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Short-Term Study Abroad Programs: A Sustainable Model for Community Colleges

Jorge Grajales-Díaz

ABSTRACT

This study employed qualitative methods to explore how the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021* approached instructional practices (e.g., in-class and out-of-class immersive learning activities, homestays, pre-program services, including use of L2 and culture learning strategies) to identify those features of the program design that Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC) could reproduce in a new short-term study abroad designed to expand its students' oral proficiency and cultural awareness. The study used data from Zoom interviews with faculty, administrators, and L2 participating students. The findings address the study's purpose in describing how the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021* facilitates language and culture learning abroad and point to several recommendations suitable to the PVCC context and, by extension, other colleges in the VCCS.

Introduction

Short-term study abroad programs (8 weeks or less) have gradually grown among colleges and universities in the U.S. in the past two decades to provide international experiences to students, enabling them to explore new cultures and learn second languages (L2)¹ while immersed in the target culture. The present article builds on the investigation I conducted of the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021* to explore how the program approached instructional practices (e.g., in-class and out-of-class immersive learning activities, homestays, pre-program services, including the use of L2 and culture learning strategies) and identify those features of the program design that Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC) and, by extension, any of the colleges of the Virginia Community College System (VCCS) could reproduce in a new short-term study abroad to expand their students' Spanish oral proficiency and cultural awareness. The article concludes with recommendations for PVCC, implications for language practitioners, and suggestions for future research.

Although PVCC has an annual average enrollment of 375 students in Spanish courses and enjoys a successful articulation agreement² with the Spanish program at UVA and other transfer institutions, about 20% of PVCC's Spanish language students do not reach the level of oral proficiency and cultural awareness that would give them the foundational confidence and curiosity to continue their language studies. This figure is based on the analysis of assessments I have conducted during the past five years of my students through oral quizzes, class conversations, and discussions related to the cultures of the Spanish Speaking world. I teach all the required levels of Spanish at PVCC (i.e., SPA 101, SPA 102, SPA 201, SPA 202), and I have noticed that some of my students (i.e., about 15%) limp through the sequence of the Spanish language courses, just barely passing³ each level and making it through Spanish 202 with a grade of C. The other 5% fall below the C grade level.

These observations are shared by my colleague, Dr. Kempes⁴, who also teaches Spanish at PVCC. We both agree that those students who complete their Spanish course sequence with a grade of C do it by fulfilling the minimum requirement, which we assess through many specific tasks and structured assignments. However, they do not explore what they could do with the language to perform independently and seem satisfied with their minimum completion. As my colleague points out, “I think of some of my students who completed Spanish 202 and thought of that as the end in and of itself, as the finish line, rather than the starting point for a new chapter of their language development” (M. Kempes, personal communication, September 30, 2020).

Furthermore, some students at PVCC complete their intermediate-level Spanish courses without having explored cultural awareness beyond the classroom environment. When asked (i.e., through class conversations, oral quizzes, and/or office hours) about the extent of their interactions with members of the Hispanic community, some students express that they do not communicate with Spanish native speakers beyond the classroom. Often, they recognize their limited knowledge of Hispanic cultures beyond the classroom or their lack of travel experiences to Spanish-speaking countries. In some cases (e.g., Spanish club conversations, office hours), students indicate that they have never traveled anywhere farther than the bordering states of the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Understanding how students can maximize the short-term study abroad opportunities and how the school should design the study abroad program for maximum student benefit will help PVCC and VCCS faculty support learners in developing L2 Spanish speaking skills and cultural awareness. Spanish is one of the most frequently studied second languages in the world and it can be beneficial for the students to learn it well to enter professions in many fields (e.g., business, law, journalism, international affairs, science, health sciences, social services, education, or politics). By providing short-term study abroad opportunities that strengthen our students’ Spanish speaking skills, and cultural awareness, PVCC can position the students to succeed in the workplace. This would align with PVCC’s mission and heighten our competitive standing within the field of higher education.

Further, given the growing number of L2 short-term study abroad programs and the relatively limited body of research for two-year colleges, there is a demonstrated need for qualitative research on how L2 short-term study abroad language and culture learning strategies are implemented. This gap in the literature and PVCC students’ Spanish oral proficiency and cultural awareness needs prompted my investigation. Examining the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021* and how to use it as a model applicable to PVCC context, the research questions that drove this investigation explored each of the following:

- how program design factors affected students’ perceptions of oral proficiency and L2 language use beyond the classroom environment during study abroad,

- how out-of-class interactions during study abroad were associated with students' understanding of language and culture learning,
- how instructors taught and used language and culture learning strategies during immersive study abroad,
- how students responded to using language and culture learning strategies during immersive study abroad.

Literature Review

Although study abroad has been a prevailing arrangement of international education among students enrolled in four-year institutions, community colleges' increasing participation in study abroad is a recent trend. The economic conditions of a globalized world are putting pressure on community colleges to prepare students to improve their understanding of other countries and cultures, including the skills needed in an increasingly competitive world (American Association of Community Colleges [AACC], 2020). As a result, a growing number of community colleges in the U.S. are focusing on study abroad to strengthen their existing programs and provide experiences for students to develop cultural competence and improve L2 language skills that are deemed increasingly relevant in today's interdependent and competitive world (Green & Siaya, 2005; Irwin, 2004).

These ideas seem to align with the growing trend of study abroad participation over the last decades. Moreover, the Institute of International Education's (IIE) Open Doors Report (2020) indicated that about 347,100 U.S. students studied abroad for academic credit in the academic year 2018-2019. The report points out that the total number of U.S. students studying abroad increased by 1.6% over the previous academic year. However, the same report reveals that the participation of community college students in study abroad remains low. Only 7,856 (2.3% of U.S. students studying abroad) community college students participated. This small figure explains the shortage of experimental research focused on examining the development of L2 acquisition of community college students in the study abroad context.

Study Abroad and International Experiences

To address the needs of students, a growing number of community colleges are finding ways to offer study abroad opportunities and international experiences for their students. In collaboration with George Mason University, Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA), created two short-term study abroad programs. Students can live and study on the Mason campus in South Korea and take courses in international business and economics, including guided cultural explorations. In addition, students can take filmmaking courses in the Czech Republic collaborating with Czech and Slovakian students. Moreover, NOVA offers

students the opportunity to experience language immersion in Salamanca, Spain, where students can take SPA 102 and SPA 201, exploring Spanish culture and history. Students are welcomed to apply for scholarships for any of these programs (NOVA, 2025).

Furthermore, the Case Study in Global Education report (AACC, 2020) highlights several community colleges that are exploring promising globalization practices; some institutions include California Colleges for International Education (CCIE) and Tompkins-Cortland Community College (TC3).

CCIE is a consortium of community colleges in the state of California comprised of 84 members serving 1.5 million students (AACC, 2020). Its mission is to increase global understanding through education and collaboration. To accomplish this, CCIE motivates and supports the formation of international programs through the California community college system. Its areas of support include faculty exchange, international business, international growth, internationalizing the curriculum, international students, and study abroad programs (AACC, 2020). In addition, students and faculty can apply for financial assistance through scholarships and grants.

TC3 is a small, rural community college in upstate New York with an annual enrollment of about 3,000 students. In conjunction with other community colleges statewide, TC3 is part of the State University of New York (SUNY) educational system (AACC, 2020). Through this liaison, TC3 actively participates in the SUNY Center for Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). This two-way, online interaction allows U.S. students and faculty to work collaboratively with their counterparts in other countries to design syllabi and plan classroom learning activities based on academic principles that foster practical and collaborative learning (AACC, 2020). Providing these types of opportunities to PVCC students can enhance their learning experiences in subject areas such as L2, thus helping them prepare for their study abroad participation and manage potential challenges.

Challenges and Influential Factors

For U.S. community college students, the challenges to studying abroad can be many: Community college students are usually older, averaging 28 years of age, and have significant responsibilities at home (17% are single parents). Many hold full-time jobs while attending college (41%) and represent a lower socio-economic income group (58% receive financial aid). It is no surprise that the majority attend community college on a part-time basis (63%) (AACC, 2020). This figure is even higher at PVCC, where 80% are part-time students (PVCC, 2020).

Much of the research on community college participation in study abroad concentrates on the factors that influence students' decisions, such as personal, social, and institutional factors. The following descriptions of each of these factors start with positive influences (e.g., experiences and, in some cases, outcomes)

associated with students' decision to participate in study abroad programs. These descriptions are followed by some reported challenges that affect students' participation.

Personal Factors

While some individual factors boost students' participation in study abroad, others obstruct their access to study abroad opportunities. Some positive factors attributed to study abroad participation include cultural awareness (Stroud, 2010), the degree to which L2 skills have improved (Anderson, 2007), and professional development. Regarding the latter, Anderson (2007) and Carlson (1990) reported on the growing popularity of studying abroad to increase career prospects, especially among those students interested in fields related to international business who want to enhance their resumes by including study abroad experiences.

Some of the most salient factors reported having hindered participation in study abroad include cost (Chieffo, 2000), lack of required L2 prerequisites, and fear of discrimination (Van Der Meid, 2003). Regarding cost, the expenses related to traveling, housing, and added expenditures while abroad can affect the decision to participate. In addition, taking time off from work to study abroad represents a great financial burden for those nontraditional community college students who are employed (Chieffo, 2000).

Social Factors

Previous research has investigated the family role in supporting study abroad participation (Anderson, 2007; Chieffo, 2000; Hoffa, 1993). Hoffa (1993) reported that families with a higher education level and previous study abroad experience positively influenced students' participation in study abroad programs. However, other family-related factors (e.g., leaving family behind, time away from home) deterred study abroad (Irwin, 2004; Koh, 2004), especially for nontraditional learners.

Institutional Factors

Institutional factors (e.g., school's mission, interest, upper management support) can also influence students' participation in study abroad (Stroud, 2010). In addition, faculty members also play a determining role by providing students with information about study abroad opportunities, supporting their decisions, and guiding them through their participation (Chieffo, 2000; Green, 2007; Peterson, 2003). Faculty determination to explore global programs available through their campuses and their willingness to engage students in studying abroad discussions can encourage participation.

Further, administrative structures, financing, school resources, and curriculum requirements (e.g., L2 learning) can influence the degree of study abroad participation. For some schools, the absence of infrastructure (Koh, 2004) and inadequate funding lead to fewer students taking advantage of study abroad

opportunities (Green, 2007). The latter describes PVCC's current predicament, which my investigation aims to improve.

In short, a review of the literature related to community colleges' participation in study abroad shows the need to create and continue efforts to strengthen community college study abroad opportunities to explore other languages and cultures. These efforts can focus on strengthening L2 learning practices in the study abroad context suitable for community college students and improving financial support.

Methodology

A single case study was designed to learn how L2 teaching and learning took place in Valencia's immersive short-term study abroad. I used three data collection methods: interviews, documents, and surveys. As noted by Denzin and Lincoln (2011), multiple methods add richness and depth to qualitative examination. Further, a variety of methods in interpretive case study research aids the researcher to achieve a crystallization of findings (Ellingson, 2009), comparable to the goal of triangulation of findings as described in Yin (2018) and Miles et al. (2014). The current paper excerpts findings from a more comprehensive case study (Grajales-Díaz, 2022).

Description of Site

The *UVA in Valencia Program* (UVA, 2018) is administered by the UVA International Studies Office (ISO) and directed by one of the professors from the UVA Department of Spanish. In this capacity, the director oversees the academic and administrative branches of the program. ISO entered an academic service agreement with the Spanish SPU (Servicios de Programas Universitarios) in order to secure a suitable building and facilities for the program's on-site operations. The building is called UVA Hispanic Studies Center, and it is situated in the city of Valencia, Spain.

Participants

This investigation includes students, instructors, and other UVA practitioners of the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021* who were willing to participate. The students and instructors I selected to participate were purposefully chosen based on availability and willingness to contribute to this project. Other practitioners were identified with purposeful sampling to obtain the opinions of those involved in interactions with the L2 learners during the study abroad. The table 1 in Appendix A gives a role-ordered matrix of participants (i.e., students, faculty, and administrators) who participated in interviews and a brief description

of their involvement. In addition, this study includes the PVCC practitioners depicted in table 2 in Appendix A.

Interviews

Interviews were the primary data collection source in this study to capture participants' perspectives regarding L2 and culture learning and teaching during the immersive study abroad context. This research included two Zoom interviews of approximately one hour with each L2 student and at least one interview with the instructors to provide insights into L2 and culture learning and instruction successes, challenges, and methods. With the permission of the participants, the interviews were computer Zoom-recorded to make sure their responses were captured correctly, and research records were kept as digital transcripts in a locked file; only the researcher had access to the records. Moreover, interviews are invaluable to answering research questions because of their ability to provide insights into participant perspectives and explanations of events (Yin, 2018). Following Kvale's (2008) recommendations, I began each interview with a briefing. I introduced my purpose for conducting the research and concluded with a debriefing in which I offered participants the opportunity to ask questions.

These interviews followed a semi-structured format, focusing on exploring themes rather than participants' responses to a particular wording or ordering of questions. I developed these questions as research progressed to address themes as they emerged. The first interview with the instructors focused on faculty members' impressions about their teaching, program design, and challenges that influence their L2 learners' oral proficiency, language use, and cultural awareness during in-class and out-of-class interactions. This line of inquiry helps generate valuable insights about the design of the learning experiences. See instructors' interview protocol in Appendix B.

The subsequent interviews, for which there was at least one with some of the participating members, revisited the mentioned themes above, along with additional themes identified during the first interview data collection. I also interviewed the center's site manager for one session of 60 minutes to determine the study abroad program's successful practices and potential challenges that would help inform insights on program design.

I followed a similar procedure to conduct interviews with the L2 students using the interview protocol in Appendix C. The purpose of the L2 students' interviews was to learn about their lived experiences learning Spanish and its culture in the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021*

Surveys

Students responded to a questionnaire (Appendix D) that included information about demographics, language and culture background, language education, previous trips abroad, and language learning. In addition, students answered a language contact survey (Appendix E) intended to quantify the amount of time they spent speaking Spanish during their summer program in Valencia. The survey includes self-report questions addressing the frequency with which students spoke Spanish with native speakers: host family members, friends, if any, and service interactions. Additional questions asked about their participation in out-of-class activities (e.g., thematic trips) and about the class(es) they took in Valencia.

Document Review

Instructors' available materials (e.g., some syllabi) were collected for analysis to better understand how teachers' stated beliefs and goals transpired. The *UVA in Valencia Academic program* review 2018 was used as a reference source of information related to the program's administration and educational offerings.

Data Analysis

As Maxwell (2005) described, qualitative research designs are appropriate in projects in which understanding the processes that participants undergo within a particular context is essential. For this study, I interpreted the process of teaching and learning an L2 (Spanish) and its culture as experienced by students and their instructors in the natural setting of their study abroad immersion in the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021*. Therefore, the use of qualitative research within the interpretivist paradigm was fitting for this project (Erickson, 1986). While most of my analysis is an inductive process, it involves some deductive reasoning, supported by my extensive teaching experience of the Spanish language at four-year institutions and a community college.

Guided by the assumptions that Erickson (1986) advances for qualitative inquiry, I used an inductive approach to coding sources, informed by the open coding practices described in Corbin and Strauss (2008). I emphasized the use of in vivo codes that use the language and terminology of participants, the emic perspective, or in other words, the participants' viewpoint about their experiences in the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021*. As recommended by Miles et al. (2014), in vivo codes "prioritize and honor the participant's voice" and provide useful leads for identifying patterns (p.74). In addition, the use of in vivo codes aligns with my inductive interpretivist paradigm by capturing the meaning-making of the participants.

Using analytic memos, as described in Erickson (1986) and Miles et al. (2014), I synthesized preliminary findings that emerge from initial coding and recorded them in the form of assertions. Then I proceeded to establish the evidentiary warrant for the assertions by reviewing the data corpus repeatedly to

test the validity of the assertions through the process of seeking confirming and disconfirming evidence, or what Erickson describes as analytic induction. The use of memos was instrumental in the development of the assertions, which I used as semantic statements that I fine-tuned based on what the data told me, informing my data collection process as I made efforts towards achieving saturation. Lastly, I used member-checking, sharing initial findings with participants to ensure that research findings accurately represented the voice and lived-experience of participants (Yin, 2018).

Findings

The primary findings of my investigation are as follows:

- The *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021* practitioners have designed a comprehensive summer study abroad around purposeful pre-program services and multiple during- program immersive activities and practices involving social interactions that foster active language and culture learning. The comments made by the participating students who completed the *End of Term (Summer 2019/2021) Evaluation Survey* attest to the quality of the enriching and wide-ranging activities designed by the practitioners, including pre-program services, homestays, cultural activities and thematic trips. See table 3 in Appendix F. All students reported that the overall program offerings were helpful to their language and culture learning. Five students “strongly agreed” and one student “agreed” on the benefits and support the services provided to them.
- Most (87.5%) of the L2 participating students agreed that the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021* homestay is the most supportive short-term immersive network to enable Spanish language and culture learning.
- Faculty designed the curriculum around numerous creative and purposeful in-class and out-of-class immersive, student-centered learning activities involving native speakers and using assessments and technology effectively to support L2 learners’ needs.
- Students employed various cultural and language learning strategies exploring multiple functions (e.g., affective, cognitive, meta-cognitive, social) to develop language skills and cultural awareness.
- Some of the most relevant characteristics of the PVCC context that merit the adaptation of the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021* in productive ways to benefit its L2 students include the following: many PVCC students are highly intelligent, motivated, and driven as anyone else; they have experienced limited interactions with people from different backgrounds and cultures, they have struggled when facing individuals from cultures other than their own; and their school (PVCC) does not provide L2 credit-awarding study abroad opportunities.

These findings address the study's purpose in describing how the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021* facilitates language and culture learning abroad. More specifically, they enable the identification of those program features that PVCC can adapt accordingly to meet its L2 learners' language and cultural awareness needs. The pre-program services, primarily the on-site orientation, supported L2 participating learners to cope with culture shock, helping them adjust to the new culture and enabling exchanges with its members (e.g., host families, members of the target culture at large). However, L2 participating learners revealed what seems to be disconfirming evidence by indicating that post-program activities were not made accessible to them, which may explain why most students minimally used their Spanish skills after they returned from their study abroad.

While the homestays represented the most supportive short-term immersive network for L2 language and culture awareness development, other networks (e.g., group members of the host culture at large in various contexts) were also important. For most of the participating L2 learners, the effectiveness of the support from the homestay seemed associated with the accessibility, authenticity, and frequency of the interactions. Moreover, developing social networks that L2 students build with local members beyond school and host family settings, including members willing to interact as sympathetic interlocutors in the L2 acquisition process, may take some time and therefore can be difficult to attain during the short-term study abroad. This is consistent with previous research; Castañeda and Zinger (2011) indicated that the short period that L2 students had to establish social relationships with native speakers is a limitation of short-term study abroad.

Regarding instruction, the participating faculty demonstrated adaptability and creativity to develop the curriculum by exploring immersive learning activities (e.g., simulations, guided learning activities, assessments) that provided realistic sociocultural contexts for L2 learning and cultural awareness development while bridging the gap between L2 learners and the target culture.

Further, students' use of language and cultural learning strategies facilitated their L2 and cultural awareness learning regardless of their Spanish level at the beginning of their study abroad (i.e., intermediate, more advanced). Moreover, their progress seemed associated with the level of comfort they experienced using Spanish with native speakers. Intermediate L2 students experienced more discomfort at the beginning of their study abroad than more advanced L2 learners. However, both groups reported that they made progress throughout the length of their participation abroad. In addition, progress variation among these L2 participating students seemed to be associated with their Spanish skills at the beginning of their study abroad. Nevertheless, without specific, quantifiable data (e.g., pre-entry, during, post-study tests) and observational

data, we are lacking the evidence to draw conclusions about how much of the variation is due to L2 learners' Spanish skills at the outset.

Lastly, the distinctive characteristics of the PVCC context that merit the adaptation of the mentioned *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021* features align with those of the L2 learners that constitute the problem of practice of this investigation. I discuss the recommendations to address the problem of practice in the following section.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following is an overview of a series of recommendations for implementing a short-term study abroad for PVCC. These recommendations are specific to address PVCC students' L2 language and cultural awareness needs and are suitable for the PVCC context but may provide insights for other institutions implementing similar models. Further, the recommendations are followed by implications and suggestions for future research.

Recommendation 1: PVCC should consider adapting a short-term study abroad framework suitable to its students' characteristics and needs, including implementing financial support mechanisms to ensure affordability.

Judging from the perspective of instructors and L2 students, the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2109/2021* design (e.g., pre-program services, in-class and out-of-class learning/ teaching strategies, homestays, cultural activities, and thematic trips) appeared to be successful. As reported in the findings, all the L2 interviewed students expressed that they experienced linguistic and cultural awareness gains and noted that their progress was demonstrated through their grades and the achievement of academic and personal goals. These positive self-reported accounts seemed validated by the participating instructors' confirmatory remarks. All the interviewed faculty stated that most of their students achieved their class objectives and improved their oral and writing skills. Further, the participating faculty noted that students' progress was due, in part, to the program's immersive nature and the implementation of the Spanish-only policy in the program's Center.

Building on these findings and focusing on overcoming two of the most prevailing obstacles (i.e., money, time) that hamper PVCC students' efforts to study abroad, I recommend adapting the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021* model to a five-week summer program, instead of offering two four-week sessions or a semester long SA. The program can be implemented to take place in Costa Rica to reduce costs and gradually transition to Spain according to increasing demand and available resources. Further, the new program should implement a similar Spanish-only policy of the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021* to require PVCC participating L2 students to use Spanish while at the new program Center.

Moreover, employed students will still need to make the necessary arrangements with their employers during their five-week SA, which will be more feasible than taking time off for a more extended period abroad. In addition, the implementation of financial support mechanisms (e.g., scholarships) will need to be an intrinsic feature of the new program to ensure affordability. The PVCC Language Department faculty involved in providing SA opportunities should consider coordinating grant proposal writing efforts regularly to secure the scholarship funds.

Within this framework, pre-program services (e.g., pre-departure and on-site orientations) and in-country activities (e.g., in-class and out-of-class interactions with native speakers) can be adapted accordingly to meet PVCC students' linguistic and cultural awareness needs. Additionally, post-study abroad program practices should be implemented for the new PVCC Short-term Study Abroad to have students reflect, assess, and share what they have learned while abroad. These recommendations are detailed in the following sections.

Recommendation 2: PVCC should consider adapting pre-departure and on-site orientations in the new Short-term Study Abroad Program including culture- and language-learning strategies.

Some students broadened their viewpoint on many issues (e.g., arts, history, language, politics, religion, society) during their immersion in the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021*. Grajales-Díaz (2022) provides more relevant detailed analysis and findings. These accomplishments underscore the importance of intercultural understanding beyond the superficial level and the role of the provided pre-program services, especially the on-site orientation, to aid L2 learners in adjusting to the new culture and making connections with its members. The pre-departure orientation that L2 participating students received on their home campus consisted of registration information, travel information, and information about the new environment (e.g., cultural adjustment, culture shock, transportation). Moreover, the on-site orientation L2 learners received upon arrival at the program center in Valencia included academic information (e.g., class objectives, class dynamics) and administrative information (e.g., transportation around Valencia, health-related issues, culture adjustment and culture shock, host families, cultural activities, thematic day trips).

As indicated by the Academic Director, the pre-departure orientation L2 students receive on their home campus informs them well about all aspects of the program before they arrive in Valencia. Interestingly, many of the participating L2 students of this research reported that the on-site orientation was more beneficial than the pre-departure orientation. Therefore, focusing on addressing this apparent discrepancy, the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021* pre-program services can be adapted accordingly to inform PVCC L2 learners well before leaving the US and on-site upon arrival. This will have the effect of positioning them well to benefit from the many cultural and linguistic exploratory opportunities the new PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program can provide and aid them in overcoming culture shock and obstacles when making

connections with members of the host culture. As a result, PVCC L2 students could reach a deeper understanding of their target culture and language through immersive in-country exchanges (e.g., homestays, classes, interactions with local servers in various contexts).

Additional implementation of pre-program services can involve the strategies included in the *UVA in Valencia Academic Program Review* (2018) in the form of advice to prepare the students to work through potential stressors and adjust accordingly. Some examples of this advice may include encouragement to be open-minded; to be patient; to communicate experiences with on-site staff, instructors, host families, and other students; to be aware of cultural baggage; to explore tips to develop cultural sensitivity; to get involved, to become informed about racial and ethnic minority students abroad; to embrace a sense of humor; to get information about women abroad (e.g., attitudes, expectations, traditional and contemporary roles). Further, Appendix G provides explanations of stages of cultural adjustments that can be shared with PVCC L2 students during the pre-departure and on-site orientation meetings. These meetings can be implemented as required gatherings for participating L2 students to ensure they receive the information, get acquainted, and provide a space where participants can ask questions and express concerns about any aspect of the new PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program.

Furthermore, the new program's pre-departure orientation should include a workshop to allow participating members the opportunity to explore and share L2 learners' awareness of language and culture learning strategies that they may have personally used and may have available to them, thus increasing their awareness of the variety of strategies available for language and culture learning. Cohen et al. (2019) point out that culture and language learning strategies relate to the learners' conscious and semi-conscious thoughts and behaviors employed to increase their knowledge and understanding of a target language and culture.

Building on these ideas and the findings of this study that resulted from the participating L2 learners' use of the adapted the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition's (CARLA's) (2022) Culture and Language Strategy Use Surveys (Grajales-Díaz, 2022), the recommended workshop should provide a space where instructors and L2 students can meet to explore various potentially challenging scenarios. For example, when L2 learners cannot understand what someone is saying to them in Spanish, or when they need to determine what to do to recall vocabulary, decide what activities best to use to practice speaking Spanish, or how to deal with difficulties and make judgments about the target culture. Moreover, the participating L2 learners of the new PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program should be able to use these strategies accordingly by function (e.g., cognitive, metacognitive, affective, social). Some of the L2 participating learners' statements indicated that they used a combination of these strategies at times. PVCC L2 students should be able to take advantage of comparable simultaneity of functions to support their language and culture learning.

Recommendation 3: PVCC should consider adapting in-country activities in the new Short-term Study Abroad Program to foster language and culture learning.

All the in-country features, including homestays, some classes, cultural workshops, and programmed excursions of the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021* reported in the findings of this study (see Grajales-Díaz, 2022, for greater detail) can be adapted to meet PVCC students' language and culture learning needs.

Acknowledging the reported learning contributions the homestays provided to the participating L2 students of this study as an essential supporting network (e.g., adjusting to the culture, improving language skills, participating in family life and learning the culture, making new friends), homestays with host families need to be provided for PVCC college-age students. For older students, a different type of living accommodation (e.g., living in an apartment or house with adult native speaker roommate/s) needs to be arranged to enable immersive cultural and speaking opportunities in this contextual supporting network. As explained by the administrative director, many of the UVA in Valencia Summer Program families favor hosting college-age students over older L2 students. These families have college-age students or younger kids living at home, and they treat their newcomers as one of their kids. This environment might not suit older independent students unaccustomed to this type of family living (R. Celma, personal communication, June 16, 2021).

Further, as reported by the L2 participating students of this study, the homestay was the most helpful supporting network of their short-term SA in their progress of oral skills and language use. This progress was due, in part, to the frequency and authenticity of interactions using Spanish. Moreover, the homestays provided a supportive environment where most of the L2 participating students felt comfortable asking questions and taking risks using Spanish without the fear of being judged. These ideas are in line with the concepts of the language socialization theory, which was used as a framework in the broader study to elucidate L2 participating students' meaning making as it related to their language and culture learning (Grajales-Díaz, 2022). In addition to language gains, the homestay supporting network enabled many participating L2 learners to explore the target culture beyond the superficial level.

Furthermore, building on the connections *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021* instructors made in the lessons combining not only the grammar, vocabulary, and culture with authentic interactions with native speakers and the target culture outside the class, similar adaptations need to be implemented for the PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program (e.g., in-class simulations that prepare L2 learners for out-of-class interactions with Native Speakers (NS), using technology accordingly to facilitate learning; in-class cultural debates of relevant themes that students can further explore through firsthand experiences with the target

culture and its members; guided learning practices; use of formative and summative assessments to support students' learning needs).

Before enrolment, students will need to have completed the sequence of beginning Spanish courses (i.e., SPA 101, SPA 102) on the home campus, or placed into any of the intermediate Spanish courses (i.e., SPA 201, SPA 202) using the placement test, to be able to register and take those courses abroad. Unlike the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021*, the intermediate level courses for PVCC Short-term Study Abroad will be offered separately and each course will be 5-weeks in length. My colleague, Dr. Kempes, and I deem it over-reaching to jam the content of the two intermediate level courses (taught in one academic year on the home campus) into one month. Further, for those students who have completed the four-semester sequence or their equivalent, we will offer a Spanish survey culture course (e.g., Introduction to Latin American Culture and Civilization, Introduction to Spanish Culture and Civilization), including a combination of theory and practice through firsthand interactions (e.g., interviews, guided thematic excursions) with the local native speakers and the new environment.

Additionally, grounded on the reported access of previous PVCC educational abroad experiences (e.g., visits to various Costa Rican regions exploring the tropical environment, including endangered ecosystems and rainforest preserves; Amazon River and Caribbean islands explorations onboard the MV Explorer ship) and the findings of the reported findings in the broader research regarding cultural workshops (e.g., cooking classes, dancing classes) and programmed excursions (e.g., thematic trips to relevant sites, museum explorations; see Grajales-Díaz, 2022), the PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program's participating language faculty should consider adapting homologous educational activities accordingly to promote language practice and culture learning.

Recommendation 4: PVCC should consider incorporating post-program activities in the new Short-term Study Abroad Program to enable L2 learners to reflect, assess, and share their experiences, insights, and learning upon return.

While most of the interviewed participants of this study did not elaborate on post-study abroad activities related to the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021*, one of the faculty who participated in this research project (Dr. Gil) mentioned that one of her L2 short-term study abroad students continued taking Spanish classes upon return. Highlighting the student's agency and commitment to continuing learning, Dr. Gil noted that those classes were beyond her student's major L2 required courses, and that the student served as an ambassador to the program by participating in pre-departure meetings and sharing her study abroad experiences with other students interested in the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021*. Moreover, one of the participating L2 students of this investigation (i.e., Vincent) mentioned that he was

planning on becoming a member of the UVA Spanish Club at the home campus after his SA to continue practicing his Spanish.

In addition, the *UVA in Valencia Academic Program Review* (2018) makes recommendations regarding post-program best practices (e.g., reflection, sharing, assessment) as critical continuing activities to achieve many of the objectives of a successful study abroad program. However, these descriptions are limited to simple definitions and fall short of providing specific details on how to implement the recommended post-program practices. Consequently, focusing on addressing the suggested limitations and advocating incorporating post-program practices for PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program, the following recommendations are based on the referenced best practices above, supported by CARLA's (2022) post-study abroad concepts and learning activities. As implied in the following descriptions, these practices are interrelated.

Reflection: In preparation for their return home, PVCC L2 study abroad students should be supported and guided to reflect on their experiences: what they have learned, and how they have changed due to their study abroad. These reflections can strengthen the participants' learning by developing connections between new and prior knowledge and exploring how the study abroad experiences are integrated into L2 learners' future (CARLA, 2022). In addition, these practices may improve retention. An example of how these recommendations may be integrated into the PVCC short-term study abroad context involves: guiding L2 learners to reflect on their experiences by asking them to write and discuss their thoughts in response to the questions in Appendix H.

Furthermore, building on some of the findings of this investigation regarding the L2 participating students' language and cultural gains, PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program's L2 students should be encouraged to reflect on the skills (e.g., apply linguistic abilities, understand cultural differences and similarities, adapt to new environments, take initiative and risks, handle difficult situations and stress) and qualities (e.g., resilience, flexibility, open-mindedness, independence, inquisitiveness) that they may have developed as a result of their experiences abroad and encouraged to use their newly-acquired skills to strengthen their resumes and prepare for potential interviews.

Assessment: The PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program's participating language faculty should consider adapting practices (e.g., guided critical reflections, journal entries) to enable L2 learners to examine what they learned while exploring how their stated objectives were achieved. These learning activities may enable L2 participating students to see the U.S. and the world in a new light after their experiences abroad. Like many other SA students, they recognize that they may return home feeling aware of potential limitations concerning some cultural values of their own country. For example, Vincent's reported experiences and reflections that rendered him insights into how the dynamics of the socialist political system of Spain

seemingly opened a broader spectrum of cultural values beyond those of his own culture, where individualism seems to be a cultural norm. In other instances, students report that they feel that they have acquired some sense of global citizenship due to their study abroad experiences (e.g., Maggie's recognition of her global citizenship that resulted from her study abroad participation and appreciation of the Spain's rich and varied cultural heritage: architecture, arts, food, language, history).

Grounded on these realizations, PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program's L2 students should be guided to reflect on how their views of the world and of their own country and culture have changed as a measure of progress in their learning. Encouraged by their instructors to explore how their study abroad experiences help them to achieve their study abroad goals, PVCC L2 study abroad learners may embark on the suggested critical reflection guided by CARLA's (2022) questionnaire below:

- What new experiences did you have while abroad that shocked or surprised you about the world?
- How do you feel now about those experiences after returning home?
- Are there certain stereotypes that you have relinquished? Kept? Modified?

Another CARLA (2022) learning activity that can be adapted and shared with the PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program's learners to enable them to evaluate what they have gained from their experiences, including challenges, asks students to share with others how they have grown as a result of their study abroad. See "Understanding Yourself Differently" activity in Appendix I.

Furthermore, building on the described insights regarding the language socialization framework (see Grajales-Díaz, 2022) and its significance in helping understand L2 learners' linguistic and cultural development, the new PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program' participating language faculty should consider including a collection of data (e.g., observations, pre- and post-tests, surveys), which can be analyzed through the lens of the language socialization framework periodically to assess program effectiveness and carry out adequate adaptations as necessary.

Sharing

The PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program's designers should consider providing L2 participating students with opportunities to share insights and perspectives gained abroad to strengthen their learning and to benefit other interested students and the College community at large. Like in Dr. Gil's students' previously described scenario, sharing can be accomplished through various means both formal (e.g., Dr. Gil's student's participation in pre-departure meetings) and informal (e.g., meeting with interested students, multicultural event party), discussions, presentations, publications, etc.

In short, as suggested in the previous descriptions, the proposed post-program activities will require faculty and L2 returning students to work together to share their expertise and implement feasible and effective reflection, assessment, and sharing practices.

Implications for Language Practitioners and Suggestions for Future Research

The results of this study demonstrate that the L2 learners in the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/ 2021* showed gains in their language skills and cultural awareness. These findings confirm what previous researchers (e.g., Martinsen, 2010) have reported about short-term study abroad programs; namely, these programs can help improve L2 linguistic and cultural learning for students who cannot travel abroad for extended periods. This is encouraging news for many community college L2 students for whom traveling abroad for extended periods due to time constraints and financial limitations is not an option.

Moreover, the L2 participating students' interactions with members of the target culture outside the classroom, especially host families, underscore the importance of these types of immersive activities to help students expand language skills and cultural awareness. These suggest a role for explicit instruction in strategies and approaches that improve L2 learners' interactions with the target culture and its members.

Instructors should incorporate explicit instruction (e.g., L2 and culture learning strategies) during pre-departure and in-class (e.g., simulations, debates) to help students understand how native speakers use their pragmatic and sociolinguistic knowledge to perform speaking functions. Speaking practices can enable L2 learners to engage in focused activities employing specific functions (e.g., command forms to order a coffee or a meal at a coffee shop). A related recommendation is that instructors should enable a task-based, interactive environment that promotes authentic learning language use (e.g., creating a survey about music and going out to the street to ask native speakers about their music preferences).

Furthermore, due to the limitations of self-reported data, future research could involve observations to study how students interact and use L2 and culture learning strategies during their interactions with the target culture and its members. In this context, the researcher could act as a participant-observer to capture L2 learners' interactions in various immersive environments (e.g., home, in-class, restaurants, museums).

In addition, future research should examine how students retain and increase their target language and cultural awareness upon returning home. Faculty and administrators involved in study abroad could offer post-study abroad workshops exploring language practice and reflection activities regarding the study abroad experience.

Lastly, students could be motivated and supported to participate in online communities from the target culture and seek out target language groups at home (Shively, 2010).

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Footnotes

¹ Learning a second language (L2) is a conscious process where the acquisition of any language other than the first language (L1) learned occurs, often in the classroom setting. Many children learn more than one language from birth and may be said to have more than one “first” language. The L2 learning process happens after the first language(s) has already been learned. Thus, it may also refer to the learning of a third or fourth language (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

² Through system agreements, students who graduate from any of Virginia’s 23 community colleges with an associate degree and a required grade point average (contingent upon transferring institution) may obtain guaranteed admission to more than 30 of the commonwealth’s colleges and universities. Fulfillment of foreign language requirements applies accordingly based on the students’ major and transferring institution, e.g., UVA Spanish Department (VCCS, 2020).

³ I teach 4 courses each semester with an average of 20 students per class. About 80% of the students obtain the grade of B and above, 15% obtain the grade of C, and 5% obtain the grade of D or below.

⁴ All the names of the participating faculty and L2 students of this study are pseudonyms.

Appendices

Appendix A

Table 1

Role-ordered Matrix of Participating Students, Faculty, and Administrators

Role	Name	Relevant role at UVA in Valencia Summer Program	Summer Year
Students	Amanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Took several Spanish courses beyond the 3000 level. 	2019
	Brenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Took SPAN 2010/2020 – Session I 	2019
	Eliza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Took SPAN 2010/2020 – Session I 	2019
	Maggie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Took SPAN 2010/2020 – Session I 	2019
	Marius	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Took SPAN 3030, SPAN 3300 – Session I 	2019
	Olivia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Took SPAN 2010/2020 – Session I 	2021
	Tammy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Took SPAN 4700; SPAN 4707 – Session I 	2021
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Took SPAN 4705, SPAN 4708 – Session II 	
	Vincent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Took SPAN 3300, SPAN 4707 – Session I 	2021
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Took SPAN 4700, SPAN 4705 – Session II 	
Spanish Faculty	Dr. Campos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taught SPAN 2010/2020 	2019/2021
	Dr. Gil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taught SPAN 2010/2020 	2019/2021
	Dr. Fuentes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taught SPAN 3050 Spanish for Medical Professionals 	2019/2021
	Dr. Rivera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taught SPAN 4700 	2019/2021
	Dr. Rosales	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taught SPAN 2010/2020 	2019
	Mrs. Rossi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Taught SPAN 2010/2020, SPAN 2020/3030 	2019

	Dr. Rubio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Taught SPAN 3050, SPAN 2020, SPAN 3030 	2019
	Mr. Smith	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Taught SPAN 2010/ 2020 	2019
	Dr. Zamora	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Taught SPAN 2020/3030 	2019
Administrator	Dr. Rivera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Academic Director 	2019/2021
	Mrs. Ruiz	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Administrative Director 	2019/2021

Table 2

PVCC participating faculty

Participating Faculty	Subject of expertise	Years of service
Dr. Jones	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sociology 	15+
Dr. Kempes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Spanish 	15+
Mrs. Lavigne	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● French 	15+
Dr. Richards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● English 	15+

Appendix B

Instructors Interview Protocol

- What is your impression of how your instruction went in the immersive study abroad class(es) summer 2019?
- What happens in a typical day of your immersive study abroad class?
- How do you plan for the immersive study abroad class?
- How do you decide what to do during the immersive study abroad class?
- What resources do you use to support instruction in the immersive study abroad class?
- What challenges have you encountered as you have been teaching the immersive study abroad class?
- What approaches have you found that have been particularly useful?
- What approaches have you found that have not seemed useful?
- What would you recommend to other faculty teaching an immersive study abroad class at UVA in Valencia Summer Program?

Appendix C

Students Interview Protocol

The questions of this interview protocol are organized by the research question they are designed to address:

1. How did program design factors seem to affect students' perceptions of oral proficiency and L2 language use beyond the classroom environment during and after the study abroad?
 - What is your impression of how your participation went in the immersive study abroad in Valencia during Summer 2019?

Prompt: In terms of achieving personal and academic goals (e.g., did you learn as much Spanish as you thought you would? Elaborate).

- What aspects of the program were more effective in developing oral skills and language use during and out-of-class(es) during and after the study abroad?
 - How helpful was the pre-departure orientation?
2. How are out-of-class interactions during study abroad associated with students' understanding of language and culture learning?
 - Describe what happened on a typical day of your study abroad
 - How helpful were your out-of-class interactions with native speakers for your language and culture learning?

In the homestay context:

- How much did your family help you learn Spanish and culture?

Prompt: Encouraging you to talk, answering questions, etc.

- How much did your family integrate you into family activities?

Prompt: Helping in family projects (e.g., cooking, shopping, accompanying a family member outside the home on a trip or errand).

3. How did students respond to using language and culture learning strategies, if any, during the immersive study abroad?
 - What resources (e.g., language and culture learning strategies) did you use to support your learning during and after the study abroad program?
 - What challenges did you encounter during and after studying abroad?
 - What approaches did you take to address those challenges?

Overarching questions

- What would you recommend to another student interested in participating in the UVA in Valencia Summer Program?
- What would you recommend to the faculty and directors in charge of the UVA in Valencia Summer Program?

Appendix D

Student Survey: L2 Background and Learning Survey

1. What semester are you in?
2. Previous stay in Spanish-speaking country? (Where? How long?)
3. Do you speak any other languages?
4. Previous study of Spanish? How many years? In what context?
5. What was your previous course at the university back home?
6. What Spanish course(s) have you taken after your study abroad?

Use the following scale to indicate the degree to which the following reasons for studying Spanish are (were) important to you.

Rating scale:

0 = Not important

1 = Slightly important

2 = Moderately important

3 = Very important

I am (was) taking Spanish because..

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. I want to use Spanish when I travel to a Spanish-speaking region. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 2. I want to be able to converse with Spanish speakers in the United States. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 3. I am interested in Hispanic culture, history, or literature. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 4. I feel that Spanish may be helpful in my future career. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 5. I want to be able to use it with Spanish-speaking friends/acquaintances. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 6. I want to be able to speak more languages than just English | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 7. I want to learn about another culture to understand the world better. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 8. Spanish may make me a more qualified job candidate. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 9. I think foreign language study is part of a well-rounded education. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 10. I feel that Spanish is an important language in the world. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 11. I feel that knowledge of Spanish will give me an edge in competing with others. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 12. I want to be able to communicate with native speakers of Spanish. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 13. I feel that Spanish will change my résumé or C.V. | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| 14. List additional reasons for taking Spanish courses: | | | | |

Appendix E

Language Contact Profile (LCP)

Please indicate the course(s) that you took during the UVA in Valencia Summer Program

Course name

1. Indicate the number of hours each week you spent speaking Spanish outside of class with native or fluent Spanish speakers during the UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019.
0 .5 1 1.5 2 2.5 3 3.5 4 4.5 5 5.5 6 6.5 7 7.5 8 8.5.....30+
2. Indicate the average number of hours each week you spent reading novels in Spanish outside of class.
3. Indicate the average number of hours each week you spent reading Spanish language magazines outside the class.
4. Indicate the average number of hours each week you spent reading e-mails or Web pages in Spanish language outside the class.
5. Indicate the average number of hours each week you spent listening to Spanish television and radio outside the class.
6. Indicate the average number of hours each week you spent listening to Spanish movies or videos outside of class.
7. Indicate the average number of hours each week you spent listening to Spanish music outside the class.
8. Indicate the average number of hours each week you spent writing homework assignments in Spanish outside the class.
9. Indicate the average number of hours each week you spent writing e-mails in Spanish outside the class.
10. Indicate the average number of hours each week you spent reading text messages in Spanish outside the class.

Adapted from Language Contact Profile (Hernández, 2016) by Jorge Grajales-Díaz

Appendix F

Table 3

End of Term (Summer 2019/ 2021) Student Evaluation Survey

Participating Student	Program Offerings	Student's Assessment
Brenda (SPAN 2010-2020 – Session I, Summer 2019)	Program Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I loved how much real-life interaction in Spanish we had” • Pre-program services: culture shock, international travel, family and roommates’ information: 5*
	Homestay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I loved both parents. The father was very nice. The mother made a real effort to have a relationship. Their daughters though were a little bit bratty. They were always fighting and whining.”
	Cultural Activities and Thematic Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural activities: Visited “Oceanográfico” and rated it 4. • Didactic workshops: Participated in cooking class – tapas- rated it 5
	Overall Program Offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rated it 5 and indicated that she will recommend the program to others by saying, “Yes! I think it was not only fun, but I learned and improved my Spanish greatly. Valencia is a great place for students.”
Eliza (SPAN 2010—2020 – Session I, Summer 2019)	Program Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I liked how I could take both SPAN 2010 and 2020 in one session. I wish I knew more in advance of my classes schedule.” • Pre-program services: culture shock, international travel, family and roommates’ information: 3.

	Homestay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I did not really like the food my host mother cooked: hamburgers, pizza, and chicken nuggets.” • “My host mother talked fast. I won’t recommend her because she was not overly friendly.”
	Cultural Activities and Thematic Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day trips / Weekend trips: Went to Pamplona and rated it 4; Cullera: 5.
	Overall Program Offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rated it with a 4 and indicated that she will recommend the program to others with a caveat, “I really like the class, teachers, and students. But I thought the people in Valencia were not friendly at all.”
Maggie (SPAN 2010—2020 – Session I, Summer 2019)	Program Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I loved the freedom we had on the weekends, and I loved my teachers and class organization.” • Pre-program services: culture shock, international travel, family and roommates’ information: 5.
	Homestay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • My host parents were great host parents. They were very kind to me and accommodating of food allergies and really helped me to understand Valencia. However, their apartment was not meant for students. Apartment too small, too many pets.” • “I don’t recommend living there.”
	Cultural Activities and Thematic Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural activities: Visited “Oceanográfico” and rated it 5. • Didactic workshops: Participated in cooking class – tapas- rated it 5

	Overall Program Offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rated it with a 5 and indicated that she will recommend the program to others: “Yes, being in Valencia was an amazing experience and I was fully immersed in the culture, something I might not experience to this extent again.” • “I loved Valencia and everything about the program. My host parents were very good. They toured us around the city and took us to museums and tourist attractions. They made me love Valencia.” • “However, the only problem we had was with their apartment. With two dogs and two cats in such a small place, it ended up being a little unclean and we may have gotten fleas. Besides that, I loved living with my host parents.”
Olivia (SPAN 2010—2020 – Session I, Summer 2021)	Program Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I liked the emphasis on culture, learning common phrases, how to order food, etc.” • Pre-program services: culture shock, international travel, family and roommates’ information: 4.
	Homestay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Good host family – attentive and concerned.” • “There were definitely cultural & personality difficulties, but not failure to provide services.” • Indicated “Pros: good food, good room. Con: felt judged and dismissed sometimes.”
	Cultural Activities and Thematic Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural activities: Walking tours: 5. • Didactic workshops: Dance class -Bachata & Salsa and rated it 2; Cooking class – paella and tapas: 4.

	Overall Program Offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rated it with a 5 and indicated that she will recommend the program to others: “Yes! I think it is a great opportunity to know your teachers, learn, experience new culture, and make new friends.”
Tammy SPAN 4700; SPAN 4707 – Session I, Summer 2021 SPAN 4705, SPAN 4708 — Session II, Summer 2021	Program Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “Good level of communication throughout. I liked how specific information was given in a timely manner and I always knew what to expect.” Pre-program services: culture shock, international travel, family and roommates’ information: 4.
	Homestay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> “I loved my host mother. She is so kind and fun to be around.” “She is extremely understanding and well prepared to host students. I had a very positive relationship with my host mother and really enjoyed living with her.”
	Cultural Activities and Thematic Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Day trips / Weekend trips: Cullera: 5. Cultural activities: Walking tours: 5; Visited “Oceanográfico:” 5. Didactic workshops: Cooking class – tapas: 5; Dance class: 5.
	Overall Program Offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rated it with a 5 and indicated that she will recommend the program to others: “Yes! I have had an amazing time, seen so many new things, and improved my Spanish both in and out of class. I really enjoyed my time here.”

Vincent SPAN 3300, SPAN 4707 – Session I, Summer 2021 SPAN 4700, SPAN 4705 – Session II, Summer 2021	Program Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I specifically liked how organized the program was. I liked the organized group activities. • “I disliked, though understood, the restrictions on travel.” • Pre-program services: culture shock, international travel, family and roommates’ information: 5.
	Homestay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Fantastic! kind, attentive, great cooking, great location, always going out of the way to help me. They would take you around to different activities.” • “They could not get a better host family.”
	Cultural Activities and Thematic Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Day trips / weekend trips: Calpe: 4; Montanejos, including thermal springs and waterfalls: 5; Peñíscola: 4. • Cultural activities: Walking tours: 5; Visit to “Oceanográfico:” 5. • Didactic workshops: Cooking class - paella: 4; tapas: 5; Dance class - Bachata & salsa: 4.
	Overall Program Offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rated it with a 5 and indicated that he will recommend the program to others: “Yes! Absolutely. The one thing I disliked was the tendency of students to usually speak English together, but that’s of course not something the program can control too much.” • “My only dislike could be that class schedules and coursework often prohibit being able to explore. ”

* Students assessed the program based on how satisfied they were with the different activities provided to them by indicating: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), Neutral (3), Disagree (2), Strongly Disagree (1).

Appendix G

The Stages of Cultural Adjustment

- Stage 1. Cultural Euphoria: In this stage, students exhibit excitement about being in a new culture, often called the “honeymoon” phase. Everything seems unique and wonderful and students are eager to explore. They see the new culture as better than it really is, focusing more on the visible cultural aspects (e.g., clothing, food, scenery). Further, students tend to pay more attention to similarities rather than differences in the early phase of their study abroad (Cohen et al., 2019).
- Stage 2. Cultural Confrontation: In this stage, the cultural adjustment begins. It is the most challenging phase for the students because they experience confusion and frustration. Their feelings can change radically from very positive to very negative. They view their home culture and the host culture unrealistically, where one is superior while the other is lacking. They feel out of their comfort zone, and everything appears more difficult because of the new culture or language. As a result, they feel homesick, discouraged, and doubt their ability to learn the new language or adapt to the culture. Despite all of these, students make critical progress in expanding their cross-cultural awareness and consciously or unconsciously developing strategies to cope with cultural differences (Cohen et al., 2019).
- Stage 3. Cultural Adjustment: This stage indicates changes from culture shock to significant cultural adjustments. Students gradually feel better and competent in the new culture, and these feelings overcome the frustration they felt at times or the feeling of being out of place. They may continue experiencing homesickness, but they interact more effectively with host culture members, thus increasing their self-confidence. They begin to look forward to more interactions in the host country and learning throughout their experiences (Cohen et al., 2019).
- Stage 4. Cultural Adaptation: In this stage, students have reached a great deal of confidence in their ability to communicate and interact more effectively. While their understanding of the influence of the culture in peoples’ lives deepens, as they acquire considerable cultural knowledge, students recognize that they still don't know or understand many things. Students have integrated many of the new culture’s values, customs, and behaviors into their daily lives. They can examine and understand many cultural norms, values, and beliefs of the host culture (Cohen et al., 2019).

Appendix H

A thoughtful return

- 1) In what ways have I changed?
- 2) In what ways might my friends and family have changed?
- 3) How would I like my family and friends to treat me when I return home?
- 4) What am I looking forward to the most? The least?
- 5) What are the lessons I have learned that I never want to forget?
- 6) What are some skills I have learned?
- 7) Many state that re-entry shock is more challenging than initial culture shock. What are some things I might do to make the transition easier? (See the reacting to changes section below.)
- 8) What have been the important things about this study abroad experience that I want to share with my family and friends?
- 9) What do I want to do with the experiences I have had (e.g., continuing studying Spanish, joining the Spanish Club at my school)?

Reactions to the changes

1. I know I have changed as a result of my experience because...
2. My friends do seem to understand _____ about me, but they don't understand...
3. My re-entry experience would be better if...
4. Now that I am home, I worry most about...
5. The one thing I know I have learned about myself is...
6. I wish I could explain to my family and friends that...

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Appendix I

Understanding Yourself Differently

The following descriptions are examples of what returnees said about how they have grown from their experiences. Check and discuss the ones that you have experienced.

I now...

- have a new sense of autonomy. If I can figure out the Madrid Metro, I can do anything! If I can enroll in a course in Spain by myself, I can surely tackle my home institution's bureaucracy! If I can travel around a tropical island myself and be in a place where I did not understand all of the language around me, I can be comfortable and confident almost anywhere;
- feel more responsible about my lifestyle choices and their global consequences;
- feel more focused about my career interests;
- feel more self-confident;
- feel more comfortable using Spanish (e.g., listening, speaking, writing);
- have a genuine feeling of breaking the language barrier by studying a content subject (such as economics) in another language;
- am able to suspend judgment about people and their actions because sometimes you just do not have all the cultural and language background that you need;
- have a higher tolerance for ambiguity in situations. Now I can be in situations in which I do not understand all that is going on and still feel comfortable in trying to communicate;
- have more concern for international politics;
- have a greater awareness of other eating patterns;
- am more in sync with the real world and the harsh reality of life (professors not showing up for class because of societal forces and events) – not U.S. American “ivory tower” phenomenon;
- have a greater sense of what is like to watch out for personal security;
- am less consumer-oriented;
- am more interested in social issues;
- know that I hit emotional rock-bottom and come back up;
- feel connected to people across the world;
- have a new appreciation for the number of opportunities and material things that I enjoy at home and at the same time a keen awareness of how much more I have than people in other countries;

- have a greater sense of connection to family and friends (even if they do not always understand me and my new experiences);
- have a greater view of the possibilities in the world and my life. It is like the doors and windows to many things were opened;
- feel like a “global citizen” and care more about what happens around the globe;
- am interested in a greater concept of justice and injustice as it is manifested differently in other countries;
- have the ability to think more critically about political events and take a look at multiple sides of current issues.

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