Engaging with Host Schools to Establish the Reciprocity of an International Teacher Education Partnership

Laura Boynton Hauerwas and Meaghan Creamer

Abstract

Although international teacher education partnerships necessitate relationships with host education communities, much of the literature addresses only the impact of the overseas teaching experiences on the American university intern. For this project, we investigated the benefits of participation in an international teacher education program for the Italian cooperating teachers and students in the host schools. The findings reveal that the Tuscan students profited by not only enhancing their English communication skills, but also by beginning to develop global awareness and understanding of their learning. Cooperating teachers were challenged in mentoring American interns, but ultimately benefited professionally and wanted to strengthen the partnership. Implications for engaging host teachers and primary students when building international education partnerships are shared.

Keywords: teacher education, partnerships, service learning, study abroad

Introduction

*E*ducators and their students strive to develop the intercultural competence necessary to be global citizens in our 21st-century world *(Longview Foundation, 2008; UNESCO, 2013)*. One strategy for developing such competencies is learning through international collaboration *(Boix Mansilla & Jackson, 2011; Zhao, 2010)*. When individuals from differing cultural backgrounds work together to create a learning experience for all involved, a positive international collaboration can occur *(Wong, 2015)*. Plater *(2011)* highlights the importance of lived experience in the community that includes engaged face-to-face conversations and interactions necessary for developing global competence and citizenship. International teacher education partnerships necessitate collaboration and engagement with the schools in the host community *(Bringle & Hatcher, 2011)*. In this article we explore an international teacher education collaboration—a partnership between an American teacher education program and primary schools

in Tuscany, Italy—from the perspective of the host education community.

We entered into this research project after our participation in this international teacher education program in Florence; one of us as a faculty member in residence in Italy, the other as an undergraduate teacher education intern studying and teaching abroad. Recognizing that the international teacher education program was initially developed with the American teacher interns as primary beneficiaries, we wondered if the partnership was achieving its goals regarding international collaboration and global learning. (Throughout this article we use the term *intern* for the preservice teachers/student teachers to distinguish the interns, the cooperating teachers, and the primary students.) Such collaboration and learning necessitates a reciprocal relationship with members of the host community *(Bringle & Hatcher, 2011; Crabtree, 2013)*. To this end, our research adds the important voices of the children and teachers of the international host community to help us build our understanding of practices necessary for developing mutually beneficial international teacher education partnerships.

Literature Review

To provide background for our research, we consider literature associated with teacher education partnerships in both local and international communities.

Teacher Education Partnerships

Central to teacher education are the clinical field experiences where interns have the opportunity to apply their learning to classroom contexts *(NCATE, 2010)*. Such school–university teacher education partnerships rely on the valuable contributions of the cooperating teachers (CTs) to the professional development of interns *(Walkington, 2007; Ziechner, 2010)*. In opening their classrooms to interns, CTs take on multiple roles, including mentor, socializer to the school community and profession, supporter, and evaluator *(Cuenca, 2011; Hall, Draper, Smith, & Bullough, 2008)*. Although CTs gain an additional resource in the classroom *(Sinclair, Dowson, & Thistleton-Martin, 2006)*, they also enter into a relationship with interns that has multiple and sometimes competing dimensions, often with little training *(Clarke, Triggs, & Nielsen, 2014; Hoffman et al., 2015)*. Despite feeling challenged by the task, CTs report that the opportunity to host interns has led them to reflect on and modify their own teaching practices *(Kroeger, Pech, & Cope, 2009)*. Mentoring

of interns can also conflict with the CTs' primary role of teaching children *(Hoffman et al., 2015)*. Successful school–university partnerships require a shared commitment between the university and the CTs that values a mutual exchange of knowledge and resources for all stakeholders *(Burns, Jacobs, Baker, & Donahue, 2016; Walkington, 2007)*.

A review of the research on the impact of hosting interns on K-12 students found little data on student outcomes in regard to classroom achievement or students' perspectives of having interns in their classes (e.g. *Nath, Guadarrama, & Ramsey, 2011; Zeichner, 2010*). Studies that have reported student outcomes highlighted the increased opportunities for small group instruction as important to increasing student achievement *(Blanks et al., 2013; Fisher, Frey, & Farnan, 2004; Mewborn, 2000; Sherretz & Kyle, 2011)*. For example, interns in the Blanks et al. *(2013)* study provided Tier 2 interventions as part of a before-school tutoring project, contributing to an increase in literacy achievement in a Title I school. Similarly, Mewborn *(2000)* found that interns positively impacted the math achievement of their students when providing small group instruction. We identified only one study *(Cowart & Rademacher, 2003)* in which students' perspectives on having an intern in their classroom were incorporated. Cowart and Rademacher found that students perceived change when their schools participated in a professional development school partnership; the students identified the advantages of having an intern who helped them learn in new ways, but also acknowledged that the interns did not manage the class as well. The students' perceptions led the partnership to make adjustments to improve teacher effectiveness. Thus despite partnership commitments to all members, few studies have included student voices or assessed the benefits to students, perhaps because of the challenge of isolating the impact of hosting an intern on elementary students or identifying meaningful measures of student outcomes.

International Teaching Experiences

High-quality study abroad programs designed to develop participants' global competence include frequent opportunities for interaction with the international host community *(Engle & Engle, 2003; Lewin, 2009)*. This is particularly true when we consider teacher education abroad *(Cushner & Brennan, 2007; Phillion & Malewski, 2011)*. Consistent with the literature on local teacher partnerships, research on overseas field experiences focuses on the impact on interns' development (e.g. *Mahon & Cushner, 2002; Marx & Moss, 2011; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011)*. Benefits frequently identi-

fied for the American interns include greater awareness of cultural identity and differences, empathy for language learners and their instructional needs, and flexibility and confidence in their role as teachers. Wilson's *(2015)* analysis of implementing and sustaining effective international teacher programs acknowledges the importance of communicating program goals with international colleagues and working with talented and supportive classroom teachers.

International teaching experiences necessitate interaction and collaboration with host teachers and students; however, what is known about hosts' perspectives and outcomes regarding these international teaching partnerships is sparse. Two studies incorporate the CTs' perspective; however, the research focus was the interns. In Stachowski and Chleb's *(1998)* study, CTs reported that the American interns were enthusiastic and globally aware; however, they also recommended that the program develop preexperience preparation addressing the host community's culture and educational practices. In another study of international student teaching, CTs indicated that, in addition to providing professional support, they helped their international interns adjust to new environments, and their interns reported that they frequently looked to the CTs for social and emotional support *(Firmin, MacKay, & Firmin, 2008)*. Kanyaprasith, Finley, and Phonphok's *(2015)* research on a United States–Thai education partnership reported benefits for multiple stakeholders: Thai teachers and students, as well as American and Thai interns. The Thai teachers indicated they had a chance to practice English, and their Thai students had positive attitudes toward the program as they experienced a variety of science-learning models. All participants reported the partnership was valuable for learning different pedagogical approaches from each other; however, teachers and graduate students were unsure of their roles in the program and expressed a need to plan and develop the program together.

In sum, we can infer from these few studies that CTs have taken an active role and have likely experienced opportunities for intercultural learning with their American interns. However, the students in the host classrooms have not been included in research on teacher education partnerships *(Kinginger, 2010)*. As Stephenson *(2006)* argued, abroad students and international program staff must act "as committed global citizens to ensure that we are carrying out our work in a way that is responsible to all parties involved" *(p. 67)*. In the case of international teacher education programs, parties

involved include not only the American teacher interns but also the CTs and the primary students in the host schools.

Theoretical Framework of the Current Study

Although teacher education partnerships assume relationships with host communities, the literature revealed a primary focus on the intern; we need to expand our understanding to include outcomes for the CTs and primary students. Thus, to examine the impact of our international education partnership on the host community partners, we drew on global service-learning research *(Crabtree, 2013; Sherraden, Bopp, & Lough, 2013)* to consider the reciprocity of the international teacher education program for the host community teachers and students. Although the teacher education program was not developed as a service-learning program nor intended to provide that particular value of philanthropic service *(Furco, 1996)*, we considered this framework appropriate based on what we perceive as compatible desirable outcomes for host communities. Specifically, Sherraden, Bopp, and Lough's *(2013)* framework for inquiry into serving abroad was used to guide our understanding of host benefits. Their framework identifies three categories of outcomes for the host communities: tangible resources, capacity building, and intercultural understanding. *Tangible resources* reflects monetary contributions and human capital that fill gaps in staffing, *capacity building* addresses organizational support and building of professional skills, and *intercultural understanding* develops from building relationships and learning from others from around the world. Thus, we believe that positive impact of a teacher education partnership on the educational community should encompass providing tangible benefits to meet hosts' needs, building the students' and teachers' capacities for teaching and learning, and enhancing participants' intercultural understanding.

Methodology

A qualitative case study design was used to describe the impact of an American teacher education abroad program for the Italian host school *(Stake, 2000)*. We used this methodology because we sought to understand "how the phenomenon matter[ed] from the perspective of the participants" in their local context *(Dyson & Genishi, 2005, p. 81)*. In addition, case study design allowed us to document with substantial detail the context, programmatic factors, and impacts using multiple data sources *(Kiely & Hartman, 2011; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013)*. Notes from the 2013 and 2014

program from cooperating teacher professional development and yearly program reports provided preliminary data about the international teacher program and its impact on partnership schools. However, primary data for the case study was collected in 2015 when the first author returned to Italy as a visiting scholar at the University of Florence. (The University of Florence is not directly involved with the American teacher education abroad program, and in 2015 the first author was only associated with the program as a researcher.) The six schools participating in the partnership at that time constituted the case study researched.

The International Teacher Education Program

For the past 5 years an American liberal arts college has offered its 3rd-year elementary/special education majors a study abroad option that includes living and teaching English in Florence, Italy for one semester. This overseas teaching program partnered with schools in Tuscany to provide the interns the opportunity to interact with Italian teachers and students, learn about Italian education practices, and develop their teaching skills. This international teaching experience was supported by two education courses: a language and literacy course taught by an American faculty member in residence, and a culture and education course taught by an Italian educator. American interns also took a beginning Italian language course and two electives.

For the Tuscan primary schools, the overseas program supplemented the teaching of English in their primary classrooms, as the interns taught English and shared knowledge about their culture and country with the primary students *(Education, Audiovisual and Cultural Executive Agency, 2012)*. The interns were in the primary classrooms 4 hours each week and were the lead teacher for English 1 hour each week. The English as a foreign language lessons that they developed were aligned with the Italian–English competencies and language proficiencies of the students. Topics covered in fall 2015 included (but were not limited to) present progressive tense, commands, prepositions, traditions of Thanksgiving and Christmas, U.S. landmarks, and the vocabulary for city safety, daily routines, and professions.

The Italian primary teachers took on the role of CTs and provided mentorship for the interns. The mentoring responsibilities of CTs outlined in program documents included

- acclimating interns to the school environment,
- supporting the interns' lesson planning,

- maintaining communication with all involved in the program,
- assessing interns' teaching and providing feedback, and
- allowing students to observe other classes in the school.

Since a compulsory training period had recently been incorporated into teacher education as part of the 2010 Gelmini reform, none of the CTs themselves had student taught nor hosted an intern before their involvement with the abroad program.

The Italian study abroad program staff and education faculty worked with the CTs to support their involvement with the American teacher education program. This included an initial orientation meeting at the beginning of the school year with CTs, school principals, and English language coordinators; two observation visits by program faculty; and a final professional development session with all CTs involved in the program. Although it is the program's goal to retain effective CTs, the program has had to recruit new teachers and schools each year as it expanded the number of interns and as previous CTs were reassigned to earlier primary grades.

Research Participants

Schools ($N = 6$) involved in the partnership during fall 2015 were invited to participate in the research study. All 10 CTs who hosted the American interns volunteered for different aspects of the research study consistent with ethical procedures approved by the IRB. The CTs had been recommended by their principals and/or English language coordinators and met the following criteria: (1) were able to communicate in English, (2) had a minimum of 3 years' experience teaching English as a foreign language, (3) were currently teaching third through sixth grade students, (4) could complete weekly assessments and participate in regular planning sessions, and (5) were able to participate in orientation and professional development offered by the program. Table 1 provides background information regarding the CTs and their participation in observations, interviews, focus groups, and student questionnaires.

Table 1. Cooperating Teachers and the Data Available by Classroom

| School | Grade[a] | Teacher[b] | Years | | | Interview | Teaching Observations | | Data Available |
			Program	Taught	Taught English	CT	Intern	CT	Questionnaires Student
School 1	5th/A	Anna	1st year	18	13	Yes	Yes	Yes	
School 1	5th/B	Lilianna	1st year	20	5	Yes			Yes
School 2	5th/A	Mia	2nd year	17	13	Yes			
School 2	5th/B	Mia							
School 3	4th/A	Natalia	1st year	36	23	Yes	Yes		Yes
School 3	5th/B	Natalia					Yes		Yes
School 3	4th/B	Natalia					Yes	Yes	Yes
School 3	4th/C	Natalia					Yes	Yes	Yes
School 3	5th/A	Lara	2nd year	15	5	Yes	Yes		
School 3	5th/B	Lara					Yes		
School 3	5th/C	Isa	2nd year	20	15	Yes	Yes		Yes
School 4	6th/A	Donna	1st year	5	5	Yes	Yes		
School 4	6th/B	Marco	2nd year	14	13	Yes	Yes		
School 5	5th/A	Giada	1st year	19	8	Yes	Yes		Yes
School 5	3rd/A	Maria	1st year	15	5	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

[a] *Each intern was assigned to a 3rd–6th grade English as a foreign language class. Some CTs taught more than one English class, and thus hosted more than one intern.*
[b] *Pseudonyms are used to protect the confidentiality of the CTs.*

Third through sixth grade students ($N = 158$) from eight class-rooms participated in the research component of the program. The primary students began their compulsory study of English at age 6, with 1 or 2 hours of instruction a week. In the third through sixth grades this increased to 3 to 4 hours a week *(Education, Audiovisual and Cultural Executive Agency, 2012).*

Data Sources

Cooperating teacher interviews. CTs were invited to meet with the first author to discuss the teacher education abroad program. Prior to the interviews the teachers were provided with a list of questions in both English and Italian. *(See Appendix A).* Three teachers agreed to participate in face-to-face interviews varying from 45 to 60 minutes. Throughout these open-ended interviews the Tuscan teachers discussed in English their experiences with the program; the questions provided were only a starting point for the interviews. Interviews were transcribed by the second author and reviewed by the first author. Five additional teachers chose to answer the interview questions in writing—two in Italian, three in English. Both oral and written responses were included as CT data sources. A bilingual study abroad staff member who was not affiliated with the education program translated the Italian responses. The bilingual abroad program director reviewed the translations for accuracy. Researchers analyzed the translated interviews, as both researchers have only basic Italian language proficiency.

Classroom observations. The first author completed unstructured observations of the American interns teaching English as a foreign language. Event sampling was used to document CT–intern interactions, elementary student–intern interactions, and CT–elementary student interactions. The first author also observed three of the CTs when they were teaching English as a foreign language.

Tuscan primary student questionnaires. The primary students responded to a questionnaire written in Italian at the end of the fall semester after the interns finished teaching. The CTs and school principals distributed the student questionnaire in class in a manner consistent with approved ethical practices. *(See Appendix B.)* The students wrote in Italian and their answers were translated in a manner similar to the CT interviews.

Data Analysis

To analyze the meaning of the partnership experiences for the host teachers and students, an inductive process of analysis was

undertaken. In the first phase, each researcher identified thought units in the interviews, student questionnaires, and observation event reports *(Hycner, 1985)*. Identified units from all data sources were then sorted into two broad categories: impact on students and impact on CTs. Next, the units in each of these categories were open coded. A total of 24 codes were identified for impact on students, and 15 codes were identified for impact on CTs. To ensure interrater reliability, both researchers separately reviewed the data, identified thought units, and coded. Researchers met regularly to review code definitions and compare coding. The researchers' interrater agreement for the coding averaged 91 percent; differences were resolved by discussion. In the second phase, the two researchers used an iterative process of pattern coding and constant comparison *(Miles & Huberman, 1994)* to capture emergent themes. Six primary themes emerged from this analysis. In compiling the data to build a coherent story we sought to identify the significant patterns, establish interrelationships between the various data sources, surface minority voices, and resist interpretation from only our personal lens. (See Table 2 for codes and themes.)

Table 2. Data Analysis Codes by Category

	Codes	Themes
Student	Pronunciation	Enhanced English communication
	Interns' proficiency in Italian	
	Interns' English proficiency	
	Student language proficiency	
	Intern–student communication patterns	
	Learning English grammar	
	Learning vocabulary words	
	Global understanding	Developed a global awareness
	Language use in world	
	Relationships with people from other countries	
	Awareness of world	
	Global similarities	
	Geography	
	Culture and tradition	
	Intern's American home	
	General content knowledge	Reflected on how they learned
	Italian curriculum influences	
	Student reaction to pedagogy	
	Visuals	
	Repetition	
	Active participation	
	Group work	
	Technology/music	
	Teacher's use of language in lessons	

Note: Continued on next page

Cooperating Teacher	Intern teach for them	Participated differently during intern's EFL lessons
	English language coteaching	
	Student learning	
	Intern share materials	
	Observe and support students	
	Mentoring intern	Learned from mentoring
	Communication	
	Other pedagogical approaches	
	Evaluation of intern	
	Value of project for school	Committed to improving partnership
	Access to native English speakers	
	Teachers' professional development	
	Collaboration	
	Planning	

We recognize that our personal participation in the abroad program framed our analysis and understanding of the host community data. As we undertook the inductive process of analyzing and interpreting data, we did several things to ensure the integrity of the project. All data analyzed had names of CTs, interns, and students redacted; the full data set was considered as a cohort. An audit trail of the data sources and detailed analysis memos was maintained to ensure triangulation of the data from all sources and that all findings could be confirmed to original sources *(Kiely & Hartman, 2011)*. Preliminary findings were shared with the overseas program director, Italian education faculty member, and a CT to address authenticity; their feedback was incorporated into our analysis. In addition, the first author continued to gather contextual information about Italian teacher education and teaching English as a foreign language practices in Tuscany from the University of Florence education faculty. During data analysis, we frequently discussed our personal experiences with the program and reflected on our participant observations about the local context in order to monitor our subjectivity progressively and negotiate the meaning *(Savin-Baden & Major, 2013)*. With this analysis we began to accumulate knowledge about the host schools' experience of having American interns.

Results

Results of the qualitative analysis of the teachers' interviews, students' responses, and classroom observations reflected the impact that the teacher education abroad program had on the Tuscan students and the CTs. Dominant themes and exemplars regarding primary student impact will be presented first, followed by the impact on the CTs.

Impact on Primary Students

The primary goal for the American interns and the Italian CTs was to further the Italian children's English language learning. The data suggest that participating in the international teacher education program led to improvement in the Italian students' English language communication. In addition, some of the students developed a global awareness and personally reflected on how they learned during classroom experiences with the intern.

Enhanced their English communication.

> In my experience we give children a lot of words: animals, clothes, numbers but only later do we teach conversation functions . . . with the American interns they learn the language, the communication and not just sentence structure. . . . They had to learn from the context, the global context. *(A CT from 2013 Focus Group 1)*

The Tuscan students improved their English language skills as they interacted in class with their interns. Students and CTs commonly noted the interns' speaking status as "mother tongue speakers" of American English. As one student explained, "She helped me a lot with the pronunciation, since her pronunciation was very American." Similarly, CTs highlighted the importance of students' hearing the language spoken by native speakers, thus allowing their pupils to develop an ear for different forms of English. CT Mia said, "Over time interns adjusted style, and Italian children and teachers began to develop an ear for the language." Additionally, the students frequently identified specific grammar constructions they learned from the intern, such as *there is*, *there are*, *progressive tense*, and *prepositions*; the students were observed "readily follow[ing] along, chorally repeating verb phrases, and referring to posters the interns had made to contrast the grammatical construction." One Italian student described the language skills gained as follows: "In reality I haven't learned many words from our American teacher, but how to make sentences (which to me is more important)." And

another wrote, "My American teacher helped me communicating because she taught me how to answer or ask questions."

American interns engaged the students' curiosity for learning a new language to communicate. As one CT in the 2014 focus group stated, "[the students] don't ask for the single meaning or translation of words like they do normally. They have to try harder to comprehend with a native speaker." And CT Anna told us "that in their attempts to get in touch with her, they came out using a vocabulary which I didn't expect they could have mastered. . . . They really surprised me." Observations documented students regularly trying to ask their intern questions in order to understand the English instructions, rather than relying on their CT whenever they were confused. For example, in one observation it was noted that the students understood the concept of size, which the intern was demonstrating, but they quickly turned to each other to figure out the English. Soon smiles burst out on their faces and they turned to the intern and said, "Short?" "Long?" The intern smiled back and said, "Yes." They were motivated to comprehend what their teacher was saying and interact with her. As the program director stated in her 2014 yearly report, "The greatest gift of this program to the Italian school children is the transformation of English from a subject to be studied to a living language."

Developed a global awareness. By communicating and establishing a relationship with their American interns, various students took a step toward global awareness. CT Natalie captured this simply when she said, "Relationships are so important before understanding, before speaking." In addition, a student indicated, "I've learned that we're all the same. We only speak different languages."

Frequently the interns taught lessons about American geography and traditions using a cross-cultural framework. On occasion, interns and students were observed sharing stories and photos of their homes, families, local landmarks, food, and holiday traditions. A group of students compared their own traditions to those of their interns as shown through the following responses: "as an Italian girl I have different traditions"; "to me cultural exchanges are fun also to understand traditions of that person"; and "in Italy we celebrate different holydays and traditions than the United States." A comparison stance was evident in the following students' descriptions about American geography: "I learned that there are different landscapes in America" and "I learned that in her world it is beautiful too." The weekly intercultural exchanges with their intern led a few students to recognize differences and consider their

actions in regard to these differences; for example, one student remarked, "The world is made of different cultures which must be respected," and another said, "No, I do not feel at home in every place I go, since I was not born there and I didn't have my things and my friends."

Global awareness was also evident as the students considered language use in different countries. Several students expressed the realization that "we can communicate even if we're from different countries." Frequently, the students commented that they learned the difference between "English language and American language" and acknowledged "that there are different Englishes spoken all over the world." The CTs spoke of the students' increased awareness of the American English dialect. As CT Mia said, "It's important for children's lives to show them there are differences. They have nourishment in their lives. They can recognize the American way to say the hour and the British way. Understand differences is important." In sum, by building relationships with their intern and learning about their language, home, and traditions, the Italian students began to recognize intercultural differences and consider the perspectives of others—important components of global competence *(UNESCO, 2013).*

Reflected on how they learned. Students reacted to the different instructional approaches used by the interns in the classroom and frequently connected the pedagogy to their learning. Students reflected on the interns' use of participatory games, small group work, and the use of charts, pictures, and realia to illustrate concepts.

Regarding participatory games, one student exclaimed, "I learned very well when she taught me interrogative pronouns with the scavenger hunt." Another remembered an interactive ball game "when she let us play with the ball that we had to pass each other asking questions: Is there? Are there?" These simple statements showed what they learned, how they learned it, and its effectiveness for them. The observational data and CT interviews confirmed the motivation that was evident in their students when they played language games. Similarly, another student discussed the impact of active participation and small group work. "I've learned really well her lessons when she used to call us at the blackboard and when she let us explain our work after being divided into groups." The interns were frequently observed guiding the students in role-play dialogues with a partner. And CT Mia noted, "I think their ideas promoted working in pairs. . . . Children love working in pairs, working in groups."

When describing what the interns did to help them understand, students frequently used the words "explain," "example," and "show me" in reference to how posters, photos, and gestures helped them better understand the lesson that was being taught. This aspect of pedagogy was one that seemed new to a lot of the students as they stated, "She explained very well with her posters that I know others would have never done." Generally, the Italian teachers used curriculum workbooks, and thus the visuals that the interns used were both novel and more realistic.

Experiencing different pedagogies with their intern led most students to reflect on differences and their impact on their learning. The primary students recognized how they were personally benefiting from the different teaching approaches their intern used to teach English.

Impact on Cooperating Teachers

CTs were challenged by their role as mentors for the American interns, but they ultimately benefited professionally and wanted to strengthen the partnership. Dominant themes emerged from data analysis to provide evidence of the impact on the CTs in three areas: participation during EFL lessons, mentoring, and the global education partnership itself.

Participated during interns' EFL lessons. In the words of one former CT, "I feel a dual responsibility for students and for interns. I am mediating two levels of priority in my classroom." Observations revealed that the CTs participated in the interns' EFL lessons to ensure their own and their students' understanding of the interns' English. For example, teachers translated the interns' English instructions to Italian for their students, and confirmed the expectations for activities with the intern. For some CTs, this reflected the way they were observed teaching English as a foreign language: providing instructions in Italian for an English-language task. Other CTs translated only when the students and interns were having noticeable difficulty communicating. As Mia explained, "Classroom language is very important for children to know what to do [and] when they have to do it. Children can't participate if they don't understand what to do." She went on to say that the interns needed to learn to "speak slowly, and check for understanding." CTs were also observed checking their own understanding of English and practicing pronunciation. For example, CT Lara discussed differences between "night" and "evening" with her intern in a lesson comparing daily routines in America and Italy.

CT Anna and her intern were seen conferring about and modeling the use of the third person -s in English. And CTs Natalia and Giada frequently repeated English phrases after their intern to refine their pronunciation.

Interns teaching in the classroom also provided the CTs more time to closely respond to their students' learning. For example, CT Anna remarked about the opportunity to observe, "Observations were a stimulus to contribute to the classroom with new suggestions to help students learn." And CT Natalia explained:

> At the beginning the mentoring teacher's task during teaching was to serve as a sort of filter to support and check if the communication was passing. . . . As the experience progressed, this role lessened to the point that I simply walked around the classroom, observed and supported students with problems and disabilities.

Observation data confirmed that the CTs often worked one-on-one with students with special needs as the interns taught. Although most CTs participated in the interns' lessons to support learning, CT Donna interpreted her role differently; she was observed sitting in the back of the classroom grading papers throughout the intern's teaching. When her intern asked for help she said, "I could do it in Italian . . . but it is better for you to make an example." Donna was not asked to participate as a CT the following year.

Learned from mentoring. Although the teacher education program shared expectations with the CTs about their work with the interns, mentoring a student teacher was a new experience for all of the CTs. As CT Giada said, "It was hard to prepare for this experience." The CTs were exposed to different teaching methods used in their classrooms by the interns and learned about teacher education mentoring in the United States; however, not all of the CTs were comfortable with the culturally different practices and were challenged with how to respond to the differences.

The CTs noted frequently that they learned new approaches or were reminded of teaching approaches used by interns. For example, CT Maria commented that her intern "reinforces the value of working in pairs, sometimes we forget about it." And CT Isa said,

> They teach and organize a lesson about what I'm teaching for English language with my children, so they teach for me. They have my room. It's very important.

> I have new ideas for my work that I can use in another subject that I teach.

Lilianna reflected on new classroom engagement strategies she learned, such as attention signals like "1, 2, 3, eyes on me" and "thumbs up/thumbs down" to check for understanding. Materials that previous years' interns developed were hanging on classroom walls, and CTs referenced incorporating these charts and pictures when teaching other classes.

However, differences in approaches to teaching English also proved to be a point of tension between some of the CTs and their interns. In their education methods class, the interns were encouraged to focus on developing communicative competence and "specific English language content through meaningful activities that involved active engagement" *(Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2016, Literacy Course Syllabus)*. Such approaches were different from the pedagogies the CTs themselves were observed using and modeling, where the emphasis was on grammar and the use of recitation and workbook practice *(Enever & Moon, 2009; Ur, 2011)*. (The European Commission has recently recommended content and language integrated learning, which is based on principles similar to those underlying U.S. English language learner practices; *Scott & Beadle, 2014.*) Several CTs commented that interns needed to adjust their instruction to be more aligned with the students' English level. For example, CT Marco was observed saying, "The students only know the present tense, my intern needs to adjust and only use the present tense." Additionally, several CTs were observed stepping in and modeling pedagogies that focused on grammar: CT Natalia modeled choral recitation of verb conjugations, and CT Lara demonstrated the use of translation as a strategy to contrast the grammatical forms of Italian and English. These CTs' responses suggested they wanted the interns to teach in the same way that they taught EFL.

Conversely, some CTs appreciated that their students were participating in interactive activities, linking them to more global learning, and responded by problem solving with their intern and students when they didn't understand each other. CT Maria was observed eagerly asking her intern to share her materials that addressed respecting the global environment. CT Isa explained, "Global understanding is more important than understanding a particular form in the language."

CTs also struggled with program expectations regarding the evaluation of the interns' teaching, indicating they were not consistent with Italian cultural values.

> I feel miserable really about the evaluation because I always say "good" because they really are good, in my opinion. So to now know this kind of cultural difference for evaluation at US Schools. It helps not to be misunderstood. *(A 2014 CT's comment at the end of a professional development session)*

The teacher education program required CTs to (1) orally debrief with the intern at the end of each lesson and (2) complete a written evaluation form using a rating scale and comments. This form was available in English and Italian; teachers could use either language, with the program translating as necessary for the interns. In the professional development session offered each semester, program staff explained how interns benefited from weekly written evaluation and formative feedback on their lessons to improve teaching. In interviews and focus group discussions, CTs indicated "they didn't know the interns well enough to evaluate," "[Italians] view assessment holistically and don't traditionally break teaching down by standards," and they "were also concerned that rating the students would change their relationship with them if they were negative." Despite these different perspectives on assessments, CTs were observed to regularly share formative comments during and after lessons with interns and program faculty, but completed the evaluation form with excellent ratings and vague positive comments. CT Anna summarized by saying, "The tutors' [mentor's] role is very delicate. We must take up responsibility to correct the interns with the purpose of best helping them. In Italian culture this is always inconvenient."

Committed to improving the partnership. Generally, the CTs developed a greater commitment to the partnership and wanted to strengthen their schools' involvement. The initial need identified in the host schools was improving access to English instruction; as the abroad program director explained in her 2014 yearly report:

> The teachers really wanted native English speakers to come and work with the children. . . . both for the language model, but also to provide the Florence students with as much opportunity in English as they only get three hours of instruction a week in upper primary.

CTs acknowledged that most Italian pupils learn British English, but are taught by an Italian teacher who speaks English with an Italian accent. Additionally, two of the CTs interviewed wanted to encourage other teachers to get involved despite the teachers' negative self-assessment of their English skills. They believed communicating in English with their intern improved their language skills and was an important professional development for their job as teachers. "I have to talk to the interns about their lesson and that is important for me" (CT Anna).

After being involved with the program, the teachers described it as "a gift to our school" (CT Anna), "global collaboration" (CT Natalia), "we say [to parents] these interns don't come here to speak in general, but they do a perfect lesson . . . happy to see this serious work" (CT Maria). To strengthen the partnership and increase involvement of teachers, the CTs recommended recognizing it as "more important than understanding language" (CT Lilianna) and "a global education program" (CT Isa). CT Maria described the partnership as "valuable to us globalizing curriculum." School 3 participated in 2014 and again in 2015; the administration formally established it as a school improvement project for 2015. CT Isa described the project in this way: "We do this project for all the fourth and all fifth class. I think it's a good idea because it's not a general project, but it wants to improve and competencies, expertise with a special kind of classes and with teachers." CTs from School 5 indicated they were going to talk to their administration about making it a school project—to formalize the partnership and give teachers time in their schedule to coplan with interns and have additional opportunities for professional development. It was also noted in the study abroad director's 2015 yearly report that CTs were now asking for "more collegial English language practice and conversation to be included in the program." Finally, several teachers indicated that they wanted to participate in more partnership planning meetings with program staff, recognizing reciprocal benefits for the interns, their students, and themselves.

> I think the most useful would be detailed planning in order to be able to compare not just the content, but also the strategies in a clear and accurate manner. This is really important to me. *(CT Anna)*

Discussion

This study regarding the impact of an international teacher education partnership on the host community points to the potential of such programs to build the intercultural competence of all involved. The findings suggest the benefits outweigh the challenges for CTs and their students who participated in the intercultural collaboration partnership experience. The discussion of the findings is presented using Sherraden, Bopp & Lough *(2013)* framework that addresses the tangible benefits, the capacity building, and intercultural understanding of the host community (see Table 3). This will be followed by an acknowledgment of the limitations of the research and implications for community engagement when building international teacher education partnerships.

Table 3. Impacts on the Host Community

Tangential Benefits	Challenges
Intern led English class one day a week.	Facilitating communication between the students and the intern
Teachers and students accessed a native speaker to build intercultural communication skills.	
Intern's teaching provided teacher time to observe and support students.	
Capacity Building	Challenges
CTs increased capacity as EFL teachers.	Understanding expectations in mentoring
Students developed intercultural communication skills and an awareness of how they learn.	Adjusting to novel practices the interns used
Intercultural Understanding	Challenges
CTs and students built relationships with American interns.	Increasing the number of teachers involved
CTs committed to partnership and expressed a desire to work with university partners to build common understanding.	Establishing a schoolwide commitment
	Shifting the focus of the program from English to global understanding

Tangible Benefits, Capacity Building, and Intercultural Understanding

Tangible benefits. Tangible benefits of the partnership for the host schools were seen in the classroom where the American interns taught English as a foreign language. Consistent with previous research regarding local university–school partnerships, the

interns were identified as a valuable resource *(Sinclair, Dowson, & Thistleton-Martin, 2006)*. The interns' EFL classes provided meaningful opportunities for all participants to build intercultural communication skills and knowledge of American culture and geography. As native speakers, the interns modeled American English and encouraged students to engage in dialogue with them and with each other in English. This increased both primary students' and CTs' exposure to English and their motivation to use English *(Education, Audiovisual and Cultural Executive Agency, 2012)*. Through their participation, the students and CTs made personal connections with someone from overseas and shared knowledge about each other's culture and traditions, an important step in building global competence *(Plater, 2011)*. Finally, the teachers had more time to observe and support individual student learning when the interns were teaching. In sum, the global education partnership provided CTs and students access to an American intern who could help them develop their English skills and learn about American culture, as well as giving CTs time to respond to individual students' needs.

Capacity building. Although the partnership was established to build the interns' capacity to teach culturally and linguistically diverse students in a globally aware manner *(Hauerwas, Skawinski, Ryan, 2017)* the findings suggest that the program's benefits for capacity building were reciprocal. Despite the greater emphasis on foreign language education in the primary schools, Italian primary teachers generally have minimal specialized training in language teaching. Nonetheless, with the 2010 Gelmini reform, each primary school teacher is the sole teacher of all subjects *(Giannikas, 2014)*. CTs recognized the partnership as an opportunity to expand their knowledge of English professionally. However, they also acknowledged that balancing the role of mentor and teacher in the classroom was challenging *(Hoffman et al., 2015; Kanyaprasith, Finley, & Phonphok, 2015)*; they prioritized their actions based on their primary students' learning, and at times took over the interns' lessons to ensure communication and familiarity with praxis.

Additionally, the CTs were exposed to different education practices used to teach EFL and assess interns' development as teachers; this necessitated collaboration with interns and faculty with differing cultural backgrounds to create a positive learning experience for all involved *(Wong, 2015)*. In mentoring, the CTs needed to consider the perspective of others as they reflected on their own training and teaching *(Kroeger, Pech, & Cope 2009)*. Some CTs had difficulty adapting to another perspective; they retreated to their

experiences, asking interns to use their EFL workbook and grammatical approaches, and expressed reluctance about critiquing their intern's teaching *(Ur, 2011)*. Others responded to the intercultural learning with insights to adapt their own teaching and approaches to mentoring, as well as strategies to strengthen the program. These responses reflected a continuum of reactions to intercultural differences evident in previous research on the intercultural development of teachers *(Cushner & Mahon, 2009)*.

By participating in the partnership, the primary students developed their capacity to be reflective learners who were excited to continue learning a new language and explore the world. They collectively struggled through points of miscommunication to learn about each other *(Wong, 2015)*. The desire to communicate with their American interns gave the students purpose for learning English. The students recognized that learning English would allow them to travel and meet others from around the world *(Education, Audiovisual and Cultural Executive Agency, 2012)*. This reflective awareness transferred to their learning more generally. Students identified different educational practices the interns used in their EFL class and appreciated how the interactive approaches and use of visuals positively impacted their learning *(Cowart & Rademacher, 2003)*.

Intercultural understanding. Finally, the findings suggest the global teacher education partnership impacted members of the host schools' intercultural understanding. Intercultural understanding is built on relationships with others from around the world *(Sherraden, Bopp, & Lough, 2013)*. By participating in the partnership, both Italian elementary students and CTs built relationships with the American interns, allowing each to learn from one another *(Plater, 2011)*. The most frequent student comment was a request for their interns to come back and spend more time teaching them. A few students even understood the program's goal from the intern's perspective, acknowledging that they wanted their intern to continue learning to be a teacher. The students also expressed intercultural understanding when comparing their learning of British and American English and explaining how their Italian traditions were different from their American intern's traditions.

Additionally, the CTs established relationships with education faculty and study abroad staff that increased their understanding of teacher education practices used in the United States. They welcomed the intern into their classroom, attended professional development sessions, and offered suggestions to further the partnership to meet the educational needs of all involved. The CTs recognized

the importance of building relationships as their program recommendations focused on strategies that would increase teacher involvement and provide time to coplan and dialogue professionally about global education practices *(Bringle & Hatcher, 2011)*. Each of these purposeful actions demonstrated the CTs' commitment to intercultural understanding within the partnership.

Limitations and Future Directions

The researchers committed to present the voices of the host community objectively through their data collection, analysis, and reporting procedures; however, there were limits in language proficiency and intercultural knowledge. Everyone involved in the research and the partnership had differing degrees of English/Italian biliteracy and knowledge of educational practices in the United States and Italy. Because data collection and analysis occurred in both Italian and English, participants' and researchers' understanding of particular terms and questions was dependent on their biliteracy and knowledge of education practices. This was certainly evident as researchers and participants worked to understand each other's approaches to English language pedagogy and teacher evaluation. Thus we acknowledge that, as in all intercultural research where we learn from each other, both the researchers and the participants engaged in linguistic and cultural interpretation of educational concepts.

Although we encouraged participants to share freely about the impact of the partnership, the data included few negative comments and challenges. This may be due to the cultural reluctance to critique that the CTs referenced when discussing assessment practices, or could instead be due to the teachers' desire to continue involvement with the program. The student questionnaires were completed in the classroom under the supervision of the CT. Although the responses varied, we recognize that writing instruction in the primary classes tended to be teacher guided. Therefore, we wondered whether the teachers' voices may have influenced the students' responses as well. Including the impact on students when investigating the benefits of international teacher education partnerships is novel; we look forward to additional research in this area and the consideration of different data sources that might also validly capture the perspectives of the students and teachers in the host community *(Fisher & Ociepka, 2011)*.

Implications for Developing Global Education Partnerships

The inclusion of international field experiences is one approach American universities are using to develop interns' intercultural competence for teaching in diverse classrooms *(Cushner & Brennan, 2007; Phillion & Malewski, 2011)*. The development of such overseas programs necessitates intercultural engagement, attending to cross-cultural differences, and moving away from ignorance of others *(Rahatzad et al., 2013)*. The Italian host teachers' and students' experiences analyzed here highlight steps to take for teacher educators and study abroad providers who want to engage with schools overseas in partnerships that are mutually beneficial and supportive of intercultural learning:

1. **Begin by establishing the mutuality of the partnership.** Take into consideration the needs of the interns, CTs, and primary students as you determine goals for the education partnership together. Identify how host schools formalize the school improvement process so that you can align program requirements and host schools' needs. This is important for getting teacher buy-in and administration validation. Reciprocity can be maintained as part of such an international collaboration if regular opportunities to learn from each other's multiple perspectives are provided. Be prepared to revise and adapt the partnership as necessary as new members become involved.

2. **Value all voices.** Participation in the partnership provided opportunities for all members to build their capacities as intercultural communicators in a professional context, but there were points of uneasiness. University professionals and English speakers both represent privileged groups, and their voices are often viewed as most important *(Kinginger, 2010)*. A lot of time is necessary to build relationships in which all members of the partnership feel comfortable communicating and sharing their valuable knowledge. Work with abroad staff and community members to communicate using any and all languages. Make use of translation and cultural brokers from the community as necessary. Build in formal and informal opportunities for the host community to provide feedback on the partnership.

3. **Support intercultural learning.** Central to the interns' interactional experiences were opportunities to learn about Italian education practices and participate in guided reflec-

tion regarding cross-cultural differences. CTs also needed these opportunities as they learned to mentor American interns. Although the CTs were provided with professional development regarding American teacher education and their roles as mentors, facilitated cross-cultural analysis and reflection was not explicitly included. Collaborating to develop professional development regarding approaches to language teaching and structure of coteaching interactions would have been a good place for our partnership to extend the CTs' and our intercultural understanding.

4. **Children's learning is essential.** In developing and maintaining the partnership, don't lose the focus on the children. In many cases, the American interns were the first person from another country with whom the students had built an ongoing relationship. Such relationships are essential for building their global understanding. The students gained a purpose for learning English and understanding another person's traditions. Shifting the focus from learning English to a partnership to build global understanding would likely establish this important goal for students, interns, CTs, and program administrators alike.

Conclusion

Given that teacher educators strive to develop their interns' global competence and pedagogical praxis in diverse field experiences, building partnerships in schools abroad is one probable approach. However, little is known about the impact of such partnerships on the host community and how to best establish reciprocal practices that achieve positive benefits for all. The research reported in this article offers a starting point to consider the impact of American teacher education programs on the European schools in which interns practice teaching. Using a global service lens, tangible resources, opportunities for capacity building, and intercultural understanding were identified for both the Italian cooperating teachers and the primary students. However, challenges were also evident. Reflecting on the research that was carried out allowed us to see the potential of international programs to build intercultural competence; however, limitations in communication and approaches to data collection point to the need for additional research. For us to continue to build our program and for others to establish reciprocal education partnerships abroad, attention must be paid to building relationships with our partners, acknowl-

edging differences, and working together toward common goals of improved educational practice and global understanding.

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Appendix A

CT Interview Questions

1. How does having an American pre-service teacher as an intern with you impact your class?

2. What strategies do you feel are most helpful for the interns to know in working with the students in your class?

3. What professional teaching practices have your American interns learned in their time with you and your students? Where have you seen growth?

4. What supports are you finding are most helpful to provide to your interns?

5. How has the experience impacted you professionally?

6. What are the strengths of the program? What would you change?

7. How long have you been a teacher?

8. How long have you been teaching English/Literacy?

9. Have you had an intern from another country before this semester?

10. Have you had an American intern before this semester?

11. Can you provide some information about how you prepared to become a teacher?

Appendix B

Primary Student Questionnaire

1. How did your American teacher help you communicate?

2. What did you learn from your American teacher? About the English language? About the world?

3. This fall what did you learn about yourself as a global citizen?

4. My American teacher helped me . . .

5. How was your English class different this fall? How was it the same?

6. I wish my American teacher . . .

7. I learned best when my American teacher . . .

About the Authors

Laura Boynton Hauerwas is an associate professor in the Elementary Special Education Department at Providence College. Her research interests include learning disabilities, response to intervention, and teacher preparation for special education and culturally diverse classrooms. She earned her Ph.D. in communication sciences and disorders from Northwestern University.

Meaghan Creamer is a master's student in Learning and Design at Vanderbilt University. Her research interests include inclusion classrooms, learning disabilities, culturally competent teaching practices, and makerspaces. She earned her BA in elementary education and special education from Providence College.