (openness), but their understanding of the L2’s worldviews (understanding other’s worldviews) was the another highly coded category. Four categories (flexibility, curiosity and discovery, cultural-specific knowledge, and sociolinguistic awareness) were coded just once. Table 4 shows deductive coding examples while Table 5 details the deductive coding results for the open-ended researcher-created open-ended survey questions.

Table 4. Deductive coding examples<sup>9</sup>

Respect	“I appreciate and recognize the generosity of those hosting us, but I already knew the Mexicans are giving people to those they trust” (P2).
Openness	“Overall, I am trying to speak as much Spanish as possible” (P2).
Tolerance for ambiguity	“More often than not I will not say anything (or refrain from conversing) instead of speaking English” (P1).
Flexibility	“I liked speaking with [removed for anonymity]’s sister because she made me feel comfortable speaking. I also am more comfortable talking to workers, but only if I plan out what I want to say” (P2).

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9. Researcher’s English translations are given in parentheses.

Curiosity and discovery	“There’s also more personality given in small talk between strangers – for example, if a stranger asks if they may pass, a [M] exicano might be more likely to say, ‘Sí, claro que sí’ (Yes, of course) instead of just, ‘Sí’ ¿Entiendes? (Yes, do you understand?)” (P2).
Withholding judgment	“I feel like I can pass judgement quickly” (P1).
Cultural self-awareness/ understanding	“Being more expressive as well helped my interactions because I find the Mexicans use so much more facial expressions/energy in conversation than Americans do...” (P2).
Understanding other’s worldviews	“They are very laid back about being in the ‘here and now’. There is no rush to stop what is going on” (P2).
Cultural specific-knowledge	“Also, I feel that I am missing a solid ‘base’ of Spanish knowledge” (P1).
Sociolinguistic awareness	“Being more expressive as well helped my interactions” (P2).
Skills to listen, observe, and interpret	“I find it easier to ‘decipher’ the accents” (P1).
Skills to analyze, evaluate, and relate	“They have all very similar views on respect, humor, and many similar idioms that sometimes they don’t even know from where they originated – just like how we don’t know where ours came from all the time” (P2).
Empathy	“For example, a man on the boat was holding a baby, and I wanted to watch her, so I made sure to be smiling as I was watching her to show that I was happy to be watching her make bubbles in her mouth and look overly-surprised, but to also let her parents not be alarmed that I was just starting at their baby. I always try to think, in every scenario, from a perspective outside my own or, at least, I try to imagine how I look as I’m doing something so I can be self-aware and not make any alarming facial expressions when talking to someone from another culture” (P2).
Adaptability	“I usually just try to reflect/mirror what whomever I’m talking to is doing” (P2).
Communication skills	“I need to develop my communication skills by ‘putting myself out there’” (P1).

Table 5. Deductive coding results as per Deardorff’s (2012) 15 categories over the five-day study abroad

	Day 1		Day 2		Day 3		Day 4		Day 5		Total for 5 days	
	P1	P2	P1	P2								
Respect	1	3	2	0	2	0	1	2	1	1	7	6
Openness	5	3	5	0	1	1	1	0	2	1	14	5
Tolerance for ambiguity	3	0	0	0	2	0	1	2	1	2	7	4
Flexibility	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
Curiosity and discovery	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Withholding judgment	1	1	3	1	1	2	1	2	3	0	9	6
Cultural self-awareness/ understanding	0	2	2	2	0	0	0	0	1	0	3	4
Understanding other’s worldviews	1	1	2	4	1	1	3	2	4	0	11	8
Cultural specific-knowledge	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0
Sociolinguistic awareness	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
Skills to listen, observe, and interpret	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	4	4
Skills to analyze, evaluate, and relate	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	2
Empathy	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	4
Adaptability	0	3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Communication skills	2	3	1	0	0	2	1	0	0	1	4	6
Total in each category per day	15	18	16	11	9	9	8	8	13	10	61	56

4.3.3. Inductive approach

In addition to coding with Deardorff’s (2012) 15 categories of IC, an inductive approach was also used. From patterns that emerged from the data, the researcher created positive, negative, and reflective coding categories. Both the positive and

negative categories had three sub-categories: (1) difference between cultures, (2) confidence and/or motivation (or lack thereof), and (3) language skills.

Therefore, if coded as positive, the comment showed that the participant: (1) noted a positive difference between the L1 and L2 cultures, (2) improved his/her confidence and/or became more proactive to learn the L2, and (3) improved his/her language skills. Conversely, if coded as negative, the comment showed that the participant: (1) noted a negative difference between the L1 and L2 cultures, (2) had doubts in his/her abilities and became demotivated, and (3) faced difficulties with their language skills. If coded as reflective, the comment indicated a reflection, thought, idea, or opinion that a participant mentioned regarding his/her experience.

Out of the 166 responses that were coded, almost 50% were positive, approximately 22% were negative, and about 30% indicated participants being reflective of their experience. [Table 6](#) lists inductive coding examples while [Table 7](#) indicates results for the open-ended daily survey questions.

Table 6. Inductive coding examples

<b>Positive</b>	
Difference in cultures	“The food is also incredible, different but good” (P1).
Confidence and/or motivation	“I also am more comfortable talking to workers, but only if I plan out what I want to say” (P2).
Language skills	“My comfort in speaking has increased and I have learned some new items” (P2).
<b>Negative</b>	
Difference in cultures	“Sometimes there is a gap between our culture when it comes to working extra on the weekends, holidays, etc” (P1).
Doubt and/or demotivation	“I envy [taken out for anonymity] because they can enter conversation so easily” (P1).
Language skills	“It is hard to stick to Spanish in situations where I feel I cannot be able to explain myself or be understood well in Spanish. I revert to English when I have difficulty saying what I want to in Spanish. I do not want to sound ‘unintelligent’ by not using proper grammar” (P2).
<b>Reflective</b>	
	“Being slightly more conservative in some (underlined) social contexts is like taking a break from my fast-paced day-to-day life” (P1).

Table 7. Inductive coding results as per researcher-created categories over the five-day study abroad

	Day 1		Day 2		Day 3		Day 4		Day 5		Total for 5 days	
	P1	P2	P1	P2								
<b>Positive</b>	9	13	10	11	7	7	6	2	7	9	39	43
• Difference in cultures	2	5	4	6	3	1	3	3	5	5	17	20
• Confidence and/or motivation	6	3	5	0	3	4	3	0	2	2	19	9
• Language skills	1	5	1	5	1	2	0	0	0	2	3	14
<b>Negative</b>	6	4	3	1	6	6	2	4	4	1	21	16
• Difference in cultures	1	1	2	0	12	0	1	2	3	0	9	3
• Doubt and/or demotivation	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	2	3
• Language skills	4	2	1	0	3	5	1	2	1	1	10	10
<b>Reflective</b>	8	4	3	7	2	4	4	2	4	9	21	26

#### 4.4. Researcher field notes

Although P1 was very motivated to improve his speaking skills, he rarely took the initiative to speak on his own, but rather only when spoken to. For example, during an hour drive to visit a state park, it was apparent that P1 did not take the initiative to speak on his own, but rather only answered questions when asked. Nonetheless, by the end of the study abroad experience, it was apparent through the researcher's observations that his skills had improved. Researcher field notes indicated that this L2 learner was taking the initiative to use Spanish during the last evening in Monterrey when he was celebrating Mexican Independence Day.

However, P2 was not afraid to ask questions and engage in the target language. For example, in the same road trip to the state park, P2 spoke freely and made conversation for the entire trip and was asking questions so she could practice her Spanish. Not only during this activity, but throughout the five-day trip, she consistently wrote down new phrases and vocabulary in a notebook to review.

Field notes indicated that she incorporated them in conversation afterward and utilized them correctly. In addition to communication skills development, both participants had the opportunity to interact with the Mexican people daily. Because of these interactions, it was obvious that both participants made connections between the L2 and L1 culture and became more culturally aware.

## 5. Discussion

To answer RQ1, results suggested that a five-day study abroad experience can contribute to improve IC. Not only did overall IC results increase for each learner, but also results confirmed that IC is dynamic and changes daily (Deardorff, 2012), as each participant had daily fluctuations across Deardorff's (2012) 15 categories. For instance, in response to RQ3, P1 rated himself a four for communication skills prior to leaving for Mexico, but on Day 1 a three. At his lowest, on Day 3, he rated himself a one, but upon returning to the United States, his rating improved to a three. In this same category, P2 rated herself a three prior to the short-term study abroad. However, while in Mexico and after the experience, her rating was at a five. In addition to these self-ratings, the deductive coding of daily open-ended survey questions showed IC's dynamicity as the number of instances of coded instances varied by day and by participant (see Table 5).

To further answer RQ1, in addition to IC development, data from the inductive coding also suggested that a short-term study abroad can be of great value to L2 students (Castañeda & Zirger, 2011; Levine & Garland, 2015; Shiri, 2015). The overwhelming positive experience that students indicated in their open-ended responses, coupled with the self-ratings and research field notes, suggested that a short-term study abroad is beneficial for L2 students. It is important to remember that a short-term study abroad of this length, like any other short-term study abroad experience, should be structured to give L2 learners opportunities to interact with L2 native speakers (Castañeda & Zirger, 2011; Wang, 2010). For example, in this study, both participants of this study had a variety of daily opportunities to interact with native speakers on an individual basis. The only time that L2 participants were not in close contact with L2 native speakers is

when they were in the hotel, which consisted of time for sleeping and showering. Apart from these activities, both participants' schedules were packed with numerous daily activities at the partnering institution or with staff, faculty, and students of the partnering institution in Mexico and its surrounding areas.

To answer RQ2 and RQ3, although participants had these fluctuations, it was evident that both participants were developing aspects of their IC through the five-day study abroad. The comments written by participants showed that their communication skills developed and both participants eventually became more confident in using their Spanish skills with native speakers. For example, P1 indicated the value of communication and that he was finding it is "easier" to communicate in certain situations. Results also revealed that the aspects of IC work together and usually don't develop in isolation, which further confirms the ever-changing nature of IC (Deardorff, 2012). During the trip, both participants commented on situations where they were both acquiring components of IC and having difficulties. From researcher field notes, it was evident that P2 felt more confident in trying to communicate with the Mexican people and utilized Spanish energetically in all situations. However, as evidenced in his daily survey, P1, trying to "formulize... [sic] phrased/ideas before speaking", had a harder time leaving his "comfort zone".

Throughout the trip, due to the structured itinerary (Brubaker, 2007; He et al., 2017; Shively, 2015; Tomaš et al., 2008), both participants had a variety of opportunities to interact with the Mexican people and the Spanish language (Castañeda & Zirger, 2011; Wang, 2010). When analyzing the data, the daily experiences of each participant as well as his/her individual developmental processes influenced the self-ratings. By sharing their insights, participants showed that they developed their IC through their daily interactions. However, it was interesting to note that although participants commented on specific experiences and noted progress in certain aspects, they may have not rated themselves accordingly. For example, P1 noted on Day 3 in an open-ended question that his listening skills were improving, which is a part of communication skills, but rated himself at his lowest on this same day. Furthermore, there were a few instances where P2 neglected to rate herself on certain aspects. Not

only does this confirm that multiple measures are key while studying abroad (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Hammer et al., 2003; He et al., 2017), but also that one IC assessment is also needed to evaluate the dynamicity of this construct (Deardorff, 2009; Lenkaitis et al., in press).

Although there were only two L2 participants that took part in this short-term study abroad, the researcher did not see this small sample size as a hurdle, but rather was confident that the study would yield meaningful data. Since this was the first study focusing on this length of short-term study abroad, the groundwork laid by this case study provided a basis for future studies. Being able to concentrate on a case study (Merriam, 1998) for these two students during this experience illustrated that more study must be done in this under researched field.

In the future, having a larger sample size will be beneficial to generalize results, but the researcher does realize that a larger sample size for this type of study abroad will only be possible when this length of trip is regularly made available to a greater number of L2 learners. Nonetheless, using the design that was implemented by the researcher that included a variety of structured activities and data collection that included daily surveys and field notes, should be used as it was beneficial and contributed greatly to the present study.

## 6. Conclusions

IC is a part of the L2 learning process that must be taken into consideration. It is important that L2 learners develop this competence so that they can appropriately and effectively communicate in the L2. Although work can be done on individual different aspects of IC, it is important that instructors and students remember that not one aspect develops in isolation from others. All components of IC work together. Using an internally-developed tool (Kartoshkina et al., 2013; Levine & Garland, 2015) or providing students with details on every category may be helpful to conceptualize all that makes up IC. In addition to learning about cultural norms in the classroom, L2 students must take accountability

for their own learning and be put into situations where they can utilize their target language. Participating in activities where L2 learners are supported by faculty from partnering institutions is key to ensure target language utilization. Furthermore, when participating in a short-term study abroad, it should be purposefully packed so that there are ample opportunities to interact with the L2 and its culture in authentic ways.

Although this study's data showed that participants rated themselves as high as a five in some of Deardorff's (2012) 15 categories, having the opportunity to interact with native speakers in the L2 culture is invaluable. After navigating through real-life situations, these ratings changed based on participants' experiences. The study revealed that while L2 learners may believe that they have developed IC from learning about the L2 culture in their L1 culture, only after experiencing the L2 firsthand will L2 learners truly realize that IC is more than meets the eye. The intricacies that exist in an L2 culture only come to life when faced with interacting with native speakers in real-life situations. Therefore, rethinking study abroad to a structured short-term experience is of great value to develop IC. It is a practical alternative for university students to meaningfully interact with native speakers of the L2 in a variety of contexts.

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