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## Global Citizenship and Education: The Multidimensional Impact of a Study Abroad Bilingual Teaching Experience on University Students and Preservice Teachers

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GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP AND EDUCATION:  
THE MULTIDIMENSIONAL IMPACT OF A STUDY ABROAD BILINGUAL TEACHING  
EXPERIENCE ON UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND PRESERVICE TEACHERS

by

HARIS N. ANWAR

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Honors in the Major program in Education  
in the School of Teaching, Learning, and Leadership  
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at the University of Central Florida  
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Thesis Chair: J. Thomas Owens, Ph.D.

## **ABSTRACT**

The intent of this thesis is to study the diverse experiences of 13 University of Central Florida students who participated in the Bilingual Study Abroad Teaching Experience in Spain. The group included nine education students and four in other majors. The experiences of study abroad participants can help to better understand what future participants can look to gain from the program, and what the organizers of the program can potentially look to improve. The research involved was a qualitative study which sought to record the experiences of participants, and then interpret those experiences. The participants were asked to determine the benefits of the program across three dimensions: academic, professional, and personal. This was accomplished through Likert scale questions which gauged their opinions, and by reflecting on their experiences in a more open-ended way, writing broadly about the impact of the program. In analyzing the responses, connections were drawn between the quantitative data in the Likert scale questions, and the qualitative data in the open responses. It was found that as a whole, participants considered the study abroad experience to be overwhelmingly positive across all surveyed dimensions. In addition, a number of connections were found that could be drawn between the broad experiences of the participants, and specific benefits which they noted in the survey. A number of unique experiences and circumstances will be considered, both positive and negative. Finally, the conclusions and implications of the study will be discussed. Recommendations are included in regard to future participants can expect to gain, potential areas of improvement in the program, and things which should be included in the orientation for future participants in the bilingual teaching experience.

## **DEDICATION**

For my parents Nabil and Bushra, my sister Aminah,  
and for Colonel Anwar, my Grandfather,  
for their continued support

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank Dr. Tom Owens, who was one of the first to encourage me to study abroad in Spain. Upon my return, he agreed to assist me in completing this thesis, and has been a great help through every step of the process. Additionally, to Dr. Sherron Roberts and Dr. Elsie Olan, thank you for your feedback and support, not only in this endeavor, but throughout the completion of my degree.

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## INTRODUCTION

Borders are drawn and redrawn. Populations grow, change, and learn from one another. A driving force in this evolution is the youth of a country, even more so when they go on to teach others. This evolution in outlook is defined by their increased identity as ‘global citizens.’ The idea behind global citizenship is that individuals feel a sense of community that transcends national boundaries. Ali Abdi (2017), writing in the *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning*, has put forward that this mindfulness can be a vital component of growth, both for learning and for teaching. Abdi notes that currently, the approach to developing this mindfulness can sometimes be superficial. The goal should instead be for people to fundamentally “engage with one another” and “achieve an honest perspective of global citizenship” (2017).

An example of developing this global citizenship is the study abroad programs which many students take part in during their time at university. Efforts have been made to encourage education students in particular to complete parts of their student teaching abroad, with more than 600 students having done so, and dozens more taking advantage of the opportunity every year (Quezada, 2004). Such programs are widely considered to be greatly impactful for the students who take part in them.

I had the opportunity to take part in such an international experience. The origins of this study are thus in my own experiences studying abroad in Spain. I was in Spain for 12 weeks, staying with a host family and taking two university courses during my time there. Along with taking classes, I took part in field work, teaching English in the assigned school for five days

every week. I was fully immersed in the language and in the culture. After returning, I hoped to relate my own experience to that of the other students who had participated in the same program. While many of their experiences were similar to mine, that is, generally positive, they had varied experiences with their families and schools. Similarly, many differed on how closely they had wanted the university to be involved while they were abroad.

From this, I began to think about how similar or dissimilar my experiences were when compared to other students in this program. How transformative an experience it was for me and how it helped to develop my own global citizenship. The current study emerges from these thoughts and questions. The intellectual curiosity which serves as its foundation is the desire to understand if fellow University of Central Florida (UCF) students found similar benefits and challenges in the program. Whatever the results may be of this research, I anticipate that it will be valuable to students, faculty, and administration as such programs continue to gain traction. Therefore, the aim of this thesis is to explore how beneficial, neutral, or detrimental these study abroad programs are for university student participants, and in what ways.

While personal interest is at the core of this research, potential implications exist for a number of other groups. For example, it may be helpful for potential study abroad participants to learn about the experiences of prior participants. Similarly, this research may help the organizers of the program to emphasize the benefits of the program which most participants are agreed upon, and address negative insights or issues, should they surface. The results of the study may also help to better understand study abroad, because it builds on the information from prior research.

The fundamental research question upon which this thesis relies on is as follows: how do students who participated in the Bilingual Study Abroad program in Spain make sense out of their experiences?

Undergraduate students often participate in study abroad programs during their time in university, and while there is robust literature that discusses the benefits of such programs for students, some facets therein have garnered comparatively little attention, particularly in regards to students in colleges of education. There certainly is existing literature which looks at the experiences of student teachers or students of education, but as will be seen in the following literature review, the focus of the studies was often in one particular area. The areas of focus in this study are the experiences and personal outcomes among participants in a school-based service learning project in Spain. Because the results of this study are tied to the unique experiences of participants, it is primarily a phenomenological practice. The objective in this regard was to document the diverse experiences of program participants and to identify any common themes across those experiences.

Impacts of study abroad programs have been identified by prior studies, which can broadly be sorted into a number of dimensions. The ones which have been identified for the purpose of this study are the personal impact, the professional impact, and the academic impact of such programs. With the established qualitative framework, these dimensions serve as a lens through which to interpret students' complex experiences. When looking for variables which are mentioned in existing studies, the objective of studying them was to confirm that they remained true in the context of this particular program. In addition to this, facets of study abroad in programs such as this one in Spain are not always addressed by the existing scholarship. In these

cases, the objective of studying the stated variables is to hopefully bring attention to other possible impacts of such study abroad programs.

## **REVIEW OF RELEVANT LITERATURE**

The current literature on this topic gives details on a number of the benefits and challenges to studying abroad; the aim of reviewing these pieces is to see what these known or assumed benefits and challenges are, and if they can be applied to the subject participants and their particular experiences studying abroad in Spain. The articles and studies that are available tend to look at all international students' experiences across the board; fewer focus on American students' experiences, and fewer still focus on preservice teachers.

In general, students and teachers have accepted that those who take time to study abroad benefit in a number of ways. Studies acknowledge, for example, that regardless of area of study, students will often experience a degree of personal growth and independence through their activities in the program (Milian et al., 2015; Tam, 2016). Another commonly mentioned benefit of international programs is the potential of learning a language through immersion in the second language community (Pyper & Slagter, 2012; Tam, 2016; Segalowitz et al., 2004). The cross-cultural conflict that comes from this same immersion is a challenge that some writers make note of as well (Duke, Reinemund, & Bouyer, 2014; Triana, 2015), while the same experience is marked elsewhere, sometimes within the same articles, as a benefit. The understanding and growth that come from navigating a different culture is noted by these pieces as initially challenging, but ultimately constructive (Bloom & Miranda, 2015; Duke, Reinemund, & Bouyer, 2014; Murphy & Murphy, 2016; Quezada, 2004).

The focus of this thesis relies on a particular study abroad program that involved university students living and working in Spain for three months. The notable characteristics of Spanish schools that participants would have encountered should be mentioned as well, such as

the desire for inclusion among teachers, and the bilingual English education programs which exist in many parts of the country (Anghel, Cabrales, & Carro, 2016; Chiner & Cardona, 2013). These bilingual programs are the ones that this study's participants took part in during their own experiences; participants taught English in bilingual elementary schools, while living in the community for this time period. This gives participants three months of practical experience and immersion in their assigned communities. In particular, a number of advantages to such study abroad programs are specifically relevant to education students. Research notes that an extended study abroad program where the participant is engaged with their host community and school provides them with opportunities to teach and learn that they otherwise could not experience (Quezada, 2004; Tam, 2016). The benefits to language acquisition have already been mentioned in a broader sense, but aside from personally learning a language, a preservice teacher will benefit from this in other ways. The exposure to second language acquisition, both in their own case, and on the part of the students, affects their perception of English language learners, and influences how they interact with and teach such students in their own classrooms (Kasun & Saavedra, 2016; Medina, Hathaway, & Pilonieta, 2015).

Many articles also make note of the multicultural awareness and potential for internationalized curriculum that comes from this exposure. In many study abroad experiences, student teachers are placed in environments and situations that give them a basic knowledge of the presence of other cultures, and which help them to empathize with different contingents of their American school populations; both of these serve to further inform their teaching (Quezada & Alfaro, 2007; Scruggs, 2007; Shedrow, 2017; Palmer & Menard-Warwick, 2012).

Current literature addresses a number of benefits related to international experiences which have been studied, connected to the dimensions by which the participants grew. Different articles addressed ways in which international experiences have impacted participants, whether as a student, a professional, or as a person. The goal in connecting the most relevant literature on this topic to these categories is to gain an idea of what facets of participants' impacts have been studied, and which have not. The hope then is to assess from this which facets can be studied to confirm previous findings, and see if they remain true in the case of the subject participants' own experiences. It can also be determined if any elements of participants' experiences have not been sufficiently addressed by the literature, and whether those elements also merit inclusion in the study.

To this end, the impacts felt by study abroad participants have been broadly set into the aforementioned dimensions, into their roles as students, professionals, or individuals. A number of relevant studies in each category are described below, to provide a survey of what the current literature describes in each case.

### **Impact as a Student**

According to prior studies, the impact that study abroad participants felt in their role as students took on different forms that fell under certain common themes. For example, many study abroad participants struggled in reconciling the experience with their expectations, class content, or other factors (Barton, Hartwig, & Cain, 2015). A number of studies implied in their results that although academic growth was evident among participants, it was far surpassed by the growth shown in other areas (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004). Despite this, evidence suggests that study abroad participants experienced measurable academic growth through their

participation; they learned and practiced academic skills which they would have otherwise only been exposed in a classroom (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Quezada, 2007). The value of immersive experience with non-English speaking students is another factor noted by studies (Medina, Hathaway & Pilonieta 2015; Quezada, 2007).

Reyes L. Quezada's article (2007) in *International Education Journal* studied the international student teaching programs which universities offer, and provides further detail about specific universities and organizations and their programs. Quezada (2007) determines, for example, that many student teachers struggled in adapting the strategies they learned in class to overseas curriculum. Looking at students' reflections on their overseas experiences, he notes that while personal and professional learning were clearly seen to have grown, the practices they were learning as students were also impacted. Quezada (2007) writes that through their participation in these programs, students were exposed to learning which they would typically only see in a theoretical context.

Georgina M. Barton, Kay A. Hartwig, and Melissa Cain's (2015) study "International students' experience of practicum in teacher education" recorded the overseas experiences of Australian preservice teachers, and how they felt the experience in schools impacted them as students. Much like American students participating in study abroad programs, the students who were interviewed for this article were not uniformly of any single opinion on how the program benefited them. A major conclusion of Barton, Hartwig, and Cain's (2015) study is that a participant's learning is reliant not just on the experience itself, but on their own disposition, as well as the environment in which they take part in the experience. Factors such as the level of

feedback from school and university, and the outlook of the mentor teacher(s) had an equally notable impact on participants' learning experience (Barton, Hartwig, & Cain, 2015).

Some of the other articles in question focus on one aspect of an education student's impact, such as how their international experience affected their perception of ELL (English language learner) students. Adriana L. Medina, Jennifer Hathaway and Paola Pilonieta (2015) build on this idea in their article for *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*. Their study followed student teachers' perceptions about other cultures and non-English speakers after their international experiences. The article says that exposure to an entirely different population helped to "shift [preservice teachers]' perceptions of 'others' and "potentially affect how they will teach ELL students in their future classrooms" (2015, p. 86).

Edward Ingraham and Debra Peterson (2004), also writing in *Frontiers*, studied both the academic and personal impacts of study abroad. In how they were impacted as students, their survey asked participants if their experience had led to an improvement in their academic performance, or had enhanced their critical thinking skills. The growth students experienced in their academic development was not as dramatic when compared to their personal and intercultural development, but even in academics, the article notes that "all of the reports reflect the belief by both faculty and students that they, the students, learn more and more deeply while studying abroad" (2004, p. 93).

### **Impact as a Professional**

The impact felt on study abroad participants in their roles as professionals took on a similar vein, whether as teachers who were hoping to gain additional skills and development, or as students who were looking for training and professional experience through their

participation. One of the most widely understood benefits of studying abroad is the language acquisition that can come from it, with all the professional growth that entails. However, the actual relation between studying abroad and learning a language varies (Tam, 2016). More concrete benefits came from practical international experiences, and included gaining skills such as curriculum integration and cultural literacy, both of which serve to draw connections between topics and students (Phillion et al., 2009; Quezada, 2007; Scruggs, 2007). Other examples of professional growth included a greater understanding and interaction with ELL students, and relatedly, a greater ability to succeed in culturally diverse classrooms (Quezada, 2007).

Angela Choi Fung Tam (2016), writing in *Teachers and Teaching*, posits that the professional impact of short term study abroad experiences is in some ways a ‘mixed bag.’ Tam conducted a study of Hong Kong preservice teachers’ experiences taking part in a language based study abroad program in mainland China (2016). In some cases, positive outcomes were recognized, but in others, such as language acquisition, the participants did not feel like they acquired as much as they had anticipated. Tam’s conclusion in this regard is that the outcomes of the experience were tied more to the practical working component of the program, rather than to any perception of the program itself (p. 778).

Thomas Scruggs’ (2007) article “Teacher Exchange as a Means of Social Studies Curriculum Internationalization” serves as an overview of social studies teachers’ experiences in exchange and training programs abroad, and a brief history of teachers’ overseas training and international impact. Scruggs explains that international exchange and teacher training programs should be and are designed around the assumption that participants will use the skills gained through them in their own classrooms (2007, p. 70). He goes on to explain how such programs

impacted teachers after they took part in them, explaining that in addition to the increased tolerance and appreciation of differences, the teaching of the curriculum itself was impacted positively. The result is a greater propensity to integrate the elements of a class curriculum: “teachers with international experiences make connections across cultures and civilizations and across global issues instead of teaching them separately” (p. 73).

Expanding on the idea of ESOL education, the following article pertained directly to biliteracy teachers’ experiences student teaching in a Spanish speaking country. Reyes L. Quezada, who published another article referenced above, writes along with Cristina Alfaro (2007) in *Teacher Education Quarterly*, that a rapidly globalizing world necessitates that teachers adapt and develop professionally to meet the needs of their diverse student populations. Participation in long or short term international experiences has been confirmed to partly fulfill this necessity, and therefore serves as a valuable professional development opportunity for teachers who can take part in it (p. 112).

JoAnn Phillion, Erik Malewski, Suniti Sharma and Yuxiang Wang (2009), writing in their article “Reimagining the Curriculum: Future Teachers and Study Abroad,” address some of the primary goals universities have in their implementation of study abroad programs for student teachers. One of the biggest objectives in teacher education, as stated by the article, is to prepare preservice teachers, who are primarily white, middle class, and native English speakers, for a student population which is projected to become increasingly diverse in the future. The knowledge that one gains from cross-cultural awareness is not simply a matter of moral value, it is increasingly a professional necessity. The authors conclude that “student teachers must be

encouraged, indeed required, to venture beyond the walls of their assigned classrooms ... and into the community and world of which schools are a part” (2009, p. 335).

### **Impact as an Individual**

Much of the literature that addresses the impact of study abroad participants in their roles as students or professionals often does so at least partly through the lens of the participant’s personal development. In other words, it framed their academic or professional growth through their growth as individuals, whatever that entails. This idea can be interpreted to mean that the most significant impact of such study abroad programs is on personal growth level. A number of articles highlight an increased sense of independence and self-reliance as positive impacts of participating in study abroad (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Milian et al., 2015). Others point to critical thinking and leadership as areas for growth (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Palmer & Warwick, 2012). The most often noted personal impact however, which addresses a number of professional and academic factors as well, is participants’ growth in intercultural understanding and empathy (Palmer & Warwick, 2012; Shedrow, 2017).

Edward Ingraham and Debra Peterson’s (2004) *Frontiers* article was mentioned above; it was explained that the article examined both the academic and the personal dimensions of study abroad participation. The study which the authors conducted of returning study abroad participants measured a number of facets of personal growth, such as participants’ “independence,” “self-reliance,” “problem-solving,” and “leadership,” among others (2004, p. 87). The findings of this study confirm that participants tend to report the international experience as a positive factor in their personal development: “in reading these reports, it is

striking to see on balance how large an impact on personal growth the study abroad experience has” (p. 93).

The development of cultural awareness was the aspect of personal impact which most relevant literature touched on in one form or another. The article by Ingraham and Peterson (2004) examined this idea, like the rest of their study, on a macro scale. Stephanie J. Shedrow’s (2017) article in the *Journal of International Students* focuses on a single case study of a preservice teacher’s international experience in Uganda; examining her preconceptions about the host country and how they shift (or fail to shift), along with her racial and cultural awareness. Shedrow concluded that in order to prepare a homogenous population of teachers for a heterogeneous population, participants should be actively guided and helped to interpret and understand their experiences (2017, p. 284). This meaningful change, while framed in the context of preservice teachers’ professional development, entails deep personal reflection on whiteness, culture, and privilege, as demonstrated by the subject of her study.

A majority of the literature selected pertained to American students’ experiences abroad, but in dealing with study abroad as a general concept, the experiences of international students in America has the potential to be just as valuable to learn from. Madeline Milian, Matthew Birnbaum, Betty Cardona, and Bonnie Nicholson’s article “Personal and Professional Challenges and Benefits of Studying Abroad” (2015) serves as a valuable resource in this regard. The article reported that in addition to the quality of education and services at the school, more than 60% of study abroad participants noted that they had developed socially as well, and found a community of friends on campus. The authors point to one participant’s comment to indicate personal

growth, the student indicated that he was “meeting friends from all around the world, visiting new places, having a valuable experience, learning practically, being independent” (2015, p. 7).

Deborah Palmer and Julia Menard-Warwick, writing in *Multicultural Education*, acknowledge the importance of cultural understanding, as the previous articles do, but interestingly, note that “cultural understanding alone is not sufficient for effective and respectful teaching in multi-cultural contexts” (2012, p. 18). Instead, they assert that multiculturalism should be addressed in conjunction with other concepts, such as critical empathy (p. 20). The results of their study, looking at the short term international experiences of a group of Texas student teachers, confirmed that the program was successful in helping to develop participants’ empathy and critical consciousness of their student’s experiences (p. 21).

## **RATIONALE**

A number of existing studies provide evidence for the value of study abroad as part of a university education (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Milian et al., 2015; Quezada & Alfaro, 2007; etc.). The fact that such programs have proven impactful in other cases does not necessarily mean that the program under consideration has the same results. For example, students may anticipate significant increases in language proficiency only to discover, after the fact, that it did not happen. In similar fashion, it was found in some cases that the personal and professional growth experienced by students was somewhat greater than the academic benefit of the program (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004). Other students anticipated certain sources of learning only to discover that they learned more in daily interactions within a culture (Tam, 2016).

Prior to my own international experience, the program coordinators had prepared us for what we might expect from the program and what would be expected of us. The primary benefit I anticipated and later recognized was the sense of independence required to be in a country alone. Being in an unfamiliar environment gave me an opportunity to develop and exercise critical thinking and decision making skills that would not have developed in the same way. Once we settled into the routine of the program it provided applied learning experiences that I had not had at my home institution. Upon returning, I assessed whether or not delaying graduation a semester and taking part in such a program really had been worth the time. In retrospect, those two components of the program remain among the main benefits of participating in the program. However, what I did not anticipate was the learning that took place through immersion in a language and culture that was different from my own.

The goal in this study was to accurately represent participants' experiences in the bilingual experience. This research was a qualitative study which sought to record the diverse experiences of study abroad participants, and then interpret those experiences. The three dimensions (personal, professional, academic) mentioned above are to be identified around peoples' loosely connected experiences as they write about them. They are a preliminary organizational tool to assist in interpreting the data.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Program Context**

The study abroad program which is the basis for this study is unique in many ways (see Appendix E: Bilingual Program Information Flyer). It shares aspects of other programs, but there wasn't any study abroad program mentioned in the literature which was exactly like it. This program is organized by UCF in conjunction with the region of Castile and Leon in Spain. The objective is to bring in English speakers for Spanish students to hear and learn from. Therefore, it was necessary that potential participants be native English speakers, or at the very least, speak English without an accent. There were additional requirements which come from working closely with children, such as a criminal history check, and a basic overview of pedagogical practices. The program is open to all majors, and those who wished to participate applied in advance. Upon approval, the students begin preparations; they arrange ways to communicate with the other members of their cohort, the other students who will be taking part in the program that semester. Prior to leaving, they attend an orientation, where they are given instructions about how to proceed, as well as advice related to how to handle various situations while abroad. It is explained how to react in certain scenarios, how to get in touch with someone at UCF, and so on.

Students arrange their own transportation to Madrid, and from there to the city they were assigned in Castile and Leon. The participants are in Spain for 12 weeks, 11 of which are spent working in their assigned school, teaching English. The students they work with are primarily elementary school age, ranging from 6<sup>th</sup> grade down to kindergarten. During their time there, most students are lodged with host families, who provide room and board. The cohort of UCF

students that participate in the program in the same semester are assigned schools in different cities, often quite far from one another. Because of this, students cannot rely on one another for day to day situations that arise. In cases where students are assigned to smaller towns, or to isolated areas, they may be the only English speaker in their communities. The participants are thus largely independent while in Spain, with minimal contact with the university, or with each other. If they want to meet at some point during their experience, students arrange it themselves. After the students have worked for 11 weeks, they can spend their final week for personal purposes: recreation, classes, travel, and so on. The students arrange their own transportation back to the United States upon the completion of this week, and upon returning, briefly follow up with the organizers of the program.

Aspects of the program are thus similar to the program for student teachers in Australia, described by Barton, Hartwig, & Cain (2015). In that program, the students completed field work at an assigned school, with a mentor teacher. This is similar to the bilingual program, where UCF students are assigned a school in Spain, in which they will teach English. They similarly develop a relationship with the faculty in their assigned school, and gain practical experience working in a classroom. The bilingual program in Spain however is different in that it was a 12 week program, rather than a yearlong program. There was also a difference in the populations, where the visiting students were often English learners, and the host population were the native English speakers (2015). It is the opposite in the Spain program, where the participants were native English speakers, and the assigned students and faculty were non-English speakers.

The experience of intercultural exchange is also present in a number of the programs which were highlighted in the literature review. For instance, the program studied by Angela Choi Fung Tam (2016) involved a study abroad program centered in China. Like the program being studied here, this program involved both an academic and a practical component. However, the level of immersion was not as extensive, and the benefits to language acquisition were noted as minimal (2016). The benefits to language acquisition were mentioned by a number of studies, usually with better results (Pyper & Slagter, 2012; Segalowitz et al., 2004). Similarly, the bilingual program shares the Spanish language and ESOL training aspects of the program mentioned by Quezada (2007). The difference there was the brevity of this particular program, compared to the three months which UCF students were able to spend teaching English.

### **Research Design**

The objective, as it has been described, could be framed as either a qualitative or quantitative study. A quantitative study would require that the data gathered from participants would be based around the idea of comparing the objective results of their experiences, and would be collected strictly in the form of data gathering surveys, with no further complexity to their responses. A qualitative study of this same topic would share the idea of gathering tangible data from participants, but would put a greater emphasis on the perspective of the respondent. Leaving the findings of the study to be dependent on their responses allows for a greater range of flexibility on the part of the information that is gathered, and it allows for the study to reveal information that is related to the topic, but which the researchers had not considered. If we accept this as a qualitative phenomenological study, the goal is to provide a structure for

presenting the participants responses. In other words, the task is to organize their experiences as presented through essays, short answer questions and a series of Likert scale answers. I used the analytical tools of content analysis to evaluate essays and short answers, and then looked to Likert scale questions for corroboration of identified themes.

As a phenomenological study, there is not a clear hypothesized relationship but rather an analysis and systematic representation of others' experiences. Phenomenology, as it is applied here, is the method by which a researcher conveys the stories of their subjects, using their diverse experiences as a lens to understand a topic.

A phenomenological approach to data analysis requires that the researcher organizes and interprets data which are not clearly delineated. Chi-Shiou Lin (2013), writing in *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries*, explains that in empirical phenomenology, it is assumed that "structure exists in the shared experiences of a phenomenon, and the methodology strives to discover the structure and its essential constituents" (2013, p. 470). Following a similar model to that of Moustakas (1994), Lin implemented what she referred to as "open coding," where she identified common themes in her (otherwise unwieldy) data by segmenting it into smaller parts and labeling those parts appropriately. This is the approach which seems to be the most appropriate for the data analysis in this study, where long form essays can be 'segmented' into different categories so as to organize them.

Ideas to keep in mind with the above approach to research include the concepts of epoche and reduction. Epoche is a concept wherein a researcher is asked to determine their own conceptions or beliefs regarding a topic. This is done to draw focus onto the specific aspects of an experience which are being studied. This is also referred to as 'bracketing,' where, as in

mathematics, certain parts of an equation can be placed inside parentheses; doing so causes one to separate those parts from others, which must be focused on first (Lin, 2013). How this might be represented in this particular subject could include the conscious removal of bias on the part of the researcher; just because the researcher experienced a certain benefit during study abroad does not mean that others will as well. A concept related to epoche is reduction. Reduction (phenomenological reduction, or eidetic reduction) refers to the idea that surface elements of a phenomenon must be removed in order to truly understand its meaning. Lin describes this as “a process of going beyond, behind, or underneath the conventional patterns of thoughts and action in order to expose the meaning structure” (2013, p. 471).

The research questions which were answered fit two different categories of analysis. The initial level in this case involves a more detailed reflection upon the experience and the impact which participants have felt from it. Secondary analysis considered these accounts through a series of corroborating questions, backing up the initial data and looking for differences that may be associated with demographic and educational variables. The inclusion both of open ended response questions and direct Likert scale questions allows for the triangulation of the respondent’s broader experiences within a certain framework. That framework would be based around the accepted knowledge of typical areas of impact for study abroad participants. The ‘triangulation,’ in this case, means that there was an effort to connect the common themes of respondents’ long form responses to the other forms of questioning, which would also be designed to find those themes. Given this approach to the development of knowledge, the variables that are discussed in the findings are those themes and subthemes that emerged from participant responses. While there might be some idea about the impacts of the program which

they are likely to identify, the specific variables are revealed and described during the analysis. Although the respondents' free form responses cannot be easily categorized, the interpretation of those responses can be. The first step in that interpretation is the survey questions themselves, and the Likert scale questions can be partly sorted into the already established dimensions:

### **1: How did the program impact you as a person?**

Subquestions address:

- Increased global awareness, increased awareness of any privileges which respondents may have. Has this affected your worldview in other ways?
- Development of self-reflection or critical empathy.
- Personal growth through the program; defining 'growth.'

Because the study is framed through the personal experiences of students, the participants' responses to these questions may bear relevancy with the other dimensions

### **2: How did the program impact you as a student?**

Subquestions address:

- Positive academic impacts of studying abroad
- Depth of learning when participating in the program
- Impact on pedagogical practices
- Did you find that the experience has fit into their long term goals

### **3: How did the program impact you as a professional?**

Subquestions address:

- Effect on how participants will conduct a classroom (e.g. with a greater degree of cultural or linguistic literacy)

- Possible language acquisition
- Practical skills, language acquisition, and other areas for potential professional growth.
- Preparation for multicultural student populations
- General forms of professional development
- Impact on participants' long term professional goals

## **Participants**

The population which the subject of this study is comprised of is a group of students who participated in a semester-long study abroad program in Spain. These students participated in the program from the years 2009 to 2017, possibly years apart from each other. The particular program in question was open to graduate students as well, and all majors could apply to participate. The contact information and names of these participants was obtained through the coordinators of the program, who in some cases are closely involved in the study. The 13 respondents were contacted through email or social media, with the request for them to take part in the study. At the time of their experiences, a majority of participants were preservice undergraduate education students. A smaller number were graduate students in education, or were pursuing degrees in other areas. Most of the population is comprised of monolingual English speakers, with a smaller percentage being multilingual. Students in the group vary in terms of age, major, gender, level of study and numerous other variables. The sole criteria for inclusion in the study is their participation in the Bilingual Teaching Experience in Spain. The specific demographics of the respondents in this study will be discussed in an upcoming section, where all the results of the survey are laid out.

## **Instruments**

As this is an exploratory descriptive study, the instrument was unique to this study. It was a researcher-developed survey based on outcomes expected from the literature reviewed and input from those involved in the program. The intention is to gather the experiences and opinions of program participants, making their perspectives the single most important element of the study. The program by which the survey was conducted is Qualtrics, which is a data collecting tool that researchers at UCF can use to administer surveys and gather information. It allows for long form, short answer, and Likert scale questions.

## **Procedures**

The basic procedure which was followed in this project first involved conducting the survey itself. The survey was conducted online, through the Qualtrics program. Participants were given clear explanations and instructions for how to complete the survey, and what they can expect from the questions.

The first step in this regard would be to gather information about the participants. This was accomplished in the initial part of the survey, in which respondents would be asked to answer questions that involved general and demographic information. Questions included here would address participants' age (both at time of participation and current), graduate status, major at time of experience, language background, cultural background, and other prior experiences.

The most important element of the survey itself is the recording of respondents' unique experiences studying abroad. This took the form of open ended survey questions and essay questions. Some of the prompts for such questions could include:

- Write freely about your experience with the program. What parts stood out to you as the most impactful? What difficulties did you experience?
- Looking back, has the study abroad experience impacted you personally? If so, how?
- What advice would you give to someone who is planning on participating in the study abroad program in the future?

The final segment of questions were statements designed for ‘Likert’ scale responses, where respondents would select whether they strongly agree, somewhat agree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree. These questions are meant to be supplemental to the free response questions, and any correlations between the respondents’ broad experiences, and the more specific facets below could be made note of. Among these, there were some general questions, relating to factors that it was likely that respondents would mention, such as the disposition of their host family, their host school, or the broader community. They would also mention relevant factors, such as how helpful the university was. A majority of the questions, however, can be fit into each of the dimensions established, the personal, professional, and academic impacts of study abroad programs.

The questions pertaining to a respondent’s perceived growth and change as a student included both general concepts, as well as specific examples of academic impact. It asked, for example, whether the study abroad experience has helped students to gain knowledge which has directly come up in a class. It asked similar questions about how the experience has impacted their organization, time management, and instructional planning, as well as their depth of learning. Finally, the survey asked them if the experience has impacted them as a student in any other way, and whether the experience has helped them attain their long term academic goals.

A similar model is followed for the questions relating to personal and professional impact. For personal impact, respondents are asked whether the study abroad experience impacted their perception of the host population, or of other groups. They are further asked if participating in the program has helped them to develop their leadership skills, their critical thinking, or their own personal growth in some other way. The questions also addressed whether participants have developed their critical thinking and empathy, and whether or not they have experienced an increased global awareness. The students' development as global citizens is most closely related to the personal impact explained here. Again, Ali Abdi (2017) explained in his article on *International Journal of Development Education and Global Learning* that global citizenship is in theory developed through a person's growth in understanding and empathy, particularly with respect to multiculturalism. The objective there is to create a paradigm where individuals "relate to one another with respect, recognition, and reciprocal acceptance. That could constructively spawn relational possibilities that are less restrictive with respect to the promise of social justice and knowledge equity" (Abdi, 2017). This description of what global citizenship entails is closely related to many facets of the participants' personal growth which are directly or indirectly surveyed.

For questions pertaining to the study abroad program's professional impact, there were a number of clear categories. The first were questions asking about the practical components of study abroad, and whether they are or were impactful in a professional development context. The other categories pertained to specific elements or skills which respondents may have developed while taking part in the program. Examples of these skills were second language acquisition, ELL student experience, increasing cultural literacy, and curriculum integration,

among others. The concluding questions asked whether participation in the study abroad program has helped students in achieving their long term professional goals.

Following the completion of the surveys, it would be beneficial to (time permitting) follow up with respondents, and conduct brief phone interviews, where the questions are discussed, and a broader conversation about their experiences studying abroad. These calls could be the first step in the analysis of the information gathered through this survey. Because of the nature of the information, this process takes a certain amount of time.

## COMPLETION OF SURVEY

Working toward the completion of this study, I completed all necessary components as they were expected by the Burnett Honors College and my committee members. After the thesis proposal was completed and signed, I submitted it to the College. I completed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) certification in December of 2017, before the Spring semester. Once the certification was complete, and the college had been informed of it, I could proceed with the subsequent steps in the study.

In January, February, and March of 2018, the final stages of this project took place. The first step in this regard was to construct the survey as it was described in the proposal. The agreed-upon questions and prompts were standardized and entered into Qualtrics. This finalized survey was sent with other relevant information to the Institutional Review Board at the university. The request was sent out to the 13 participants in the study abroad program which are surveyed, asking for their input in the study. The identities of this group of respondents are derived from collected lists of former participants in the bilingual study abroad program. The participants' responses are the key component to this research. Some patterns emerge when observing their responses on a macro scale, but their individual experiences are equally important to this research. Both are expanded on in the following analysis.

The responses of participants needed to be reported as simply as possible, for example with the demographic questions, the results can be reported in a simple question-answer format where the breakdown of important factors to the answers are identified. The results of the long form questions cannot be simplified in the same way. The primary means of organizing the results of these questions would be to identify common themes which numerous participants

bring up unprompted, and make note of them. The Likert scale questions again serve as a tool to triangulate the recorded responses. The results of these questions can be discussed in the Analysis section of the study, after the data itself has been described sufficiently.

## RESULTS

### Demographic Background

A total of 13 participants took part in the survey. The preliminary portion of the survey was meant to gather general information about the participants: their gender, ethnic background, area of study, and so on. Of the 13 participants, 10 were female, and three were male. Two of the participants identified as Asian (East Asian or Asian American), two identified as Black (Black, Afro-Caribbean, or African American), two identified as Multiracial, and the remaining seven identified as White or Euro-American. All 13 participants were in their twenties at the time of their experience; 11 were in their early twenties (20-24), and the remaining two were 26 and 27, respectively. Currently, with the exception of one participant who is 24, all of the participants are in their mid to late twenties (25-29) or their early thirties (30-34)

Four of the participants grew up in a household in which a language other than English was spoken; the remaining nine grew up in English speaking households. Of the participants, six currently speak one language; six currently speak two languages, and one participant speaks more than two languages.

A majority of the participants (9) were pursuing degrees in the field of education at the time of their experience; the remaining students were studying a wide range of subjects, including history, biology, and international relations. Some participants reported that they changed their majors after returning. Three of the education students had completed at least one of their required internships at the time of the study abroad; the remaining students either did not respond or had not completed an internship. For many of these students, the study abroad experience was the first full-time teaching experience they had.

## **Likert Scale Outcomes**

The participants' collective responses to the Likert scale questions are detailed below, giving an overview of responses for each question. The purpose here is to clearly lay out the basic results of the survey questions. These questions show to what degree participants agree with given statements, and serves to put the subsequent analysis in the appropriate context. To that end, the results given here are comprehensive but generalized. For instance, they may simply explain how many students agreed with a statement, without differentiating between how many 'strongly agreed' and 'somewhat agreed.' Such differentiations are still taken into account in the analysis, because the analysis is based on the complete data, rather than this summary. To see the complete Likert scale responses in the original format, see Appendix C: Likert Scale Question Results. These following results are substantiated with direct quotes from respondents in the following sections, entitled Analysis and Discussion of Results.

In certain sections, there were instances where the question is not applicable to a respondent's circumstance. For instance, a number of questions related to the professional impact of the program ask about how it has impacted them as teachers, in which case only those who are in the field of education would respond. In other instances, they are asked about their perception of the host family. If they stayed with a host family they would respond to the relevant questions there. In such situations the other respondents are not counted, in which case the total responses for a question is less than 13.

### **General Perceptions**

The general perception questions gathered participants' opinions on aspects of the program which are described above as "relevant factors." In some cases, these are tangential to

the focus of the study. They are included as questions here because they may be connected to other aspects of their experience, and because it helps to gain a more full understanding of their experience in Spain.

Among the respondents, 10 agreed that the host family's attitude positively impacted their experience. Two respondents neither agreed nor disagreed, and one respondent strongly disagreed. At least four respondents made specific note of the positive experience with their host families. This perception of the host family will be further discussed in the analysis and discussion of results. When asked the same question about their host school and teachers, 12 respondents agreed that they were positively impacted, and one disagreed. When asked whether the host school or university were helpful in situations where they may have been needed, 12 respondents agreed, and one disagreed.

### **Perception of Academic Impact**

Out of 13, 10 respondents agreed that there was a connection between their experiential learning in Spain and their academic learning at UCF. Of the remaining three respondents, one disagreed, and two neither agreed nor disagreed.

When asked whether their academic performance was positively impacted by the study abroad experience, 11 respondents agreed, one disagreed, and one neither agreed nor disagreed. The results were similar when students were asked about other facets of their academic lives, and whether they were positively impacted. The same number of respondents (11) agreed that it helped their organizational skills, and two were neutral. Out of 13, Eight agreed that it helped their time management, three were neutral, and one somewhat disagreed. In regard to the positive impact for other academic skills in general, 11 agreed and two were neutral.

Similar to the agreement about specific academic skills, 11 respondents agreed that they learned more ‘deeply’ during their time abroad than they would otherwise. Nine agreed that it made them adapt their instructional planning, with another two being neutral, and one disagreeing. There was a consensus among all 13 participants that the experience helped them move towards attaining their long term academic goals. These results, as well as the following ones in the personal and professional dimensions, are substantiated with direct quotes from respondents in the following section entitled Analysis.

### **Perception of Professional Impact**

When asked a similar statement, about whether the study abroad experience had helped them attain their long term professional goals, eight students agreed, and two were neutral. All 11 relevant respondents agreed that the study abroad experience has impacted them in a way that could not have been achieved through other forms of professional development. They all similarly agreed that it has influenced the way in which they perceive ELL (English Language Learner) students.

10 out of 11 students agreed that the experience has impacted the way in which they conduct their classrooms, or plan to conduct them. This was also true for students using knowledge from their experience in the classroom, and for integrating different parts of the curriculum; 10 respondents agreed to both statements. One respondent (not always the same one) was neutral in each of those cases, neither agreeing nor disagreeing.

Out of the 11 applicable respondents, 10 agreed that the study abroad experience has given them practical experience in the classroom, and has prepared them to teach a student population, which is different from themselves. The same number of respondents agreed that it

impacted their development of cross-cultural competencies. All but one of the 11 respondents agreed that their current teaching positions require such competencies, with the remaining student neither agreeing nor disagreeing. This ratio was also present with students' opinions about developing second language skills; 10 agreed that they had developed such skills, and one remained neutral.

### **Perception of Personal Impact**

All 13 respondents agreed that they had experienced personal growth through the study abroad experience, with 11 strongly agreeing and two somewhat agreeing. All 13 participants also agreed that the study abroad experience had impacted their preconceptions of the host population. There was similar consensus about how the program helped them develop critical thinking, empathy, global awareness, and leadership; the participants either strongly or somewhat agreed to being impacted in the above dimensions of personal growth. When asked whether the study abroad experience had caused them to reflect on their own privileges, 11 participants agreed, one somewhat disagreed, and one was neutral.

### **Written Response Outcomes**

Respondents were asked a total of five written response questions. As explained, these questions were meant to allow the students to describe the experience in their own words, elaborate on their expressed opinions, or bring attention to an aspect of the program which the study has neglected to mention. At least 13 responses from students were recorded for each of the questions, and many of these responses are several paragraphs. Because of this, it is not practical to comprehensively relate participants' answers here. As with the Likert scale

responses which are summarized above, the following analysis takes the written responses into account, in their entirety. To view these responses in full, please see Appendix D: Written Response Question Results.

## ANALYSIS

Importantly, the analysis here will bring in the participants' written responses more extensively. A key goal in analyzing the data which has been collected is the merging of the qualitative and quantitative data to develop a more congruent perspective on the student's experience. In other words, we will look at the survey results above and see how they align with the written responses of the same group. To that end, the initial sections of analysis serve to draw connections between those different forms of data. This is followed by a more in-depth overview of certain respondents and their unique experiences. Identifying patterns and triangulating the different forms of information is an underlying goal of this study. There will then be a discussion of the above results and the analysis in this section, from which some conclusions are drawn. This is where I can 'bracket' some of my own experiences, because in some cases they may be different from the experiences of other respondents, in keeping with the approach to analysis of Lin (2013). In the following sections, I mention cases where my experience was different from certain participants, and where my opinion may align with theirs.

The results of the survey demonstrate the overwhelmingly positive nature of the experiences of the 13 participants, but there are a number of unique experiences among these which should be considered. The Likert Scale questions which have been described above can also be interpreted in a numerical form, which allows for ease of understanding in the following analysis. On a 1-5 scale of agreement, with 5 being 'highly agree,' and 1 being 'highly disagree,' the participants have rated many of their feelings about the impact of the study abroad experience. The closer to 5 that the average response is, the stronger their agreement is across the board; similarly, the closer to 1 that the average is, the stronger participants' disagreement

with the statement in question. The averages can serve to highlight the consensus on certain issues, and disagreement in others, but again, it shows this for these particular respondents. These opinions can then be compared to what they write about in their reflections.

### **Academic Impact**

Based on the results, the participants agreed that there was a clear connection between their experiential learning in Spain and their academic learning at UCF, with a mean of agreement between the participants of 4.1. Other survey questions about the academic benefit of the program showed similar levels of agreement, with a mean of 4.1 or higher in each case. For example, respondents agreed that the experience has a positive impact on their organizational skills, as well as their general academic performance. Reflecting on her experience, one respondent noted simply “organization is key.” This reflection is something which can be applied to many aspects of the program, and a number of respondents recommend that future participants engage in practices like documenting their experiences, whether they’re in school or simply traveling.

Respondents noted similar positive growth for their time management, depth of learning, and other academic skills. Most respondents agreed that the experience has made them adapt their instructional planning. A number of them agreed that ‘adaptability’ is important during the experience, one commenting that they were able to “exercise” their “adaptability skills” during their time in Spain.

Based on the responses, participants found the experience to be beneficial across all measures, but they found it to be the most impactful for their aforementioned organizational skills and for attaining their long term academic goals. For instance, some of the participants

chose to change their areas of study, or made other school related decisions based on their experience. In some cases, individual participants noted one or more of the above as less impactful than the average; for example, one respondent noted that they would have liked additional resources related to teaching, so she could learn and implement them as she progressed. Some similar experiences, good and bad, will be discussed further.

### **Professional Impact**

Similar to the academic impact, the participants noted a significant benefit in how the program affected their professional growth. Indeed, they wrote at much greater length, and in more detail, about this element of their experience. It was noted in the results that a professional factor which many acknowledged was in their perceptions and conduct; for instance, all the participants strongly agreed that the experience changed their perception of ELL students. One current teacher said “I try to remember my experience when teaching ELL students and what it was like in a foreign country.” Other participants agreed, adding that “I can compare my experience teaching Spanish children English as a Second Language [to current students] ... I can remember common misconceptions and errors they made and address them quicker to expedite learning.” These comments are consistent with the Likert Scale responses in the professional section.

From the results, we can see that these responses align with other reported benefits of the practical component of the program; participants overwhelmingly agreed that it gave them firsthand experience which they have since used in the classroom. This was true for all facets of professional development which were surveyed, with a mean of 4.5 or higher in each case (see Appendix C: Likert Scale Question Results). One respondent noted that “the work experience as

a teacher was like another internship ... I enjoyed working closely with the teachers from Spain and gaining experience and learning more ESOL techniques.” This is also reflected in how some participants now conduct their classrooms, and in how they make connections between curricula. For example, one respondent found that the experience influenced her current teaching strategies: “I remember how interactive the English instruction was and I try to tie music and dance into my teaching here in the states.” Another respondent recommends that future participants “research best techniques for teaching students who aren't immersed in the language.” Many found such techniques to be relevant during the program and vital afterwards.

It was stated above that participants who are currently teaching agreed that their work requires ‘cross-cultural competencies,’ regardless of location. We also saw that many found that the study abroad program helped them develop these competencies, and prepared them to work with a diverse student population. One respondent noted that “the program helped broaden my understanding of educational inequity in general as well as multicultural education.” Another commented that the program helped them enhance their worldview: “the experience showed me how much I love learning about different cultures. It taught me to be open minded as well as understanding that everyone views the world differently and there’s no ‘right’ way to do so.”

Strong agreement was found among the participants whose experience has impacted them in a way which could not be achieved through other forms of professional development, and that the experience has helped them work towards attaining their long term professional goals. One such area which was unanimous was in their development of Spanish language skills, often credited to the immersion in their assigned communities. A current teacher spoke to this, in how she was able to draw connections to her current position in foreign language education. She

found that “having that opportunity to be fully emerged in the Spain [sic] and strengthen my Spanish skills was prominent for my future career.” Others agreed, one saying that “I learned Spanish to a point where I could have full on conversations without English,” and another that “I learned another language which gives me an upper hand in my career.”

### **Personal Impact**

More than either the academic or professional impact, participants noted that the program had a profound personal impact on them. They wrote extensively about how the experience impacted their independence and other life skills. Many also mentioned that their perceptions and worldviews were influenced, particularly in regard to communities outside the United States.

The summarized results of those who took part in the program overwhelmingly agreed that they have experienced personal growth through it, with a mean of 4.8 among all participants. This agreement was present in all areas of personal growth, with a mean of 4.4 or higher for all dimensions surveyed. Many of the elements surveyed specifically describe the objectives of ‘global citizenship’ (Abdi 2017). An aspect of the program that more than one respondent made note of was the presence of a host family, which they had extensive contact with during the time of the experience. More than one respondent wrote that living in a host family helped immerse them in the culture and language, one adding that it “provided for a more authentic experience.”

Importantly, all the participants agreed that the study abroad experience had impacted their preconceptions of the host population, and increased their global awareness in general. One respondent wrote precisely this, in that it provided him with “a global context for understanding issues concerning race, ethnicity, and language inequity.” Many participants agreed, one noting that “being exposed to a new culture changes people,” and how since her experience, she has

been “more tolerant and open of others.” Another recommended that future participants immerse themselves in their environment: “Give your all to the experience. Spend time with the family and make friends in the local community.”

Respondents similarly agreed that the experience helped them reflect on their own privileges. One current teacher stated that it helped her gain an additional view on life, “as the [life] I lived there was very different than the one I live here in the US.” Expanding on this, she noted how the experience had influenced her self-reflection: “it allowed me to view my life from a more objective perspective.”

In a broader sense, many participants commented about how the study abroad experience helped them to develop critical thinking and empathy, as well as their leadership abilities. One former participant acknowledged how it helped him grow, explaining the significance in retrospect: “looking back, I can see how this program was pivotal in my development as an intellectual and a scholar-practitioner.” Many participants noted the impact the experience had on parts of their leadership skills. There were many comments which discussed how the program helped them “step out of their comfort zone” and “grow their independence.” One respondent articulated this by explaining how “there is something challenging but exhilarating about being away from home, and it grows you.”

### **Individual Experiences**

From the agreement among participants in terms of benefits, and from the many personal accounts detailed above, the participants found the study abroad program to be an overwhelmingly positive experience. The goal in this study has been to accurately represent participants’ experiences in the study abroad program. Reporting the group’s collective opinions

is only one facet of their experience. Therefore, in addition to the levels of agreement represented by the '1 to 5' averages, the respondents' opinions about each issue are recounted in their own words. So far however, the accounts which have been related are primarily from those who share the general consensus, which is positive. In some instances however, individual participants had negative experiences with aspects of the program. These instances are inarguably a minority, but to accurately represent participants' experiences, such accounts should be considered. To that end, a sample of standout experiences, both positive and negative, follow. Pseudonyms are used in this section, for ease of understanding.

All but one of the participants ranked the host family's attitude as either a positive or neutral impact on their experience, with a mean of agreement among respondents of 4.3. The participant who marked the host family's attitude as a negative was James. His experiences stand out in a number of ways; for example, he was the only participant who was pursuing a doctorate at the time of his participation. He was also one of the few people of color to participate in the program, with the majority being White or Euro-American. James attributed the negative experience with the host family to some of the cultural tensions connected to his race: "I struggled a lot with making sense of my positionality as a black man in Spain, especially in a small village. My host family was nice, although the mother would often make problematic statements concerning black people." Despite the difficult situation with his host family, James strongly agreed that the personal and academic impact of the program was positive for him. He noted that his time in Spain gave him important context for issues relating to social and educational inequality. He credits the program with broadening his understanding and helping him develop as a scholar. From these additional responses, it's clear that he has a positive view

of the experience as a whole; he explains that “beyond the issues with my host mother, I really did not have any issues.” For future participants who are Black however, he does recommend “reading up on some of the issues concerning race, xenophobia, and multiculturalism in Spain before going.”

Just as participants’ agreed about the host families’ positive impact, they were in agreement about the positive impact of the university and host school, in their respective roles. The mean of agreement was 4.5 or higher for all questions related to whether the host school/teachers were helpful, whether the university was available when needed, and so on. Similar to James, who was one of the few participants to have a negative experience with his host family, Beth was one of the few participants who felt that her experience with the host school and university was somewhat negative. She elaborates on why she feels this way, explaining that the funding for participants was minimal: “we had to pay for transportation to school daily, personal supplies, etc.” The transportation issue was an exceptional situation, and most participants had an easier time getting to their assigned schools. This might explain why she in particular would have a negative opinion on this issue. Beth had also expressed dissatisfaction with the assigned school where she was working. She attributes this to their lack of preparation, explaining that “most of the teachers were unsure what to do with an assistant teacher/co-teacher. Perhaps a training for them would benefit all parties involved.” She repeats this point when making suggestions to those managing the program: “Professional development would benefit the teachers who will be receiving the UCF student teachers.” Again, despite some of the difficulties she encountered during the program, and despite the frustration she expresses in some parts of the survey, Beth still felt that the overall experience was positive. She

explains in her responses that the program helped her develop independence and confidence, and even influenced her field of choice: “Spain helped me build the confidence needed to complete other teach abroad programs ... This experience helped me realize that I actually wanted to be an ESOL teacher rather than a Spanish teacher, as I had previously thought.”

This was not the only instance of a participant altering their career trajectory because of the experience. Another example of this is Paula, a graduate student who chose to apply for the study abroad program to Spain. In her own words, “it was one of the best decisions I have ever made in my life.” Paula’s time abroad was quite productive, and she strongly agreed to all questions pertaining to the academic, personal, and professional benefits of the experience. She found that the timespan of the program was perfect for her “to form relationships, experience the culture, and improve on the language.” At the time of her departure, Paula was studying to be a counselor, but after her semester abroad, “I switched my major to TESOL and never looked back.” She reports that making that switch opened up many opportunities for her, and she now has a very fulfilling job training preschool teachers who are English Learners themselves. In her personal life, the experience greatly influenced the perspective by which she lives life generally. She still tries to “incorporate the Spanish lifestyle” into her life however she can. A personal impact which will directly influence her perception of students is the perspective she has gained on language in general. As Paula explains, “I have also gained respect for anyone learning a second language. From now on, it would be ideal for me to truly immerse myself in other cultures...” The immersion which she experienced in Spain this helped her to empathize with her students, who might similarly be living in a culture which is different from their own, where people speak a language they are unfamiliar with. As many participants have noted, this is a

level of professional and personal development which is difficult to achieve outside of programs like study abroad.

Participants shared number of stories like this; not always of people changing their majors or careers, but generally talking about the ongoing impact of the program, and the doors it opened for them. One final account which fits this description is that of Rachel. Rachel was a graduate student in elementary education when she took part in the program; her experience in Spain sticks with her, even six years later. She found great meaning in fostering relationships, both in the Spanish community and among her cohort of participants. It impacted her on a personal level as well, as she explains: “I have always felt the need to do another teaching abroad experience and now I live in Taiwan! That experience looked great on my resume and has helped me grow as a teacher as well.” She goes on to explain how she is able to relate her experience with ELLs in Spain to the ELLs she now teaches in Taiwan. Differences are present between the learning process of Mandarin and Spanish speakers, but as she explains, the experience in Spain has still been enormously beneficial, both in attaining the position and in her practices. Recognizing the role that the Spain program, and study abroad in general, has had on her life, Rachel tries to ‘pay it forward’ for others who are interested in such programs. She often encourages others to study or teach abroad, and offers advice on how they can be successful in that regard. She explains that she has become “a sort of representative to other young people who may want to teach abroad. I always have people emailing me, asking me to speak with their son or daughter or friend who is thinking about an abroad experience.” She concludes with an observation of the personal impact of the program: “look at how much more of the world I've gotten to see because of the Spain program! You can't take that away, ever.”

The experiences of study abroad participants were incredibly diverse, even among the four which were related here. The nine other respondents have equally unique experiences, which could have been explored in just as much detail. This brief cross-section of experiences demonstrates there were indeed obstacles and difficulties which individual participants experienced. There is legitimately important information present in these recollections, which future participants should take into account. Despite these, the program's outcomes were ultimately positive across the board, including for those who themselves describe negative aspects of it.

### **Additional Patterns in the Data**

In addition to the broad connections that are drawn in the analysis, a number of connections can be made because of the general and demographic data gathered through the survey. There are instances recorded in these experiences where an individual participant's race, gender, or other factors may have influenced their experience; often making it more impactful, or in some cases, such as with James above, more difficult.

Because participants' reported experiences are so positive across the board, patterns are sometimes difficult to detect. One potentially superficial pattern which is noticeable is the differences in experience between students in the field of education and students in other majors. Both groups of students have similar levels of agreement for the positive impact of the experience; this agreement is still present in areas that would normally be most relevant to education students, such as the practical experience in the school. The differences which are present are more so in their written responses. Perhaps unsurprisingly, Education majors were more likely to highlight elements of the experience which pertained to their field: working with

students, gaining experience as a teacher, and so on. Participants in other fields usually did not mention these elements as the most personally impactful. They were more likely to talk about how the experience helped them develop independence and adaptability, how it was relevant to their language skills, and so on. Education majors made note of these aspects as well, but their responses were more varied in what they discussed.

A number of possibly more substantial patterns stand out in terms of demographics. For instance, participants who identify as White or Euro-American show a stronger sense of personal growth through their experience, especially in terms of growth in cultural understanding. Across the board, participants reported an increase in global awareness and cross-cultural competencies. White participants however, expressed the most agreement with the statement that the study abroad program “caused me to reflect on my own privileges.” That agreement is present among participants who are non-White as well, but with a mean of agreement of 4.7 for White participants, and 4.0 for non-White participants, it’s clear that among this group of respondents, the White students experienced a significant shift in their perceptions. These differences could be attributed to their exposure to a majority culture and language that they were not a member of. This is a perspective that some non-White participants may not have experienced, if they grew up in the United States. Indeed, many of these participants noted in their responses that a large part of their personal impact was gained through this exposure to a different culture, and in viewing the world as an ‘outsider’ rather than an ‘insider.’ This is backed up by other data points, for example that only 29% (two out of seven) of the White participants grew up in multilingual households, compared to 83% (five out of six) of the non-White participants.

The analysis of these patterns should be similar to the analysis of the individual responses. They should be primarily viewed within the context of these students, rather than extrapolated to wider conclusions about all study abroad participants. This is not a sample size large enough to conclude, for example, that a given subgroup is more or less likely to benefit from study abroad. Instead, the patterns which are identified here should serve as another lens by which to understand the individual experiences of participants.

## **DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

The underlying theme among students' unique experiences is that the study abroad program is overwhelmingly positive, across all dimensions which are measured. This remains true if one looks at individual cases, and asks them to elaborate and discuss the program at length. It remains true even if one isolates the experiences of individuals who struggled with aspects of their experience, who encountered obstacles, and even instances of prejudice. This does not mean that there isn't nuance present in the information which has been collected in this study, nor that the analysis of that information is simplistic.

The question around which this study was framed was learning how students who participated in the Bilingual Study Abroad program in Spain make sense of their experiences. This survey has certainly helped me reflect on my own experience, and learning about others' experiences through the study has helped me understand my own. When others explained that they found it difficult living in a small village, I recalled similar feelings in my own experience, and the isolation that came from it. When they then talked about the language skills that came from being immersed in that village, and the independence that came from living there, I again saw my experience reflected in theirs.

When I see so many respondents write about their host families, I remember my own; how hospitable they were, and how I had a window into their life for three months. This reframing of my own experience was often present as I read and analyzed the experiences of others in the program. I noticed many cases where their perceptions reflected my own, such as those mentioned above. I also noticed aspects of the experience that I found beneficial, which the study respondents rarely mentioned. For example, 12 of the respondents agreed in the Likert

responses that the host school and teachers had a positive impact. Despite this, only a handful of respondents (two or three) mentioned the co teachers in their written responses. In some cases, this was because respondents' circumstances required them to teach in different schools, or with teachers who were unprepared to work with the program participant. I was fortunate in this case that the nature of my assigned school allowed me to develop relationships with the Spanish teachers.

Eleven of the 13 respondents are currently teaching, and many of them have noted the professional impact which came from the study abroad program. I have noted some examples of such impact, but as an undergraduate, I cannot look at this program with the same hindsight as former participants who in some cases went to Spain several years ago. The agreement among participants about the long-term benefits of the program makes me think that the program may open such doors for me as well. I can see how it has impacted people like Rachel and Paula, and how it impacted the 11 other participants. Some took it as another internship, an opportunity to gain more classroom experience. Others developed their independence, critical thinking, and leadership. A few participants have taken the insight they gained in Spain, and developed their global citizenship even farther: working in Central America and Asia, or training the next generation of teachers. Studying and analyzing others' experiences in this program has also helped me place my own study abroad experience in a broader context. I can see the diverse ways in which the program has impacted them, and I can potentially see myself there in the future.

The data gathered here are not clearly delineated; it is not necessarily easy to organize. This is why a phenomenological approach was necessary for interpreting the data. Although

they were prompted with very broad questions, many participants highlighted similar things as benefits in the program; from here, a number of patterns emerged. Patterns in what students found most beneficial, in what they remember most fondly, in what they suggest future participants do to get the most out of their experience, and so on. Based on how the responses are interpreted, a number of other such patterns are seen. Many of these have been discussed in the analysis above, and often they return to the idea of ‘global citizenship.’ Reflecting on what they found personally impactful, individuals like James and Paula identified areas of growth such as respect, empathy, and ‘educational equity.’ These are areas which directly align with their development as global citizens (Abdi, 2017). Their experience was shared by a number of other participants.

### **Connections to Existing Literature**

What has not been discussed in as much depth here is how the findings of this study align with those of other studies. Whether or not they are consistent with the existing literature, and if not, explaining why that's the case. For instance, it has been noted in other studies that while study abroad participants experience growth across all dimensions, the growth is strongest in the areas of personal and professional growth, and not as strong in academic growth (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004). This was found to be true in this study as well, where participants experienced growth across all factors, including academic factors. As a whole however, the growth which they experienced as individuals and as professionals was substantially higher. This can be seen in the degree to which students agreed to the factors in each case. For academic factors, the means of agreement for the statements were lower, starting at 4.1. The means for the personal and professional factors were noticeably higher at 4.5 and 4.4, respectively. This can also be

seen in what participants chose to write about in their reflections. While some respondents wrote about their classes or academic skills, many more wrote either about how the experience helped them develop as teachers, propel their careers, foster their personal growth, and so on.

In writing about their experiences, many participants noted their growing second language skills as a significant benefit of the program, both professionally and personally. This is corroborated by the sections of the survey which discuss students' development of language skills. This is in line with previous literature on the subject, which noted that immersion in a second language community greatly helps individuals to begin the process of learning a language (Pyper & Slagter, 2012; Segalowitz et al., 2004). Speaking to languages generally, some articles also noted that exposure to second language acquisition affects teachers' perception of English language learners (Kasun & Saavedra, 2016; Medina, Hathaway, & Pilonieta, 2015). A number of participants in this study noted in their responses that the experience has changed how they view ELL students, and the Likert scale question on how their perception of ELLs has changed was one of the few responses that was unanimous, in that all participants strongly agreed with the statement.

Speaking more to the personal growth which was noted earlier, a number of studies have said that regardless of their major, study abroad participants will often experience a degree of personal growth and independence through their experiences in the program (Milian et al., 2015; Tam, 2016). It has already been stated in this section that the participants of this study confirm this to be the case here as well. In the survey, respondents have marked agreement to statements confirming that they had indeed experienced personal growth generally, and as represented by their independence, critical thinking, and leadership. Their written responses also

spoke to these qualities often, though the elements of personal impact which respondents discussed in their writings were quite broad. The development which participants reported in these answers aligns to the many facets of personal growth which are touted by various sources as areas of potential growth (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Palmer & Warwick, 2012).

Another aspect of personal growth which is mentioned both in existing literature and in this study is the understanding that comes from immersing oneself in a different culture, and learning to navigate it (Murphy & Murphy, 2016; Quezada, 2004). The existing literature makes a point to mention that navigating a different language and culture is often challenging, but ultimately constructive. Many respondents in this study found this to be the case as well. They struggled in adapting to their environment, learning to communicate with a new population, and so on; as they learned to work through those obstacles, they became increasingly independent and self-reliant. The experience also served to develop participants' intercultural connections and empathy (Palmer & Warwick, 2012; Shedrow, 2017).

### **Implications for the Program**

As this bilingual study abroad program continues to send new students to Spain every year, it is important for those in charge of the program to view the participants' experiences with greater depth than the brief testimonials or personal anecdotes which participants might share upon returning. This study certainly accomplishes that; the various dimensions by which these respondents report the program to have impacted them are clearly delineated, and supported in their own words. It reflects very well on the program that the surveyed participants were unanimous in their view that the experience was positive, even if some felt that aspects of the

program could be improved. In that regard, the negative experiences of individual participants also carry implications for what the program can entail for some people.

### **Considerations for Future Participants**

Just as those organizing the study abroad program can benefit from learning about others' experiences, students who are considering taking part in the program could benefit from seeing what they stand to gain, and what they can expect while they are there. Hearing these things from former participants carries its own significance. Students can see tangible examples of how the program has opened doors for people, or changed the way they work through things, or caused them to change majors, careers, or even worldviews. Just as valuable are the areas where participants have struggled. Students may benefit from learning how participants' circumstances have varied drastically, or how they felt isolated as the only English speaker in their community. Similarly, it would be valuable for African American students to hear what former participants have to say about how their race impacted their 'positionality' in Spain. The goal of such discussions should never be to discourage students from taking part in the program, but to better understand what it entails, and how they can make the most of the experience. Some of these aspects of the discussion are included in the orientation which takes place before students go to Spain, but some aspects, particularly the details, might not be.

### **Limitations and Lessons Learned**

While there is a substantial amount which can be learned from the results of this study, it is important to discuss certain considerations in the population that was surveyed, and in the methodology. Some of these considerations have already been mentioned elsewhere in the study

or analysis. For example, the sample size in this study was quite small, at 13 respondents. This has different implications for different parts of the survey, and for the conclusions that can be drawn.

The small sample size does not change the conclusions which can be drawn from the qualitative data, because those responses still fulfill the initial goal of accurately representing and interpreting the experiences of these particular participants. The quantitative data which were gathered here (Likert scale questions, etc.) can help to understand and triangulate the responses within this group, but their collective opinions should not be interpreted as being representative of all participants in this study abroad program at UCF.

Similarly, there was additional insight which could have been gained for respondents' individual experiences. This was briefly mentioned above, in the form of phone calls to follow up on completion of the survey. Time-permitting, the inclusion of such calls in a study of this nature could provide context for participants' written experiences. The qualitative information gathered through the survey questions is sufficient for the purposes of the study, but this was an instance where time constraints prevented us from sharing additional insight.

Some might infer that the positive responses in this survey reflect the generally positive view of study abroad programs in college (Ingraham & Peterson, 2004; Milian et al., 2015; Quezada & Alfaro, 2007; etc.). While it is possible, even likely, that this is the case, the sample size in this particular study is too small to be generalizable. As was demonstrated above, the connections which actually can be drawn to the literature are on an individual level. On that level, there were numerous parallels between students' experiences and what the literature described as known benefits of study abroad programs. The value of this survey is thus in the

unique experiences which are shared; how they connect to each other, and to the ‘big picture.’ The quantitative data serve the purpose of illustrating those connections, and it is in that capacity that it is the most useful.

### **Recommendations from this Study**

The study abroad experience has been enormously beneficial for the students who were surveyed here. Something which I think this study highlights was simply listening to individuals, allowing them to reflect on their experiences, and connecting those thoughts to broader trends. There is substantial scholarship on study abroad and developing global perspectives, so this study is far from the first to do this. However, much of the literature mentioned in this study does not spend the same amount of time reflecting on individual respondents’ experiences. This could be an area which would be interesting to learn more about.

The direction of future research depends on what the researchers wish to accomplish. If, for instance, their aim is to build on the observations made here, and expand them into more generalizable conclusions, then surveying a larger sample size would be the first step. Again, the quantitative data which were gathered here was not meant to represent the opinions of all participants in the study abroad program. If knowing those collective opinions were seen as something that would be valuable to know, it would be most important to ensure that the group sample was large enough to be representative.

Recommendations for areas of further inquiry include a closer look at the impact of factors such as individual disposition, as well as the disposition of the host family and other relevant individuals. The respondents’ opinion on these factors was surveyed here, but it was tangential to the focus of this particular study. Another issue which was raised by respondents

was the racial dynamics present for students of certain backgrounds. Studying these dynamics further could result in learning more about how the ethnic tensions in a host country impact foreigners like study abroad participants. This is something which could be done with the experiences of those in this particular program, or with study abroad programs broadly speaking.

Finally, since the respondents here wrote the most strongly, and the most extensively, about the personal and professional impact of the program, it would be useful to look further into these aspects of the program. Look further into how teaching abroad helps teachers and other professionals develop their craft, and look further into how immersion in a different culture helps individuals develop their independence, empathy, and identification as citizens of the world.

## **APPENDIX A: SURVEY QUESTIONS**

### Background and Demographic Questions

1	How old were you at the time of the experience?
2	How old are you now?
3	Were you an undergrad or graduate student at the time of the experience?
4	What is/was your major at the time of the experience?
5	Did you have experience as a teacher before your study abroad?
6	Is English your first language?
7	(If currently teaching) are you from a different cultural background from a majority of your student population?

### Likert Scale Questions (general)

1	The host family's attitude positively impacted my own experience.
2	The host school/teachers were positively impactful for my own experience.
3	The university was helpful in situations when I may have needed them.

### Likert Scale Questions (academic growth/change)

1	The study abroad experience has helped me gain knowledge which has come up in a class.
2	My academic performance was positively impacted by the study abroad experience.
3	The study abroad experience has positively impacted my organization.
4	The study abroad experience has positively impacted my time management.
5	The study abroad experience has positively impacted other academic skills (explain).
6	I learned more 'deeply' during the study abroad experience than I would otherwise.
7	The study abroad experience has made me adapt my instructional planning.
8	The study abroad experience has helped me move towards attaining my long term academic goals.

### Likert Scale Questions (professional growth/change)

1	The study abroad experience has impacted the way in which I perceive ELL students
2	The study abroad experience has affected how I will conduct a classroom.
3	(If already teaching) The study abroad experience has impacted the way in which I conduct my classroom.
4	I have developed second language skills through the study abroad experience.
5	I will use the knowledge acquired during the study abroad experience directly in my classroom.
6	The practical component of the study abroad experience gave me experience which has been beneficial to me in the classroom.
7	The study abroad experience has helped me to integrate and make connections between different parts of the curriculum.

<b>8</b>	The study abroad experience impacted me in a way that could not have been achieved through other forms of professional development.
<b>9</b>	The study abroad experience has helped me prepare for teaching a student population which is (ethnically/culturally) different from me.
<b>10</b>	The study abroad experience has helped me move towards attaining my long term professional goals.

**Likert Scale Questions (personal growth/change)**

<b>1</b>	The study abroad experience has impacted my preconceptions of the host population.
<b>2</b>	The study abroad experience has caused me to reflect on my own privileges.
<b>3</b>	The study abroad experience has helped me to develop critical thinking and empathy.
<b>4</b>	I have experienced personal growth through the study abroad experience.
<b>5</b>	I have experienced an increased global awareness through the study abroad experience.
<b>6</b>	The study abroad experience has positively impacted my leadership abilities.

## **APPENDIX B: WRITTEN RESPONSE QUESTIONS**

**Q12. Please write a couple of sentences about two to three things that you liked best about the program**

**Q13. Please write a couple of sentences about two to three things that you liked least about the program**

**Q14. Looking back, how has the study abroad experience impacted you personally?**

**Q15. What advice would you give to someone who is planning on participating in the study abroad program in the future?**

**Q16 What advice would you give to the person who is managing the study abroad program in the future?**

## **APPENDIX C: LIKERT SCALE QUESTION RESULTS**

## General Perceptions

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
The host family's attitude positively impacted my own experience.	1	0	2	1	9
The host school/teachers positively impacted my own experience.	0	1	0	0	12
The host school was helpful in situations when I may have needed them.	0	1	0	3	9
The university was helpful in situations when I may have needed them.	0	1	0	4	8

## Academic Impact

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
There was a connection between my experiential learning in Spain and the academic learning at UCF.	0	1	2	4	6
My academic performance was positively impacted by the study abroad experience.	0	1	1	4	7
The study abroad experience has positively impacted my organizational skills.	0	0	2	1	10
The study abroad experience has positively impacted my time management.	0	1	3	1	7
The study abroad experience has positively impacted other academic skills.	0	0	2	3	8
I learned more deeply during the study abroad experience than I would otherwise.	0	1	1	2	9

The study abroad experience has made me adapt my instructional planning.	0	1	2	4	5
The study abroad experience has helped me move towards attaining my long term academic goals.	0	0	0	5	8

### Professional Impact

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
The study abroad experience has impacted the way in which I perceive ELL students.	0	0	0	0	11
The study abroad experience has affected how I conduct a classroom.	0	0	1	4	6
(If already teaching) The study abroad experience has impacted the way in which I conduct my classroom.	0	0	1	3	7
I have developed second language skills through the study abroad experience.	0	0	1	1	9
I will use the knowledge acquired during the study abroad experience directly in my classroom.	0	0	1	2	8
The practical component of the study abroad experience gave me experience which has been beneficial to me in the classroom.	0	0	0	2	8
The study abroad experience has helped me to integrate and make connections between different parts of the curriculum.	0	0	1	3	7

The study abroad experience impacted me in a way that could not have been achieved through other forms of professional development.	0	0	0	1	10
The study abroad experience has helped me prepare for teaching a student population which is (ethnically/culturally) different from me.	1	0	0	1	9
The study abroad experience has helped me move towards attaining my long term professional goals.	0	0	2	1	7
The experience in Spain developed my cross-cultural competencies.	0	0	0	1	9
My current teaching requires me to draw heavily on cross-cultural competencies.	0	0	1	0	10

### Personal Impact

	Strongly Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neutral	Somewhat Agree	Strongly Agree
The study abroad experience has impacted my preconceptions of the host population.	0	0	0	5	8
The study abroad experience has caused me to reflect on my own privileges.	0	1	1	3	8
The study abroad experience has helped me to develop critical thinking and empathy.	0	0	0	6	7
I have experienced personal growth through the study abroad experience.	0	0	0	2	11
I have experienced an increased global awareness	0	0	0	3	10

through the study abroad experience.					
The study abroad experience has positively impacted my leadership abilities.	0	0	0	4	9

## **APPENDIX D: WRITTEN RESPONSE QUESTION RESULTS**

**Q12. Please write a couple of sentences about two to three things that you liked best about the program**

“The things I liked best about the program was the initial meeting and gathering of the participants. This was a great way to get everyone acquainted and more comfortable. We also got to hear some experiences from others who had completed the program. I really enjoyed my living situation (residencia in Avila). It gave me the privacy I was used to but also gave me access to food easily. The school I was placed in with my coteachers, was the best option for me too! They were very helpful, caring, and even spent time with me outside of school. I will always have fond memories about my time in Spain.”

“I absolutely loved the program, it gave the opportunity to travel abroad and meet some wonderful people. The experience of teaching English in Spain was a great addition to my resume when applying for jobs two years later. I believe staying with a family in Spain had many benefits as well- I learned Spanish fluently and was able to do/experience way more than if I had lived alone. The family and I still stay in contact to this day, this program allowed me to have lifelong family in another country. I recommend this program to everyone who is starting college.”

“I really liked staying with a host family and getting to live life as if I was part of their family. I also really enjoyed traveling on the weekends and getting to see a lot of Spain.”

“My overall experience was great! My favorite part was having the opportunity to have a first-hand experience in the classroom. In my school, I actually had the chance to encounter many different grade levels. I worked in and assisted in grade levels ranging from the pre-school level up to the middle school level. I also got to participate in extracurricular activities with the students. I also meet some amazing people throughout this experience, some of which I still keep in contact with today.”

“The school that I was placed in provided me with a global context for understanding issues concerning race, ethnicity, and language inequity. The program helped broaden my understanding of educational inequity in general as well as multicultural education.”

“I loved getting to know the family, having the opportunity to visit what life was like in the heartland of Spain, and having my boundaries pushed both professionally in the classroom and culturally.”

“It provided an affordable way to live abroad and experience the education structure in another country. The hosts were incredibly helpful as well.”

“I really enjoyed being able to stay with a host family. I felt like this really helped immerse me even more in the culture and language and provided for a more authentic experience. I also like that all the participants met up with one another at least at one point during the time there.”

“I liked the amount of time we were there. Three months was a good amount of time to form relationships, experience the culture, and improve on the language. I also liked that a group of us went there together so we had each other’s support.”

“Living with a host family really immersed me into the Spanish culture. Working in an elementary school in Spain showed me how education looks in a different country.”

“The program allowed for participants to feel protected by placing us with home-stays. -I liked that all participants were not placed in the same cities. This way we weren't with one another every weekend and had a chance to visit more places.”

“1) Being immersed in the Spanish culture 2) Opportunities to foster your independence through day to day problem solving 3) Working and building relationships with the students and staff at the local schools 4) Taking advantage of traveling and exploring during times/days off”

“The work experience as a teacher was like another internship. It was a very affordable way to travel abroad and a great way to build my resume as a teacher. I enjoyed working closely with the teachers from Spain and gaining experience and learning more ESOL techniques.”

**Q13. Please write a couple of sentences about two to three things that you liked least about the program**

“I think the program should require you to know some Spanish language and/or insist that you take one basic class prior to or simultaneously. Not knowing anything was tough in my area (Avila) because it is outside of the big city Madrid. Although it did push me to learn some Spanish immediately, so it could be a good thing too. Also, I had four schools I was assigned to due to the nature of my coteachers day schedule. I wished I could have spent more time with one school and one coteacher. I feel like my impact would have been greater if I had had more time to concentrate on the needs of one or two classes. These villages had 6-12 year olds in each class so it was hard to differentiate often.”

“I wish the program was a little longer. I also wish that professors were more understanding when it comes to deadlines and class requirements.”

“I was in a very small village and there were essentially no people for me to make as actual friends. It was very hard to stay there on weekends because there was not much to do. I think being in a town that was a bit more populated would have been a better experience in terms of living situation.”

“In my opinion, the schools could have been better organized and should have helped my fellow participants and I have a smoother transition into the new city or town that we were living in. It was kind of sink or swim situation. Luckily, I am a fluent Spanish speaker so it wasn't as difficult for me as it may have been for others. I also believe that

three months is not nearly enough time for an experience like this one. I would have liked for it to have lasted a bit longer.”

“I struggled a lot with making sense of my positionality as a black man in Spain, especially in a small village. My host family was nice, although the mother would often make problematic statements concerning black people, in particular black Americans and Afro-Latin@s.”

“I wish there was more contact with the family beforehand. I didn't realize my host mom was the principal until I arrived for my first day of work.”

“At the time I could have used more structure on how to teach each class and how to teach English as a second language to students who weren't being immersed in the language.”

“In many ways, I wish we were somehow able to pick the city/town we were in. It might have also been nice to have at least one other person in the same town/city.”

“I wish we would've had more designated vacation time instead of squeezing travel time on the weekends. I also wasn't thrilled with my roommate/living situation; I don't think my roommate was aptly prepared for the situation and seemed annoyed with my presence sometimes.”

“I truly can't think of anything. My host family was so amazing and welcoming we still keep in touch to this day. I was also able to really work with the English curriculum there. The teachers provided a ton of opportunities for me to teach. Overall it was perfect.”

“We were working almost full-time but were not given any stipends for our personal expenses. This would not be the program for a college student that does not have parental support. We had to pay for transportation to school daily, personal supplies, etc. In comparison to other similar programs, our compensation was significantly less. -It seemed as if the school and most of the teachers were unsure what to do with an assistant teacher/co-teacher. Perhaps a training for them would benefit all parties involved.”

“There was nothing I disliked about the program but there were things I wished I had while I was in Spain: 1) An established relationship with any local university or college in Spain to help with companionship. Or a professor/advisor that was nearby in case of immediate emergencies. 2) An extension to the program where past participants can return 3) Resources to help teach lessons in the schools”

“There was little opportunity to reconnect with other members. The program once we arrived in Spain. It would have been nice to have built in opportunities to meet up with everyone again. Otherwise I was extremely happy with my time spent in Spain.”

**Q14. Looking back, how has the study abroad experience impacted you personally?**

“Personally, it has impacted me greatly. I have always felt the need to do another teaching abroad experience and now I live in Taiwan! That experience looked great on my resume and has helped me grow as a teacher as well. I can compare my experience teacher Spanish children English as a Second Language and my Taiwanese students the same (Chinese speakers). I can remember common misconceptions and errors they made and address them quicker to expedite learning. But of course many common errors are different among the native language. Also, being exposed to a new culture changes people. I feel more tolerant and open of others. I have also become a sort of representative to other young people who may want to teach abroad. I always have people emailing me asking me to speak with their son or daughter or friend who is thinking about an abroad experience. I like being a positive role model for others as well as a helping hand! Also, look at how much more of the world I've gotten to see because of the Spain program! You can't take that away, ever :)”

“This experience made me the teacher I am today. I believe it gave me unforgettable experiences in teaching and in life. I learned what teaching was like prior to internship. I also learned another language which gives me an upper hand in my career. I have made many friends that I still talk to all the time. I am so grateful to the staff at UCF to making this possible for me. I will never forget everything I learned from my study abroad.”

“It gave me an additional view on life - as the one I lived there was very different than the one I live here in the US. It also allowed me to view my life from a more objective perspective and really get away from the life I created for 3 months. I have always loved traveling and have considered moving to another country multiple times throughout my life. This experience gave me the opportunity to do so without having to commit my entire life to it. I learned things about myself that I was unsure of and got to impact a community that was foreign to me. I learned Spanish to a point where I could have full on conversations without English (because the people in my village didn't speak English). This experience also made me a more independent person. I traveled many places alone and didn't have anyone I knew prior on the trip. I also got to experience a different form of learning and see the benefits and downfalls it may have. One of the biggest things that I was impacted by was the difficulty in communication when there is a language barrier. Having to fight language just to communicate anything was very difficult at first and overcoming that has allowed me to communicate with anyone through patience and diligence. It now seems easy since we speak the same language here =D.”

“It changed the way I viewed the world, I now see it from an outsiders perspective. I also made life long friends while participating in this experience. I was also a foreign language ed. major, so having that opportunity to be fully emerged in the Spain and strengthen my Spanish skills was prominent for my future career.”

“At the time I was unable to really appreciate the experience this program provided; I believe I was too personally invested at the time to really reflect. However, in looking

back, I can see how this program was pivotal in my development as an intellectual and a scholar-practitioner.”

“I was able to exercise my adaptability skills and can no appreciate the intricacies of various cultures.”

“Extremely, not only did it help me learn more about other countries but it helped me get other jobs abroad including teaching in Honduras and China.”

“It solidified my love and interested in Spanish language and culture, resulting in me graduating with a degree in Spanish. Also, having been one of the few non-education majors, it opened me up to a world of TEFL. Because of my positive experience in Spain, I later went on to teach English in China.”

“It was one of the best decisions I have ever made in my life. I was studying School Family Counseling, but after the semester abroad, I switched my major to TESOL and never looked back. My job in TESOL has been a door-opener, leading me to have a job I love as a trainer to preschool teachers who are also language learners of English. It also changed my perspective on how I wish to live my life; I still incorporate the Spanish lifestyle into my current living situation. Since Spain, I live a much more slow-paced lifestyle, am a huge advocate for public transportation, see the importance of days off and personal days, and have adopted a looser lifestyle on teaching/raising children (compared to before, when I was overly-structured and controlling). I have also gained respect for anyone learning a second language. From now on, it would be ideal for me to truly immerse myself in other cultures by staying in a location for three months! I know that’ll probably never happen again, so my memories of Spain are precious and greatly cherished.”

“Yes. I try to remember my experience when teaching ELL students and what it was like in a foreign country. I remember how interactive the English instruction was and I try to tie music and dance into my teaching here in the states.”

“The study abroad experience allowed me to feel comfortable living abroad. I had fear before I went to Spain about living in another country and traveling by myself. Spain helped me build the confidence needed to complete other teach abroad programs. Spain also taught me to feel confident speaking Spanish. Also, at the time I was studying for a TESOL certification. This experience helped me realize that I actually wanted to be an ESOL teacher rather than a Spanish teacher, as I had previously thought.”

“I think the experience allowed me to step out of my comfort zone. There is something challenging but exhilarating about being away from home and it grows you. The experience showed me how much I love learning about different cultures. It taught me to be open minded as well as understanding that everyone views the world differently and there’s no “right” way to do so. It taught me that traveling alone may sometimes be the best way to travel. It made me want to travel to a new place each year.”

“It helped me in my future career as an Educator. It helped me grow in my independence and character. And it enabled me to see parts of World and meet people I would normally have never met.”

**Q15. What advice would you give to someone who is planning on participating in the study abroad program in the future?**

“Don't be scared, be brave! Everything else will still be there when you get back. Everyone else will still be doing the same things when you get back. Take full opportunity of this opportunity because not many people will have this. Meaning don't be afraid to see new places, try new foods, make new friends and exchange language. It will only make you a better person.”

“Have fun, enjoy the surroundings and try to participate in as much as you can.”

“Fully invest in the program and yourself. There will be times where you absolutely love it and some where you just want to go home. It is worth it and an amazing experience. Don't let the few days of questioning get to you and keep pushing through. Also, the first two weeks are the hardest if there is a language barrier for you. It is ok! Do what you can and try to embrace an experience that you will never have again. Go on trips with the other teachers, see their home towns, drink beers with them and get tapas, and EXPERIENCE Spain. It is an awesome country that is unlike others I have visited and an overall amazing experience. I highly recommend going to all parts of it as each region is a bit different. Leon has great tapas and a small city feel. Bilbao also has great tapas, a great music scene, and a very different way of life. Barcelona is the Miami of Spain and always a blast. Madrid has wonderful parks and history as well as great night life. Granada is a hipster-esque city that is gorgeous (you can see Africa on clear days supposedly). Salamanca is a college town that has many college bars and a super fun feel. There are many more cities but I use these as examples to show that you should use your time here to get everything and anything you could want out of a great experience.”

“I would advise them to take advantage of every opportunity that they may encounter during their study, because it will be over before they know it.”

“If you are someone who is black--broadly defined--I would recommend reading up on some of the issues concerning race, xenophobia, and multiculturalism in Spain before going. I do not want to essentialize the perspectives of all black people, but reality is that regardless of where one may stand in terms of their racial identity development, you are perceived a particular way due to skin color.”

“Give your all to the experience. Spend time with the family and make friends in the local community. Whatever you do, don't just spend a significant amount of time in

your room talking to people back home. While this is important to do, it shouldn't detract from your ability to enter into this rich experience.”

“Research best techniques for teaching students who aren't immersed in the language. Also learn as much Spanish as possible. Remember to be adaptable and flexible.”

“The more Spanish you know, the more you will get out of the experience, so make an effort to learn as much as you can before you arrive and during your stay.”

“Prepare for the weather! Keep your current relationships close so you can stay sane. Document your time somehow. If you feel safe enough to do so, say yes and try new things. Be flexible and embrace change. Keep in touch with the other American group members. Learn the language. Make sure you are at a point in your life where you are able to care for yourself and adapt.”

“Be open minded and try everything. The food. The teaching opportunities. Don't be scared!”

“Make sure to have a lot of money saved before you do the program.”

“1) Keep an open mind 2) Respect the Spanish culture 3) Put yourself out there 4) Document your experiences with words and pictures 5) Keep in touch with people/Establish relationships 6) Save money 7) Create a list of questions for someone who has already gone and ask them!”

“Learn basic Spanish skills. At the beginning it is very overwhelming but in the end it is so rewarding.”

**Q16 What advice would you give to the person who is managing the study abroad program in the future?**

“I don't really know about this side of it. I was very happy with my experience and living in the residencia. I didn't mind being so far away from the others, but I know others who were lonely and unhappy because of it. So maybe find a way to put two people in one area?”

“Nothing- thank you! :)”

“For me, it was a bit difficult living in a very small village (Valderas). I was fine - as I can usually adapt well - but I could see someone else having a bit more trouble. I would say put them in a town a little bigger, although I don't really think it is that big of a deal.”

“Making sure the participants have a smooth transition into their temporary school, home, etc. Organization is key!”

“I went with the first cohort so I am sure many of the kinks have been worked out. Beyond the issues with my host mother, I really did not have any issues beyond the usual fluctuating feelings while being abroad for a semester.”

“Look for the types of people who have shown that they have grit. The access in case I needed anything via email was a peace of mind.”

“Help give clear expectations to students on the reality of living in another culture, resources to help teach, and resources for helping to learn Spanish.”

“Keep up the great work!”

“Find more wonderful host families it makes all the difference!”

“Students participating in this program are working all day and need to be compensated. - Professional development would benefit the teachers who will be receiving the UCF student teachers.”

“1) Hold a reunion or a session for past participants and new participants 2) Maybe have an advisor who goes abroad with the students”

“Have more opportunities for the group to meet and get to know each other before and during the trip.”

“Population characteristics”

**APPENDIX E: BILINGUAL PROGRAM INFORMATION FLYER**



*Elementary School Experience in Spain*  
*Fall Semester 2014*



**What:**

- 12 Week Bi-Lingual Field Experience in Spanish Elementary Schools
  - \*Eleven Weeks in Schools, Working with Spanish Supervising Teacher
  - \*One Week Free for Travel in Spain/Europe

**When:**

- Next Program Begins in August/September 2014

**Who:**

- Elementary, Early Childhood Education or ESOL Majors/Minors/Certificate Preferred. All applications considered.
- Graduate students may also apply.
- Must be Native English Language Speaker
- Some Knowledge of Spanish Helpful, Though Not Required
- Joint Program with UCF's College of Education and the Consejeria de Educacion de la Region de Castilla y Leon

**Where:**

- Castilla and Leon Region, Spain

**Expenses:**

- Program Includes:
  - \*12 Weeks of Room and Board in Spain
- Participant Expenses:
  - \*Airfare to/from Madrid
  - \*UCF Tuition and Fees (You must register for the following courses unless you are enrolled in at least one Fall 2014 online course):
    - EDG 4954: Developing International Education Perspectives: Field Experiences in European Schools, OR
    - EDG 6775: Exploring Global Educational Issues in International Contexts
  - \*Medical and Evacuation insurance
  - \*Travel from airport to site in Spain
  - \*Program charge of \$200
  - \*Incidental Travel Not Linked to Study Abroad Program

**Application Process:** (For best consideration, submit application by March 21, 2014)

- Complete an Application Form ([www.education.ucf.edu/Spain](http://www.education.ucf.edu/Spain))

**Additional Information:**

Contact

- Dr. Karen Biraimah, 407-823-2428, [Karen.biraimah@ucf.edu](mailto:Karen.biraimah@ucf.edu), ED 209H
- Dr. Tom Owens, 407-823-4280, [tom.owens@ucf.edu](mailto:tom.owens@ucf.edu), ED 320-D

[www.education.ucf.edu/Spain](http://www.education.ucf.edu/Spain)

## **APPENDIX F: DETERMINATION OF EXEMPT HUMAN RESEARCH**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

### Determination of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **James Thomas Owens and Co-PIs: Haris Anwar, ELA Education**

Date: **March 22, 2018**

Dear Researcher:

On 03/22/2018, the IRB reviewed the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination  
Project Title: Global Citizenship and Education: The Multidimensional Impact of a Study Abroad Bilingual Teaching Experience on Preservice Teachers.  
Investigator: James Thomas Owens  
IRB Number: SBE-18-13812  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: n/a

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the [Investigator Manual](#).

This letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Gillian Morien on 03/22/2018 04:19:44 PM EDT

Designated Reviewer

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