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# USING THE PRISM MODEL AS A FRAMEWORK FOR PREPARING EDUCATORS ON STUDY ABROAD

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## Abstract

The important role of study abroad in the preparation of competent teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century globalized world cannot be underestimated. Yet, the percentage of teacher education programs that have incorporated study abroad into their curriculum is still negligible. While there are approximately 5.3 million emergent bilinguals in U.S. K-12 public schools, and they constitute the fastest growing sector of K-12, the demographics of teachers have changed very little, with most of them being White, middle-class, monolingual, and monolithic females. Additionally, teacher education curricula do not incorporate the appropriate training for the accommodations that must be made in order to educate culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students effectively. As a result, teachers continue to have difficulties meeting the demands of today's pluralistic society. Based on this premise, this exploratory study surveyed education majors participating in a summer study abroad program in Spain to determine their expectations and perceptions about the program with a focus on the sociocultural and linguistic dimensions of the prism model. Findings revealed that the students' expectations were in consonance with the framework, indicating their dispositions toward acquiring the required knowledge and skills for the implementation of biography-driven instruction (BDI). The data also revealed the appropriateness of the study abroad program for preparing educators for BDI.

## Keywords

Biography-Driven Instruction, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Students, Globally Competent Teachers, Linguistic and Sociocultural Competencies, Study Abroad for Educators, Prism Model

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## INTRODUCTION

“Within a national context that increasingly prioritizes international experiences and global knowledge, teacher preparation programs must prepare new teachers to understand their place in U.S. classrooms and to understand their roles as global citizens and teachers of diverse, globally connected students” (Dunn et al., 2014, p. 284).

In a report on the scarcity of college graduates who are internationally competent, NAFSA (2019, para. 1) stated: “When 95% of consumers live outside of the United States, we cannot afford to ignore this essential aspect of higher education.” Likewise, when today's globalized world requires globally competent teachers, colleges of education cannot afford to ignore this essential aspect of teacher preparation. An overwhelming majority of teachers who graduate from U.S. teacher education programs continue to be largely homogeneous groups of White, female, middle-class, monolithic, and monolingual English speakers, who have difficulty identifying challenges related to multiculturalism and multilingualism and are not adequately prepared to accommodate non-native speakers of English (Assaf & Dooley, 2006; Bomer, 2017; Causey et al., 2000; Stairs et al., 2012; Sharma et al., 2011; Sleeter, 2008b). As reported by Back et al. (2022, p. 1), “Cultivating global perspectives among K-12 educators is even more important when we consider the current demographics of these educators, who are overwhelmingly White and monolingual in stark contrast to the multicultural, multilingual students they teach.” Thus, cultural responsiveness continues to be labeled as “a bother” (Murry et al, 2021; Stangor, 2019). This, according to Murry et al. (2021, p. 9), is due to “the sociopsychological tendency among all of us to approach difference (i.e., perceived departure from the expected or assumed norm) as a problem to overcome, a gap to address, or a deficit to correct.” Based on U.S. Census Bureau projections (2017), the foreign-born population in

the United States will reach nearly 15% by the year 2028, a 1.36% change versus the 0.49% change of the native population in the same year, which makes international experience for pre-service teachers even more indispensable. As a result of the lack of preparation on the part of the teachers, the students they teach do not receive appropriate education, because, as the literature suggests, “a teacher preparation curriculum that emphasizes teacher candidates’ expansion of worldviews through exposure to diversity will enable them to incorporate global and intercultural perspectives into their classrooms and thus poise broader ranges of their students for academic success” (Dunn et al., 2014, p. 285). In the words of Murry et al., “Classroom diversity remains undermaximized in postmillennial schools” (2021, p. 7). The multifaceted diversity of the students constitutes a challenge for the teachers and can even be intimidating. It must also be noted that even when teachers are aware of the assets that culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) students bring to the classroom, they still face the issue of how to identify and maximize those assets. According to the literature, the extent to which they are able to manage this issue is marginal (Murry et al., 2021; Richardson, 2018), so appropriate preparation is needed in order for the teachers to begin instruction from the rich untapped biographies of CLD students.

### ***Benefits of Study Abroad Programs***

The literature credits study abroad programs in general for the development of global and intercultural competencies among post-secondary students. They facilitate the building of a knowledge base and experience that go beyond the classroom, as they extend the curriculum of the classroom and provide students with the opportunity to interact with the cultures of other countries and societies (Cubillos & Ilvento, 2018; Mapp, 2012; Soria & Troisi, 2014; Watson et al., 2013). Additionally, study abroad is a transformative learning experience that increases cultural competencies (Grant & Letzring, 2003; Intolubbe-Chmil et al., 2012; Patterson et al., 2019). Findings point to the fact that the benefits also depend on factors including specific programs and subjects, curriculum, “in-group” cultural comfort (Jackson, 2011; Paras et al., 2019), cultural engagement opportunities (Hernández, 2016; Kamdar & Lewis, 2015), interaction with host families (Segalowitz et al., 2004), and guided, planned, and targeted interaction with local communities (Paige et al., 2004; Paige & Vande Berg, 2012), among others. However, the gains in terms of culturally-rich opportunities (Shiveley & Misco, 2015), impact on global awareness (Kurt et al., 2013), enhanced cross-cultural sensitivity (Shiveley & Misco, 2015), increased self-awareness (Gaia, 2015) and intercultural competence (Fine & McNamara, 2011) are undisputed, and the length of the programs (Kehl & Morris, 2007) and the quality of intercultural contact (Bloom & Miranda, 2015) have been found to be the most impactful factors.

On the other hand, findings on the linguistic gains vary depending on factors that include length of stay, curriculum, individual motivations, empathy, social skills, willingness to communicate, and self-awareness, among others (Allen, 2010; Davidson, 2010; Dwyer, 2004; Hernández, 2016; Klapper & Rees, 2012; Llanes, 2011; Llanes et al., 2012; Martinsen, 2010; McManus et al., 2021; Pinar, 2016; Richart, 2015; Weger, 2013). Nevertheless, there is a consensus about the overall heightening of participants’ self-efficacy beliefs and increase in motivation and persistence in language study (Cubillos & Ilvento, 2012, 2018). Curricula that actively promote meaningful interactions in the target language (Martinsen et al., 2010) and longer stays (Davidson, 2010; Dwyer, 2004; Hernández, 2016; Richart, 2015) have been found to be associated with the best linguistic outcomes. Furthermore, recent studies that have focused on specific categories of study abroad programs, such as short-term, long-term, language-based, culture-based, adventure-based, internship-based, and so forth, or those intended for specific careers, such as teachers, engineers, doctors, and the like, have been focusing on specific aspects that are crucial for their fields in an attempt to take full advantage of the opportunity to provide the most appropriate education for students. According to Cubillos and Ilvento (2018, p. 249), “Study abroad is a central component of the internationalization movement of college curricula in the United States.”

As Redden (2019) affirms, the number of U.S. students who study abroad has been steadily growing for the last 25 years, and the Institute of International Education reports that a total of 341,751 U.S. students studied abroad for credit in 2017-18, which was a 2.7% increase from the previous academic year. NAFSA (2019) reported that from 2017 to 2019, the number of students grew 1.6% to 347,099, which represented about 1.8% of all U.S. students enrolled at institutions of higher education in the United States, and about 10% of U.S. graduates. More recent data have not been included, as the COVID 19 pandemic affected the programs from 2020 to 2022. In spite of the rising trend, the data show that the enrollment is still very low. NAFSA (2019) reported that 40% of U.S. companies surveyed missed international business opportunities because of a lack of internationally competent personnel. Additionally, as Redden (2019) reported, typically, a little less than two-thirds of U.S. study abroad students (64.6%) participate in short-term programs (that is, programs lasting less than eight weeks), one-third study in mid-length programs that last a quarter or a semester, and only 2.3% do a full academic or calendar year, which is a common practice in other countries.

### ***Study Abroad for Educators***

Open Doors reports (2021) indicate that in the 2018-19 academic year, the most popular fields of study for U.S. students studying abroad were business and management (71,792), followed by social sciences (59,158), physical

and life sciences (28,197), health professions (24,574), and foreign language and international studies (23,833). Education was third from the bottom with 10,760 or 3.1%, followed only by agriculture with 2.9% and legal studies and law enforcement with 1.6%. Additionally, out of all the students who studied abroad, 64.9% of them stayed for eight weeks or less, 32.9% spent one or two terms or semesters, and only 2.2% spent one year. Data collected from 2000 to 2019 shows that the percentage of study abroad students from colleges of education has ranged from 3.1% to 4.4%, occupying one of the lowest positions throughout the period. Furthermore, the fact that the 4.4% was reported at the beginning of the period and the 3.1% was reported at the end of the period is further proof of the dire situation of colleges of education. Not only is the percentage low, but it is dwindling consistently as well.

He et al. (2017) affirmed that an effective study abroad program for teacher education must include cultural immersion experiences, teaching opportunities, language learning, reflection, and collaboration. Specifically, future teachers who participate in study abroad are provided with authentic opportunities to experience interaction with people of other cultures in preparation for their classroom interactions with CLD students (Gleeson & Tait, 2012; McManus et al., 2021; Pizziconi, 2017) and develop new intercultural skills for functioning within such communities. Additionally, field experience opportunities abroad such as student teaching, classroom observations, and other pedagogical activities provide authentic immersion opportunities in which participants develop new intercultural skills because of their exposure to broad ranges of students, school personnel, and cultural communities (Sanders-Smith & Cordoba, 2021; Smolcic & Katunich, 2017). All these experiences prepare them for working with students from diverse backgrounds as they learn new approaches to teaching and classroom management as well as different pedagogical skills and new perspectives on educational issues from their international colleagues (Gleeson & Tait, 2012; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011), thus decreasing the culture gap that often exists between teachers and their CLD students. According to Marx and Moss (2011), this gap reflects teachers' ethnocentric views, which can limit culturally congruent experiences with their diverse students. Study abroad also enables them to develop empathy for diverse students as they themselves also experience the status of cultural outsider and understand how it feels. Eventually, they are able to appreciate individual differences as well as undergo a transformation of previously narrow and discriminatory beliefs and attitudes (Marx & Moss, 2011).

Recognizing the critical need to prepare pre-service teachers differently than hitherto in an attempt to ensure that they are able to address the needs of 21<sup>st</sup>-century students effectively, some colleges of education are going beyond incorporating courses on diversity and culturally responsive teaching to engage with the global community by means of international partnerships, community engagement, service learning, practicums, and internships in study abroad settings. Unfortunately, this initiative is yet to produce high numbers. Additionally, teacher education programs often have very rigid degree plans, which makes it extremely difficult for students to add study abroad (Mikulec, 2019). As reported by Shively and Misco (2015, p. 107), "The efforts to incorporate a global dimension into an already crowded teacher education curriculum can be a challenge." The literature points to a need to improve participation of colleges of education in study abroad programs (Mikulec, 2019; Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011).

Colleges of education need to consider the fact that in K-12 alone there are approximately 5.3 million identified CLD students, and that 64% of teachers in K-12 have at least one CLD student in their classrooms, but many teachers have no idea how to teach them. In fact, it is projected that CLD students will be the majority of high school graduates by 2025 (Murry et al., 2021; Prescott et al., 2019). According to the National Center for Educator Statistics (2019), out of the 64% who teach CLD students, only about 10% have a major, minor, or certification in ESL or bilingual education, and only 44.8% took any courses on how to teach these students. In fact, Gándara and Hopkins (2010) reported that many teachers held the view that they did not know how to teach CLD students even when they had specialized credentials. According to Ama (2022), this is the most significant and most overlooked problem in teacher education.

While the literature provides evidence of cultural immersion experiences and teaching opportunities for Education students, there is a dearth of information on language learning. Phillion and Malewski (2011) reported on the cultural gains of their students in Honduras. Palmer and Menard-Warwick (2012) reported the development of a greater sense of empathy among their pre-service teachers in Mexico when working with emergent bilinguals. Doppen et al., (2016) reported on the cultural experience and student teaching opportunities of their pre-service teachers. Mikulec (2019) also discovered increased levels of self-confidence, autonomy, tolerance for ambiguity, flexibility and adaptability, and interpersonal skills, as well as identification of the role of culture in education, pedagogy, and preparation for teaching diverse learners. In the same vein, Mikulec (2018) affirmed that study abroad programs designed specifically for pre-service teachers provide an opportunity for students to develop cultural competence as well as more unique and different opportunities to develop culturally responsive practices than domestic field placements. Clearly, the second language development of teachers has been overlooked. Furthermore, in spite of the reports on students' cultural development, the students' voices are missing in the literature in terms of their expectations, perceived gains, and demonstration of a true understanding of the importance of the sociocultural and linguistic dimensions of the prism model that need to be met in order for CLD students to receive appropriate education. Considering that the preparation of educators in study abroad programs may be falling short of the required skills, the goal of this article is to investigate the use of the prism model as a

framework for the preparation of educators on study abroad programs to provide biography-driven, well-structured, and appropriately supervised linguistic and sociocultural components in study abroad programs for educators.

### ***The Prism Model and Biography-Driven Instruction***

Developed by Thomas and Collier in 1997, the prism model offers a framework that explains a holistic perspective of the factors that are indispensable for creating educational conditions that must be accounted for in order to accelerate CLD students' acquisition of their first language (L1), second language (L2), and content knowledge, and promote their academic achievement (Herrera & Murry 2016). According to the model, four dimensions of CLD students must be addressed. The dimensions are sociocultural, academic, cognitive, and linguistic. According to the framework, the four dimensions must be addressed together as they are interrelated and involve developmental processes that occur simultaneously for the students, and they are pivotal to the success of the students. This framework informed the conceptualization of the CLD student biography.

The academic dimension encompasses the differential aspects of the curriculum and instruction and the academic policies that influence the successful academic performance of CLD students. The academic challenges include lack of preparation for appropriate academic practices for effective differentiation on the part of the teachers, high-stakes assessments, inadequate opportunities for academic interactions in the classroom, assumptions about CLD students' prior knowledge and experiences within the dominant culture, and language learning as a remedial focus instead of language acquisition as a subcomponent of content-area academic learning (Herrera & Murry, 2016). What should happen is the transfer of academic knowledge and skills from the L1 to the L2, academic language development, and acquisition of academic content.

The cognitive dimension comprises CLD students' knowledge and thinking processes, and the ways in which they apply their learning. Some of the challenges are that the cognitive development in the L1 is interrupted and a lot of effort is devoted to the cognitive development of a new language, adaptation to new learning styles and environments, different writing systems and content, and new instructional practices. What must happen is the development of new learning strategies including cognitive, social/affective, and metacognitive skills, and the development of basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS), for two to three years, and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP), for four to seven years (Herrera & Murry, 2016).

The linguistic dimension, which has been the source of a great deal of confusion because some people in the American society are of the opinion that only English should be used in schools, involves CLD students' language proficiency in both their L1 and L2. Some of the challenges are lack of knowledge about other languages and language acquisition on the part of educators, disregard for the proven amount of time required for L1 and L2 acquisition, lack of adequate preparation for teachers providing native language support, inappropriate models for educating CLD students, lack of sufficient resources for instruction, and ineffective literacy instruction in the L1 and L2 (Herrera & Murry, 2016). What needs to happen is ongoing development of literacy in both the L1 and L2.

The sociocultural dimension, which is at the center of the CLD students' biography, comprises the social and cultural factors that are critical for CLD students to be able to transition into a new environment and requires the implementation of differential instructional practices on the part of the teacher. The differential instructional practices must be informed by the asset perspective instead of the deficit theories. The deficit theories assume that some children, because of genetic, cultural, or experiential differences, are inferior to other children, and that they have deficits that must be overcome in order for them to be able to learn. That perspective therefore views some students as deficient and focuses on what they lack. Contrary to this view, the asset perspective views the students as assets, values and uses the strengths they bring, and helps them move forward with high expectations (Nieto & Bode, 2017). Their biography is therefore considered an asset to the educational process. Teachers of CLD students must account for the sociocultural dimension when planning differentiated instruction, as this is a crucial factor in the lives of CLD students.

These dimensions are indispensable for the appropriate and successful education of CLD students, leading to the implementation of biography-driven instruction (BDI). As a product of the framework, this research-based instructional method takes into consideration the students' assets and draws from them both within and outside the classroom to inform their instruction. Therefore, BDI facilitates the high-quality instruction that is essential for bridging the achievement gap between native and non-native speakers of English, which has eluded educators for so long due to the effects of the deficit theories (González & Soltero, 2011; Herrera, 2010; Herrera & Murry, 2016; Murry et al., 2021). Teachers must create a classroom environment that is sensitive to the cultural background and academic needs of all students (Nieto & Bode, 2017).

### ***Purpose***

Given that 64% of K-12 teachers have CLD students in their classrooms, and it is not only bilingual education and ESL teachers who teach CLD students, in addition to the fact that the population of CLD students continues to rise at a much faster rate than the rest of the population, as previously noted, it is imperative that all teachers are prepared in a manner that enables them to provide appropriate biography-driven education effectively. The present study focused on the sociocultural and linguistic dimensions of the prism model due to their critical role in BDI and

the fact that they receive the least attention both in instructional and assessment practices (Escamilla Cevallos & Soto, 2018). As stated previously, the sociocultural dimension is at the center of the CLD students’ biography, so the other three dimensions depend on it (Herrera & Murry, 2016). Additionally, the literature confirms that fluency in the students’ home language makes teachers relatively more effective with emergent bilinguals (Gándara & Santibáñez, 2016; Loeb et al., 2014).

To this end, it is essential that the sociocultural and linguistic gains of study abroad programs for educators are closely monitored to ensure that the students are being prepared adequately to provide appropriate BDI for CLD students. An exploration of previous studies on study abroad experiences of education majors revealed various purposes, designs, and issues that were not centered on CLD students but on the general development of teachers’ competencies (Allen, 2013; Back et al., 2022; Badstübner & Ecke, 2009; He et al., 2017; Mikulec, 2019; Shiveley & Misco, 2015). Additionally, for the most part, the studies relied on quantitative methods in which pre-determined items were presented to be rated on Likert scales, all of which of course fit their purpose. Therefore, this study used a qualitative method aimed at adding to the literature by bringing the voices of the students into the discussion. The research questions were as follows:

1. What are education majors’ expectations for participating in study abroad programs?
2. What are their expectations with respect to the sociocultural and linguistic dimensions of the prism model?
3. What are their perceptions with regard to how their program meets the sociocultural and linguistic dimensions of the prism model?

Whereas the broad definition of culture includes language, this author chooses to separate the two in order to be able to distinguish between linguistic and other cultural aspects.

## METHOD

### *Participants*

Education majors in a short-term summer study abroad program in Spain offered by a university in the Southwestern United States participated in this study. Majors represented in the program included bilingual education, English as a second language, elementary education, secondary education, and special education. Out of the 29 potential participants, 21 (72%) completed the pre-program questionnaire. There were 13 juniors, seven seniors, and one graduate student, and their ages ranged from 20 to 35, with an average age of 21.5 years. All of them were pre-service teachers with the exception of the graduate student, who was doing her doctorate in bilingual education. Females outnumbered males (90.5% vs. 9.5%), which was the norm in the program. Fifteen of the 21 (71.4%) completed the post-program questionnaire. All the 15 who completed the post-program questionnaire had also completed the pre-program questionnaire, so 15 (71.4%) completed both questionnaires. All the 21 completed pre-program surveys and all the 15 completed post-program surveys were used for the analysis.

Categories	Pre-Program Surveys		Post-Program Surveys	
	Number of Students	%	Number of Students	%
<b>Females</b>	19	90.5%	13	86.7%
<b>Males</b>	2	9.5%	2	13.3%
<b>19-22 years old</b>	13	61.9%	10	66.7%
<b>23-25 years old</b>	7	33.3%	4	26.7%
<b>More than 25 years old</b>	1	4.8%	1	6.7%
<b>Junior</b>	13	61.9%	10	66.7%
<b>Senior</b>	7	33.3%	4	26.7%
<b>Graduate</b>	1	4.8%	1	6.7%

**Table 1: Participants’ Demographic Information**

### *Program Context and Design*

The study abroad program used for this study takes place annually in the summer for six weeks from May to July in Spain. The program is directed by a faculty member from the College of Education who created the program in 2011. The faculty member plans and implements all aspects of the program. The host university has had a partnership with the home institution since the establishment of the program. The students are admitted into a Spanish Language and Culture program offered by the host university for one month, graduate at the end of the program, and receive diplomas and transcripts. The transcripts are sent to the home university where the students are awarded the corresponding credits. Students receive 6 credits of Spanish grammar, conversation, literature, and civilization, and the specific courses they receive credits for at the home university are determined by the equivalents of the courses they take at the host university as agreed to previously by the two universities. To determine which courses should be taken by the students at the host university, the students take a placement test on the first day of class, which is used by the university to determine their proficiency levels and corresponding courses. The program is intensive and encompasses four hours of classes every morning, as well as two hours of

enrichment courses in the afternoon twice a week. The other students who attend the program at the host university come from all parts of the world.

Students also take one course in Education and Culture taught by the director of the study abroad program. The students attend a two-hour class every evening and receive 3 credits. The course encompasses lectures on the education system of Spain and comparisons between that system and the education system in the United States. Also included in the course are different aspects of the culture of Spain and intercultural competence. Another component of the course is a two-week field experience in a local bilingual school where the students observe and teach classes, attend meetings and presentations with teachers and administrators, and participate in other professional development opportunities for five hours every day. The course also includes various cultural activities, dance classes, and cooking projects. Other educational activities include excursions within Spain, which take the students to world-famous cities and museums, as well as international travel to Portugal, where the students spend one weekend learning about the country and its education and culture. Students also have some free weekends when they can travel to other countries.

An assignment using Google My Maps called Mapping for Integration was incorporated into the program with a goal to enhance the integration of the students into the society. Based on the literature, study abroad students do not integrate sufficiently into the local communities, and that hinders their interactions with locals (Cubillos & Ilvento, 2018; Hernández, 2016; Mikulec, 2019; Paige & Vande Berg, 2012). As a result, they acquire less knowledge of the language and culture than expected. Therefore, in groups of four, students create maps of different parts of the city where the program is located and use mapping pins to highlight important facts and incorporate interviews with local people.

### ***Instruments***

Two instruments were used in this study -- a pre-program questionnaire and a post-program questionnaire. The questionnaires were created by the author for a large-scale study, so only certain parts were used for this study. The questionnaires consisted of demographic questions (questions 1 to 3), and specific questions about the study abroad program (questions 4 to 30 in the pre-program questionnaire and questions 4 to 24 in the post-program questionnaire). Additional data were collected from the documents for the 2019 program, which included the program flyer, information sheet, itinerary, contract with host university, and field experience schedule.

### ***Data Collection***

The data were collected in two phases. Prior to starting the program, the students completed the pre-program questionnaire online and submitted it to the investigator. Upon receiving the questionnaires, the investigator labeled them by using numbers assigned to the students, instead of their names, and an A to indicate pre-program. At the end of the program, the students completed the post-program questionnaire online and submitted it to the investigator. The investigator labeled them with the numbers corresponding to their names and a B indicating post-program. The students' names were then dissociated from the numbers to protect their anonymity. Each phase was completed in two weeks.

### ***Data Analysis***

The students' responses in the pre-program survey with regard to their expectations about participating in the study abroad program were extracted in their entirety. Inductive coding was used to determine the emerging themes. The researcher coded the data on three separate occasions and categorized them before generating the final themes and calculating their frequencies to be used to answer research question 1. The data related to the sociocultural and linguistic dimensions were retrieved to answer research question 2. All the responses that indicated students' perceived gains from participating in the study abroad program were extracted from the post-program questionnaire and also coded inductively to determine emerging themes. The final themes were generated, and their frequencies were calculated and used to answer research question 3.

## **RESULTS**

### ***1. What are education majors' expectations for participating in study abroad programs?***

All the excerpts that carried meaning were counted, so a single response could generate a number of excerpts. As shown in Table 2, a total of 204 excerpts were retrieved with regard to the students' expectations for participating in the program. After the coding and categorization, five macrothemes emerged from the data. The results showed that the students' expectations correspond to the following macrothemes: "Learn Spanish or improve Spanish proficiency" (84 excerpts or 41.2%), followed by "Gain more teaching experience and learn new and different teaching methods, strategies, and techniques" (59 excerpts or 28.9%), "Gain personal development and new experiences" (26 excerpts or 12.7%), "Gain an understanding of other societies and cultures" (21 excerpts or 10.3%), and "Learn from a different education system" (14 excerpts or 6.9%).

Themes	No. of Excerpts	Percentage of Excerpts
1. Learn Spanish or improve Spanish proficiency	84	41.2%
2. Gain more teaching experience and learn new and different teaching methods, strategies, and techniques	59	28.9%
3. Gain personal development and new experiences	26	12.7%
4. Gain an understanding of other societies and cultures	21	10.3%
5. Learn from a different education system	14	6.9%
Total	204	

**Table 2: Students’ Expected Gains**

**2. What are their expectations with respect to the sociocultural and linguistic dimensions of the prism model?**

As explained above, the sociocultural dimension includes the social and cultural factors that are critical for the transitional adjustment and academic success of CLD students, and the differentiated instruction must be informed by their assets because their biography is of value to the educational process. The linguistic dimension also entails the development of CLD students’ language proficiency in both the L1 and L2. Therefore, as illustrated in Table 2, the sociocultural and linguistic dimensions constitute two of the macrothemes that emerged from the data on students’ expectations. The students clearly indicated that they wanted to gain an understanding of other societies and cultures, which is a requirement that must be met in order for educators to be able to meet the sociocultural dimension. They also wanted to learn Spanish or improve their Spanish proficiency, and fluency in the student’s home language is one of the main factors that make teachers more effective with emergent bilinguals, as indicated above.

**3. What are their perceptions with regard to how their program meets the sociocultural and linguistic dimensions of the prism model?**

As shown in Table 3, a total of 67 excerpts regarding the students’ perceived gains from participating in the program were retrieved, coded, and categorized, and the same five macrothemes emerged from the data, but the order was different. The results showed that the students’ perceived gains correspond to the following macrothemes: “Learned Spanish or improved Spanish proficiency” (21 excerpts or 31.3%), followed by “Gained more teaching experience and learned new and different teaching methods, strategies, and techniques” (16 excerpts or 23.9%), “Learned from a different education system” (14 excerpts or 20.9%), “Learned about other societies and cultures” (8 excerpts or 11.9%), and “Gained personal development and new experiences” (8 excerpts or 11.9%). Therefore, the sociocultural and linguistic dimensions constitute two of the macrothemes that emerged from the data on students’ perceived gains as well.

Theme	No. of Responses	Percentages
1. Learned Spanish or improved Spanish proficiency	21	31.3%
2. Gained more teaching experience and learned new and different teaching methods, strategies, and techniques	16	23.9%
3. Learned from a different education system	14	20.9%
4. Gained an understanding of other societies and cultures	8	11.9%
5. Gained personal development and new experiences	8	11.9%
Total	67	

**Table 3: Students’ Perceived Gains**

**DISCUSSION**

This exploratory study investigated 21 education majors’ expectations and perceived gains in a six-week summer study abroad program in Spain, with the goal of exploring what they expected to gain at the beginning of the program and what their perceived gains were at the end of the program with regard to the sociocultural and linguistic dimensions of the prism model. The study also investigated the appropriateness of the program in terms of its ability to prepare students for BDI.

**Expectations**

Clearly, there is ample indication that the students expected the program to prepare them for BDI. The macrothemes that emerged from the study indicate that the students’ expected gains from the study abroad program were to learn Spanish or improve their Spanish proficiency, gain more teaching experience and learn new and different teaching methods, strategies, and techniques, gain personal development and new experiences, gain an understanding of other societies and cultures, and learn from a different education system. This demonstrates the students’ understanding of the need to prepare themselves for BDI, as they emphasized the need to acquire sociocultural understanding and learn a new language or improve their language proficiency, which are essential

dimensions of the framework and therefore necessary for the preparation of teachers for BDI. These findings are consistent with Kinginger (2013).

Further analyses of the reasons that were given by the students for their expectations with regard to the linguistic dimension produced responses including the following: personal and career reasons; they would like to become bilingual; it would help them reach all of their students in their future classrooms; they would love to teach ESL around the world; they wanted to become fluent; they would have a second language under their belt, which would allow them to help the students more; it could broaden their areas of work; they want to be able to use Spanish while teaching ESL students; they want to be able to incorporate both Spanish and sign language into their instruction; they hope to gain experience in Spanish to help benefit their career; they will use what they learn to help their students when they teach ESL students who are native Spanish speakers; they want to be able to read and write the language and become more advanced in their knowledge of the language; they expect to use the language to help students who come to the United States not knowing any English and speak only Spanish; they want to provide different support for the students; they want to know a new language to open many doors in their future career and help them with future lessons and tasks; they want to strengthen their Spanish skills since they will be working with mostly Spanish-speaking students when they become teachers; they will use the language to speak to their emergent bilinguals in their classrooms; they will use the language to speak to the students' parents and other people in the community; they expect to have conversations with their students who are on different emergent bilingual levels; they hope they can learn enough of the language to be able to speak it during lessons and help their students understand English vocabulary; they want to be able to converse with the students' parents in their mother tongue, so that they are able to be a part of the classroom community; they expect to learn the language better in order to be able to manage their students' behavior effectively; they expect to expand their knowledge in Spanish to better serve their students in the classroom as two-way dual language teachers; being bilingual will help expand their career choices; and they want to be more effective in their schools.

With regard to the sociocultural dimension, the specific reasons the students provided for their expectations included the following: they want to gain a better understanding of how different cultures work; they believe it is important for them as global citizens to go to other parts of the world and experience other cultures besides their own; they want to experience the city as people living there, not as tourists; they think the best way to integrate into different societies is by being more open and understanding of other cultures; living in another country will allow them to see things in a more global and open manner; they want to go home with a broadened cultural perspective; and they expect to gain a better idea of completely different societies and cultures. The reasons they gave for having those expectations included the following: they believe it is important for teachers to give students unique and well-rounded experiences to help them learn more about the world around them; empathy for emergent bilinguals; they want to be able to relate to students from other cultures; knowing about different cultures will help them on the job; and they think it is important for them as global citizens to go to other parts of the world and experience other cultures besides their own. Clearly, the students have the expectation of being able to include the linguistic and sociocultural dimensions of the prism model in their instruction as evidenced by their responses. However, colleges of education are not matching the expectations of the students (Bomer, 2017; Causey et al., 2000; Stairs et al., 2012; Sharma et al., 2011; Sleeter, 2008b).

Findings also revealed that the students' report on their perceived gains was very positive. An examination of the responses provided by the students revealed that their perceived gains correspond to the macrothemes of "Learned Spanish or improved their Spanish proficiency", "Learned new and different teaching methods, strategies, and techniques", "Learned from a different education system", "Gained personal development and new experiences", and "Learned about other societies and cultures," in that order. These results indicate the appropriateness of the program for preparing teacher candidates to meet the linguistic and sociocultural dimensions of the prism model, according to the students.

With regard to the appropriateness of the program for the linguistic dimension, the students clearly demonstrated that they learned a lot of Spanish during the program. When they were asked what they would do with the language after the program, most of them indicated that they would use it for their teaching career. Out of 15 completed post-program surveys, 13 (86.7%) indicated that their Spanish proficiency improved a lot and 2 (13.3%) reported that it improved a little. None of the students selected "very little" or "not at all." All the 15 students also indicated that they believe that they moved up one proficiency level (e.g. novice to intermediate or intermediate to advanced) based on the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines (2012). They were provided with a copy of the guidelines.

They reported that they were able to use the language for different purposes including the following: they were able to have an entire conversation in the Madrid airport; they ordered food and asked questions about the transaction; they asked for directions to their gates; they learned how to interact with children who don't speak the same language as them; they would be able to communicate better with their students; they had never taken any Spanish classes, and the study abroad courses really helped them understand the mechanics of the language; they were able to make connections with words in Spanish and English; they had a better understanding of how to conjugate verbs in Spanish and know the names of different forms of conjugation, which they knew nothing about before; they could understand more Spanish and have small conversations with others, whereas before they only



knew some words like hello and goodbye; they expected to be able to communicate with their students' parents better and have a wider selection of jobs; they were able to speak with their Spanish-speaking friends; they realized that bettering their proficiency and fluency in Spanish is dependent on the effort they make and pushing past the need to be perfect when speaking the language; they were able to use Spanish to describe their symptoms to doctors; they could write essays, debate controversial topics, order food in a restaurant, find their way at an airport, send emails, teach how to prepare a meal, call a cab, converse, and travel with anyone from a Hispanic speaking community or country; they could confidently speak with native speakers and help students struggling with math due to lack of English language skills.

When they were asked what contributed to their improved proficiency levels, they gave credit to the intensive 4-week Spanish course they took at the host university and the education and culture course that was taught by the faculty leader, both of which were taught entirely in Spanish (30.5%), total integration into the society (25.4%), host family stay (20.3%), personal effort (13.6%), field experience in the bilingual school (5.1%), and excursions and cultural activities (5.1%). All of these refer directly to components that were strategically incorporated into the program as described under "Program Context and Design," referring specifically to the 4-week Spanish course at the host university, the education and culture course, integration into the society through the Mapping for Integration assignment, host family stay, field experience at the bilingual school, and, to a lesser extent, the excursions and cultural activities. These findings are consistent with Back et al. (2022), Diao et al. (2011), He et al. (2017), Jarvis and Mady (2021), Nero (2018), Trent (2011), Wernicke (2010), and Zhao et al. (2009), who also found positive perceptions among their participants. Clearly, more than just the presence of the students in the location, these well-structured inherent components of the program that obligate the students to make maximum use of the opportunity are hugely beneficial. Additionally, the students' own dispositions are also notable.

With regard to frequency of usage of the Spanish language during the program, 11 of the 15 students (73.3%) reported that they used Spanish very frequently, and four (26.7%) reported that they used Spanish frequently. None of them selected the "not frequently" option. This indicates that the students made the appropriate efforts to achieve their linguistic goals. When they were asked to state how much Spanish they learned on a scale of 1 to 10, the results were as follows: three students said 10, five said 8, four said 7, and three said 6, with a mean score of 7.7. This self-evaluation is mid-high and appears not to correspond to the very positive responses the students gave in terms of perceived linguistic achievement (moving up one proficiency level, believing that they learned a lot of Spanish, and using the language very frequently). This lower-than-expected self-assessment could be due to lack of confidence on the part of the students. A follow-up study that will include an analysis of the students' actual assessment results will reveal the actual level of improvement.

With regard to the sociocultural dimension, the students' responses indicated that they gained a substantial understanding of different societies and cultures. All the 15 students who completed the post-program survey indicated that they gained a lot of sociocultural knowledge. These findings are consistent with He et al. (2017) and Nopporn (2015), but not consistent with Cubillos and Ilvento (2018). The students also reported that they visited 26 countries altogether in addition to Spain and Portugal. When they were asked how much cultural knowledge they believed they gained from the program on a scale of 1 to 10, six of them said 10, four of them said 9, five of them said 8, and the mean score was 9.1. Their positive perceptions of the amount of knowledge they acquired from the different societies and cultures they experienced included the following: they developed a massive appreciation for different cultures; they feel they gained a first-hand understanding of different cultures that they would have never been able to see aside from studying abroad; they learned a lot about Spanish and Portuguese cultures; they gained a respect for the Spanish culture; aside from Spain and Portugal, they visited other countries on weekends and experienced a broader perspective of the world and totally different cultures; they experienced cultural differences; and they experienced the Spanish culture to the fullest, including the cuisine, traditional events, festivals, and social life. As indicated above, these results can be attributed to the constitution of the program, which obligated them to integrate fully into the society, share experiences with students from all over the world, and take advantage of opportunities to visit other countries on weekends and participate in cultural activities.

## CONCLUSIONS AND EXPECTATIONS

This study investigated the expectations and perceptions of 21 education majors participating in a six-week summer study abroad program in Spain to determine if education majors' expectations on study abroad were in consonance with the linguistic and sociocultural dimensions of the prism model. Additionally, the study sought to determine if the students' perceived gains from the program were also in consonance with said dimensions. Findings indicated that the students' self-reported expectations matched the linguistic and sociocultural dimensions of the model, thus evidencing their dispositions for obtaining the required training for BDI. Furthermore, their self-reported perceived gains from their study abroad program demonstrated the consonance of the program with the linguistic and sociocultural dimensions of the prism model and its appropriateness for preparing teachers for BDI for CLD students. Colleges of education ought to take a cue from the training the students have indicated that they already

expect to receive and incorporate into their curriculum appropriate study abroad programs that can facilitate the preparation of competent teachers for the 21<sup>st</sup>-century globalized world. As rightly stated by Shiveley and Misco (2015), “America’s youth need to be taught by teachers who are able to cultivate in young people a perspective of the world, which emphasizes the interconnections among cultures, species, and the planet” (p. 107).

The findings of this study provide a base for further investigation on the subject. Follow-up studies by the investigator will include comparisons and correlations between the expectations and perceived gains as well as between students’ reported gains and actual assessment results. The study will also be replicated in other contexts to obtain more generalizable data. The prism model offers a framework for designing study abroad curricula for the preparation of 21<sup>st</sup>-century educators that requires the implementation of carefully structured components in order to achieve targeted outcomes. The curricula must include a carefully selected site where there are limited opportunities for students to use English; a well-established language course provided by a partner university in the target country that also admits students from other parts of the world; a field experience program offered by a reputable partner bilingual school where students have an opportunity to teach, observe, and collaborate with other teachers; a home-stay system that employs experienced host families that have a longstanding relationship with the host university; a well-structured social integration assignment; carefully-planned excursions; and opportunities for visits to other countries of the students’ choice. In essence, the components of the program must be strategically structured in order to obtain the expected outcomes. This is in consonance with He et al. (2017)’s five core elements of a study abroad program for teachers, which include cultural immersion experiences, teaching opportunities, language learning, reflection, and collaboration. As they affirm, “international experience alone does not lead to multicultural and global readiness for teachers” (p. 155). Multiple measures must be implemented strategically in order to achieve the expected results.

The dimensions of the prism model provide the desired study abroad blueprint for teachers of CLD students, and teacher preparation programs should incorporate the dimensions in their curricula in order to best prepare students for their future careers. The status quo is no longer effective in K-12, as CLD students are not only taught by bilingual education and ESL teachers but by all teachers. Therefore, study abroad opportunities are now the norm and not the exception.

### **Limitations and future research**

While this study provided important insights about education majors’ expectations and perceptions, a framework for the development of study abroad programs, and an effective program model that can be emulated for the appropriate preparation of 21<sup>st</sup>-century teachers, the small size of the sample and the fact that all the participants belonged to one program do not allow for generalizations to be made. However, the study can be replicated in different contexts for further investigation. Different research designs can also be utilized to obtain further findings.

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Dr. Comfort Pratt received her Bachelor of Arts with Honors degree in Spanish and French with a minor in linguistics at the University of Ghana, a Graduate Certificate in Translation at Complutense University in Madrid, Spain, a Master of Arts Degree in Modern Languages at Texas A&M University, and a Ph.D. in Romance Linguistics and French at Louisiana State University. She is currently an Associate Professor of Curriculum and Instruction at Texas Tech University. Her areas of specialization include foreign language education, second language acquisition, and sociolinguistics. She is the author of *El español del noroeste de Luisiana: Pervivencia de un dialecto amenazado* (2004), and *In-Class Communicative Projects* (2008). Her recent articles include “Creencias de autoeficacia y principales desafíos docentes de profesores de español como segunda lengua” (2022), “Foreign language teachers’ self-efficacy beliefs and perspectives about maintaining their students’ interest” (2021), and “Spanish teaching assistants’ training, implementation, and beliefs about the appropriateness of communicative language teaching” (2019). Dr. Pratt is the 2022 College of Education President’s Academic Achievement Award recipient.