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[Akindele Ogunleye](#) *

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Article

Predicting the Role of Language in Developing Intercultural Competence: A Comparative Study of Study Abroad Experiences in English-Speaking and Non-English-Speaking Regions

Akindele Ogunleye

University of Texas at El Paso, 13433 Pine Valley Ave. Horizon City, El Paso. TX. 79928;
aogunleye@miners.utep.edu or draogunleye@gmail.com

Abstract: The challenge of globalization is probably the greatest challenge for educators since the last millennium. The concept of studying abroad as a panacea for the complexity of globalism has been challenging for the development of intercultural competence. The world has rapidly become a global village, confronting educational institutions to produce graduates skillful to fit the changing world and marketplace. Therefore, an effective study abroad for U.S. education would be beneficial for both individual and institutional goals. Study abroad is a self-select program where students elect to participate in the program of their choice leading to the major obstacle to tracking collective effectiveness. This study reveals long held beliefs of study abroad and language as a prime motivator of study abroad. The study reveals that language may not hold much predictable development for intercultural competence due to other variable factors of globalization. In other words, educators would have to reflect more on the potential of study abroad and cultural development to create programs that can transform intercultural learners into global citizens.

Keywords: intercultural competence; language; internationalization; Study abroad; cultural identity; diversity; interest; worldview

1. Introduction

Institutions of higher education (IHE) have been making constant effort to justify the value of study abroad in developing intercultural competence among students who participate in study abroad. To evaluate the effectiveness and efficacy of Study Abroad have been largely focused on developing language skills, yet there is need for greater understanding of the approach that goes beyond measuring the linguistic development of language that inform development of intercultural and transcultural competence (Isabelli-Garcia, et al., 2018 & Kinginger, 2011). In recent years, researchers have become increasingly challenged in the claim that Study Abroad is beneficial for higher education without any supporting evidence (Ogden & Streitwieser, 2016). Numerous studies have also investigated the history of Study Abroad and intercultural competence, yet the role of Study Abroad in intercultural competence is grossly understudied in depth (Abbe et al., 2007; Goldstein, 2022; Loveland & Morris, 2018; Nguyen, 2017).

Further, the internationalization of higher education and the emergence of globalization have further exposed the importance of language in predicting the development of Study Abroad. In the last few years, there has been a great deal of controversy surrounding the need for global citizenship and what or who can be defined as a global citizen (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Goldstein, 2022). Globalization created the want for foreign language proficiency (Anderson et al., 2006; Paige, 2003; Pedersen, 2009; Rundstrom, 2005). The emergence of global features in every segment of international relations has defined roles for nation-states in various capacities and at the same time created the need for developing intercultural competence. Thus, there is a clear demonstration that developing

language skills needs a deeper and structured pattern to understand other cultures that foster cultural competence in college students which can enhance and transform their views about global relations.

As part of the effort to expand students' worldviews and to improve American students' ability to negotiate in a world of conflictual global forces, students who Study Abroad will have a chance to develop their language skill; this aspect of study abroad is not adequately reviewed to ensure students interested in language development are sufficiently supported with the resources needed for language skill development especially with duration, destination and longitudinal studies. This aspect of Study Abroad is often overlooked in the bid to market the prospects of intercultural competence (Ficarra, 2017; Zemach-Bersin, 2010) unfortunately, study abroad has become progressively commercialized, failing to recognize the growing need for an intercultural mindset for their graduates entering the marketplace (Starr-Glass, 2016). For the purposes of reference in this study; intercultural competence development is defined to have four mixed dispositions of cultural identity, cultural interest, cultural diversity and worldview. Hence the emphasis is on the role of language in developing intercultural competence.

2. Literature Review

Study Abroad is the branch of education abroad program that occurs outside the participant's home country and driven to a significant degree by its goals and objectives. It is a transformational experience that changes students' worldview, internationalization, and cultural awareness and provides multiple social and learning benefits e.g., intercultural competence, global awareness, and foreign language skills to which they may have been less exposed locally. According to the Lincoln Commission (2005) the changing world requires graduates to acquire knowledge about global issues and transformative abilities for personal, institutional, and national benefits. In the United States, the perspectives of Study Abroad have developed more cautiously, especially at institutional and national levels; where IHE have concentrated on Western Europe, but in some cases going to Eastern Europe and counteracting ethnocentrism, personal choice, which closely relates to perceived self-efficacy (Carlson et al., 1990). Further, Gudykunst (1998) defined this cautious and mindful behavior where individuals and institutions experience both anxiety and uncertainty when interacting with foreign cultures as highly limiting to developing language skills. To adapt to another culture, individuals aim to understand the cultural behaviors that can enable them make predictions about their hosts and they cognitively manage their anxiety to communicate effectively and adjust to the host culture gradually when they can understand and interpret the host. Landis et al. (2003) states that endeavors have little real interaction with locals when U.S. students participate in Study Abroad, therefore there is little opportunity for intercultural engagement or language skill development, cultural learning or theoretically known as ethnocentric behavior. Landis et al., further affirmed that U.S. students lack the necessary tools to learn effectively in another culture, making study abroad a challenging and an academically weak endeavor, pursued by white female elite who used Study Abroad to create an opportunity for personal endeavor (Gore, 2005).

The idea to expand access to study abroad to all students makes studying abroad a key element in U.S. foreign policy, together with its possibility to assist the U.S. face the challenges of insecurity supported, with a long-term goal of building an internationally knowledgeable citizenry (Ungar, 2016). Studying abroad has hidden challenges that continue to undermine the current system to achieve a globally interculturally competent graduate. The whole idea of study abroad is to know other cultures/countries as much as they know the U.S. Over the years, language skill development in study abroad remains a formidable part of the student development towards study abroad effectiveness (Open doors, 2023); in other words, the main reason higher education administrators are seeking ways to respond to increasing demand of development of graduate skill and exposing students to the realities of cultural concepts and global awareness is the emergence of interdependence of the global system.

Educators designed intercultural competence to address cognitive, emotional, and behavioral changes, especially in students' personality and language skills (Landis et al., 2003). So, intercultural

competence is about behavioral adjustment, i.e., self-monitoring, tolerance for ambiguity, acceptance, and low personality traits. Given the growing importance of Study Abroad in higher education, Nguyen (2017) states that Study Abroad programs are coupled with the inconsistent and misaligned terms of design structure, faculty-led/administrator's role, lack of resources and difficulty in attaining immersion. These inconsistencies have been limiting the potential of Study Abroad to reach enhanced levels in its assessment of language skills. Therefore, achieving effectiveness in Study Abroad intercultural competence programs remains vague or seriously hampered by various models of the framework.

Institutions of Higher education institutions are responding to globalization and cultural competence in many ways. The use of Study Abroad as a means of skill development broadly proclaims that IHE should have robust policies on developing language skills. As globalization transformed the entire world into a global village, international travel became commonplace, trade and commerce transpired more around the global south and instant communication became more affordable. Internationalization became the new shift recognized by educators as a key factor in skills and competence for graduates. In response, international education mobility in the U.S. has been well documented by Institute of International Education (IIE) in terms of figures but not effectively assessed in terms of beneficial outcomes. It therefore reveals that problems limiting the ability of IHE to achieve effectiveness are artificial and solvable problems such as defining the consequences of declining enrollment of undergraduates interested in foreign-language courses since the 1980s (Klee, 2013; Landis et al., 2003). According to Looney and Lusin, 2019, there is need for investment in language education, they affirmed that enrollment other than English fell by 9.2 percent in college and universities in the United States, whilst only Japanese and Korea graduate enrollment in foreign language show enrollment gain.

Similarly, Lingo (2019) popularized the idea of cultural capital as a way in which education served to convert study abroad participation as a high-brow cultural capital to maintain inequality advantages for students with high socio-economic status that enables high socio-economic status students to stand out from their peers in graduate school or marketplace job placement. Accordingly, cultural capital may be responsible for the limiting capacity of U.S. Study Abroad to develop a global reach to frame intercultural competence in terms of global mindset for Study Abroad participants. Nonetheless, online Study Abroad can be developed to enrich the potential of IHE to reach all cultures globally, especially in regions where U.S. Study Abroad has no substantial effect. Anthony Blinken, U.S. Secretary of State in 2022 affirmed that the U.S. government worked hard to preserve the opportunities offered by Study Abroad to learn and grow together during the pandemic, for example, U.S. education expanded the Critical Language Scholarship (CLS spark) to include a virtual version of the program, this scholarship provided an immersive class on global languages reaching new regions, prompting the government to double the funding to American colleges and universities for diversifying their international programs online (Blinken, 2022). The CLS spark program has been a success, a good example of immersion and competence. About 32,990 U.S. students participated in online global learning opportunities in 2020/21 and received academic credits for participating in the online program. In the 2019/20 session, 252 institutions participated in online global learning opportunities. In 2020, about 2,427 institutions were reported to have participated in online programs (Martel & Baer, 2023).

Since the 1920s, U.S. students have been studying abroad in western Europe, Garraty et al. (1969) narrate the history of U.S. students Study Abroad in Europe, as one that is aimed at obtaining specialized knowledge that is more readily available in other countries to broaden their minds beyond the limits of the classroom environment, for example, to speak a new language by immersion, or experience in politics, religion, socioeconomic level of the masses, and traditions. The sojourn abroad has been construed for language proficiency for U.S. students since the inaugural publication of the foreign language annals (Kinging, 2008). The connection of socially constructed emotions may be making students Study Abroad primarily in Europe, one of such constructs is the special relationship between the U.S. and the United Kingdom (UK). This relationship may be responsible

for attracting U.S. students to Study Abroad in the UK or the dominance of a language, especially for students who have Spanish background will be attracted to Study Abroad in Spain or Italy. Studying abroad involves physical, psychological, emotional, and attitudinal adjustment leading students to identify opportunities for intercultural competence development (Abrams & Hatch, 1960; Landis et al., 2003; Norris & Dwyer, 2005; Van Mol, 2022). The cultural shock is also expected to shoot off emotional reactions of innovative ideas for all students by building new bridges and taking a deeper dive into supporting an inclusive community for meaningful changes that create the opportunity for students to develop competence in the culture of other people. The idea of traveling out of a student's own country is to take advantage of the broadening effect and serve as an opportunity for instant stimuli that can widen their perspective and provide an occasion for immersion in the local culture and build lasting intercultural relationships. The opportunity to Study Abroad offers students a lifetime opportunity to experience life in other culturally different environments, and to see the world from the position of their host country or culture.

Understanding the impact language creates in developing the intercultural competence of U.S. students who study abroad in English speaking regions of western Europe such as such as United Kingdom, Ireland, Netherlands and those who study abroad in non-English speaking regions is the central focus of this study. Are there any significant differences between the two groups of students? What role did language play in developing students' cultural development in the different regions. The study adopts the sociocultural theory of Vygotsky (1978) which deals with the importance of culture and society in developing and shaping individuals. The framework also emphasizes the importance of sociocultural beliefs, as well as social context on language and cultural growth.

3. Methodology

The study employed a causal-comparative research design, investigating the differences in the pre – posttest (Salvatelli, 2019) conducted among students at a Southwestern public university in the United States. The pre-study students were held as the baseline group and the results were compared to the students' post study responses to a study abroad program. For validity purposes between the two points of collection of data, the study used Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) to determine if there are statistically significant differences in the pre and post data variable indicating the impact of the intervention. The choice of ANOVA is due to the categorical nature of study destinations.

Thus, students who participated in Study Abroad are examined by their levels of proficiency in cultural identity, cultural interest, cultural diversity, and development of worldview. The design is to provide evidence concerning the effect of a Study Abroad program on participants' intercultural competence development using a General Linear Model to determine the mean difference between region of study and intercultural competence development; the pre- and post-survey comparison in relation to their perceived levels of intercultural competence development on (i.e., cultural identity, cultural interest, cultural diversity, and development of worldview).

3.1. Research Question and Hypotheses

What role does the language of the host country/region play in developing intercultural competence among U.S. students participating in study abroad programs? Specifically, are there differences in intercultural competence gains—such as cultural identity, cultural interest, appreciation for cultural diversity, and worldview development—between students who study in English-speaking countries/regions and those who study in non-English-speaking countries/regions?

3.2. Hypothesis

U.S. students who participate in study abroad programs in non-English-speaking countries/regions exhibit greater gains in intercultural competence (cultural identity, cultural interest, appreciation for cultural diversity, and worldview development) compared to those who study in English-speaking countries/regions.

3.3. Study Population and Sample

The participants of this study were drawn from students who have previously participated in a Study Abroad program in 2022 to 2023. They responded to two (2) sets of questionnaires (pre-and post-study survey). A sampling frame of 36 students attempted and completed the online survey exercise representing a 12 percent return rate. In the pre-survey, participants were prompted to reflect on their perceived level of intercultural competence before they enrolled for a Study Abroad program. In the post-survey, participants were prompted to reflect on their gained intercultural competence, if any, after participating in a Study Abroad program. The researcher sorted and obtained the emails of students who have participated in a Study Abroad program in 2022 and 2023 from the Office of international program and study abroad of the Southwest university, totaling about 300 emails. The researcher sent out the surveys to the students and thereafter sent out reminders to encourage the students to participate in the study.

3.4. Research Procedures

The study started out the procedure with designing a survey using QuestionPro® (online survey software to create surveys and questionnaires) for students who have participated in a Study Abroad program in 2022 and 2023. The QuestionPro® contained both pre-and post-study questionnaires which were mailed to students who had participated in a study program. The participants were primed to reflect on their levels of intercultural competence before and after their participation in a Study Abroad program. The study highlighted the changes that occur in students' intercultural development using the difference between the pre-departure intercultural measurement and measurement of the post-study participation to establish the real transformation of students' development on intercultural competence.

4. Purpose of Study

As a perceived high-impact program in higher education, study abroad has been explored in this study for interrelationships with and the possibility of developing cultural identity, cultural interest in other cultures, cultural diversity, and worldview as the overall development of intercultural competence. Furthermore, this study examines how language significantly affects the positive development of intercultural competence. According to Abrams and Hatch (1960); a variation of scholarly quality from program to program and the need for cooperation and coordination study abroad is a legitimate and valuable aspect of higher education, i.e., precisely defined objectives with tightly designed programs where institutional goals can be derived. However, study abroad obviously needs more discovery of its potential and how this study abroad should be designed to broaden the opportunities in intercultural relationships that assist students deepen the role of language in developing intercultural competence. But there has been among institutions little coordination in establishing and administering programs and maintaining standards, seemingly lacking accountability. These objectives may include intellectual and professional development, general education, and global awareness. The issue of finance inevitably drives the direction of efficiency. Admittedly, educational institutions are not doing enough to integrate and sustain the foreign language of their students upon return to campus (Abrams & Hatch, 1960). The purpose of the study was to ascertain the difference between intercultural competence of students who participated in a study abroad program in English and non-English country or region.

Background and Development of the Intercultural Competence Scale

The process started with the development of Intercultural Competence Awareness and Susceptibility (ICAS) Scale of students of higher education instrument for determining the statistical power and validity of measuring intercultural competence development using a Study Abroad program. First, it was appropriate to determine what the purpose of the study wants to measure, i.e., defining the measure of reliability that represents proxies of variables which were not directly

observable, for example cultural identity. The study generated a pool of items and designed a scorable scale using the dispositions of intercultural competence as a guide. The study also considered the inclusion of validation items to reduce the effect of social desirability bias associated with solicited self-report surveys as well as ensuring that each item has a singular phenomenon to measure.

The study found that the concept of measurability in developing instruments for research purposes was fundamental. Resolving the gap in measuring the development of intercultural competence by language or region of study abroad of U.S. higher education is a vital process across the range of social research. Hence, the study set out to find a way to quantify the instrument item. In other words, developing intercultural competence can be measurable through the sub-scales of intercultural competence dispositions i.e., cultural identity, cultural diversity, cultural interest, and worldview. Many interesting variables like tolerance for ambiguity, behavior adjustment, and intercultural sensitivity are not directly observable abilities of students to develop intercultural competence. The study then explored the latent variable, which is the underlying construct that the scale is trying to quantify. Unfortunately, the latent variable is hypothetical and unmeasurable. The study affirmed four (4) sub-scales as sufficient latent variables for the definition of intercultural competence which includes developing - cultural identity, cultural diversity, cultural interest, and worldview while studying abroad.

This means that the instrument's content validity is inferred from how the scales were constructed. The construction of the instrument attempts to reflect the latent variable which is the underlying construction that the scale item pool is intended to address or measure. While reliability is a fundamental issue in psychological measurement (DeVellis, 2003). The reliability of measurement signifies the degree to which a score shows accuracy, consistency, and replicability. Each single scale item is intended to measure a single idea or phenomenon, while the power gained from improving reliability depends on several factors such as sample size, probability of type 1 error, and effect size but most importantly the dimensionality of the construct itself.

Theoretical perspective of this study is aligned to the transformation of students from their ethnocentric tendencies of isolation, and stereotypic behavior to ethnorelative stage where they develop skill for a second language, accept cultural differences, and incorporate independent worldview. Some scholars (Ficarra, 2017 & Garraty et al., 1969) have attributed the lack of worldview before enrolling in a study abroad program as a roadblock developing intercultural competence for many students. It is important to have some knowledge of international relations and personal readiness before going to study abroad. An independent worldview will motivate students to strive in developing local tradition, custom, develop a well-kept journal, make friendships, learn a new language, immersion in the local community, plan expeditions, have a guidebook, avoid distraction, read local newspapers, record all miscellaneous information (dates, places, venues, good descriptions).

5. Data Collection

The pre-and post-study data was collected via electronic means from students who have previously participated in a Study Abroad program. The data consists of pre-survey questionnaires about their level of intercultural competence before their participation in a Study Abroad program, while the post-survey questionnaire consists of perceived gains of intercultural competence if any, in addition to the destination of their study abroad - English or non-English speaking country or region.

Data Analysis

The ICAS instrument has already assigned numeric scores to the data that was obtained in this study and SPSS 29 version was used to clean up the database for analysis. The study used descriptive analysis to report the central tendency and variations. The General Linear Model was adopted to analyze the outcome of data collected and to ascertain the correlation between students who elect to study in English-speaking country/region and students who elect to study in non-English speaking

country/region to measure their different levels of intercultural competence development. In other words, the study investigates the role of language in developing intercultural competence. The study preferred the use of students who have participated in a study abroad program and have returned to campus as the sample population. A total of 36 students who have participated in a Study Program completed and returned the pre-and post-Study Abroad survey out of over 300 students invited to participate, representing a 12 percent response rate. Female participants were 69 percent, male participants were 24 percent, while nonbinary participants were 3 percent and participants who prefer not to say their gender were 3 percent. 39 percent of all participants were within the ages of 18 – 22, 36 percent were within the ages of 23 – 27, 6 percent of participants were within the ages of 28 – 32, 19 percent were age 33 and above.

Table 1. Language.

		Frequency	Precent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	English	22	61.1	61.1	61.1
	Non-English	14	39.9	38.9	100.00
	Total	36	100.00	100.00	

The sample population comprised of undergraduate, masters and doctoral students. Undergraduates represented 58 percent; masters represented 35 percent while doctoral students represented 7 percent. Undergraduate seniors were 78 percent, while 77 percent of master's students were in their first year of study and doctoral students in their first year were 87 percent. The study adopted a free sampling method to select participants.

6. Summary of Results

The table below shows the results of one-way Analysis of Variance, (ANOVA) where the dependent variable is intercultural development (differences in pre- and post-tests for cultural identity, cultural interest, cultural diversity, and worldview) and the variable is language (English speaking and non-English speaking) are the independent variables. Below is a breakdown of the key information:

Table 2. Role of language/region of study in aiding intercultural competency development. *Test of in-between Subject tests. Dependent variable: Intercultural Development.*

Source	Type III	df	Mean Square	F	Sig
Sums of Squares					
Corrected model	.003	1	.003	.000	.993
Intercept	291.559	1	291.559	7.926	.008
Language	.003	1	.003	.000	.993
Error	1250.747	34	36.787		
Total	1557.000	36			
Corrected Total	1250.750				

R Squared = .000 (Adjusted R Squared = .029).

6.1. Corrected Model

Sum of Squares: The corrected model has a sum of squares of 0.003 which is extremely low, indicating that the model explains almost no variation in the dependent variable. This suggests that the predictor variable in the model "language or region of study" contributes little to explaining the differences in intercultural competence scores among students. Since the corrected model sum of squares is almost zero, this implies that the predictor variable "language or region of study" does not significantly impact the outcome variable (intercultural competence). In other words, language does

not appear to meaningfully explain or predict intercultural competence development. The students' choice of studying in an English-speaking or non-English-speaking region had negligible influence on their intercultural competence scores.

The R-squared value is derived from the ratio of the model sum of squares to the total sum of squares. Since the model sum of squares is almost zero, the R-squared value for this model is also 0.000 indicating that "language or region of study" alone is not a useful predictor of intercultural competence. This insignificance suggests that other factors may be responsible for variation in intercultural competence such as the duration of the study abroad experience, previous international experience, or students' personal motivations for studying abroad.

Mean Square: Also 0.003, calculated by dividing the sum of squares by its degrees of freedom ($df = 1$). It implies that the predictor variable "language or region of study" does not contribute significantly to explaining the variance in the outcome variable (intercultural competence). This aligns with the p-value (Sig.) of 0.993 for "language, or region of study" which is not statistically significant. Together, these results indicate that whether a student chose to study in an English-speaking or non-English-speaking country/region would not impact their intercultural competence in a meaningful way in this study.

Comparison with Error Mean Square: The Error Mean Square (the Mean Square of the residuals) is 36.787, which is much larger than the Corrected Model Mean Square of 0.003. This large difference indicates that almost all the variance in intercultural competence is due to error or unexplained factors rather than the predictor variable.

When the Error Mean Square is much higher than the Model Mean Square, it suggests that the model is not effective in capturing the underlying variance in the dependent variable.

Implication for Model Significance: The low Mean Square for the corrected model, combined with the high Error Mean Square, leads to an extremely low F-value (0.000) and a non-significant p-value (0.993). This lack of significance means that the model, as specified with "language or region of study" as the sole predictor, does not significantly explain any variation in intercultural competence.

Intercept: The intercept's sum of squares (291.559) suggests that there is a meaningful baseline level of intercultural competence among students that does not depend on the language or region of the study-abroad destination, which implies that students gained their intercultural competence from other variables. The intercept has a significant p-value (Sig.) of 0.008, indicating that the baseline level of intercultural competence is statistically different from zero. This implies that even if "language or region of study" as a variable does not contribute to intercultural competence, students still have a significant baseline level of intercultural development. This could be due to factors not included in the model, such as previous international exposure, personality traits, or educational background.

6.2. Language/Region of Study

Sum of Squares: 0.003, identical to the model's sum of squares.

Mean Square: 0.003.

F-value: 0.000 (suggesting no explanatory power of the language variable on intercultural development).

Significance (Sig.): A p-value of 0.993 indicates that language does not significantly contribute to predicting intercultural development.

Interpretation: The analysis shows that language as a predictor variable does not significantly impact intercultural development in this sample. The intercept is statistically significant, indicating a baseline level of intercultural development, but this baseline level is not affected by the language variable in the model.

6.3. Error

Sum of Squares: 1250.747, representing the unexplained variance in the model.

Mean Square: 36.787, derived from dividing the error sum of squares by the degrees of freedom (34).

Model Summary (R Squared and Adjusted R Squared): R Squared: 0.000, indicating that the model explains none of the variances in intercultural development. Adjusted R Squared: -0.029, suggesting that adding the language variable reduces the model's explanatory power due to its lack of significance.

Table 3. – Intercultural competence development. *Intercultural Development.*

Language	Mean	N	Std. Deviation
English	2.9091	22	4.33050
Non- English	2.9286	14	8.11896
Total	2.9167	36	5.97794

7. Key Findings

A total of 61 percent of students choose English speaking country/region, while 39 percent of students choose non-English speaking country/region as destination for their study abroad program. The study did not expect that language would be a non-predictable factor in developing intercultural competence in developing intercultural competence. Especially for students who study in non-English speaking country/region which may offer more exposure to unfamiliar cultural norms and perspectives, leading to in-depth worldview development. While the significant effect of language on the region of study shows that the decision to study in an English-speaking versus a non-English-speaking country is a key factor. This choice might be driven by the perceived comfort in language and familiarity with the culture, with non-English-speaking countries offering more diverse intercultural experiences. It is possible that the limitation of short duration in study abroad programs would seriously hinder the development of a second language.

In conclusion, the study failed to accept the hypothesis that there is a statistically mean difference for students who study abroad in English-speaking country/region and those who study abroad in non-English speaking country/region in terms of developing intercultural competence. The mean intercultural development score is remarkably similar between students who studied in English-speaking countries (2.9091) and those who studied in non-English-speaking countries (2.9236). The difference in means is minimal, suggesting that on average, students in both groups developed intercultural competence at a similar level.

The standard deviation is much larger for students who studied in non-English-speaking countries (8.12) compared to those in English-speaking countries (4.33). This indicates that the intercultural development scores for students studying in non-English countries are more spread out, meaning that some students had much higher or lower scores compared to the average, while students in English-speaking countries had scores that were more consistently clustered around the mean. On average, students who studied in English-speaking countries and non-English-speaking countries had almost identical levels of intercultural competence development. However, there was more variability in the scores for those studying in non-English-speaking countries, indicating a wider range of experiences or outcomes for these students. Lastly, it was found that the four attributes of intercultural competence (cultural identity, cultural interest, cultural diversity, and worldview) influence overall student intercultural competence development based on the statistical analysis conducted.

7.2. Conclusion and Recommendations

The increasing movement of people to places other than their country of birth has changed global demographics, thereby creating a new order of intercultural competence. Intercultural competence has become a reflection of understanding cultures other than one’s traditional culture. In recent times, institutions of higher education have been responding to the increasing demand for cultural competence through the development of intercultural knowledge (Abbe et al., 2007). This study extracts its purpose on the new challenge of developing intercultural competence through

research. In other words, the study contributes to knowledge that seeks to determine the role of language in developing intercultural competence.

As a legitimate and valuable aspect of higher education in terms of precisely defined objectives, Study Abroad obviously need more discovery of its potential and requires institutionalized cooperation and coordination to broaden the opportunities that a global culture can bring to prepare students in this era of globalization.

7.3. Limitations of Study

This study was limited to participation over one summer, the study could have adopted a longitudinal study longer than one summer to enable it to recruit a higher number of students who can participate in the study. Program interventions must be intentionally organized to allow the achievement of intercultural training which happens under certain circumstances of intercultural pedagogy, cultural mentoring that are all part of the study design. This study has identified lack of time to plan for the researcher and short duration of time for the students to develop intercultural competence as the major challenge of most Study Abroad programs.

Other future studies should find the number of students that are bilingual to determine the correlations of bilingual skills in the entire study and to seek correlations to speak multiple languages with study abroad destinations in terms of communication, relationship building and ability to foster higher academic achievement. Closely aligned, is to find the number of students that are first-generation in their family and seek out the correlations with study abroad programs in terms of adaptability, motivation, and the advantage of familiar capital.

Additionally, the implication of a small sample size can have limiting outcomes of the research for in-depth investigation, interpretation, and implication of results, such as reliability or the probability of a sampling error.

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