

Adapting Success: Development of a Sustainable Short-term Study Abroad Program Design for  
Community College

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A Capstone Project

Presented to

The Faculty of the UVA School of Education and Human Development

University of Virginia

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In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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by

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APPROVAL OF THE CAPSTONE PROJECT

This capstone project, *Adapting Success: Development of a Sustainable Short-term Study Abroad Program Design for Community College*, has been approved by the Graduate Faculty of the UVA School of Education and Human Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

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## I – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Co-Chairs – Dr. Matthew Wheelock and Dr. Peter Youngs

Short-term study abroad is a relatively new trend of international education among students enrolled in four-year institutions, and an even more recent one among community colleges. In this context, a growing number of community colleges in the U.S. is focusing on study abroad to strengthen their existing programs and provide experiences for students to develop cultural competence and improve second language (L2) skills that are deemed increasingly relevant in today's interdependent and competitive world (Green & Siaya, 2005; Irwin, 2004).

Though an increasing number of higher educational institutions are implementing short-term study abroad to widen and strengthen their curriculum, there remains limited qualitative research on the instructional practices of these educational sojourns. The present research study employed qualitative methods to explore how the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program 2019/2021* approached instructional practices (e.g., in-class and out-of-class immersive learning activities, homestays, pre-program services, including use of L2 and culture learning strategies) to identify those features of the program design that Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC) could reproduce in a new short-term study abroad that could be designed to expand its students' oral proficiency and cultural awareness.

In order to elucidate the interactions of UVA L2 learners with knowledgeable members of the host culture in Valencia (e.g., instructors, host family members, tour guides) this study employed a conceptual framework that was adapted from the Language Socialization Theory. This framework provided sociolinguistic and cultural understandings of the effectiveness of those interactions.



The study used data from Zoom interviews with faculty, administrators, and L2 participating students. It also used data from documents and student and faculty surveys. Further, examining the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* and how to use it as a model applicable to PVCC, the research questions that drove this investigation explored how:

- program design factors affected students' perceptions of oral proficiency and L2 language use beyond the classroom environment during study abroad,
- out-of-class interactions during study abroad were associated with students' understanding of language and culture learning,
- instructors taught and used language and culture learning strategies during immersive study abroad,
- students responded to using language and culture learning strategies during immersive study abroad.

The findings revealed that the pre-program services, primarily the on-site orientation, largely supported L2 participating learners to cope with culture shock, helping them adjust to the new culture and enabling exchanges with its members (e.g., host families, members of the target culture at large).

While the homestays represented the most supportive short-term immersive network for L2 language and culture awareness development, other networks (e.g., group members of the host culture at large in various contexts) were also important. For most of the participating L2 learners, the effectiveness of the support from the homestay appears to be associated with the accessibility, authenticity, and frequency of the interactions with members of the host family.

Further, the participating faculty demonstrated adaptability and creativity in developing the curriculum by exploring immersive learning activities (e.g., simulations, guided learning

activities, assessments) that provided realistic sociocultural contexts for L2 learning and cultural awareness development while bridging the gap between L2 learners and the target culture.

In addition, students' use of language and cultural learning strategies facilitated their L2 and cultural awareness learning regardless of their Spanish level at the beginning of their study abroad. Moreover, their progress was associated with the level of comfort they experienced using Spanish with native speakers. Intermediate L2 students experienced more discomfort at the beginning of their study abroad than more advanced L2 learners. However, both groups reported that they made progress throughout the length of their participation abroad.

Lastly, the distinctive characteristics of the PVCC context that merit the adaptation of the identified *UVA in Valencia Summer Program's* features align with those of the L2 learners that constitute the problem of practice of this investigation.

The findings point to several recommendations, highlighted below.

- PVCC should consider adapting a short-term study abroad framework suitable to its students' characteristics and needs, including financial support mechanisms to ensure affordability.
- PVCC should consider adapting pre-program services: pre-departure and on-site orientations, including culture- and L2-learning strategies.
- PVCC should consider adapting in-country activities to foster language and culture learning.
- PVCC should consider incorporating post-program activities in the new short-term study abroad program to enable L2 learners to reflect, assess, and share their experiences, insights, and learning upon return.

## II – STUDY DESCRIPTION

This section of the capstone project is organized into four chapters. Chapter 1 (Introduction and Problem of Practice) starts with an overview of L2 learning strategies; it continues with a description of the nature of study abroad, a detailed description of the problem of practice, and concludes with the research questions that drove this investigation. Chapter 2 (Literature Review) gives an overview of pertinent research on L2 learning and use while studying abroad. It then summarizes research on the involvement of community colleges in study abroad. It concludes with an overview of research on second language socialization in study abroad, including a description of the conceptual framework. Chapter 3 (Methodology) offers reasoning for using qualitative research methods, including the paradigmatic assumptions of this kind of research. It also describes the site and participants, the process of data collection, and the methods used to analyze these data. Finally, chapter 4 (Findings) offers a series of assertions addressing the research questions, with supporting evidence obtained during the data collection process.

## Chapter 1: Introduction and Problem of Practice

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

Some L2 acquisition theories are rooted in the learner’s innate capacity for language learning (e.g., Chomsky’s Universal Grammar). Others emphasize the function of the environment, especially opportunities to interact with native speakers who may adjust their language and interaction patterns to address the learner’s needs (e.g., Skinner’s Behaviorism applied to language and culture). Yet others concentrate on learners’ engagement with the broader social context in which cognitive development, including language development and cultural awareness, transpires as a result of social interactions (e.g., Vygotsky’s notion of Zones of Proximal Development; Mitchell et al., 2013). Building on these theories and contending that L2 teaching has become more learner-focused and interactive, Cohen, Kappler, and Paige (2019) point out that there has been<sup>1</sup> an emphasis on supporting students to take more responsibility for meeting their own language learning needs and become less dependent on the instructor of the class. Some of this attention is focused on raising instructors’ and students’ awareness of strategies to learn and use a second language as an essential part of good language learning, including studying an L2 abroad. “The basic tenet of the strategy movement is that anyone can successfully learn and use a foreign language, given enough time and active application of strategies” (Cohen et al., 2019, p. 41). These authors, Cohen et al. (2019), also point out that culture and language learning strategies can apply to any geographical region or culture.

The present research is a qualitative study of the *UVA in Valencia Program*, including empirical data collection from UVA students and faculty who participated in the program in summer 2019 and summer 2021. Using the *UVA in Valencia Program* as a model on which to build, the broader purpose of this investigation is to adapt and apply the findings to the context of Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC) to support the design of a short-term study abroad.

This first chapter includes an overview of L2 learning strategies, focusing on helping L2 learners take on an active role in their learning. This is followed by a description of the nature of study abroad, highlighting some advantages and complexities of this type of L2 learning experience, as suggested by research findings. After summarizing several short-term study abroad programs that seem to have successfully implemented L2 and culture learning strategies, the first chapter discusses the local context of the problem and provides a detailed description of the problem of practice, namely, the low rates of Spanish speaking performance and cultural awareness as exhibited by some PVCC students after completion of the intermediate level Spanish sequence. It concludes with a description of the study's purpose, emphasizing the role of authentic social interactions in the study abroad context and the significance of implementing short-term study abroad opportunities to address PVCC students' Spanish oral proficiency and cultural awareness needs.

### **L2 Learning Strategies**

Second language learning strategies are the steps that learners take to learn the target language. These are the specific actions, conscious or semi-conscious thoughts and behaviors, or techniques that the students use to enhance their learning (e.g., looking for conversation partners or comforting themselves when facing a challenging language task or a socially awkward

moment due to cultural differences). Some of the most salient strategies are classified into four functional groups: cognitive, metacognitive, affective, or social (Chamot, 2001; Cohen et al., 2019; Oxford, 1990). While this classification focuses on the purpose or role each strategy plays, L2 learners can use many of these strategies simultaneously.

### **Cognitive Strategies**

These strategies center on analysis and reason. They refer to the mental manipulation students undertake in the process of learning and using the target language. Learners form internal mental codes (e.g., images formed through the use of visual techniques to facilitate L2 vocabulary learning and speech sound retention after watching a Spanish drama) and revise them to receive and produce the message in the target language. The tasks involved in learning a language include identifying, retaining, grouping, and storing the language material. Those relevant to using the language encompass retrieving language material and rehearsing, understanding, and/or producing words, phrases, or other L2 elements. Some specific cognitive strategies involve using prior knowledge to understand new material; mental, oral, or written summarization of language information; and using visual imagery to learn new information or to address a problem (Chamot, 1987; Cohen et al., 2019; Oxford, 1990).

### **Metacognitive Strategies**

These types of strategies enable learners to plan, arrange, and evaluate their L2 learning. In the process, students play an active role ideally as they plan what they will do, keeping track of how things are going, as well as evaluating their performance on any given task. Learners may plan strategies by rehearsing what they are going to say or writing planning notes. They may consciously choose vocabulary and grammar structures that they will use. As students engage in

specific tasks, they may self-correct their language or compensate for challenges by paraphrasing or gesturing (Chamot, 1987; Cohen et al., 2019; Oxford, 1990).

### **Affective Strategies**

These strategies aid learners to control their feelings, motivations, and attitudes and can help them lower anxiety and provide self-encouragement; for example, if learners are preparing for a job interview in the target language, they may encourage themselves to speak in the target language despite their fear of making grammatical mistakes and reward themselves for good performances. Cohen et al. (2019) indicate that students' capacity to self-motivate is a major influence on success, highlighting that, despite adverse circumstances, some learners are more successful than others at staying committed to the goals they have established for themselves.

### **Social Strategies**

L2 learners can choose to interact with other L2 learners and native speakers. Social strategies may involve identifying and using conversation starters, searching for instances to work jointly with others on specific tasks, and initiating inquiries. For example, a learner studying Spanish while living in the U.S. may identify strategies to begin a conversation with Spanish tourists in Washington, D.C. These strategies may be particularly useful for L2 learners studying abroad since initiating a conversation is an important way to create opportunities for language and cultural interactions (Cohen et al., 2019; Cohen & Shively, 2007; Duff, 2007; Shively, 2011, 2013, 2018).

### **Study Abroad Programs**

The term “study abroad” usually refers to a trip, short- or long-term, that is designed to achieve educational goals. As indicated by the Institute for the International Education of Students (IES Abroad; 2020), study abroad programs are often embedded in courses offered by a

specific college or university to provide students a more in-depth worldwide perspective and experience. Study abroad programs feature different designs. Some study abroad programs may last eight weeks or less, while others can last for a semester or entire school year. Both types of programs may allow students to live away from home in homestay exchanges abroad. Further, study abroad programs can help students learn foreign languages by immersing them in an environment surrounded by the target language and culture, often unfamiliar to them, and thus positioning them to adapt to a language and learn it relatively quickly.

The L2 language learning strategies described above can help study abroad learners develop and strengthen the conscious and semi-conscious thoughts and behaviors<sup>2</sup> needed to improve their knowledge and understanding of the target language and culture (Cohen et al., 2019). For example, L2 students who are getting ready to meet their host families for their study abroad can rehearse their self-introduction to make it smooth, appropriate, and with minimal errors. If their effort is on consciously planning and strategizing, they may also serve as a metacognitive strategy. In particular, focusing on what they want to do can help L2 learners identify factors that can help and/or hinder them in their learning efforts. Such practice can also help L2 learners reduce the anxiety they might experience by the prospect of meeting their host families for the first time (Cohen et al., 2019). Thus, their preparation represents an affective strategy. Lastly, the rehearsal of a self-introduction can function as a social strategy, since the more successful they become at self-introductions, the easier it may be for them to introduce themselves to others, and the more motivated they may feel as a result. Consequently, successful self-introductions can lead them to seek out more interactions with native speakers during their study abroad experience.



Furthermore, it has been generally assumed that students improve L2 skills over time during their study abroad because their immersive exposure provides optimal conditions for L2 learning (Pellegrino, 1998). This is echoed by students' perceptions of their experiences. Students feel that they improve while they are abroad and report high gains in language skills, especially in the areas of speaking and listening (Pellegrino, 1998). While this seems obvious, research has reported a correlation between self-perception of language gain and standardized proficiency measures (Dewey et al., 2013). Self-assessment has been demonstrated to be a valuable tool for showing advancement; students are able to gauge their progress with language learning using assessment tools (e.g., language contact profiles [LCPs], language learning surveys; Dewey et al., 2013).

Moreover, students' gains are also reported in empirical studies. Davidson (2010) found a strong correlation between the length of time students spent abroad learning Russian and their progress in speaking, reading, and listening during periods of two, four, and nine months. Further, as short-term study abroad increases in popularity, L2 learners' gains are also reflected in research on study abroad over short periods. Yager (1998) examined a group of students studying in Mexico for seven weeks who showed significant improvement in spoken Spanish in one of three categories (overall, grammar, pronunciation), as judged by native speakers. Llanes and Botana (2015) reported significant gains in Spanish listening comprehension for 12 American college students in a 5-week study abroad program in Costa Rica.

However, empirical research also reports mixed results. Some researchers point out that study abroad can promote oral proficiency and confidence in learners' speaking ability (Dewey et al., 2013). Others note that many students make considerable improvements in their target language (TL) abilities during study abroad, but some make relatively little or no progress

(Shively, 2018). Yet others have made stronger claims: “Research on L2 study abroad has shown that the popular concept of fast and effortless improvement in proficiency is vastly exaggerated at best, and perhaps more myth than reality” (Dekeyser, 2010, p. 80). These mixed results can be the effect of many determining factors, which may include: the quality of interactions with members of the host TL and culture, including interactions with the host family, the impact that too much time spent with first language (L1) peers can have on language- and culture-learning outcomes (Megan & Back, 2007), the difficulty of establishing contacts with members of the host culture, or the lack of L2 learners’ confidence.

In short, these findings reveal the complexity of L2 study abroad programs and imply the importance of addressing specific factors in the study abroad program design phase.

Consequently, faculty and program administrators need to provide adequate foundational preparations at home campuses that will position L2 learners for a successful study abroad experience. This is addressed by Cohen, Paige, Shively, Emit, and Hoff (2005) in their research about maximizing study abroad through language and culture strategies. They hypothesized that students were not obtaining the benefits they could have from study abroad due to their lack of language and culture learning strategies and of a consistent plan for learning about culture or developing intercultural communication skills. In their research, they focused on developing strategies that would help SA students learn language and culture more effectively. Some of these are the cognitive, metacognitive, affective, and social strategies reported in Cohen et al. (2019).

### **Study Abroad Examples**

Several study abroad programs seem to have successfully incorporated some of the language and culture learning strategies noted above; they include the short-term summer study

abroad programs at the University of Minnesota, the University of Texas (UT) in Austin, and the University of Virginia, the latter being the focus of this investigation.

One of the short-term study abroad programs offered by UT Austin includes faculty-led programs such as the *Language and Culture Summer Program in Salvador, Brazil*. This short-term study abroad (8 weeks) is both immersive and intensive and gives students an in-depth look at the Portuguese language and Brazilian culture. Students attend language classes in the morning and dedicate the afternoon to exploring culture through workshops and lectures. The program also includes several three-day excursions. In addition, students are housed in homestays with local families (UT, 2020). As noted by the program director, “Some of the host moms have been receiving students for 20 years. They really like what they are doing and students get a real nice slice of life by hanging out with the families” (UT, 2020, 3:10). These immersive and intensive involvements align with Cohen et al.’s (2019) strategies in that they help students 1) to explore the potential value of homestay and social interactions along with the possible shortcomings and responsibilities involved; 2) to think realistically about their expectations for interacting with host families and native speakers; and 3) to consider potential conflicts in homestay and social situations and possible ways to resolve them.

A similar short-term study abroad is the *Study and Intern in Toledo Program* hosted by the University of Minnesota (UMN) in Toledo, Spain. This summer program offers many of the features included in the UT and UVA summer programs (e.g., language and culture classes, culture workshops, homestays, weekend exploratory excursions). In addition, the UMN in Toledo program enables students to participate in an internship during the length of their short-term study in banks, governmental bureaus, hospitals, and libraries (UMN, 2020). Providing this opportunity to L2 learners is important because learning abroad is often impacted by the extent

to which study abroad students participate in out-of-class interactions and by the social networks that they build with local members of the host culture (Shively, 2018). Establishing those social networks can be supported by the implementation of Cohen et al.'s social strategies.

Furthermore, some community colleges offer study abroad opportunities in the form of short-term summer and winter/spring break courses that include L2 instruction, among other disciplines. These study abroad offerings are often part of a consortium of community colleges based on local geography (e.g., California Colleges for International Education (CCIE), Maricopa Community Colleges Study Abroad (MCC), the latter based in Arizona). Adhering to the community college "open enrollment" philosophy and low-cost education, these study abroad offerings are available to college students of all ages, aptitudes, and backgrounds, including a great percentage of low income and minority students. To address the financial challenge that these students can face while trying to take advantage of study abroad opportunities, these community college consortiums work with the state and other organizations to secure funds to establish scholarships for those students (CCIE, 2021; MCC, 2021).

One example of these study abroad offerings is the program that includes six-week courses offered by Maricopa Community Colleges Study Abroad in Japan during the early summer. Students can take beginning Japanese conversation I and II and a class in culture, focusing on international trade. Learners can live with Japanese host families for part of their sojourn, participate in weekend business workshops with Japanese students at Kyushu University, join visits to a shrine and museums, and partake in anime-related activities, as well as other cultural events (MCC, 2021).

**Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC) (Local context of the problem)**

Piedmont Virginia Community College (PVCC, 2020) is a comprehensive, public institution of post-secondary education that offers more than 40 academic programs, conferring associate degrees, certificates, continuing education, and workforce training. As part of the Virginia Community College System, PVCC has served the City of Charlottesville and Central Virginia since 1972. PVCC (2020) serves the educational needs of more than 7,000 credit-earning students<sup>3</sup> each year. The majority attend part-time (80%), are female (57%), and are age 24 or younger (74%). Each year, more than 2,000 PVCC students transfer to a four-year college to earn their bachelor's degrees. Some of the transfer programs include Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, and Associate of Applied Science Degrees. These degrees generally take two years of full-time study to complete and require 60-72 credit hours.

Certain degree programs at PVCC (e.g., Associate of Arts: Liberal Arts, Fine Arts, Music, Theater & Drama) include a foreign language requirement. Students are required to complete up to four courses of a foreign language elective, including two beginning- and two intermediate-level courses. While most students begin their foreign language sequence at the basic level (i.e., Spanish 101), many students have high school experience (75%) or heritage-speaker ability (10%) that places them directly into a level higher than 101. Certain Associate of Science degrees (such as General Studies, Business Administration, and Education) require that students complete a number of elective courses in humanities, and students can complete those requirements by taking a foreign language. PVCC's foreign language offerings include American Sign Language, French, German, Japanese, Latin, and Spanish.

## **Spanish Language Program**

PVCC's Spanish language program has two full-time and three adjunct faculty members who teach an average of 375 students every year. The faculty is committed to helping their students develop Spanish language skills and cultural awareness through instructional immersion strategies that are part of a communicative, student-centered, content- and task-based instructional environment that emphasizes interaction, conversation, and language use, rather than learning about language in isolated clusters (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

The beginning-level courses (i.e., Spanish 101 and Spanish 102) are designed for students to use their newly acquired skills to communicate in Spanish in a realistic and culturally appropriate fashion with emphasis placed on speaking, listening, reading, and writing. The Spanish language program expects students to be able to carry out a range of communicative tasks and functions by the end of the two-semester beginning sequence (See Appendix A for full description).

The primary purpose of the intermediate-level courses (i.e., Spanish 201 and Spanish 202) is to develop, through comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing, students' ability and confidence to communicate in the Spanish language (See Appendix B for a complete description of the courses' objectives).

Moreover, the faculty of PVCC's Spanish language program designs these intermediate-level courses to be a springboard so that students will acquire practical communicative skills and be prepared to take subsequent courses in Spanish language and culture (e.g., advanced grammar, culture and civilization, introduction to literature); to discuss culture, history, language, and literature in the target language; and to successfully participate in study abroad.

These goals are in line with the guidelines established for intermediate-level speakers of Spanish by the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL, 2012) and the Virginia Department of Education (2014). PVCC language programs use these guidelines to inform Spanish L2 learners' goals about language and culture. At the intermediate level, the speakers of L2 Spanish should be able to 1) carry out daily communicative tasks in the target language, such as the exchange of basic information related to social situations: work, school, recreation; 2) express personal information about self, family, home, daily activities, interests, and personal preferences, as well as physical and social needs, such as food, shopping, travel, lodging, and broader themes; and 3) communicate about a variety of themes, expressing ideas by combining and recombining known elements and conversational input to produce responses in several sentences or small paragraph-length structures. The speaking skills of those PVCC students included in this capstone project are below the expected level. While PVCC students do not play an active role in this research, they serve as motivation for the study, which will focus on the *UVA in Valencia Program*.

Furthermore, PVCC's language program is designed based on to the belief that the knowledge students acquire from the practices and perspectives of the people of the culture linked to the language studied can help them better understand their own self and culture and strengthen their critical thinking skills. This is an outcome our program seeks to deliver. Cultural self-awareness is the foundation of intercultural competence because it enables us to understand that culture influences all of our interactions and that culture is not merely something found in others (Cohen et al., 2019). In addition, it enables us to compare and contrast our own culture(s) with that of others, as well as to predict those areas where cultural frictions may be the most likely to occur and which frictions may be the most challenging (Cohen et al., 2019).

Further, the faculty makes efforts to help PVCC's Spanish learners gain cultural awareness. Since language develops from social interactions, L2 learners cannot truly learn the language without learning about its culture and interacting with native speakers. Nevertheless, the time dedicated to exploring culture can be limited by the fast pace of the Spanish language courses we offer at PVCC, especially the online courses, which primarily focus on completing the established curriculum which emphasizes language skills. Notwithstanding this limitation and supported by the cultural guidelines stated in the Standards for Foreign Language Learning of the ACTFL (2012), PVCC's language faculty designs learning activities that lead students to 1) understand the relationship between the practices and perspectives of the people from the Hispanic cultures and 2) understand the relationship between products and attitudes of the Hispanic cultures.

Furthermore, Spanish learners at PVCC are encouraged to join the Spanish Club to develop and practice their Spanish speaking ability in a relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere during weekly conversations outside the classroom. Students of any skill level, from beginning to native speakers, are welcome to participate in fun and engaging activities while enjoying each other's company.

In addition, some PVCC language faculty have made efforts to provide their students with short-term cultural exploration opportunities abroad; however, these offerings are seldom linked to credit-awarding courses and are only offered occasionally.

### **Study Abroad Experiences Offered by PVCC**

In their most recent educational, noncredit-awarding travel abroad, which took place in late spring 2019, several L2 faculty from PVCC led two-week cultural exploration trips to provide their students and friends of the college with firsthand experiences of the culture related



to the L2 language they teach at the home campus (i.e., the French instructor took a group of her students to France; two Spanish instructors, Dr. Kempes<sup>4</sup> and the main researcher of this investigation, took their students to Costa Rica).

In association with EF (Education First) College Study Tours, the Spanish instructors led an EF tour to Costa Rica. They spent 14 days with a group of 22 participants, including students (some of whom were L2 Spanish learners) and friends of the college. The main objective of this travel abroad was to provide the participants with the opportunity to explore the Costa Rican tropical environment, including endangered ecosystems and rainforest preserves, and to explore culture while visiting various regions of the country. In addition, the trip provided Spanish learners with opportunities to practice their Spanish speaking skills while interacting with native speakers in natural settings.

Participants learned about pineapple and coffee farming and visited different neotropical habitats such as the Monteverde cloud forest reserve, the rain forest, and the transitional forest of the central Pacific region. They also hiked up volcanoes and down waterfalls. They traveled with diverse and friendly groups from Tennessee Wesleyan University and Walters State Community College, planting trees together to build biological corridors and discovering the extraordinary biodiversity of a country the size of West Virginia.

Because language learning was not the main focus of the trip, it was not supported by any specific program component. However, some students practiced Spanish with the locals through serendipitous service encounters (e.g., ordering a coffee or a meal, exchanging currency, mailing postcards, and/or adding minutes to a cell phone) and even those who had never studied the language certainly mastered the quintessential Costa Rican slogan: *Pura vida, mae*.

Attesting to the value of their experiences, PVCC student participants, some of whom

had never traveled abroad, reported that the most enriching aspects of the trip included<sup>5</sup> “exploring another culture, immersion in a different language” (Interview, PVCC students, 5/24/19). These comments highlight the potential benefits of these types of trips to explore culture and language.

Other educational travel abroad efforts were part of credit-awarding courses that, while they examined culture, were not intended for Spanish language development because they were taught in English. In 2012, I designed an interdisciplinary survey course on Latin American culture and civilization, which I taught in 2012 and 2014 onboard the MV Explorer ship that took my students and me to explore many relevant ports in Latin America. With the support of a grant from the PVCC Educational Foundation, and a partnership with Semester at Sea Voyages program, housed at UVA at the time, we sailed twice to Latin America on trips that lasted for three weeks during winter vacation. In addition to introducing students to the richness of Latin American Culture and Civilization, through a combination of theory and practice, the nature of the course allowed me to adapt its content, reading material, and discussions to the regions visited. The first expedition took the class on the Amazon Exploration Voyage, during which students had the opportunity to explore some of the Caribbean islands (i.e., Dominican Republic, Dominica, Grenada, Puerto Rico) and navigate the Amazon River to Manaus while learning about the iconic status of the river and the diverse cultural riches of those regions. For the second voyage, the class explored many countries in Central America, including passing through the Panama Canal.

The practical component of the courses was based on direct interactions students had with the many people and places we visited and the theory was based on interdisciplinary readings that used the lens of Anthropology, Sociology, History, literature, and film to examine

the diverse cultural, artistic, political, and social events that have taken place in or have been inspired by these regions, spanning the early period of the Spanish conquest until the present day. Although the courses were taught in English, students who knew some Spanish and/or were taking Spanish courses had the opportunity to practice and improve their speaking skills with native Spanish speakers whom they met on land. At the end of their trip, some students wrote in their course evaluation that the experiences they had on the trip helped them to understand better the world in which they live and their role as global citizens.

In short, the shared enthusiasm shown by the participants for credit- and noncredit-awarding short-travel abroad implies its educational value and potential to address the L2 Spanish language and cultural awareness needs of PVCC students. The positive comments of the participants attest to the importance of this type of cultural exploratory trip and the need to provide this opportunity regularly to address PVCC's current lack of a well-planned study abroad program. These trips could be part of more structured instructional sojourns, such as short-term L2 study abroad, including credit-awarding language and culture courses that PVCC could offer every summer.

Further, every year during office hours or Spanish Club conversations, one or two nontraditional Spanish L2 PVCC students (e.g., adult learners, retired members of the community) express interest in short-term study abroad opportunities. They seek these opportunities to position themselves in an environment that would help them further develop their oral proficiency and cultural awareness. Their interests tend to be related to 1) their career paths as employers in all fields look for well-rounded and culturally competent candidates; and 2) personal interests (e.g., leisure, missionary work, language, and culture) in traveling to specific regions of the Spanish-speaking world.

### **Problem of Practice**

Although PVCC has an annual average enrollment of 375 students in Spanish courses and enjoys a successful articulation agreement<sup>6</sup> with the Spanish program at UVA and other transfer institutions, about 20% of PVCC's Spanish language students do not reach the level of oral proficiency and cultural awareness that would give them the foundational confidence and curiosity to continue their language studies. This figure is based on the analysis of assessments I have conducted during the past five years of my students through oral quizzes, class conversations, and discussions related to the cultures of the Spanish Speaking world. I teach all of the required levels of Spanish at PVCC, and I have noticed that some of my students (i.e., about 15%) limp through the sequence of the Spanish language courses, just barely passing<sup>7</sup> each level and making it through Spanish 202 with a grade of C.

These observations are shared by my colleague, Dr. Kempes, who also teaches Spanish at PVCC. We both agree that those students who complete their Spanish course sequence with a grade of C do it by fulfilling the minimum requirement, which we assess through many specific tasks and structured assignments. However, they do not explore what they could do with the language to perform independently and seem satisfied with their minimum completion. As my colleague points out, "I think of some of my students who completed Spanish 202 and thought of that as the end in and of itself, as the finish line, rather than the starting point for a new chapter of their language development" (Interview, Kempes, 9/30/20).

Furthermore, some students at PVCC complete their intermediate-level Spanish courses without having explored cultural awareness beyond the classroom environment. When asked (i.e., through class conversations, oral quizzes, and/or office hours) about the extent of their interactions with members of the Hispanic community, some students express that they do not

communicate with Spanish native speakers beyond the classroom. Often, they recognize their limited knowledge of Hispanic cultures beyond the classroom or their lack of travel experiences to Spanish-speaking countries. In some cases (e.g., Spanish club conversations, office hours), students indicate that they have never traveled anywhere further than the bordering states of the Commonwealth of Virginia. In other instances, Spanish 202 students are reluctant to apply to the PVCC Rotary Exchange Program with Argentina or have very little knowledge of the country, as suggested by the reply a student gave to one of my colleagues, “Argentina, that is in South America, right?”

In short, the previous descriptions provide evidence of PVCC Spanish L2 learners’ achievements as well as their Spanish oral proficiency and cultural awareness needs. Exploring the design of a short-term study abroad to address their learning needs may include strategies for social relations to assist students in getting maximum benefit from their experiences abroad during interactions with locals and host family stays concerning language and culture learning (Cohen et al., 2019). In the process, this study will investigate how the *UVA in Valencia Program* design and language and culture learning strategies, including social relations strategies, can support the design of PVCC’s short-term study abroad.

### **UVA in Valencia Program**

*UVA in Valencia Program* is the University of Virginia’s largest educational study abroad program. It was first established in 1983 and, ever since, the program has provided U.S. students with opportunities to expand their knowledge of Spanish language, literature, and culture through immersive experiences. Students can live and study in Valencia, Spain, for one semester (fall or spring), a full academic year, or two four-week intensive summer program, choosing summer session I, summer session II, or both sessions back-to-back (UVA, 2018).

Program offerings include a wide range of courses covering a variety of subjects, including language and culture, business Spanish, social sciences, engineering, health, and sports. Further, participants live with host families, meet with local students as language partners, and engage in cultural activities and thematic trips in Valencia. In addition, students are offered the opportunity to participate in weekend trips to Madrid, Granada, Toledo, and Bilbao, or to walk on the Camino de Santiago during the fall break to experience the architecture, history, and culture shaped during more than 11 centuries by all of the pilgrims who walked the Camino for a variety of reasons (e.g., culture, exploration, friendship, health, spirituality, sports; UVA, 2019).

A recent *UVA in Valencia Program* review includes the *End of the Term Evaluation* of those students who participated in the program in the Fall semester 2017. Fifty students completed the evaluation responding to questions that addressed the quality of their experiences throughout the program offerings. See Appendix C. The majority of the comments made by the students on the *End of Term Evaluation* attest to the quality of the enriching and wide-ranging experiences designed for students participating in the program during fall 2017. This program could serve as a model for the creation of a short-term, immersive study abroad program to increase PVCC students' Spanish oral proficiency and cultural awareness.

In sum, the *UVA in Valencia Program* offers many language and culture learning opportunities, including classes, homestays, language conversation partner exchanges, service internships, and service encounters. However, research indicates that L2 study abroad is a complex endeavor that can be affected by many determining factors (e.g., the effectiveness of the learning opportunities can be contingent upon the inclusion of an adequate pre-departure orientation). In the context of this study, I want to explore how the *UVA in Valencia Summer-*

*2019/2021 program* approached pre-departure orientation, as well as the extent to which the design of the program addressed students' language and cultural learning needs and personal and social characteristics of the participants.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The primary focus of the present research study is to examine the *UVA in Valencia Summer-2019/2021 Program* to identify features of the program design that PVCC can replicate to create a short-term study abroad to expand PVCC students' Spanish oral proficiency and cultural awareness. This may consist of exploring pre-departure and during-program activities, including L2 learning strategies (e.g., social strategies). In the process, this investigation examines the extent to which the *UVA in Valencia Summer-2019/2021* study abroad program can be used as a model on which to build, focusing on identifying those features of the program that foster language and culture learning, and drawing connections between short-term study abroad goals that could be embraced by PVCC and those pursued by *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* on language and culture. In addition, this study reviews the literature of relevant research on L2 learning and use in study abroad, including short-term study abroad, as well as the relevant literature on language and culture learning strategies.

Furthermore, using a qualitative single-case study approach, this research examines the L2 teaching and learning that took place in authentic social interactions; these include learners' interactions in homestays, museums, restaurants, and cultural activities, and with instructors and staff in the study center in Valencia. In this context, language socialization theory provides a framework that informs the research questions driving this investigation and the perspective of the main researcher on L2 learning.

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

### **Research Questions**

The research questions that guided this study and that align with the above-stated goals, together with a summary of the plan for data collection, are set forth in Table 1 below.

Table 1

#### *Research Questions and Data Collection Plan*

Research Question	Data Collection Plan
1. How can program design factors affect students' perceptions of oral proficiency and L2 language use beyond the classroom environment during study abroad?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Documentation on student learning objectives and syllabi.</li> <li>• Interviews with 5 Spanish faculty members once, 4 Spanish faculty members twice, and 2 administrators once.</li> <li>• Interviews with 4 students once; 4 students twice.</li> </ul>
2. How are out-of-class interactions during study abroad associated with students' understanding of language and culture learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closed-form and open-ended survey responses from students.</li> <li>• Interviews with 4 students once; 4 students twice.</li> </ul>
3. How do faculty teach and use language and culture learning strategies, if any, in the immersive study abroad?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interviews with 5 Spanish faculty members once, 4 Spanish faculty members twice.</li> </ul>



4. How do students respond to using language and culture learning strategies, if any, during the immersive study abroad?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closed-form and open-ended survey responses from students.</li> <li>• Interview with 4 students once, 4 students twice.</li> </ul>
5. What aspects of the PVCC context are most relevant for adapting <i>UVA in Valencia program</i> model in productive ways for PVCC?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use deductive and inductive approach to analyze the data to address this question.</li> <li>• Similarities and differences of students – community college vs university students.</li> <li>• Open-ended survey responses from faculty at PVCC, including L2 colleagues.</li> </ul>

### **Definition of Terms**

**Assessments:** Assessments refer to evaluative comments through which participants make public their beliefs, judgments, and feelings about the people, places, and events described in the discourse (e.g., Granada was amazing! I loved it!).

**Culture:** Culture refers to values, beliefs, attitudes, preferences, customs, learning styles, communication styles, history/historical interpretations, achievements, technology, the arts, literature, etc. – the sum of what a particular group of people has created together, shared, and transmitted (Cohen et al., 2019).

**PVCC Rotary Exchange Program with Argentina:** Sponsored by the Blue Ridge Mountains Rotary Club of Albemarle County, this program provides educational, cultural, and social experiences for PVCC and Otto Krause students. This is achieved through an exchange between students from PVCC and Otto Krause Technical School in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Usually, one or two Otto Krause students spend six weeks in Charlottesville beginning in mid-January, and one PVCC student studies in Buenos Aires for approximately six weeks beginning in May immediately following graduation.

**Short-term Study Abroad Programs:** Summer programs and those of 8 weeks or less.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

Study abroad experience continues to be a central part of undergraduate foreign language (FL) instruction (Hernández, 2016). It provides a degree of cross-cultural awareness, personal transformation, and L2 acquisition (Gaia, 2015). Previous studies (e.g., Bataller, 2010; Brecht et al., 1995; Davidson, 2010; Cohen & Shively, 2007; Hernández, 2010; Isabelli-García, 2006; Magnan & Back, 2007; Marqués-Pascual, 2011; Pellegrino, 1998; Shively, 2011, 2013) have reported that study abroad has positive effects on L2 learning for participants who spend at least one semester abroad. However, Reynolds-Case (2013) points out that relatively little research has been done with participants of short-term study abroad programs (summer programs or those of eight weeks or less) among college students to demonstrate whether short-term study abroad programs offer sufficient time and contact for students to show measurable progress in their command of the target language. On the other hand, Gaia (2015) indicates that these short-term programs improve students' understanding and awareness of other cultures and languages, recognition of the impact of other cultures on the world, and awareness of their own identity. Further, the Institute of International Education (IIE, 2020) reported that 347,100 U.S. college students studied abroad during the 2018-2019 school year. Of those students, 64.99 % participated in short-term programs of 8 weeks or less, 32.9 % were part of mid-length programs of one to two quarters or a full semester, and only 2.2 % of the students participated in a year-long program. Consequently, research on the benefits of short-term study abroad programs is needed, focusing on maximizing the potential of the study abroad environment to improve L2 learning outcomes.

In this capstone project, I study the *UVA in Valencia Summer 2019/2021 Program* and how to use it as a model applicable to the PVCC context, exploring how:

- program design factors affect students' perceptions of oral proficiency and L2 language use beyond the classroom environment during study abroad,
- out-of-class interactions during study abroad are associated with students' understanding of language and culture learning,
- instructors teach and use language and culture learning strategies during immersive study abroad,
- students respond to using language and culture learning strategies during immersive study abroad.

Reviewing current literature, I present findings from previous research on the effects of study abroad - including short-term programs - on college students studying an L2 and about relevant cultures. Then I reference some related reports highlighting influential factors that determine community college students' participation in study abroad. I conclude by describing relevant research, including about L2 learning abroad, that has used language socialization theory to examine the acquisition of linguistic and sociocultural understanding, which I adapt and use as a conceptual framework in this investigation to analyze the interactions between the UVA in Valencia L2 learners and members of the target culture, native speakers (NS), highlighting the importance of those interactions in the language development process.

### **L2 Learning While Studying Abroad**

Previous studies by Bataller (2010), Cohen and Shively (2007), and Hernández (2010) have indicated that study abroad has a positive effect on L2 learning outcomes for students who spend at least a semester abroad. Moreover, short-term study abroad programs have begun to attract the interest of second language acquisition (SLA) researchers (e.g., Allen, 2010; Allen & Herron, 2003; Castañeda & Zinger, 2011; Cubillos, 2013). While some researchers have found

that study abroad students can achieve measurable target language progress after a few weeks abroad (e.g., Cubillos, 2013; Cubillos et al., 2008; Hernández & Boero, 2018; Martinsen, 2010; Reynolds-Case, 2013), others are uncertain about the linguistic benefit of short-term immersion study abroad (e.g., Davison, 2007; Wilkinson, 2002). Commenting on data from a 25-year longitudinal research of L2 outcomes during a study abroad in Russia, Davison (2007) indicated that short-term study abroad had little measurable effect on the progress of L2 learners.

However, Allen and Herron (2003) noted that a six-week program in France yielded speaking improvements for participating students and Cubillos, et al. (2008) reported that participants of a five-week study abroad program improved their listening comprehension skills. In addition, Martinsen (2010) indicated that the majority of participants in a five-week program in Argentina made speaking progress in the target language (Spanish). Reynolds-Case (2013) detected significant comprehension improvement among students who participated in a short-term study abroad in Spain that lasted four weeks. She also found improvement in the participants' production of linguistic patterns from specific regions in Spain.

In short, while some researchers have expressed skepticism about the benefits of short-term study abroad to improve L2 learning outcomes, others have indicated that students have made measurable improvements during a short-term study abroad, including progress in speaking proficiency.

### **L2 Use in Study Abroad**

Quantitative research conducted by some investigators (e.g., Hernández, 2010; Kinginger, 2008; Reynolds-Case, 2013) has indicated that the extent of exposure that students have to the target language is an important factor that potentially affects L2 development in both short-term and long-term study abroad programs. Language contact profiles (LCP) have been

used regularly in second language acquisition research to measure the relationship between the frequency with which the target language is used outside of class and language learning outcomes during study abroad. Some researchers (e.g., Cohen & Shively (2007); Freed, et al. (2004); Hernández (2010, 2016)) have indicated that students with more contact with the target language outside of the class performed better than students with less contact. Using an updated version of the LCP, Hernández (2010) identified a relationship between L2 use and speaking gains of the participants of a study abroad in Spain. His study suggested that participants' motivation and interaction with native speakers are significant factors in determining the development of speaking proficiency in the study abroad context. Cohen and Shively (2007) noted an important association between L2 use and more target-like pragmatic performance.<sup>8</sup> However, Magnan and Back (2007) found no relationship between target language use and linguistic progress. They reported on the lack of connection between target language use and speaking developments in French. After reviewing the post-trip questionnaires concerning participants' study abroad experiences in France, the researchers concluded that most students did not dedicate enough time to socializing with French native speakers. Instead, they spent most of the time socializing with their American peers (Magnan & Back, 2007). As a result, this limited their opportunity to have language contact that could have helped them achieve linguistic and speaking improvement.

Adding to the previous quantitative studies, some qualitative investigations (e.g., Allen, 2010; Kinginger, 2008; Wilkinson, 2002) have focused on describing the nature of social interactions during study abroad. Overall, their findings suggest that language contact with native speakers of the target language is often not as extensive as it was previously assumed in the field of second language acquisition. Kinginger (2008) found that students usually had limited contact

with native speakers despite their anticipated intention to interact with them during study abroad. Some American students studying in France reported that members of the host community often wanted to speak with them in English, thus native speakers responded to them in English rather than in the target language (French). Further, Wilkinson (2002) reported the experiences of seven American undergraduate students studying French in France during a summer study abroad. She commented on the students' disappointment that resulted from the limited out-of-class interactions with native speakers and offered recommendations for study abroad practitioners. She suggested that for L2 learners to have meaningful linguistic gains through out-of-class interactions and make the best of their study abroad experience, students need to have consistent and meaningful interactions with native speakers, mainly those who can speak and write correctly in the target language and are willing to interact as sympathetic interlocutors in the L2 acquisition process.

In the face of these shortcomings, Shively (2011, 2013) studied L2 pragmatic development (service encounters: local shops, post office, banks, and other sites) for a semester from data collected on-site from a group of students from the U.S. studying Spanish in Toledo, Spain. She found that, overall, students' L2 language use changed overtime towards L2 target language norms. Almost always, students were able to obtain successfully the goods and services that they requested. She also highlights the importance of these interactions in participants' immersion experiences and their contribution to out-of-class contact to provide oral practice that distinguishes the study abroad context from studying the target language at home. In addition, her research provides insightful information in the context of language socialization theory<sup>9</sup> describing the structure of out-of-class interactions and suggesting ways in which service interactions potentially contribute to L2 learning while studying abroad.

Short-term study abroad immersive experiences have generated even more noticeable apprehensions among some researchers (e.g., Allen, 2010; Castañeda & Zinger, 2011; Kinginger, 2008). These researchers have expressed concern about L2 learners' social interactions with native speakers during study abroad due to the short duration of the programs that might prevent students from integrating appropriately into host groups. Castañeda and Zinger (2011) indicated that the short period that students had to develop social relationships with native speakers is a limitation of short-term study abroad. Furthermore, Allen (2010) found that some of her study abroad students did not take advantage of the potential language learning opportunities during study abroad, choosing instead to spend most of the time with their English-speaking classmates. When students used the target language to interact with native speakers, it was often with their host families or during brief service encounter exchanges rather than in longer conversations with members of the host culture. In addition, their studies (Allen, 2010; Castañeda & Zinger, 2011; Kinginger, 2008) suggest that participants of short-term study abroad frequently experience artificial cultural contact, inadequate language practice, and isolation from the target culture.

In view of the evidence of inadequate utilization of language resources during short-term study abroad, some researchers (e.g., Cohen & Shively, 2007; Hernández, 2016; Hernández & Boero, 2018; Shively, 2011, 2013) have begun to recommend language practice by providing study abroad students with training and instruction in language use strategies, examining the impact of pre-departure instruction and explicit strategic tasks (e.g., role-plays) during SA on L2 pragmatic development. In a quasi-experimental study, Hernández and Boero (2018) examined the effects of pedagogical interventions on students' request performance during a short-term study abroad program using a variety of cognitive, discourse completion, and retrospective



verbal measures. Building on recent literature on study abroad, L2 development in request performance in study abroad context, and pragmatic instruction in study abroad context, the authors articulate specific and relevant questions to drive the study and explore the potential that short-term study abroad has to facilitate students' L2 pragmatic competence when joined with pedagogical intervention. Through combined explicit intervention, including pragmalinguistic strategies and sociopragmatic factors<sup>10</sup> as well as immersive short-term study abroad on the request performances of students enrolled in a 4-week study abroad in Spain, the researchers found significant interaction effects for most of their measures, including speaking proficiency gains. Though the authors could provide more evidence of their sampling methods, they give reasonable evidence for the students' pragmatic progress in Spanish (Hernández & Boero, 2018).

In sum, a review of the literature suggests that, notwithstanding the linguistic progress and speaking proficiency reported in some research, the extent to which short-term study abroad contributes to L2 improvement remains uncertain. Some possible reasons for the mixed results include ineffective utilization of language resources and the programs' short duration. In some cases, students do not take advantage of the potential language opportunities of interacting with host culture members, choosing to interact with their L1 peers instead, thus isolating them from the target culture. In other cases, the programs' short duration might prevent L2 learners from integrating properly into host groups. As a result, it is essential to create short-term study abroad programs that are in line with curriculum and instruction principles and theory that optimize study abroad opportunities for L2 learners, including community college students.

### **Community Colleges' Involvement in Study Abroad**

Although study abroad has been a prevailing arrangement of international education among students enrolled in four-year institutions, community colleges' increasing participation

in study abroad is a recent trend. The economic conditions of a globalized world are putting pressure on community colleges to prepare students to improve their understanding of other countries and cultures, including the skills needed in an increasingly competitive world (AACC, 2020). As a result, a growing number of community colleges in the U.S. is focusing on study abroad to strengthen their existing programs and provide experiences for students to develop cultural competence and improve L2 language skills that are deemed increasingly relevant in today's interdependent and competitive world (Green & Siaya, 2005; Irwin, 2004).

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

### **Study Abroad and International Experiences**

To address the needs of students, a growing number of community colleges are finding ways to offer study abroad opportunities and international experiences for their students. The *Case Study in Global Education* report, (AACC, 2020) highlights several community colleges that are exploring promising globalization practices, some of which include California Colleges for International Education (CCIE) and Tompkins-Cortland Community College (TC3).

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

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

### **Challenges and Influential Factors**

For U.S. community college students, the challenges to studying abroad can be many: Community college students are usually older, averaging 28 years of age, and have significant responsibilities at home (17% are single parents). Many hold full-time jobs while attending college (41%) and represent a lower socio-economic income group (58% receive financial aid).

It is no surprise that the majority attend community college on a part-time basis (63%) (AACC, 2020). This figure is even higher at PVCC, where 80% are part-time students (PVCC, 2020).

Much of the research on community college participation in study abroad concentrates on the factors that influence students' decisions, such as personal, social, and institutional factors. The following descriptions of each of these factors start with positive influences (e.g., experiences and, in some cases, outcomes) associated with students' decision to participate in study abroad programs. These descriptions are followed by some reported challenges that affect students' participation.

### **Personal Factors**

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

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

## **Social Factors**

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

## **Institutional Factors**

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

Further, administrative structures, financing, school resources, and curriculum requirements (e.g., L2 learning) can influence the degree of study abroad participation. For some schools, the absence of infrastructure (Koh, 2004) and inadequate funding lead to fewer students taking advantage of study abroad opportunities (Green, 2007). The latter describes PVCC's current predicament, which I want to help improve.

In short, a review of the literature related to community colleges' participation in study abroad shows the need to create and continue efforts to strengthen community college study abroad opportunities to explore other nations and cultures. These efforts can focus on

strengthening L2 learning practices in the study abroad context suitable for community college students and improving financial support.

In the following sections, I provide a review of the literature on second language socialization in study abroad. Then, I describe the theory of language socialization, which I adapt and use as a conceptual framework in this investigation to structure data collection and its analysis. The findings will inform the PVCC short-term study abroad program design, focusing on community college students' specific needs.

### **Second Language Socialization in Study Abroad**

It is broadly agreed that study abroad provides L2 learners with rich opportunities and interactions that lead to positive outcomes such as linguistic and cultural gains. However, many researchers have recommended that in order to improve positive outcomes, further qualitative investigations are needed to understand the complex process that takes place during L2 study abroad (e.g., Kinginger, 2009; Wilkinson, 2002).

To elucidate the nature of the gains noted above, some researchers have used language socialization theory to examine the L2 learning process in the study abroad context (e.g., Duff, 2007; Kinginger, 2013; Shively, 2013, 2018). They argue that language development can be explained through the language socialization framework. Through the language socialization process, novices acquire communicative competence in the new context, the study abroad, in which learners join new language communities (e.g., classes, dorms, host families, internships, public transportation users, as well as student and service exchanges).

Acknowledging the differences between service exchanges in both English and Spanish, American L2 learners studying abroad in Spain, and by extension in any Spanish speaking country, encounter new pragmatic norms. Language socialization theory provides a framework

to understand students' acceptance or rejection of linguistic and cultural norms of the target culture by examining their pragmatic progress in learning the L2 (Shively, 2011). When the learners enter the socialization process of the target group, they acquire pragmatic proficiency, or the understanding of the way language forms and how conversation constructions are applied appropriately in social interactions to make meaning and to structure social roles, relationships, and identities (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986).

While the previously described beliefs relate to the socialization of L1 and L2, additional intricacies apply to L2. By the time L2 learners are socialized into the new language, they already have been influenced by their first culture and have attained a set of pragmatic norms from their L1 speech group. As they discover the pragmatic norms of L2, they may adopt practices influenced by their L1 or hybrid ones (Shively, 2011). For example, in the context of service requests, Fernández and Boero (2018) reported that American English speakers tend to overlook the three common request forms Spaniards use in service interactions, namely, imperatives, interrogatives, and elliptical forms. Instead, they tend to use English-like constructions such as speaker-oriented forms (first-person reference). Some of these expressions include wants statements (e.g., I would like a sandwich), needs statements (e.g., I need a postcard), and speaker-oriented indirect forms (e.g., can I have a beer?).

By comparison, hearer-oriented (second person reference) requests are often used in Spain. As noted above, some of these are imperatives (e.g., *dame un sándwich* ('give me a sandwich'), interrogatives (e.g., *¿me puedes dar una tarjeta postal?* ('can you give me a postcard?')), and elliptical forms, (e.g., *una cerveza* ('a beer')). The immersive context of the study abroad enables L2 learners to experience a wide range of social interactions with the host culture members, exploring language and culture. In the process, novices can be socialized into

the pragmatic norms and practices of the target language. However, this pragmatic socialization can be limited sometimes, such as in cases when study abroad students are treated by the host group members in ways that would be unacceptable within the host groups. For example, in her study abroad research in Toledo, Spain, Shively (2011) reported that, due to the high influx of tourists, people from downtown Toledo were accustomed to interacting with foreigners who were not expert speakers of Spanish and thus were not easily offended by the inappropriate *puedo tener*<sup>11</sup> or other differences. In other cases, the type of interactions that L2 participants experience and the treatment they receive is determined by gender (Kinging, 2008; Talburt & Stewart, 1999).

Additional research that has considered L2 socialization during study abroad include homestay interactions with native speakers, which has reported oral proficiency, and linguistic and cultural awareness gains (e.g., Kinginger, 2009; Schmidt-Rinehard & Knight, 2004; Shiri, 2015). These homestay interactions involved “using language to complete daily activities while engaging native speakers in the host family” (Shiri, 2015, p.10). In this context, the language socialization framework has been used to examine and construe “very specific aspects of learners’ interactions and language development” (p. 10). One example of this is the conversations during dinner time when exchanges between people of different ages and levels of knowledge transpire. In these settings, the more knowledgeable members socialize younger and less experienced participants into local norms and routines (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986), including distinctive linguistic patterns. These exchanges around the dinner table represent a cultural space for native speakers (NS) to share their moral, social, personal, and local awareness of the world (Ochs & Shohet, 2006). Further, they serve to establish the relationships that strengthen or alter the social order and “facilitate the social construction of knowledge and social perspectives



through communicative practices that characterize these occasions” (p., 36). Consequently, dinner table exchanges are an optimal space to teach L2 learners about the sociocultural and linguistic practices of the target group.

### **Language Socialization Theory: A Conceptual Framework**

Building on Vygotsky’s notion of guidance and support provided by teachers and more skillful peers in the process of learning, which was named “scaffolding” (Wood, Bruner, & Ross, 1976), language socialization was first the focus of anthropology and sociology before receiving the attention of language learning (Wang, 2010). In the last decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, language socialization research on children’s L1 learning and students’ L2 acquisition has received significant recognition. For example, as noted in the previous section, the work of Schieffelin and Ochs (1986) has provided a language socialization framework to examine the acquisition of linguistic and sociocultural understanding as part of an interrelated process where cultural norms and beliefs influence expert-novice communication at many levels. In addition, language socialization can occur practically anywhere. The most commonly researched contexts include the home setting for L1 socialization through mother-child conversation, and educational contexts (Zuengler & Cole, 2005) or out-of-class contexts for L2 socialization.

Informed by Schieffelin & Ochs’ (1986) framework, Duff (2007) describes language socialization as:

the process by which novices or newcomers in a community or culture gain communicative competence, membership, and legitimacy in the group. It is a process that is mediated by language and whose goal is the mastery of linguistic conventions, pragmatics, the adoption

of appropriate identities, stances (e.g., epistemic, or empathetic) or ideologies, and other behaviors associated with the target group and its normative practices (p., 310).

For the current research, it is important to observe a distinction between the study of language acquisition and the study of language socialization, as examined by Schieffelin and Ochs (1986). While the study of language acquisition focuses on understanding the factors that constitute linguistic competence at different development stages (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986), the primary focus of the study of language socialization is to find out *how* individuals “become competent members of social groups and the social role of language in the process” (p. 166).

The research that concentrates on studying language acquisition aims to understand the processes and strategies that determine the development of comprehension and production of language over time. The studies that focus on language socialization are concerned with how language operates as a means or instrument in the process of socialization, including the “acquisition of the appropriate uses of language as part of acquiring social competence” (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986, p. 167). While it is important to distinguish the difference between language acquisition and language socialization studies, they are part of an integrated process. As stated by Schieffelin & Ochs (1986):

The process of acquiring a language is deeply affected by the process of becoming a competent member of society. The process of becoming a competent member of society is realized to a large degree through language, by acquiring knowledge of its functions, social distribution, and interpretations in and across social situations (pp. 167-168).

Furthermore, Vickers (2007) points out that the central focus of language socialization is the interconnection between culture, cognition, and language. Thus, “learning language goes hand in hand with learning to operate within a particular society” (p., 622). In addition, other

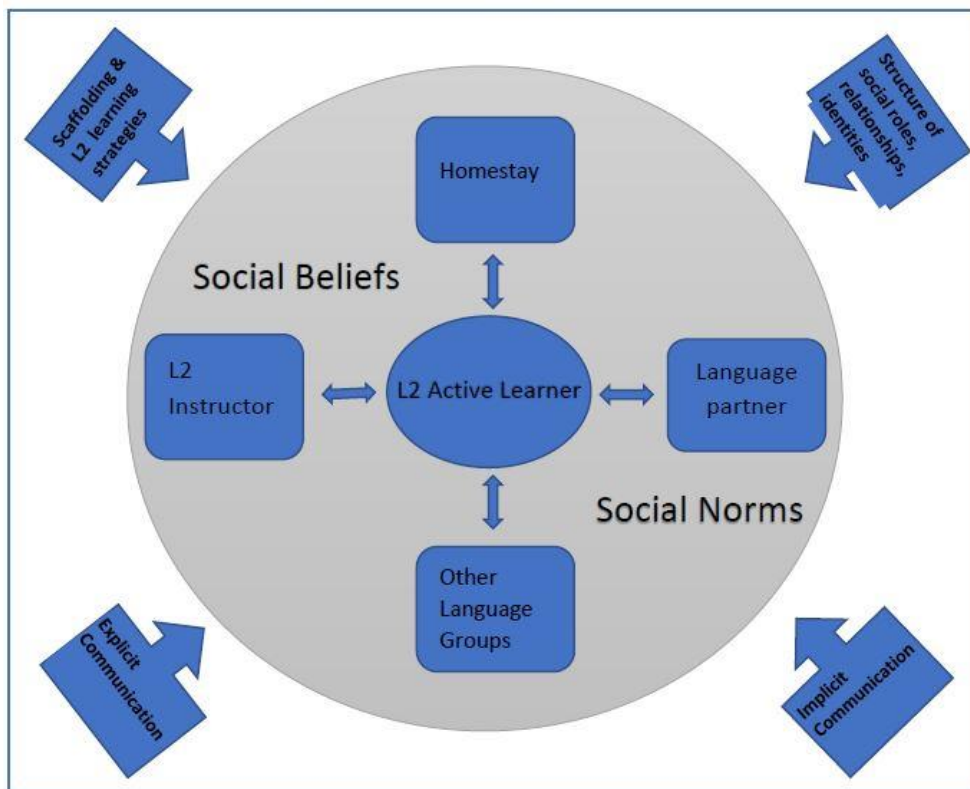
researchers have indicated that the language socialization process is cooperative, reciprocal, and complex; even in the same context, the experiences will vary among different individuals (He, 2003; Rivers, 1998; Seliger, 1977; Willet, 1995; Zuengler & Cole 2005).

Moreover, while important socialization occurs during individuals' early stages in life, the process continues through the years as people interact with new groups and embrace new functions in society (Duff, 2007; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986). Further, Schieffelin and Ochs (1986) assert that the language socialization process might be explicit or implicit. By explicit, they are referring to what a skilled member of the target group would say directly to a newcomer about events and activities and how to speak in specific contexts. For example, in the homestay study abroad context, a host older sister might instruct a study abroad participant to use the informal form of the second personal pronoun "Tú" in Spanish when talking to a young family member. Implicit socialization occurs when novices engage in daily activities and observe and relate to more skilled members of the target group. As this happens, the newcomer's role is that of a recipient of cultural and linguistic information. However, language socialization theory highlights the notion that newcomers can also play an active role as they seek out their own development while simultaneously socializing the more skilled host members thus making them understand the novices' needs. As such, socialization entails a combination of agency and bidirectionality (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986).

In the present research context, the language socialization framework informs the primary researcher in examining the interactions between the L2 learners and the native speakers of the *UVA in Valencia Summer-2019/2021 Program*. A visual of the conceptual framework is shown in Figure 1 below. Central concepts of language socialization theory guide the data

collection process, which upon analysis, yields relevant information on best ways to design a short-term study abroad program for PVCC.

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework; adapted from language socialization theory.



Language socialization theory supports the notion that L2 learners acquire linguistic skills (e.g., linguistic conventions, pragmatics) and sociocultural understanding (e.g., appropriate identities, ideologies, and normative practices) of the target culture. This acquisition is part of an interrelated process where social norms and beliefs influence expert-novice communication at many levels (Schieffelin and Ochs, 1986). This communication is realized through continuous guidance (scaffolding) of capable members (experts) of the target group (e.g., instructors, parents, peers, mentors; Vygotsky, 1978).

Within this framework, this study explores how instructors and skillful members of the target group (*UVA in Valencia Summer Program* Spanish native speakers) use scaffolding and

L2 and culture learning strategies in the process of L2 learning/teaching. In addition to L2 instructors, host native speakers are members of the new language communities (e.g., classes, homestays, internships, L2 partner exchanges, service exchanges, thematic trips).

Moreover, language socialization involves both agency and bidirectionality. L2 learners are expected to play an active role during their in-class and out-of-class interactions with members of the new language communities correspondingly as they seek out their own development. In the process, students can inform their host native speakers of their learning needs. Further, students' agency may be determined by the effectiveness of culture learning strategies (i.e., ways to help L2 learners effectively learn about the host culture) imparted in the pre-departure orientation before the study abroad. In research focusing on assessing gains in speaking performance, Vande Berg et al. (2009) noticed that participants who were informed of the cultural differences during pre-departure orientation sessions performed better in the simulated oral proficiency interview (SOPI) and experienced greater satisfaction with their SA participation than those students who were not part of these orientations.

Additional factors that may influence L2 learners' active role and thereby their progress of L2 and culture learning during their in-class and out-of-class interactions with native speakers involve using L2 learning strategies (e.g., cognitive, metacognitive, affective, or social). For example, Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart (2010) reported that L2 learners who, in the beginning, were reluctant to carry out a plan that included activities involving conversations with their homestay hosts (i.e., social strategies) indicated afterward that the learning activities boosted and expanded exchanges that might not have happened otherwise.

Supported by L2 learning strategies, the in-class interactions between L2 learners and their instructors can function as a mediating setting that aids L2 learners to manage the wealth of

information received from interactions in the natural environment of the target culture (i.e., what could be an overwhelming amount of linguistic and cultural input). In a seminal work on the value of in-class instruction in study abroad, Brecht & Robinson (1995) highlight the reactions of a group of Russian L2 learners to how their class interactions provided scaffolding in their Russian interlanguage production. Some L2 learners commented on how their in-class interactions supported their out-of-class language practice by reading, assimilating, and using words (i.e., a combination of cognitive and metacognitive strategies). Others commented on how some of the activities helped them activate prior knowledge (i.e., cognitive strategies), thus facilitating “the transformation of existing declarative into procedural knowledge of Russian” (p. 324).

Furthermore, language socialization theory frames the analysis of how UVA L2 learners understand the way L2 forms (i.e., the process of acquisition, practice, production) and how conversation constructions apply in social interactions to make meaning and to structure social roles, relationships, and identities (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1996). Homestay conversations can exemplify this when exchanges between people of different ages/ generations and levels of linguistic and cultural knowledge unfold at the dinner table. More knowledgeable members of the target culture socialize less experienced participants (L2 learners) into local norms and routines, including distinctive linguistic patterns. L2 learners could subsequently accept or reject cultural norms of Spanish culture as determined by their L2 pragmatic progress.

Lastly, native speakers’ explicit socialization (e.g., in-class guidance and practice that prepare L2 learners for out-of-class interactions ) seems to have informed UVA L2 learners’ use of L2 in specific contexts (e.g., getting a drink or a meal at a restaurant), and implicit

socialization (e.g., taking a siesta, eating late) seems to have boosted these UVA L2 learners' understanding of Spanish culture.

In sum, language socialization theory offers a suitable framework for examining the interactions between the L2 learners of the *UVA in Valencia Summer-2019/2021* and members of the target culture, stressing the importance of those interactions in the L2 learners' language development process and the program design factors and faculty approach to teaching and using language and culture learning strategies.

### **Conclusion**

Research on the effects of short-term study abroad on college students learning an L2 has demonstrated measurable progress on cultural awareness and language gains. As reported in some of the research findings, students who spent more time outside the class using the target language to interact with members of the host culture experienced greater improvement in speaking ability than those students who had less contact outside the class. However, other studies have reported no benefits, and some researchers expressed uncertainty or skepticism about the affordances of short-term study abroad on language learning as a result of limited meaningful contact with native speakers and members of the target culture. The extent to which short-term study abroad contributes to L2 improvement remains uncertain. As a result, it is essential to create short-term study abroad programs that are in line with curriculum and instruction principles and theory (e.g., L2 learning strategies, language socialization theory) that optimize study abroad opportunities for L2 learners, including community college students. These opportunities should include L2 learning practices suited to community college students' learning needs and adequate funding to improve their participation.

Language socialization theory has successfully provided a framework for exploring sociolinguistic and cultural understanding as well as for examining sociopragmatic intervention effectiveness to enhance L2 learners' outcomes in service interactions and homestays or other interactions that take place beyond the classroom. Essential tenets of language socialization theory offer an appropriate conceptual framework for exploring the development of L2 linguistic, cultural, and communicative skills of UVA L2 learners through interactions with knowledgeable members of the target culture in the *UVA in Valencia Summer-2019/2021 Program*.



### Chapter 3: Methodology

This chapter links the findings and recommendations from the literature to the problem of practice to set up a course of action for the present investigation. As indicated by the literature, there is a need to 1) understand better how short-term study abroad contributes to L2 improvement and 2) provide and strengthen study abroad opportunities for community college students. This research study aims to shed light on those findings and recommendations, thereby addressing PVCC students' Spanish oral proficiency and cultural awareness needs by adapting the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* model in productive ways for PVCC. In the process, I connect my adapted language socialization conceptual framework with data collection and analysis to underscore the importance of the interactions among the participants in the language development process, which lead me to address the questions that drive this investigation:

1. How can program design factors affect students' perceptions of oral proficiency and L2 language use beyond the classroom environment during study abroad?
2. How are out-of-class interactions during study abroad associated with students' understanding of language and culture learning?
3. How do faculty teach and use language and culture learning strategies, if any, in the immersive study abroad?
4. How do students respond to using language and culture learning strategies, if any, during the immersive study abroad?
5. What aspects of the PVCC context are most relevant for adapting *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* model in productive ways for PVCC?

This methodology chapter begins with the reasons for choosing a qualitative case study research method to examine the interactions between UVA L2 learners and the Spanish native

speakers, including instructors, who participated in the *UVA in Valencia Summer 2019/2021 Program*. It follows with a statement of paradigm assumptions and a researcher's discussion as the investigation's primary instrument. After reviewing the reasons for choosing the site and participants, I discuss previous exploratory research that informed the research topic. Then, I include a process for data collection and each collection method's role in the study. The chapter ends with a method of data analysis, a description of limitations, and strategies to establish credibility.

### **Qualitative Case Study Research**

This research uses a single case study design because it allows for deep exploration into the unit of analysis (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014): namely, the participants of the *UVA in Valencia Summer 2019 /2021 Program*, focusing on the interactions between L2 learners and their instructors. By employing a single case, the study uses multiple data sources and perspectives of the unit. These methods align with the language socialization framework. Language socialization tends to focus on the group or community and a set of community-based practices more than the individual. In this context, case study participants help illustrate language acquisition and the socialization process (Duff, 2007).

Further, understanding the processes that participants undergo within a particular context is an essential characteristic of qualitative research (Maxwell, 2005). For this research, I wanted to interpret the process of teaching and learning Spanish and the Spanish culture as experienced by instructors and their L2 students in their immersive study abroad program natural setting. Therefore, the use of qualitative research within the interpretivist paradigm was fitting for this project. Erickson (1986) points out that situations "when one needs to [know] more about... [t]he

specific structure of occurrences rather than their general character and overall distribution" (p. 121) are appropriate for the use of qualitative interpretive research.

### **Researcher's Paradigm**

I approached this research investigation with an interpretivist paradigm, applying inductive analysis broadly and deductively at times. Guided by the assumptions that Erickson (1986) and Guba & Lincoln (1985) advance for qualitative inquiry, I adhere to several ontological, epistemological, and methodological assumptions. From an ontological perspective, reality is not separate from the person but is complex, contextual, and always encountered in multiples. Consequently, multiple realities are fundamental components of social life. In addition, the world is of our own making and beyond our own making. Some aspects of reality are structured and unchangeable, and others we remake and reconstitute; thus, we are continuously constructing our own reality. In the context of this research, there is a reality that is related to the immersive environment of the study abroad itself and how immersion works in that context, but there is also a constructive reality about how participants make sense of that immersive study abroad environment (e.g., the UVA L2 students engaging in interactions with members of the target culture and in learning activities that lead them to make meaning of their interactions, or the instructors and other members of the target culture speaking explicitly in the target language (Spanish) believing that this aids the students to make meaning as they interact with each other in the study abroad immersive environment). Epistemologically, we are looking for meaning and meaning structures. The findings, centered on human meaning-making behavior, are created in interaction between the researcher and the participants. Methodologically, it is assumed that all research methods are fallible. Consequently, as described in the data collection section, I approached the research using triangulation using multiple

methods as a way of finding out what happened in the immersive *UVA in Valencia Summer 2019/2021 Program*. In the process, I counted myself as the main instrument of the research, proceeding with caution to omit potential bias when making sampling or analytic decisions.

### **Reflexive Statement**

I have taught Spanish language at the post-secondary level for about 16 years, working at four-year institutions and the community college where I currently teach as a full-time faculty member. During that time, I formed professional relationships with my colleagues and developed an understanding of organizational structures, department policies, and curricular practices, including L2 study abroad.

Working with both four-year and community college students in the study abroad context has provided me with insights into the students' learning behaviors and needs. In addition, having learned English as an L2 in an environment similar to studying abroad gives me insight into the nature of L2 learners' lived experiences. My experiences and understanding positioned me well to establish a healthy connection with the participants of this investigation. I strove to diminish any concern of power inequality by continuously referencing the voluntary nature of participation in the research. I also emphasized to the participants that the goal of the interviews was to address the broader purpose of this study (i.e., to adapt and apply the findings to the context of PVCC to support the design of a short-term study abroad).

Moreover, my cultural background as a Hispanic person might influence the way L2 learners perceive me. As far as my perception of them is concerned, however, my many years of living and teaching in the U.S. have accustomed me to college students behavior. I did not foresee my race and gender affecting how I viewed the L2 students and their lived experiences in the L2 study abroad environment.

Further, I embraced Erickson's (1986) recommendations to avoid imposing generalizations from my background or the literature on the effects of L2 study abroad immersion onto the data analysis. I examined my own assumptions about the topic of studying abroad and the data analysis and I made a conscious attempt not to impose these assumptions on the project. Additionally, I strove to gain the participants' perspectives by documenting their descriptions of behaviors and the meanings they attributed to those behaviors. I also made efforts to reduce researcher bias in this study by Zoom-recording all of the interviews. As noted by Erickson (1986), by reviewing the recordings, the researcher can eliminate biases or judgments made during the event's actual occurrence. For this investigation, the events had already taken place by the time of the interviews. However, I believe Erickson's recommendation still held because of the validity added through the participants' authentic emic perspective.

### **Setting and Participants**

#### **Sampling Rationale**

Learning is a highly contextualized process that occurs within a particular physical and social community (Behrman, 2002). As a result, sampling in qualitative studies "tends to be more strategic and purposive because we are focusing on a case's unique contexts" (Miles, et al., 2014, p. 32). Informed by these guidelines and my interest in improving implementation in my institution, I purposively chose to study *UVA in Valencia Summer 2019/ 2021 Program*. The former is particularly true because, as a full-time Spanish faculty member, I am involved in the implementation of corequisite instruction as it relates to my department.

*UVA in Valencia Summer Program* (UVA, 2018) features some distinctive characteristics that can inform the design and subsequent implementation of a short-term study abroad specific to the context of PVCC. Some of these characteristics include: 1) it is a short summer term (4-8

weeks); 2) it is affordable, as compared to a semester or year-long program; 3) it is open to a diverse group of students, including minority students and students with disabilities; 4) it provides homestays, and adaptations are recommended to meet students' individual needs and host family availability (e.g., homestays for older students); 5) it ensures transferability of credits to any four-year institution or university; and 6) it ensures that participants enter the program after having completed the sequence of the first four L2 courses.

### **Description of Site**

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

Valencia is the third largest city in Spain, with a population of about 800,000 people. It is located on the coast of the Mediterranean Sea with a year-round average temperature of 73 °F. The city is served by several different means of public transportation including city buses, subway, streetcar, and taxis all within easy access from the program center. In addition, the city offers bike rentals at very accessible rates.

The UVA Hispanic Studies Center is located in a major university area, surrounded by private and public schools of higher education. The center provides services such as classrooms (7), a computer room, an auditorium, offices, Internet access, a study hall/library, cafeteria, photocopy access and leisure area, including free access to a gym for L2 learners, which is

located close to the program center. Further, program L2 students are housed in private households and provided with three meals a day which are served at Spanish times and expected to be eaten with the family as schedule allows.

### Participants

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

Table 2

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

<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Relevant role at UVA in Valencia Summer Program</b>	<b>Summer Year</b>
<b>Students</b>	Amanda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Took several Spanish courses beyond the 3000 level.</li> </ul>	2005
	Brenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Took SPAN 2010/2020 – Session I</li> </ul>	2019
	Eliza	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Took SPAN 2010/2020 – Session I</li> </ul>	2019
	Maggie	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Took SPAN 2010/2020 – Session I</li> </ul>	2019
	Marius	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Took SPAN 3030, SPAN 3300 – Session I</li> </ul>	2019
	Olivia	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Took SPAN 2010/2020 – Session I</li> </ul>	2021
	Tammy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Took SPAN 4700; SPAN 4707 – Session I</li> </ul>	2021
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Took SPAN 4705, SPAN 4708 – Session II</li> </ul>	
	Vincent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Took SPAN 3300, SPAN 4707 – Session I</li> </ul>	2021
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Took SPAN 4700, SPAN 4705 – Session II</li> </ul>	
<b>Spanish Faculty</b>	Dr. Campos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taught SPAN 2010/2020</li> </ul>	2019/2021
	Dr. Gil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taught SPAN 2010/2020</li> </ul>	2019/2021
	Dr. Fuentes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taught SPAN 3050 Spanish for Medical Professionals</li> </ul>	2019/2021
	Dr. Rivera	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Taught SPAN 4700</li> </ul>	2019/2021

	Dr. Rosales	• Taught SPAN 2010/2020	2019
	Mrs. Rossi	• Taught SPAN 2010/2020, SPAN 2020/3030	2019
	Dr. Rubio	• Taught SPAN 3050, SPAN 2020, SPAN 3030	2019
	Mr. Smith	• Taught SPAN 2010/ 2020	2019
	Dr. Zamora	• Taught SPAN 2020/3030	2019
<b>Administrator</b>	Dr. Rivera	• Academic Director	2019/2021
	Mrs. Ruiz	• Administrative Director	2019/2021

\* Participants' names are pseudonyms. Appendix D displays full description of the *UVA in Valencia Summer* courses.

### Access and Role Chosen

Having known the *UVA In Valencia Program's* director on a professional level<sup>12</sup> for many years and being acquainted with the Valencia on-site manager and some of the instructors and staff could have placed me in an advantageous position that influenced my access to the participants to interview.

Furthermore, guided by the research questions, the interviews that I conduct with the participants help to clarify concepts and processes established in the conceptual framework. These inquiries also help set priorities for data collection, which involve redesigning instrumentation (e.g., new questions and new inquiry lines; Miles et al., 2014). In this context, my role in the process involves some degree of participation, which “engenders greater trust in the researcher on the part of the participants and this facilitates interactions important to the co-generation of evidence” (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012, p. 65). Research project evidence is “co-generated” by participants (the actors) and the researcher together through meaning-making process. As noted by Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2012), meaning-making by the researcher is contingent upon the meaning-making of those actors who are called upon to explain them to the researcher (e.g., interviews and participatory interactions). “The possibility of the multiplicity of meanings is one of the things that makes connections to context critical for



both the conduct of interpretive research and its design” (p.80) and which lead to interpreting the interactions among the participants in the *UVA in Valencia Summer 2019 Program*.

### **Previous Exploratory Research**

This capstone research is informed by a previous study that I conducted exploring how an L2 immersion environment contributed to UVA graduate-level English as a second language (ESL) students to develop instructional communication skills in the target language (English).

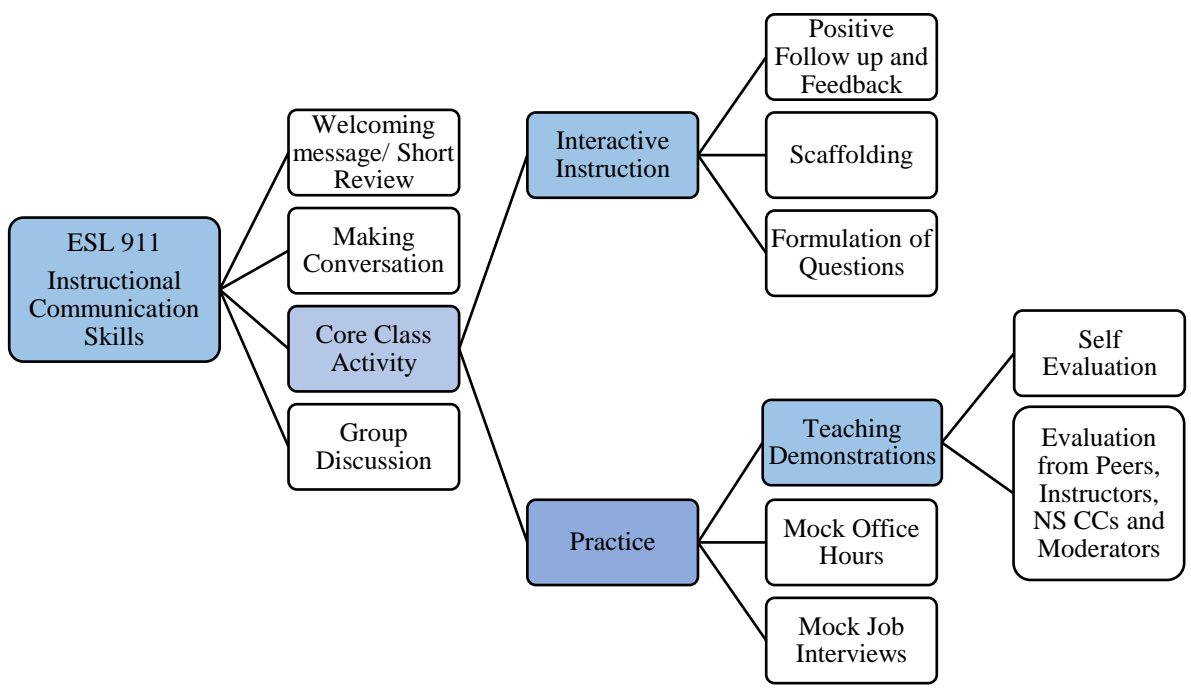
The study focused on both the instructors’ and their students’ meaning-making of teaching and learning instructional communication skills in the graduate ESL immersion classroom. Though the present research focuses on a study abroad immersion environment, the previous investigation concentrated on the immersion model that used L2 language as the medium of instruction to achieve a higher level of target language proficiency in a context in which the target language (English) was predominantly spoken by the surrounding community. It also included data from observations and interviews. As in this capstone project, the study received approval from the University of Virginia’s Institutional Review Board.

Further, the investigation was conducted based on a qualitative design, using interviews (12 hours) and class observations (20 hours), involving approximately 22 graduate-level ESL students, their two instructors, and supporting undergraduate level students for whom English was their first language. The results of the study showed some significant assertions of successful practices in the immersion environment of the graduate ESL class: The structure and design of the class involved interactive instruction (e.g., scaffolding, formulation of questions) and enabled ESL students to have ample practice of their newly acquired instructional communication skills using the target language (e.g., teaching demonstrations, mock office

hours). See *figure 2*. These features align with the language socialization conceptual framework, which I use for the current investigation.

*Figure 2*

UVA ESL 911 Instructional Communication Skills: Immersion Class Design



The ESL immersive class’s thriving design, the language socialization conceptual framework for the current investigation, and the gaps in research on L2 short-term study abroad inspired this research study.

## **Data Collection**

In this research study, I used three data collection methods: interviews, documents, and surveys. As noted by Denzin and Lincoln (2011), multiple methods add richness and depth to qualitative examination. Further, a variety of methods in interpretive case study research aids the researcher to achieve a *crystallization* of findings (Ellingson, 2009), comparable to the goal of triangulation as described in Yin (2018) and Miles et al. (2014).

### **Interviews**

Interviews were the primary data collection source in this study to capture participants' perspectives regarding L2 and culture learning and teaching during the immersive study abroad context. This research included at least one Zoom interview of approximately one hour with each L2 student and instructor to provide insights into L2 and culture learning and instruction successes, challenges, and methods. With the permission of the participants, the interviews were Zoom-recorded to make sure their responses were captured correctly and research records were kept in a locked file; only the researcher(s) had access to the records.

Moreover, interviews are invaluable to answering the research questions because of their ability to provide insights into participant perspectives and explanations of events (Yin, 2018). Following Kvale's (2008) recommendations, I began each interview with a briefing. I introduced my purpose for conducting the research and concluded with a debriefing in which I offered participants the opportunity to ask questions.

Further, Seidman (2006) notes that establishing the right level of rapport is essential to accurately represent the participants' experiences. As a result, I strove to maintain a pleasant level of formality with the participants during the interview process.

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

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

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

### **Surveys**

Students responded to a questionnaire (Appendix G) that included information about demographics, language and culture background, language education, previous trips abroad and language learning. In addition, students answered a language contact survey (Appendix H) intended to quantify the amount of time they spent speaking Spanish during their summer

program in Valencia. The survey includes self-report questions addressing the frequency with which students spoke Spanish with native speakers: host family members, friends, if any, and service interactions. Additional questions asked about their participation in out-of-class activities (e.g., thematic trips) and about the class(es) they took in Valencia.

### **Document Review**

Instructors' available materials (e.g., some syllabi) were collected for analysis to better understand how teachers' stated beliefs and goals transpired. The *UVA in Valencia Academic program review 2018* was used as a reference source of information related to the program's administration and educational offerings. Previous students' evaluations (Fall 2017) were already examined and the results are presented in this report to identify some salient characteristics of the *UVA in Valencia Program* (Appendix C).

### **Data Analysis**

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

Guided by the assumptions that Erickson (1986) advances for qualitative inquiry, I used an inductive approach to coding sources, informed by the open coding practices described in

Corbin and Strauss (2008). I emphasized the use of *in vivo* codes that use the language and terminology of participants, the *emic* perspective. As recommended by Miles et al. (2014), *in vivo* codes “prioritize and honor the participant’s voice” ( p.74) and provide useful leads for identifying patterns. In addition, the use of *in vivo* codes aligns with my inductive interpretivist paradigm by capturing the meaning-making of the participants.

Using *analytic memos*, as described in Erickson (1986) and Miles et al. (2014), I synthesized preliminary findings that emerge from initial coding and recorded them in the form of *assertions*. Then I proceeded to establish the evidentiary warrant for the assertions by reviewing the data corpus repeatedly to test the validity of the assertions through the process of seeking confirming and disconfirming evidence, or what Erickson (1986) describes as *analytic induction*. The use of memos is instrumental in the development of the assertions, which I used as semantic statements that I fine-tuned based on what the data told me, informing my data collection process as I made efforts towards achieving saturation. Lastly, I used *member-checking*, sharing initial findings with participants to ensure that research findings accurately represented the voice and lived-experience of participants (Yin, 2018).

Further, the assertions described above are supported by *analytic vignettes*, which are slices of life that illustrate assertions because they are concrete, vivid, accessible, and convincing (W. Heinecke, personal communication, April 15, 2020). These vignettes distill multiple interviews, surveys, and documents into a coherent narrative synthesis that addresses the research questions.

Lastly, I displayed information in the form of matrices “to further analyze and/or to represent and present the conclusions” (Miles et al., 2014, p. 107).

## **Limitations**

This study's main limitation is related to time and the lack of data collected from direct observations of the participants in situ due to the Coronavirus pandemic. The study would likely benefit from an extended timeframe (i.e., at least two consecutive summer terms of data collection) and the benefits of observing the participants' interactions on site.

## **Establishing Credibility**

As noted at the beginning of the data collection section, I sought to achieve triangulation using different data collection methods (e.g., interviews, surveys) and data sources (e.g., L2 students, L2 instructors, available documents). These triangulation sources offer different foci and strengths that help complement each other (Saldaña et al., 2014) and develop convergent evidence (Yin, 2018). A critical colleague checked code lists and holistic analysis. In addition to member checking, as described in the data analysis section above, further credibility was established by relying on peer reviews (i.e., capstone committee, fellow L2 faculty at PVCC). In addition, once I collected the data, I identified some of the disconfirming data inconsistent with the main findings and explained the nature of the participant's inconsistencies (P. Youngs, personal communication, 01/ 15/ 2021).

## **Conclusions**

This capstone study uses a single qualitative case research method to examine the interactions among participants in the *UVA in Valencia Summer 20219/ 2021 Program*. The overarching goal of this investigation is to shed light on adapting the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* model in productive ways for the PVCC context. While primarily approaching this research through an interpretivist inductive paradigm, some deductive reasoning supports my

analysis of the data, which I gathered through various methods; namely, interviews, documents, and surveys. The deductive analysis is informed by my teaching experiences and the literature. Lastly, I imbue credibility by using member checking, peer review, and follow-up clarifying descriptions on the nature of any disconfirming data inconsistent with the main findings.



## Chapter 4: Findings

This chapter describes how the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* is implemented in reference to the research questions stated at the end of Chapter 1. Following a description of the general characteristics of the students' daily schedule, the findings are organized thematically by research question and presented in the format of Ericson's assertions, including supporting quotations, data from interviews, documents, and surveys.

As noted in the first chapter, the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* offers two four-week intensive sessions. Students can take summer session I, summer session II, or both sessions sequentially. They take classes in the morning, the afternoon, or both at the UVA Hispanic Studies Center, which is located "in a prime university area, surrounded by private and public schools of higher learning" (UVA, 2018, p. 8). This schedule division is established due to the high number of students participating in the program, ensuring that there are not too many students together in the center at the same time.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, students sign a pledge to commit to speaking in Spanish only during the time they remain at the school, including in classrooms and other spaces in the Center. For some students, the Center is located within walking distance from their host family home; for others, their homes can be located all throughout the city in the zones chosen by the program administrators and they need to take the bus to get around. "Housing assignments are made according to students' preferences, special needs and requests, housing availability, and student order of admission"\*<sup>14</sup> (Interview, Administrative Director, 6/16/21).

The morning classes are scheduled to begin as early as 8:00 am and the afternoon classes are scheduled until 7:00 pm. Each class lasts two hours and the combined intermediate courses, SPAN 2010/SPAN 2020, last four hours. The following details about the students' daily

schedule are based on the information L2 participating students provided in the Zoom interviews. During breaks, students have something to drink and/ or a bite to eat (small snack) and often go to the coffee places or cafeterias around the school center where they interact with native speakers. Regardless of their class schedule, some students often have breakfast with their host families in the morning and others eat on their own the breakfast that their host mother regularly leaves out for them on the dining table. Then they either go to class, work on their homework assignments, or go outside to explore the city (e.g., visits to the city center, cafes, museums, parks, restaurants, shops, the beach) where they often interact with native speakers. Some instructors take their classes to coffee houses, restaurants, retail stores, and other establishments to practice Spanish with the local servers, vendors, or public servants.

Early in the afternoon, some students return home to have lunch with their host families after school or before heading for their afternoon classes. In the late afternoon or early evening, some students participate in cultural workshops, get together at a marketplace or a terrace to have tapas or celebrate *la sobremesa*<sup>15</sup> to socialize with native speakers. Spanish culture is a festive society and always has enjoyed social life. As indicated by Operé and Valle (2017), “In the summer months, one frequently sees the families eating out or celebrating *la sobremesa* in the terraces while the kids run around near their parents. Conversations and discussions often last until late at night” (p. 189).\*

Other students participate in activities with their host families (e.g., picking up the children from school, shopping, playing board games, watching TV or movies). Furthermore, student-athletes receive support in meeting their fitness training goals. For example, after her afternoon classes, Brenda, a swimmer at UVA, and her teammates “would go to the local pool, a type of YMCA place, where [they had] a lane reserved, and often there would be some local

people there as well” (Interview, Brenda, 5/17/21). Others go to any affiliated gyms, which they can access at different locations throughout the city as participants of the *UVA in Valencia Program*.

Later in the evening, around 9:00 pm, students have dinner with their host families, which is a culture shock for many students at first, as they are not accustomed to eating dinner so late. However, the interviewed students reported that their pre-departure and on-site orientations were instrumental in helping them adjust to new cultural differences, including eating dinner late at night. I address these themes further in assertion three in response to research question one.

On weekends, some students enroll in thematic field trips to cities around Valencia while others visit various cities in Spain including Barcelona, Cordoba, Granada, and Madrid, and still others travel to other parts of Europe taking advantage of affordable flying tickets. Students often travel with their peers and are faced with situations that test their ability to adapt to diverse circumstances while being able to solve problems on their own as they communicate in the target language (e.g., figuring out means of transportation, the prices of goods and services, places to eat and stay).

**RQ 1: How can program design factors affect students’ perceptions of oral proficiency and L2 use beyond the classroom environment during study abroad?**

The assertions in response to this research question address the way in which L2 learners broadly viewed their study abroad participation based on the accomplishment of their personal and academic goals. Their perspectives are confirmed by the instructors’ comments praising the value of the program’s immersive environment and the importance of the interactions students had with native speakers in various contexts to support their learning. These are followed by an analytic vignette that weaves together key details about the pre-program services with insights

from the students as to how those services supported them.

**Assertion 1: Students broadly viewed their study abroad participation as a successful experience determined by the achievement of their personal and academic goals**

All of the interviewed students, six females and two males,<sup>16</sup> characterized their study abroad experience as successful and expressed satisfaction with their participation in the program based on their attainment of their personal and academic goals. All eight students indicated that they improved their Spanish speaking skills and increased their awareness about Spanish culture, highlighting that their progress was reflected in their grades. All eight students attributed their success to their determination and to most aspects of the program, including in-class and out-of-class activities, the use of relevant texts, scaffolding, interactions with members of the host family and the target culture in various contexts, as well as weekend excursions to different cultural sites around Valencia or other cities in Spain. However, one of the eight students pointed out that she did not benefit from the interactions with members of the host family and did not participate in any of the weekend excursions.

Some of the personal goals that students highlighted include traveling, communicating with the locals using Spanish, satisfying a family dream, experiencing other cultures to explore the history, food, new and different traditions, and learning about another culture to understand the world better. Expressing her fulfillment for having achieved her family's dream, Eliza stated:

I really enjoyed this experience of studying abroad at least for a month because it was very important to me and my family growing up. My mom always wanted us to do it because when she was in college, she went with my aunt to Greece and Italy to study abroad for a semester, which was a life-changing experience for them. I look forward to

studying abroad again to continue strengthening my Spanish skills and become fluent someday. (Interview, Eliza, 5/17/21)

Similar to her mother and aunt, Eliza experienced firsthand interactions with the host culture (e.g., living with a host family, visiting historical sites, getting around the city using the public transportation system) that contributed to her L2 improvement and cultural awareness during her study abroad. See Eliza's descriptions of learning about authentic Spanish food and family living in Assertion 4.

In terms of academic goals, students expressed that their participation in the program was driven by their interest in studying abroad, fulfilling their L2 course requirements, and improving their Spanish speaking skills while immersed in the target culture. To accomplish this, four students took the combined intermediate-level courses, SPAN 2010/2020, and four students took more advanced classes (i.e., SPAN 3030 Cultural Conversations, SPAN 3300 Texts and Interpretation, SPAN 4700 Spanish Culture and Civilization, SPAN 4705 Spanish Mass Media, SPAN 4707 Introduction to Spanish Art, SPAN 4708 Picasso)<sup>17</sup>. This 50-50 split was not representative of the general distribution of the students in the program. See Appendix L for an accurate distribution of the students who participated in the program in the summers 2019 and 2021. Responding to a survey about the reasons for taking Spanish courses abroad, Marius<sup>18</sup> indicated:

I suppose my reasoning for studying Spanish was initially founded in the desire to experience different cultures to understand the world better by enabling myself to tap into one of its primary sources: its language, exploring culture. I also realized the value of speaking Spanish for job opportunities and qualifications, but this did not factor into my reasoning until later. Also, because Spanish is one of the most commonly spoken

languages in the world, learning it seemed to make a lot of sense to me, which was fueled by my initial desire to communicate well with as many people as possible. (Survey, Marius, 6/16/21)

Further, Marius also indicated during the interviews that his motivating interests led him to engage actively in class discussions and long conversations with members of his host family and to negotiate situations with some native speakers (e.g., servers, tour guides) who initially wanted to talk to him in English. Marius insisted on speaking in Spanish, explaining to his interlocutors his need to practice conversation with native speakers. In addition to strengthening Marius' spoken Spanish, these interactions align with his desire to explore the culture to understand the world better. An example of this happened when Marius and a group of his L2 learning peers visited several historical sites in Cordoba and Granada and Marius sought out a conversation with one of the tour guides during one of the visits by making reference to a book about the history of the Spanish language and literature that one of his professors from PVCC had recommended to him and which he had read:

I don't remember the tour guide asking us many questions. However, I do remember having a conversation with the tour guide myself. She was a historian and I had a book in my mind that I thought she might have been interested in. A book by Antonio Alatorre and I told her that the book is very cool, it is like a social history of the Spanish language. She knew the book and we both had a conversation in Spanish for about eight minutes, you know, about Spanish history, Spanish language. (Interview, Marius, 6/19/21)

While Marius entered the program understanding a lot of the Spanish that was spoken to him and was able to make his point albeit with some difficulty, the type of fluidity and sophistication described in the quote above did not transpire right away. As indicated by Marius,

“[...] in my first week or so, during my first frequent interactions in Spanish with native speakers, it was a bit hard to understand, but I got acclimated very quickly, so by the time we went to Cordoba and Granada, I understood nearly everything” (Interview, Marius, 6/19/21).

Other students who, like Marius, entered the program at the Spanish 3000 level or above, expressed having similar agency during interactions with native speakers (i.e., Amanda, Tammy, Vincent). However, the first impressions of the program were not similar for all of them. In Vincent’s case, for example, disappointment was the initial impression because, as he noted, “my first surprise was the difference between what I expected the nature of the language immersion to be like versus what it actually turned out being, especially interactions between students outside the Center. Everyone wants to talk to each other in English outside the class and for that I initially felt some disappointment” (Interview, Vincent, 7/21/21). Vincent’s first impressions seem to disconfirm the stated Assertion 1. However, he soon realized that it was not precisely tenable among his L2 learning peers to speak in Spanish all the time outside class, as seemed confirmed by some of Amanda's experiences interacting with her American L2 learning peers outside the class during her study abroad in 2005:

To me, that was somewhat artificial. It is one thing if we are in class or at the Center but, you know, if I was going out to get dinner with my friends to continue to speak Spanish to them when we all speak English is kind of odd, and so I found that most of my friends didn't abide by that rule. [...] the most authentic communication for me was when I was speaking with my host family, who did not speak English. (Interview, Amanda, 6/30/21)

Like Amanda, Vincent came to terms with the situation and found reassurance in the fact that he still could have plenty of opportunities to interact with native speakers using Spanish: interactions with members of the host family, native speakers in the community at large, and

instructors and staff in class and at the Center. As a result, he gradually experienced progress, growing confidence "to go out in the community to try different activities independently and feel more comfortable with conversing with people who [he] did not know" (Interview, Vincent, 7/21/2021).

Furthermore, for some of the students who took the intermediate-level courses, their immersive experiences provided them with the opportunity to review and practice the Spanish they had learned during high school. Referring to her intermediate courses, Maggie noted:

I feel like the most of it was review from what I had learned in high school, but it helped because it aided me to solidify what I knew, and so I felt that my skills strengthened while I was there. By the end, my conversational skills and my interactions with my host family definitely were a lot better than at the beginning, and I could understand and read Spanish a lot better. So yeah, I think my Spanish definitely improved. (Interview, Maggie, 5/25/21)

Regarding the after study abroad L2 use and cultural engagement, however, most of the *UVA in Valencia Summer 2019* L2 learners interviewed indicated that they used their Spanish very little and that none took any Spanish courses after their study abroad. This finding was surprising because the comments in the interviews and the responses in the surveys suggested that those students were motivated and seemed determined to continue learning Spanish and about the Spanish culture. One possible explanation for this might be that once students fulfilled their L2 language requirements in the study abroad, they soon occupied their time and efforts to attend to immediate responsibilities related to their majors and other extracurricular activities. These inferences seem to align with the academic director's comments regarding the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program's* L2 participating students; namely, that most summer students are



more interested in participating in a brief study abroad while fulfilling their course requirements than in getting involved with the country (Interview, Dr. Rivera, 2021). In addition, the interviewed *UVA in Valencia Summer 2019* students expressed no recollection of having received explicit information about the post-study abroad to provide strategies on integrating their study abroad experiences into their future activities, exploring how the study abroad might strengthen their new experiences (e.g., changing attitudes, providing an understanding of how to value and engage with new cultures and languages).

As described by the language socialization framework, scaffolding and collaboration in L2 learning are essential components of the process. Failing to foster and maintain explicit support upon completion of the study abroad might explain the interviewed *UVA in Valencia Summer 2019* participants' apparent decline in motivation and determination to continue learning Spanish and its cultures.

On the other hand, one of the instructors who taught in the *UVA in Valencia Summer 2019*, and who also teaches at the UVA home campus in Virginia, indicated that one of her students from *the UVA in Valencia Summer 2019*, who did not participate in this research, began her study abroad with the sole intention of fulfilling her intermediate Spanish courses, but continued studying Spanish in the home campus in Charlottesville after her study abroad experiences in Valencia. "She arrived at Valencia speaking little Spanish; however, she was the one who made the most progress in one month and ended speaking Spanish well for her level and she enjoyed it so much that she continued with the next level that was not required for her major" (Interview, Dr. Gil, 5/22/21).

Moreover, Amanda, who participated in the *UVA in Valencia Program* during the fall semester of 2005, indicated that her study abroad was a major influence in her future career

decision. For her, combining what she learned in-class with out-of-class contextualized excursions that the program offered and that aligned with her Spanish art history interest “were decisive in becoming a Spanish teacher” (Interview, Amanda, 6/30/21). Granted, Amanda’s study abroad experience was one semester long, as opposed to one month study abroad during the summer 2019 or the summer 2021. Further, Amanda noted that, after her participation in the *UVA in Valencia Program*, she returned to her UVA home campus and graduated with a dual bachelor’s degree in Spanish and art history and a subsequent master’s degree in education. Amanda is currently a Spanish teacher in the Washington, DC area and her “teaching practices have been greatly influenced by the pragmatic nature of [her] study abroad in Valencia” (Interview, Amanda, 6/30/21).

**Assertion 2: The self-reported L2 learners’ achievement of personal and academic goals previously described was confirmed by the faculty’s broad view of their students’ participation in the UVA in Valencia Summer Program**

All nine interviewed faculty, including one academic administrator, reported that the vast majority of their students met their class objectives and made substantial progress through their participation in the program, especially in their speaking and writing skills. In addition, they all indicated that the program’s immersive nature and the Spanish-only policy in the Center contributed to the rapid progression of the students. Further, they highlighted that the first week generates some anxiety among students, particularly those taking the low intermediate level courses. The anxiety that L2 learners experience at that particular level may be caused by the fear that results from not being able to communicate their ideas with native speakers. As described by one of the instructors, “students seem nervous and worried at the beginning, but as soon as they find out that they are able to communicate their ideas in Spanish, even with simple

phrases and utilizing simple verbal forms, they improve rapidly” (Interview, Dr. Campos, 5/5/2021).

Appendix I includes a Name-Ordered matrix with a brief quote from each participating instructor on their perspective about their students’ progress. The quotes align with the positive outlook that the L2 students reported during the interviews about their participation in the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program*. Most of these faculty highlighted the value of the immersive nature of the program and the importance of the interactions L2 learners had with native speakers in various contexts to support their progress.

However, the instructors’ perspectives did not always align with the L2 learners’ perspectives about the program. For example, Ms. Rosales mentioned that one of her students entered her class with a tourist mindset, thinking that the summer study abroad would be a four-week vacation. Ms. Rosales noted that one morning, this student showed up to class with a hangover, unprepared, and without an assignment that he was supposed to submit that day. When Ms. Rosales asked him about his lack of commitment, he responded that “this was the worse vacation he had ever taken” (Interview, Ms. Rosales, 5/25/21).

The disconnect that Ms. Rosales describes underscores the importance of the pre-departure and on-site orientations and their potential role in preventing this type of situation. Based on Ms. Rosales’s descriptions, it is fair to assume that this student did not participate in the pre-departure and on-site orientations that could have informed him about his responsibilities as a student in the program and clarified that the summer study abroad was not a vacation and that his behavior was not accepted. According to Ms. Rosales’s comments during the Zoom interview, she addressed the situation by outlining the appropriate attitude and behaviors the student needed to display in order to successfully complete the course. These included fully

embracing his responsibilities as an L2 student, thus taking advantage of the affordances of the immersive study abroad. Ms. Rosales commented that the student apologized to her for his behavior and that, following her advice, he successfully completed the class.

Furthermore, many of the faculty, especially those who taught the combined intermediate level courses (i.e., SPAN 2010/2020) indicated that some students struggled during the first week because their language level was still limited. Moreover, they pointed out the additional challenge the introverted students experience. For them, understanding how to interact with the new environment is a slow process. In this context, the faculty seems to have a clear understanding of their supportive role during those initial days of L2 learners' participation:

Those first days consist of building a balance in the group because it is a group that one is going to have for a month, interacting very intensively, and that is going to progress very differently. So, there must be cohesion in the group so that nobody gets behind.\*

(Interview, Dr. Campos, 5/5/2021)

As suggested by Dr. Campos' comments, the instructors get to know their students well during their intensive interactions, thus allowing them to build balance and cohesion in their group through feedback and continuous monitoring, focusing on each student's individual needs. Dr. Fuentes, the longest-serving Spanish faculty at *UVA in Valencia Program*, addresses these through the following strategies:

I give a lot of value to those things students generate in Spanish, inviting them to participate continuously, highlighting those things they do well over the mistakes, understanding that one can also learn from them by identifying and correcting them and this transpires when they take risks with the language. I also use many practical activities

in class that reflect those situations they will face outside the classroom.\* (Interview, Dr. Fuentes, 6/9/2021)

Dr. Fuentes' strategies are representative of the practices all the faculty report that they implement in their courses to provide ongoing support to their students. Further, these practices align with the L2 learning strategies and scaffolding that constitute some of the tenets of the conceptual framework described in Chapter 1. I provide specific examples of how these L2 learning strategies are implemented by the faculty in the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* in my response to RQ3 of this investigation and offer my interpretation through the lens of the conceptual framework and the L2 learning strategies described in Chapter 1.

**Assertion 3: Students agreed on the benefits of the combined pre-program services, pre-departure and on-site orientations, including information on culture shock and the host family**

All of the interviewed L2 learners who participated in the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* 2019/2021 agreed on the value and support of the combined pre-program services, including information on culture shock and the host family. This assertion is framed through an analytic vignette to fully describe the significance of pre-departure and on-site orientations. It includes comments from the *UVA in Valencia Program's* academic director regarding pre-departure and on-site orientations interwoven with remarks made by L2 learners who participated in the program in the summer of 2019 and 2021. In addition, it contains information from the *UVA in Valencia Academic Program Review 2018* documentation. Lastly, the vignette is followed by concluding remarks and descriptions of students' progress in light of their referenced cultural adjustment stages. Three out of the eight interviewed participating students exhibited characteristics corresponding to stage 2 (Cultural Confrontation), and four exhibited

characteristics corresponding to stages 3 (Cultural Adjustment) and 4 (Cultural Adaptation). Despite this cultural categorization difference, all the participating L2 students indicated that they made progress concerning their cultural awareness and L2 oral proficiency.

**Analytic Vignette: Participants' comments made through Zoom interviews interwoven with information from documentation from the UVA in Valencia Academic Program**

**Review 2018**

*During my interview with Dr. Rivera in the Zoom meeting room, he emphatically pointed out that L2 students receive a solid preparation at the UVA home campus before leaving for Valencia. He also indicated that students arrive knowing almost all aspects of the pre-departure orientation that focuses on preparing them for their study abroad experience in Valencia.*

*According to the Fall 2017 pre-departure information in the UVA in Valencia Academic Program Review 2018, this orientation features a series of slides covering an overview of registration information (e.g., UVA requirements, documents, academics, payment). In addition, it includes recommendations related to travel (e.g., flight documentation, health-related needs, insurance, jet lag, packing, precautions), and information about the new environment (e.g., cultural adjustment and culture shock, alcohol and drugs, recommendations, banking, transportation).*

*However, many of the interviewed students did not seem to share Dr. Rivera's conviction about the pre-departure orientation. Three out of four students who participated in the UVA in Valencia Summer 2019 program had vague recollections of the pre-departure orientation; granted, two years had passed since their participation in the program by the time of the Zoom interviews. For example, Brenda and Marius indicated that they barely remembered the orientation they received at the home campus. Brenda noted, "I don't think they gave us really a*

*lot of details or super helpful information. I think if they did, I probably would have remembered it a little bit more.” Similar impressions were shared by Maggie, “[...] we had a pre-departure meeting one day and I guess it wasn’t that helpful because I honestly don’t really remember it.”*

*Eliza, however, had some recollections of the pre-departure orientation, which she found somewhat helpful: “The pre-departure orientation was helpful a little bit because they talked about the rules and expectations and scenarios in case anything were to go wrong. Thankfully, nothing went wrong when I was studying abroad, so I didn't really have to use any of the information they gave us.” She also referred to the information she received related to the program flight options. As she indicated, “there are two different options, you can either take the flight with the group to Spain or you can fly on your own, like I did, because I am from out of state, so it was easier for me.” While Eliza did not elaborate on the specific content of some of the information discussed during her pre-departure orientation (she could not remember), she seemed confident about having received an essential balance of scenarios that illustrated potential challenges and available support.*

*As for the students who participated in the UVA in Valencia Summer 2021, two out of three students had more vivid recollections of their pre-departure orientation than the summer 2019 cohort. For example, Olivia mentioned that “[...] it was helpful to know that there were staff members available to answer questions. I also liked that there was a PowerPoint available to us because it was a summary of the information and I took screenshots of the slides that I felt held pertinent information and I used those through my time there, like schedule, or how to order a taxi etc.”*

*Another L2 student who participated in the summer 2021 program, Tammy, also remembered the pre-departure orientation as helpful because it gave “[...] a very general idea*

*of what to expect when you are abroad. They were good about sort of telling us how the city worked in the different parts of the city and giving us an idea of what we could expect in terms of the stereotypes you might encounter that people have about you as a group of Americans studying abroad. And then these are some of the things that you might think about going abroad that you might find to be true, you might not find to be true.” On the other hand, Tammy also indicated that, “it's kind of hard with pre-departure orientation, though, honestly, because until you get there and you're actually there and you're figuring it out for yourself, it's really difficult to visualize it and to realize, okay, yes, they told me I am going to have to take the bus, but now I know exactly which bus route and what time and how to use my bus pass to get there.” Further, she also expressed that, for a variety of reasons, the pre-departure orientation “felt like the program is still a long way away, so I hadn't fully sort of prepared myself to be getting ready to leave. [...] in all fairness, I definitely paid closer attention to the orientation upon arrival than I did on the pre-departure orientation.”*

*As indicated by Dr. Rivera during the Zoom interview, the orientation in the Valencia Center is an entire day affair that begins the day after students arrive in Valencia and is presented in two parts, “one administrative orientation and one academic orientation. In the administrative orientation, we inform the students about how to get around the city, matters related to health, especially now with the Covid pandemic, culture adjustment and culture shock, host families, and excursions.”\* Some of the information students received seem to purposively overlap due to its immediate nature, specifically the cultural adjustment and culture shock information they receive in their home campus and then on-site in Valencia upon arrival.*

*As stated in the Cultural Adjustment Chapter of the UVA in Valencia Academic Program Review 2018, “culture shock, or culture fatigue is a typical phenomenon when encountering a*



*new culture and country for an extended period of time. Adjusting to a different language, driving on the other side of the road, wearing different clothes, and eating different foods [at different times] can be exciting and challenging.” In addition, the same Program Review 2018 highlights that other factors that can contribute to culture shock include less obvious aspects of student culture such as values (e.g., time, personal space, gender roles, communication style), habits, expectations, common practices and procedures, which may not coincide with the host culture. The resulting culture bumps can produce an emotional response – frustration, anger, impatience, anxiety, confusion, depression – called culture shock. Some of the cultural differences that caused culture shock among all the students of this investigation include language, late night eating habits, forwardness in oral communication, and personal space. Further, variations of the emotional responses were exhibited by all the students who participated in this investigation and which are referenced throughout this vignette.*

*To prepare the students to be able to work through the stressors and adjust, the pre-program services include strategies in the form of advice (i.e., encouragement to be open-minded; to be patient; to communicate experiences with on-site staff, instructors, host families and other students; to be aware of cultural baggage; to explore tips to develop cultural sensitivity; to get involved, to get informed about racial and ethnic minority students abroad; to embrace a sense of humor; to get information about sexual orientation abroad, students with disabilities abroad, women abroad ). Appendix J provides a detailed description of these strategies.*

*Concerning the on-site orientation, Dr. Rivera was assertive about his comments during the Zoom interview, indicating that “[...] students have an academic orientation where all the faculty is present. We let students know about the class dynamics, about those things they can do*

*and cannot do, and how we are going to work together.”\* Dr. Rivera paused for a moment, thinking about his next ideas, then he continued, “In sum, students receive lots of information before and after arriving in Valencia. Sometimes they receive so much information that they cannot absorb it all at once and gradually assimilate the information in the following days.”\* Then he mentioned that, after the information sessions, students are provided with a guided visit through the city of Valencia so that they locate themselves in the physical space. In his own words, students take part in “[...]a visit that introduces the students to the most representative places, the Historic Center, accompanied by a tour guide that provides information and answers their questions so that they can orientate themselves.”\* Finally, Dr. Rivera ended his comments about the on-site orientation with, “the students are given a folder with practical information that includes a metro and bus pass so that they can move around the city and information about the public transportation system of Valencia.”\**

*Overall, students seem to have found that the on-site orientation in Valencia was more helpful than the pre-departure orientation on the home campus because the information seemed more real to them when they were immersed in the culture. Brenda, for example, thought that the orientation in Valencia was more helpful because she found that the information was directly related to her needs at the time (e.g., details on how to take the bus, weekend trips, places to go and not to go, rules about the host family, what is appropriate and what is not appropriate.) In addition, she found that the information about cultural adjustment was also helpful as far as making her aware that there were going to be ups and downs as she acclimated to her new environment. Talking about her cultural adjustment experience, Brenda said,*

*“I thought every day was going to be the best day and that it would be so much fun, and there were a lot of days like that, but there were other days when I felt like going home*

*because I felt out of place, outside of my comfort zone. I think it was good that they told us that ahead of time, that that was going to happen and that that was normal, so it made me feel better knowing that.”*

*Brenda may have experienced what most study abroad students experience, a cultural confrontation that incites emotional reactions (Cohen et al., 2019). Judging by her comments, the cultural adjustment information she received aided her with successfully coping with her feeling out of her comfort zone.*

*Olivia had a more shocking experience. She described her language culture shock and made reference to the information she received during the on-site orientation, “One of the staff members went over a PowerPoint with us to discuss the four phases of culture shock, like the honeymoon phase, the stress [confrontational] phase, then the third phase, which is like coping or something, and then acceptance.” She paused for a few seconds to catch her breath and structure her thoughts, then she continued, “My two friends and I were some of the few students that attended the meeting, so we all had ample time to speak and when the staff member asked me how long my honeymoon period lasted, I said in my candid nature, about 20 minutes.” A gentle giggle followed her comment, suggesting that, despite the difficulties, reflecting on the situation after the fact enabled her to find humor in her lived experiences. She paused again, fixing her brown eyes on the horizon, clearly focusing on finding those memories stored in her brain: “I remember getting on the bus at the airport, and that was all honeymoon-like and then we were picked up by our host father at the stadium. Luckily I had a roommate because she was able to carry the brunt of the conversation, but it was probably the most stressful car ride of my entire life because I was not able to understand anything that he was saying. Then the first week was difficult to say the least getting used to everything.” Having learned about the cultural*

*adjustment helped Olivia to put her new experiences in perspective, knowing that many students have arrived in similar situations as she did and at the end of their study abroad they have made considerable progress in language acquisition, as it seemed was her case with her Spanish. See Olivia's descriptions about her L2 language progress in the analytic vignette in Assertion 5. Further, Olivia pointed out that she accomplished her "primary goal – finishing her Spanish language requirement in a month instead of a year, and secondary goal – studying abroad for the first time." In addition, she mentioned that along the way, she learned more about what it means "to have work/life balance and more about what it means to be independent."*

*Maggie's recollections of the on-site orientations were vague, but distinctive enough to acknowledge that her presence in the Center made her feel that the information she was getting seemed more applicable, "[...] but I guess that was really when I got it, showed understanding because, like when you're actually in the building and you can see, oh, this is where I'm going to be learning that and just the expectations seem clearer."*

*In Tammy's case, the on-site orientation was more helpful to her because, as she described it "[...] at that point you are there and so they are giving you the materials [including bus and gym passes], information about the three gyms we could use, or more detailed information about how we should interact with the host family members, what we should do and should not do, how we can be helpful to them, and what our expectations should have been of them and their expectations of us while we were in their house."*

The preceding analytic vignette illustrates how the on-site orientation upon arrival was more helpful to the students than the pre-departure orientation on their home campus. Despite this finding, as noted at the beginning of this assertion, all of the interviewed L2 learners agreed on the value and support of the combined pre-program services (pre-departure and on-site

orientation), including information on culture shock and the host family. In addition to their comments noted in the previous vignette (except for Maggie's and Brenda's comments about the pre-departure orientation) the students' agreement was evident in the *End of Term Evaluation* that all students completed upon conclusion of their summer program. All of the interviewed students reported that the combined pre-program services were helpful to them: four students "strongly agreed" and three "agreed" on the benefits and support of the services provided to them.

Furthermore, the cultural adjustment phases referenced by the students in the vignette are described by Cohen et al. (2019) in their *Instructional Guide to Strategies for Language and Culture Learning and Use*. See Appendix K for a full description. Instead of phases, Cohen et al. called them stages (i.e., Stage 1: Cultural Euphoria, Stage 2: Cultural Confrontation, Stage 3: Cultural Adjustment, Stage 4: Cultural Adaptation).

All of the students of this study who participated in the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* for a month and took the combination course SPAN 2010/SPAN 2020 (i.e., Brenda, Eliza, Maggie, Olivia) exhibited characteristics described in Stage 2. Due to their limited language level and the short length of their immersion, these students seemed to have been at the initial stages of their cultural adjustment, and they experienced confusion and frustration at times related to culture and language differences. They all indicated feeling out of their comfort zone, and some mentioned that they felt homesick (i.e., Brenda, Maggie). However, despite these feelings, they all reported having made significant progress in expanding their cultural awareness and L2 oral proficiency.

Moreover, all the L2 interviewed students who entered the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* at the SPAN 3000 (i.e., Marius) level or above (i.e., Tammy, Vincent) demonstrated

characteristics corresponding to Stage 3: Cultural Adjustment, and some exhibited characteristics corresponding to Stage 4: Cultural Adaptation. For example, Marius took session II for a month, while Tammy and Vincent took sessions I and II and were immersed in the culture for two months. As a result, the information gathered from the interviews suggests that these students seem to have experienced a significant cultural adjustment and some cultural adaptation feeling increasingly comfortable and competent in the culture. These growing feelings overcame their initial perceptions of feeling frustrated and out of place. In addition, these students reported that they gradually interacted more effectively with members of the host culture, which aided them in increasing their confidence to continue exploring future interactions. Thus, as discussed in the responses to RQ2, they expanded their learning, which helped them examine and comprehend a specific range of beliefs, cultural norms, and values of the Spanish culture.

To sum up the response to RQ1, the previous assertions provide a detailed picture of how the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program*'s design affected the L2 participating learners' perceptions about their oral proficiency and L2 use beyond the classroom environment. The participants reported an overall positive account of the L2 students' experiences with some exceptions (e.g., initial culture and language shock exhibited by most L2 learners, Vincent's initial disappointment to find out that some L2 learners spoke English outside the Center). Despite these hurdles, all the participating L2 learners reported gains in their oral skills and L2 language use. These successes were determined by the students' acknowledgement of their personal and academic achievements and the instructors' confirmatory remarks of L2 learners' accomplishments during class and out-of-class participation, involving exchanges with host culture members. Further, L2 learners' reported accounts regarding the pre-program services,

especially the on-site orientation, suggest that those instructions aided them in adjusting to the new culture and making connections with its members.

Lastly, exploring some significant features of the language socialization theory (e.g., agency, bidirectionality, explicit and implicit socialization, scaffolding), I elucidate L2 participating students' out-of-class interactions with members of the host community and their professors' instructional practices in Assertions 5, 7, 8, 9, and 10 correspondingly.

**RQ2: How are out-of-class interactions during study abroad associated with students' understanding of language and culture learning?**

Some program-related practical activities that were regarded by the participants as effective in helping the L2 Spanish students develop oral skills, language use, and awareness about Spanish culture include: 1) interactions with members of the host families; 2) interactions with members of the target culture at large in multiple contexts (e.g., coffee shops, local swimming pool, public transportation, restaurants, tour guides); and 3) in-class discussions about lexical terms supported by a practical guide called *ContiGo España* to aid students in out-of-class interactions.

**Assertion 4: The majority of the interviewed students reported that their interactions with members of their host family were the most helpful component during their time in Spain in aiding them to improve their oral skills and language use**

Seven out of the eight interviewed L2 students reported that the interactions they had with members of their host family was the most helpful during-program factor in aiding in improving their oral skills and language use, partly because those interactions required the most authentic communication in Spanish and occurred frequently. For four students (i.e., Eliza, Marius, Tammy, Vincent), the need to communicate using spoken Spanish was more immediate

than for others, mostly when students were assigned by themselves to households where no one spoke English. Describing her experiences interacting with her host family, Eliza indicated:

The biggest thing that improved my oral speaking skills was the host family. I was placed in a host family by myself, so it was just me, unlike some of my new study-abroad friends that I made who were paired with another person. I am not quite sure they gained as much Spanish speaking skills as I did, because they were able to communicate with each other in English sometimes. For me, I only was able to communicate in Spanish because there was no one else to speak English with me, and so they really forced me to learn how to communicate with Spanish native speakers who could not speak any English at all. (Interview, Eliza, 5/17/21)

Eliza also acknowledged that she had taken Spanish in high school and had previously traveled to Spain for a short period of time. Nevertheless, she noted that speaking in Spanish with her household members was very challenging the first week of her study, but that she was able to gradually overcome the language barrier and improve her communication. In addition, Eliza pointed out that she often had lunch and dinner with her host mom and her two younger kids who were in elementary school. She indicated that they talked about family life, the things they had learned in school, and other times they watched television together or she accompanied her host mother to take her kids to school. Moreover, describing her host mother's personality, Eliza stated:

My host mother was very forthcoming with her life, and she shared a lot about it, but she also wanted to know about my life [...So] it was nice because my mom came to visit the last week I was there and she invited my mother to have dinner, like a traditional Spanish dinner [...] It was really fun, and I was the translator between them because my mom did



not speak any Spanish and my host mother did not Speak any English. But they got along great and, despite the language barrier, they still were able to communicate. (Interview, Eliza, 5/17/21)

Eliza's immersive and supportive environment seems to have contributed to her Spanish progress. While it appears evident from the quote that Eliza got a lot from her immersive experience with her host family, she also found a need to balance her experiences to regain a sense of normalcy at times. "Sometimes at home with my host family, I felt somewhat saturated of too much Spanish and felt the need to go to my room to isolate myself to just decompress for a little while and write to my friends" (Interview, Eliza, 5/17/21). Even in the study-abroad context, L2 culture and language learning is not a naturally occurring process. As Eliza also pointed out during the interview, she found ways to relieve stress when things got overwhelming by doing what she usually does back home (e.g., taking breaks, communicating with friends).

Furthermore, Marius, Tammy, and Vincent were among the students who expressed that living with their host family was the most influential during-program factor in their progress towards oral proficiency and language use. As in Eliza's case, these students' host families spoke only Spanish at home and created a welcoming environment where students felt comfortable asking questions, getting feedback, and taking risks with the language without the fear of being judged (See Vincent's and Tammy's comments in Table 3 below). Further, some of the conversations between these students (i.e., Marius, Tammy, Vincent) and their host family members seemed to have reached a cultural exploration beyond the superficial level, which, at times, revealed attitudes of the host family members about certain topics that students found surprising and disagreeable (see Marius' comment about "the perfect Spanish" in Table 3 below). This level of discussion seemed to have transpired partly because these students entered

the program at the SPAN 3000 level or above, were committed to their active role of taking advantage of the immersive interactions, and, as suggested by their comments in Table 3 below, benefitted from the forthcoming personalities of some of their host family members and the frequency of the interactions. In addition, Tammy's and Vincent's comments indicate that the planned (by instructor) in-class discussions they had in some of their courses supported them in exploring cultural elements of the Spanish culture, which resulted in their ability to initiate and maintain conversations on themes as varied and current as bullfighting, the independence of Cataluña, the role of women in Spanish society, the royal family in Spain, etc.

The Name-Ordered matrix below includes a quote from each of these students and their perception about their interactions with members of their host families.

Table 3

*Name-Ordered Matrix: Students' Perceptions of Interactions with Host Families*

<p>Marius  (SPAN 3030, SPAN 3300 – Session I, Summer 2019)</p>	<p>"Some of the conversations I had with my host mother, an elderly woman, allowed me to learn how some people from Spain view American politics, which was a different perspective for me. For example, she spoke of liking Obama's personality but not liking his politics, or disliking Trump's personality but liking his politics more, that type of thing. Other conversations were about profound themes, like the human condition of love and sexual attraction. At times, the conversations went on for hours. But other times she spoke in a way that I found surprising. For example, she would say that the Spanish she spoke was the perfect Spanish and that people from Mexico or South America did not speak perfect Spanish. My response to that was, as a linguistics student, I have to disagree with you."</p>
<p>Tammy  SPAN 4700; SPAN 4707 – Session I, Summer 2021  SPAN 4705, SPAN 4708 – Session II,</p>	<p>"My host family was just my host mother and she was very nice. She also had two daughters but they were not living at home because they had moved out of the house and were already working and living their own lives. My host mother spoke no English so that was very helpful speaking to her all in Spanish. In my Culture and Civilization class, our professor would encourage us to talk to our host families about those things we discussed in class. So I often talked to her about things like the royal family in Spain because that is definitely a point of contention, different people have different opinions on that."</p>

Summer 2021	<p>Other times, we talked about the political system in Spain and about how different it is from the political system in the US. Or about the role of women in Spain, which she had a lot to say as a single woman living in Valencia. [...] It was interesting to hear her opinion about that because her role in the house [...] was less traditional in that she was not staying at home all the time. She was a very independent woman who had been married before, but divorced, and so she made her own way and taking care of two girls and raised them and everything. So her take on the role of women was that she didn't have to change her behavior for being a woman because she could do whatever she needed to do to support her family. So I appreciated having that sort of viewpoint. [...] And being able to compare it to how we talked in class about how the role of women had changed and the Spanish family had changed in everything and developed and now it's not so typical that you know mom has to stay at home with the kids [...] So it was very interesting to hear from her.”</p>
<p>Vincent</p> <p>SPAN 3300, SPAN 4707 – Session I, Summer 2021</p> <p>SPAN 4700, SPAN 4705 – Session II, Summer 2021</p>	<p>“My host family has provided a supportive environment where I am getting asked a lot of questions about simple things like, how did your day go? How do you like this or that ? Or have you seen this yet? They are very proactive about prompting conversation to occur, and then also I feel like any kind of suggestions that I have they have always welcomed. This has been more or less the experience I've heard from my classmates, so without a doubt that's where I am practicing the most; that's where I am getting the most correction and learning new words, because I can just ask, what is this called? What is that called? Even abstract ideas when I am watching a news broadcast: how do you refer to this or that?</p> <p>And when I make a mistake I get gently corrected, which I am happy about. I had to be comfortable enough to put myself out there, making mistakes, without being too afraid of that, and being comfortable asking questions [...] I also made sure I was there for the mealtimes because those moments have been the most helpful for conversation, and so, I wanted to be there so I could reap the benefits of that.</p> <p>[...] My culture class was helpful in preparing me to interact with my host family to discuss present-day real-time events, like bull fighting, independence of Cataluña, etc.”</p>

Furthermore, for some students (e.g., Brenda, Maggie) who entered the program at the Spanish lower intermediate level, interacting with host family members who spoke English to them occasionally was a helpful practice. For example, Brenda found her host family

environment very supportive when, in the beginning, she was hesitant to communicate using Spanish. As she described it:

My host mom would encourage me by asking me to try to communicate in Spanish and by saying that if we could not understand, we would work through it. Also, she spoke very good English, so if I ever had words that were too complicated or that I had no idea what it would translate into, I would do half Spanish and half English sentences and my host mom was nice about correcting me in a nice way and I thought that was super helpful. (Interview, Brenda, 5/17/21)

While Brenda's immersive experiences interacting with her host mother at the beginning of her homestay seemed different than Eliza's, whose host mother did not speak any English, Brenda found that those initial interactions, when her host mother used some English in their conversations, made her feel less uncomfortable about the experience and motivated her to seek out conversations in Spanish with other native speakers as her speaking skills improved. In her own words, "I remember feeling more comfortable talking in Spanish with native speakers after my conversations with my host mother, especially speaking with some of the people at the swimming pool. They were excited about us being there trying to speak their language" (Interview, Brenda, 5/17/21).

A similar situation was experienced by Maggie, who indicated: "My homestay helped me the most to improve my Spanish. They forced me out of my comfort zone because I had no idea what I was saying at first, but they were accommodating and understanding" (Interview, Maggie, 5/25/21).

However, Olivia's experience interacting with her host mother had a bumpy start, which tainted her homestay interactions throughout the rest of her study abroad. On day three of her

homestay while eating dinner with her host mother, Olivia shared what seemed a candid opinion about her personal preferences, “I think all I said with my limited vocabulary was that I prioritize sleep over studying” (Interview, Olivia, 7/28/21). Apparently, Olivia’s preferences did not sit well with her host mother, who, seemingly showered her with what seemed like opposing opinions. As expressed by Olivia:

At that moment, I felt threatened, and I shut down. She was speaking very fast in a language that I was not well-versed in. [...] After a few too many finger points in my direction, I left the table, went to my room, and cried. I wish I could say that I just shook it off and continued to live my best life, but that was not the case. I let that interaction color my experience abroad. [...] I avoided breakfast; I actually avoided being home altogether. When I was home, I studied immensely so as to have a good excuse for avoiding my host mother. Then, at dinner time, I would say that I had been studying, which were the only times that I could obtain a positive reaction from her (Interview, Olivia, 7/28/21).

Olivia’s descriptions seem to disconfirm what the other L2 learners of this investigation reported about their interactions with their host mothers and host families. For them, their interactions were positive and contributed to their L2 development and cultural awareness. For Olivia, her decision to avoid “being at home altogether” excluded her from the affordances of interacting with her host family (e.g., asking questions, engaging in conversation, listening and trying to figure out the gist of conversations, learning vocabulary and cultural aspects), which characterized the other participating L2 students’ interactions with members of the host family. For those L2 students, various factors (e.g., accessibility, authenticity, frequency) contributed to their progress in the homestay context. If Olivia had sought a more positive solution, perhaps by

asking the program administration to intervene and assure her access to the enriching company/conversation with a supporting host family, she could have obtained better results.

As suggested by the previous descriptions, Olivia's case represents a conflict that seems to have resulted from miscommunication and the seeming lack of support from the host mother. In this type of situation, the *UVA In Valencia Program* administration functions as an intermediary between the students and the host families when students are hesitant to express their likes or dislikes or those things that make them uncomfortable. First, the program provides tools so that students can communicate their ideas directly. Then, if that does not work, the administration intercedes directly on behalf of the students' interests (Interview, Administrative Director, 6/16/21). Judging by her descriptions, Olivia did not report her case to the program administrators, who could have mediated the situation on her behalf either to alleviate the apparent miscommunication or to place her in a more suitable homestay.

Furthermore, some of the tools (to help communication) mentioned by the Administrative Director include the pre-departure and on-site guidance about how students should interact with the host family members, how to be helpful to them, and about what students' expectations should be of them, or the host family members' expectations of the students while in their house. This seems confirmed by the Academic Director and Tammy's comments regarding the administrative on-site orientation, included in the vignette in Assertion 3 of this capstone. Tammy indicated that the on-site orientation was more helpful to her based on the information she received, which included tips on how to interact and help members of her host family.

Fortunately for Olivia, all her studying allowed her to finish out the courses with A's in each. But, unfortunately, she didn't do everything she had hoped to do while in Spain because she spent her time studying. As a result, in the four weeks that she was there, she was not able to

find a work/life balance that satisfied her exploratory needs (Interview, Olivia, 7/28/21), nor the benefits of a supportive homestay that characterized the experience of all the other participants of this study.

**Assertion 5: Additional during-program practices that aided students' progress in oral proficiency, language use, and cultural awareness included interactions with native speakers of the community at large in various contexts (e.g., coffee shops, local swimming pool, public transportation, restaurants, museums, visits to other cities in Spain)**

All of the interviewed students reported that their out-of-class interactions with members of the host culture at large were instrumental in their progress of oral skills, language use, and awareness about the target culture. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, all the interviewed students stated that they took their classes in the morning or the afternoon at the UVA Hispanic Studies Center. In either case, their daily explorations in the community allowed them to interact with native speakers after or before class and they all noted that this practice aided their progress. Further, all the students indicated that some of their in-class simulations and discussions helped them in out-of-class interactions in various contexts. These accounts are reflected in the following analytic vignette, which includes multiple sources of evidence, beginning with the statements of the students who took the intermediate-level Spanish and continuing with the students who took higher level courses, SPAN 3000 or above. Two features were salient among the participating students: 1) students' progress seemed related to how comfortable they felt using the target language and interacting with the local native Spanish speakers (feeling comfortable helped reduce the initial anxiety of speaking in a new language), and 2) intermediate-level participants seemed to have experienced more initial discomfort than more

advanced students. Lastly, the analytic vignette is followed by explanatory remarks through the lens of the language socialization framework, focusing on addressing RQ2.

**Analytic vignette: Triangulating from multiple data sources (i.e., different participants, different places) employing Zoom interviews**

*Brenda took her classes in the morning and sought out interactions with native speakers outside class in the afternoon. She reported that: “the information we learned and practiced in class was still fresh in my brain when I went outside to explore the city afterward. I felt comfortable speaking with people most of the time and felt less awkward each time I spoke Spanish in new situations.” This description seems to confirm what Dr. Campos indicated about students’ confidence (see comments, including Appendix I, in Assertion 2). He mentioned that learners experience anxiety, fear, and nervousness during the first days of their study abroad, and that it is particularly difficult for those students who enter the program with very little skills in the language. However, he pointed out that, “as soon as students gain confidence in their developing skills, [...] after having lost their shame of making mistakes speaking in a foreign language[...], the learning is much faster. They feel a strong need to express themselves and even find some pleasure in doing so in another language,”\* as is suggested by Brenda’s descriptions.*

*Brenda indicated that some of her in-class activities involved writing short dialogues and acting them out with her classmates to practice vocabulary and grammar, exploring the various themes covered in their textbook. For example, in the chapter related to food, she noted, “we role-played getting a coffee or ordering a meal and asking questions about the menu at a restaurant.” Brenda expressed that these practices aided her because they made it easier for her to retrieve the information from her memory at the moment of interacting with the actual servers,*



*especially the ones at the coffee shops near the Center who knew that Brenda and her classmates were English speakers learning Spanish, so, as she reported, “they were super fun and helpful.”*

*Brenda’s comfort and confidence grew from knowing how to pronounce certain expressions or having a general understanding of how to express some of the ideas relevant to the conversations and gradually understanding what was said to her. Moreover, as described in assertion 4, Brenda also felt comfortable speaking Spanish with members of the target culture when she interacted with the people at the local swimming pool. Her comfort and confidence seemed grounded on the support and confirmation from her interlocutors when she sought to communicate with them in Spanish.*

*Other out-of-class interactions similar to Brenda’s were reported by Olivia, who, notwithstanding her bumpy start due to an apparent miscommunication with her host mother on day two (see Olivia’s comments in Assertion 4), and her difficulties understanding spoken Spanish during the first two weeks in Spain, “I felt like I was just drowning in a sea of unfamiliar words,” she reported that the experiences in class, learning the key phrases and actively practicing them in the same day and continuously in out-of-class interactions with members of the host culture were very helpful. She also mentioned that one of her instructors took her class to a shopping center while they were working on the unit about clothing and shopping. As she observed, “In the store, we got to practice the vocabulary and the grammar with the native speakers, and that was hugely beneficial.” In addition to benefiting from a similar retrieval process (see explanations following this vignette) as Brenda did, Olivia’s descriptions suggest that the repeated nature of these practices helped her increase her comfort speaking Spanish with native speakers outside of class. This seems confirmed by her description of an experience she had at a restaurant toward the end of her study abroad where she was able to help one of her*

*friends from the Program by aiding her order her meal in Spanish. Olivia noted that even though her friend was in a more advanced course than she was, her friend had not properly learned how to ask for meal in a restaurant and she felt a great sense of accomplishment for being able to do that for her friend using her newly acquired skills in Spanish.*

*Brenda's and Olivia's described learning experiences seem to align with one of Dr. Campos's instructional practices that consists of getting students ready in-class to interact with native speakers outside of class. Dr. Campos indicated that he likes to spend as much time as possible outside the classroom when he teaches the short-term study abroad courses in Valencia because he believes that the classroom is a neutral place and that, "as much as we want to, the classroom is a space that could be anywhere."\* Hence, he prefers to take his students to the "streets" where, as he declared, "they experience full immersion."\* Dr. Campos noted that a way in which he accomplishes this immersion is by bringing his class to a coffee shop near the Center. This immersive learning activity is fully described later in Assertion 7.*

*Eliza and Maggie also reported that they benefited from their out-of-class interactions with members of local communities (e.g., servers, tour guides, Center staff members) and weekend trips to other cities in Spain, where they interacted with native speakers in different well-known cultural sites in Barcelona and Madrid (e.g., Sagrada Familia Church, Picasso Museum, Prado Museum). Eliza, for example, mentioned that her class final project required written scripts and video recordings of themselves interacting with two groups of native speakers (e.g., local service providers, host families). While Eliza did not elaborate on her recordings interacting with members of her host culture, she considered her overall experience beneficial. She reported that she was able to adapt to situations when she felt out of her comfort zone, trying her Spanish with native speakers, and making efforts to adjust to cultural differences (e.g., siesta*

*time and late dinners). Unaccustomed to seeing shops closing in the middle of the day, Eliza noted that she found it intriguing that many shops closed from about three to five in the afternoon to give people time to rest and take a break during what seems to be the hottest part of the day. She also experienced discomfort at the beginning of her study abroad when she had to wait until 9:00 p.m. or 10:00 p.m. to eat dinner when that is usually her bedtime, but gradually adapted to it.*

*Maggie reported that, on some weekends, they had the flexibility to travel and explore other cities in Spain. She mentioned that she went to Barcelona and Madrid with a group of her classmates, including other L2 participating students. She indicated that they were forced to use their Spanish to figure out transportation and places to eat and stay. She felt that, in addition to helping her improve her spoken Spanish, her travel experience helped her grow by becoming more independent through having to make decisions on her own and by acquiring a sense of global citizenship through the appreciation for other cultures' richness (e.g., architecture, art in general, food, language, history). Maggie's acknowledgement of her global citizenship development stresses the value of the Program's cultural supported events (e.g., class thematic discussions, guided tour visits to different sites in Valencia and other cities in Spain, workshops) to promote skills for global citizenship and the global workforce (e.g., decision making when faced with new and challenging circumstances, L2 language and cultural development).*

*As far as the students (i.e., Amanda, Marius, Tammy, Vincent) who took SPAN 3000 or above, all four students expressed that their comfort and confidence using Spanish with different groups of native speakers outside of class (e.g., Center staff members, servers, tour guides) gradually grew during the time they spent in Spain. For example, as noted by Vincent, "I had to be comfortable enough to put myself out there, making mistakes, without being too afraid of that,*

*and being comfortable asking questions a lot.” Vincent’s comments resonate with what Dr. Campos indicated in his remarks in the first paragraph of this vignette; in other words, once students begin to lose their fear of making mistakes, their learning is much faster. Moreover, Vincent’s acknowledgment highlights the importance of the acceptance of making mistakes in the L2 learning process. As indicated by Dr. Fuentes, “making mistakes is as necessary as making knowledgeable contributions because we learn a lot through the mistakes.”\* She emphatically commented in the Zoom interview that she repeats these ideas to her students regularly aiming to help them feel more comfortable in their efforts to use their Spanish to interact with native speakers, encouraging them to actively address their mistakes by asking questions and welcoming feedback from their instructors and knowledgeable members of the various groups of the Spanish culture with whom they interact (e.g., host family members, tour guides, exchange language partners).*

*Furthermore, these four students also reported significant agency in their approach to interacting with target language groups and three of them (i.e., Marius, Vincent, Tammy) noted that they redirected some conversations to Spanish whenever a native speaker outside the class spoke to them in English after finding out they were from the U.S. As a result, they indicated having made substantial progress in their oral skills and language use.*

*Related to this proactive approach, the four students (i.e., Amanda, Marius, Vincent, Tammy) mentioned above indicated that they used their Spanish with native speakers everywhere they went (e.g., coffee houses, local bars, museums, restaurants, retail stores). Tammy and Vincent mentioned that they used their Spanish in some of the social and cultural activities the program supported (e.g., salsa class, cooking class), and Tammy noted that she took a couple of trips outside of Valencia with a group of students from the Program during her first session and*

*was forced to use her Spanish to ask for directions about the train she needed to get on and ask questions about her ticket at the train station (she could not remember the specific details of her conversation). She also pointed out that she had many conversations in Spanish with native speakers in the cities she visited (e.g., Barcelona, Madrid).*

*Regarding the in-class activities that prepared these participating students for interactions with target language groups outside the classroom, they all reported that they were fulfilled with their experiences because they explored and discussed many cultural themes that supported the progress of their oral skills, language use, and cultural awareness. For example, Tammy and Vincent indicated that some of the practices in their Culture and Civilization class (e.g., debates between students in the class regarding local language differences and similarities, the relationship between the church and the state, the end of bullfighting in Cataluña) were pivotal because they simulated a lot of what they were going to say while interacting with the target language groups. They mentioned that these were topics that were interesting to them to ask about, without boring anyone by talking about them because they were themes on which most people already had opinions or whose perspectives were unique and interesting to discuss. Moreover, they highlighted the decisive role of their instructor during those debates, scaffolding the process by asking questions, making suggestions, and answering students' questions.*

*Additionally, Tammy mentioned that some of the activities they practiced in her Introduction to Spanish Art class (e.g., using worksheets to analyze paintings shown through a projector) aided them to apply the same approach at the moment of seeing the authentic artworks at the Prado and Picasso museums, including being able to formulate relevant questions to the tour guides.*

*Nevertheless, not all the interactions these students had with native Speakers outside the classroom were as seamless as those described above. They all reported experiencing challenging situations when they had difficulty expressing some of their ideas or could not understand what was spoken to them in Spanish, especially during the first or second week of studying abroad. For example, Tammy, who participated in sessions I and II, reported that she contracted Covid the second week abroad. While asymptomatic, she noted that she needed to be isolated, so the Program administration placed her in an apartment near the Center, interacting with her instructors and classmates via Zoom. Tammy mentioned that much of her communication with native speakers during her ten-day quarantine was over the phone. She found it overwhelming initially and sometimes frustrating because people spoke quickly, and she could not see their faces. So she didn't know whether she was getting her message across when she communicated with them (e.g., the people at the pharmacy, people at the travel agency). However, Tammy indicated that her communication over the phone gradually improved and that by the end of her study abroad, she understood and was able to communicate most of her ideas in Spanish.*

*Another example of inadequate communication in Spanish with native speakers among these students was reported by Vincent. He mentioned that he ended up on the wrong side of town during the first week of his study abroad when he took a taxi to go to the Center. Because he could not remember the Center's location, he told the taxi driver that the Center was near the stadium, unaware that there was more than one stadium in the city. Finding humor in his frustrating experience, Vincent smiled sneakily as he indicated that the taxi driver, wanting an explanation, suggested the location of one of the stadiums, to which he consented with a "vale (okay)," without understanding what the driver was saying to him, out of fear of how he was*

*viewed. As he noted, “[I was] too afraid to ask for clarification or for someone to repeat themselves because I [didn’t] want to seem like I [didn’t] know what I [was] doing.” Hence, they ended up at the wrong stadium, far away from the Center. Failing to ask questions for clarification caused Vincent to be an accomplice in his own frustration. Despite this initial drawback, Vincent gradually overcame his fear, as he implied earlier, he became more comfortable communicating in Spanish, and more assertive when speaking with native speakers.*

The vignette above illustrates how some of the students’ out-of-class interactions with target language groups in different contexts, including some in-class discussions and simulations, supported their language and culture learning. Further exploration of in-class and out-of-class instructional and learning activities is addressed in Assertion 7. The vignette also reveals some of the challenges the students experienced.

As noted in the literature review, one of the central tenets of language socialization theory is that through participation in everyday social interaction, newcomers to a community are socialized through language into cultural and linguistic practices of the community (e.g., Ochs 2002). In this framework, the out-of-class interactions described in the previous vignette provide instances where cultural and linguistic socialization transpired. For example, Brenda’s and Olivia’s accounts suggest that some of their classes supported interactions with server groups (e.g., coffee shops, restaurants, retail stores) and facilitated their interactions through the use of effective learning strategies that seemingly resulted in successful language exchanges (e.g., getting coffee, getting some food). Further, as suggested by Olivia and Brenda, the repetitive nature of these mediated interactions and the supportive and confirmative role of the interlocutors (e.g., women at the swimming pool) lessened their initial anxiety and fear of facing their new culture and of trying their nascent Spanish with native speakers. In the process, they

felt more comfortable and confident, enabling active participation, thus language learning and cultural awareness were gradually achieved.

Furthermore, Dr. Campos's referenced instructional practices seem to illustrate the L2 learning strategies (i.e., affective, cognitive, metacognitive, social) introduced in Chapter 1 of this capstone. Moreover, these learning strategies functionalities seem to elucidate Brenda's and Olivia's experiences:

- Affective (feeling comfortable and confident helped reduce anxiety).
- Cognitive (retrieval of linguistic and spatial memories, rehearsal, comprehension, or production of words and phrases were supported by repetitive rehearsal practices).
- Metacognitive (planning what the L2 learners would do and being cognizant of their selected vocabulary and grammar use facilitated learning).
- Social (interacting with other learners and native speakers, possibly involving conversation starters facilitated language exchanges and opportunities to work cooperatively with others).

As suggested by Brenda's, Olivia's, and Dr. Campos's accounts described in the vignette, these L2 learning strategies helped students in taking advantage of the affordances of out-of-class interactions (e.g., communicative practices, authentic interactions).

Another distinctive feature described in the literature review about language socialization theory is that the socialization process can occur both explicitly and implicitly. As suggested by Elizabeth's and Maggie's recollections, implicit and explicit socialization transpired from some of their sought interactions. For example, Elizabeth's adaptation to new cultural situations (e.g., siesta, eating late) seems to have developed through "routine participation in semiotically mediated practices" (Ochs & Schieffelin 2014, p. 12). In Maggie's case, some of her



socialization occurred explicitly through guided cultural explorations (e.g., visits to cultural sites in Barcelona and Madrid), which helped her develop a sense of global citizenship.

However, after revisiting the body of data for disconfirming evidence, I noted that not all the out-of-class interactions with native speakers transpired as anticipated. In some instances, the interlocutors were not as accommodating as those described in Brenda's and Olivia's cases. For example, Brenda and Eliza mentioned that in some stores or restaurants where they wanted to ask a question in Spanish to clarify a doubt or to initiate a conversation with a server or a clerk, the servers quickly dismissed them because they were too busy and could not wait for them to put their thoughts together in Spanish or did not have the patience to interpret some of what they were trying to say.

As described in Chapter 2 of this capstone project, L2 learning in the socialization framework involves frequent meaningful communicative practices (i.e., input/ intake; interaction, involving explicit/ implicit feedback; output) with native speakers in natural settings (e.g., coffee shops, restaurants) through authentic interactions. In addition, L2 learners must be accepted into the community and allowed access to everyday activities of the local members. In this social framework, friendly interlocutors play a decisive role in the communication process, especially for those beginning students for whom comfort and confidence using the target language depends on their perceived gradual progress. While this seems to explain what Brenda and Olivia experienced in some of their interactions with native speakers (e.g., baristas in the coffee shop, women in the swimming pool), the following descriptions may explain what Brenda and Eliza experienced when they were dismissed by the servers in the places they referenced:

If students' access to meaningful input is blocked or if they are provided insufficient or inhospitable opportunities to interact in significant ways, their language production will

also be curtailed and their learning goals (plus their senses of themselves as people whose learning is valued and supported) will likely be negatively influenced (Duff, 2007).

In spite of this apparent negative influence, Brenda's and Eliza's overall assessment of their experience was positive and they reported that, largely, their interactions with native speakers supported their learning of the Spanish language and culture.

Furthermore, the more advanced participating students (i.e., Amanda, Marius, Tammy, Vincent) exhibited another distinctive characteristic expected of novices in the language socialization framework: an active role in the socialization process. This active role led these L2 learners to seek out meaningful interactions with target group members outside the class and, in some cases, to inform the members of the target groups about their learning needs (e.g., redirecting conversations to Spanish when spoken to in English by the locals or asking for clarifications during class discussions in the Culture and Civilization class).

In sum, the overall assessment reported by the students regarding the role of out-of-class interactions with members of the target culture at large during their study abroad was positive. Moreover, despite their initial fear and reported challenges, all the participating students expressed that their confidence gradually improved. As suggested by their descriptions, their interactions aided their linguistic and cultural development.

**Assertion 6: A practical guide called *ContiGo España* supports L2 learners' understanding of language and culture and aids them with in-class discussions and out-of-class interactions**

*ContiGo España* was designed by the UVA in Valencia faculty to aid American students participating in the *UVA in Valencia Program* for the first time. The information contained succinctly explores those unknown, curious, or surprising aspects of Spanish culture (e.g., eating

dinner late at night, speaking too closely or too loudly to people during conversations, wearing shoes at all times while at home). This practical guide is one of the materials (e.g., metro pass, route maps) included in the folder students receive at the onsite academic orientation in Valencia. Further, some instructors (e.g., Dr. Campos, Dr. Fuentes, Dr. Rivera, Dr. Rubio) use it to support discussion and reflection in their classes. In addition to in-class use, the guide is designed to aid L2 students in all sorts of out-of-class immersive interactions, helping them to avoid possible cultural and linguistic misunderstandings that they may experience while staying in Spain. One of the most common cultural and linguistic misunderstandings experienced by L2 learners while immersed in Spanish culture relates to the directness of the Spaniards in their speech and their shared practice of speaking loudly. As noted by the *UVA in Valencia Program* Administrative Director:

For the American students, our way of speaking can come across as being rude. For example, in Spain, electricity is costly, so we are accustomed to turning the lights off each time we leave the room. The host mothers often remind the L2 students to turn the lights off after they leave their rooms, and at times they may be yelling the request from across the hall, which students may perceive as getting told off.\* (Interview, Administrative Director, 6/16/21)

Commenting on this theme, Vincent expressed that people in Spain are very direct in conversation and that he was warned about it during the pre-departure meeting; however, he noted that he did not grasp what that meant at the time. After his experiences and class discussions, he arrived at the following conclusion:

If you are doing something that would be seen as socially questionable, and that depends, whether in the classroom setting or on the bus or in the metro and, especially with Covid,

wearing masks and social distancing, there are many more rules to observe. Anybody off the street, who you do not know, will be happy to remind you of what you are supposed to be doing, and it can sort of come off in a very blunt manner. It is not personal, but it can feel rude to an American. (Interview, Vincent, 7/21/21)

To help L2 learners cope with this type of situation, the guide focuses on raising intercultural awareness by exploring cultural and linguistic elements, thus serving as a valuable tool for students interacting with a new language and culture in a global and interconnected world (Guitart et al., 2018).

Observed from the lens of the language socialization framework, the collective “voices” of the authors (faculty, experts on the local culture) socialize the novices (L2 participating students) through explicit guidance (i.e., linguistic, cultural) that students can further explore in implicit communicative practices mediated through the new language while immersed in the local community. In this framework, in addition to linguistic skills, the L2 learners acquire a sociocultural understanding (e.g., ideologies, normative practices) of the new culture. As noted in the literature review section of this study, this acquisition is part of an interrelated process where social norms and beliefs influence expert-novice communication at many levels (Scheffelin & Ochs, 1986), as suggested by the quotes above.

Furthermore, the authors organize the guide by chapters exploring specific cultural themes and divide each into two sections. First, they introduce basic vocabulary related to the chapter’s theme in the first section. Then, they use the vocabulary in the section that follows through contextualized cultural explanations, recommendations, and practical suggestions to help L2 learners become familiar with the Spanish cultural reality. One example of this is the expression “*a pie*: on foot”\*, which the authors place under “*Vocabulario útil*: Useful

vocabulary"\* in the first section of the chapter related to the city of Valencia. Then, in the second section, the authors use the expression to provide contextualized practical guidance labeled, "*La mejor manera de desplazarse por el centro: The best way to get around the city center.*"\* This is followed by the practical suggestion: "Valencia is quite flat; thus you can easily go over it "*a pie,*" by bike or by bus, and the only way to visit the historic center is by walking."\* Knowing this information made Maggie and her roommate feel comfortable enough to take the bus to the Center for their daily morning classes and return home by walking for about forty minutes in the early afternoon. On their walk home, Maggie expressed that they enjoyed their walk and the view, stopping at times in the grocery store along the way to buy blueberries or "*horchata,*" a cold or iced drink made with tiger nuts and sugar. While doing this, they used their Spanish to communicate with the local servers.

Furthermore, most of the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* participating L2 students indicated that the practical information the authors include in the guide (e.g., information about various neighborhoods, operation of the public transportation system, recommendations of the most attractive places to visit, including some exciting sites found in the *la Ciudad de las Artes y las Ciencias: City of Arts and Sciences*<sup>19</sup>) helped them navigate their way around the city.

Additionally, the authors provide tools that aid L2 learners to reflect on new challenging circumstances and face them to minimize the culture shock that they often experience in the immersive context (Guitart et al., 2018). These tools are represented by the explanations and recommendations related to the concept of distance or space in the context of interpersonal interactions on matters related to wellbeing, family, and health. The authors guide the L2 learners by explicitly indicating that:

The so-called concept of personal distance or space is very different in Spain and the U.S. Thus, you should not be scared by it. In the beginning, you might feel uncomfortable, but little by little, you will understand that it is a simple cultural matter and that, when your host family or any other Spaniard gets closer to you when speaking to you or places his/her hand on your shoulder, it only means one more way to express closeness or affection.\* (Guitart et al., 2018, p. 23)

Moreover, the authors provide descriptions of situations and circumstances that resemble what L2 learners will encounter when meeting their host families and dealing with their family interactions. In addition to informing students about the role of the host family as an essential support network, the writers tell L2 students that different generations of family members often live under the same roof. Further, they inform students about the times to eat lunch and dinner, which differ from American students' eating times, the practice of *la siesta* and *sobremesa*, and the high taxes on electricity, which increase the cost of the electrical bill, hence the constant reminder to turn off the lights or the fan whenever students are not using them. Additionally, L2 students are guided on what to do when they do not feel well, how to express some common symptoms (e.g., having blisters, allergies, a temperature, a cough), and how to describe them at the doctor's office or the pharmacy. However, one of the participating students (i.e., Tammy) did not reference the guide when asked about it during her descriptions of her ten-day quarantine after testing positive for Covid-19. She expressed that she did not remember seeing the guide, adding that she may have misplaced it by mistake.

Another theme the authors explore in the guide addresses the differences between Spanish from Latin America and Spain. The main objective is to awaken students' curiosity about these differences to learn how to use them, thus exploring and enjoying the richness of the

Spanish language (Guitart et al., 2018). They provide examples of lexical differences between the Spanish spoken in Spain and the different Latin American variants. These examples are helpful for American L2 learners who have learned Spanish from Latin America and native speakers from Latin America visiting Spain. Some words are not used in Spain or have a different meaning, especially colloquial Spanish that refers to various items (e.g., beverages, food, fruits, money) and many aspects of daily life. An illustration of this scenario is Marius' discovery of the word "longaniza," the word for pork sausage, commonly used in Spain, which he learned as "salchicha" from his Spanish classes in the U.S. Marius found that the exploration of these vocabulary words in his cultural discussion class was very useful.

Furthermore, the authors remind L2 learners of the verb conjugations corresponding to the second person plural, *vosotros/as*, including corresponding imperative forms. This informal speech pattern is only used in Spain or by the Spaniards, instead of the formal *ustedes*, used in Latin America where the register level (i.e., formal, informal) is determined by context. Becoming aware of these differences, Vincent noted that "a big transition for many students was that American Spanish programs emphasize Latin American Spanish because it is probably something more relevant to the experience of someone in the U.S., and that includes often skipping emphasis on *vosotros*" (Interview, Vincent, 7/21/21). In addition, Amanda and Vincent admitted that they had to relearn the *vosotros* form because, as the authors explain in the guide, the *ustedes* form, reserved for formal contexts in Spain, is less and less used there. Further, Vincent also admitted that he had not reached the comfort level he needed to use the imperative forms the way Spaniards do. In other words, Vincent noted that instead of saying, for example, "*dame un bocadillo*," (give me a sandwich), he said, "*me gustaría tener un bocadillo, por favor*," "I would like to have a sandwich, please." According to the explanations of Hernández and

Boero (2018), included in the literature review section of this capstone, Vincent was using what most American English speakers do in service interactions; namely, the English-like constructions such as speaker-oriented forms, first-person reference (e.g., I would like to have a sandwich), as opposed to the hearer-oriented form (e.g., give me a sandwich) used by the Spaniards. As Vincent discovered the pragmatic norms of L2 (e.g., Spanish command forms), he adapted practices influenced by his L1. With time and repetitive immersive interactions with native speakers in the target culture, Vincent will likely gradually be socialized into the L2 pragmatic norms, making him feel comfortable and confident to use the hearer-oriented imperative forms native speakers use in Spain.

Another theme explored by the authors in the guide is gastronomy. In addition to describing a variety of foods, which often differ from what L2 learners are accustomed to eating at home, the writers highlight the social importance of food during gatherings of friends and family. Students learn about many Spanish customs (e.g., gastronomy, national and local, and those dishes around most popular celebrations). For example, Marius learned about “*el rabo*,” oxtail, and about “*el pulpo*,” octopus. He mentioned that he tried out the oxtail in one of the restaurants and that he found it to be very rich. In his own words, “it came piled up on a plate, cut into the different parts of the vertebrae with the meat around it and served with many potatoes” (Interview, Marius, 6/19/21).

Another dish that Marius tried for the first time was served to him by his host mother on two occasions. Marius learned that *el pulpo* is a popular dish in Galicia, Northwestern Spain, and wondered whether his host mother was Galician because she seemed fond of it and prepared it in different ways. However, Marius was not too impressed with *el pulpo*, but he ate it nonetheless



because he did not want to appear unappreciative, as he said, “it was edible; I just did not like it too much!”

Going shopping is another theme explored by the authors. They provide detailed guidance to aid the students who need or want to go shopping while staying in Spain (e.g., practical vocabulary for help with purchasing a mobile phone, some clothes, some books). In addition, they include information about the best places to go shopping, when and how to do it. While the L2 participating students of this study did not provide specific details about their shopping experiences, their general comments about “going shopping” suggest that they had successful immersive encounters.

Related to these descriptions, traveling is another theme the authors address in the guide. They provide suggestions of possible destinations around Valencia and to other parts of the country, including the most reliable means of transportation in each case. This is accompanied by ample information about what to do when traveling to Barcelona, Madrid, and Northern and Southern Spain. Some of the L2 participating students (e.g., Eliza, Maggie), who visited Barcelona and Madrid, expressed that the information about means of transportation, safety, and recommendations of places to visit, were instrumental in their explorations of many cultural sites (e.g., Gaudi’s architectural designs and Picasso Museum in Barcelona, Prado Museum in Madrid).

Lastly, the authors include information about Spanish festivities, exploring their meaning and providing explanations and guidance on celebrating international festivities such as *Fallas de Valencia*, *Sanfermines de Pamplona*, and *Holy Week*, covering part of Spanish geography and its festivities. Dr. Rubio expressed that she uses this information in her cultural conversations class to engage L2 learners during in-class discussions. With the exception of *Sanfermines de*

*Pamplona* (Northeastern Spain), most of these festivities are not part of the summer months, which may explain the lack of descriptions from the participating students on these themes.

To sum up, the collective voices of the UVA in Valencia Program faculty, who wrote *ContiGo España*, guide L2 learners through practical recommendations in order to facilitate their linguistic and sociocultural understanding of the Spanish culture. To accomplish this, they provide explicit guidance related to social practices and norms to socialize L2 learners into Spanish society. In addition, the authors advise novices on a variety of themes, including transportation, cultural sites of Valencia and other cities in Spain, the differences between the Spanish from Latin America and Spain, gastronomy, among other topics. In addition to in-class discussions, L2 learners are encouraged to engage in out-of-class interactions with members of the target culture through which they may experience implicit socialization.

**RQ3: How do faculty teach and use language and culture learning strategies, if any, in the immersive study abroad?**

The assertions in response to this research question address the ways instructors utilize pedagogical practices to facilitate language and culture learning. The instructor's role is explored along several dimensions: what instructional activities they engaged in, what content and skills they addressed with their instruction, and how they employ formative and summative assessments to support students' learning needs. These instructional practices are described in analytic vignettes, interwoven with students' confirmatory remarks at times, followed by explanatory observations through the lens of the language socialization framework.

**Assertion 7: Faculty employed simulations to engage students in active learning, developing communicative and linguistic skills and cultural awareness.**

All of the participating faculty of this study indicated that they employed simulations to engage students in active learning, developing communicative and linguistic skills and cultural awareness. Addressing a question related to successful instructional practices, Dr. Rivera expressed that, “we design everything in such a way that students are forced to communicate in Spanish, except in extreme need. Thus, students’ progress is fast”\* (Interview, Dr. Rivera, 6/1/21). One of the ways the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* faculty (e.g., Dr. Campos, Dr. Fuentes, Dr. Rivera, Dr. Rubio, Dr. Zamora) facilitate this communication consists of simulations to engage their students in active learning through demonstrative interactions. Further, these instructors expressed that these simulations often motivate their students to take on an active role and work through an event, which mirrors a real-life situation (e.g., interacting with servers in public places, debates regarding sociocultural issues, challenging social situations). In addition, some of their described simulations focus on developing linguistic skills (e.g., vocabulary and command forms used to order coffee and food in a coffee shop) while others focus on discussing current and controversial issues (e.g., the role of the Catholic Church in Spanish society), yet others are intended to guide students on how to interact with native speakers in challenging scenarios (e.g., a corrupt taxi driver overcharging for a cab ride).

Recounting some of his teaching methods at the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program*, Dr. Campos indicated that he engages his students in reproducing scenes that exemplify real-life interactions (e.g., servers at a coffee house interacting with customers, challenging situations some L2 Spanish learners experience when they are new to Valencia). To accomplish this, he guides his students on taking on the roles of customers at a coffee shop or of a corrupt taxi driver and his passenger. These scenarios are described in the following analytic vignette:

**Analytic Vignette: Simulations representing two situations: Interactions with servers at a coffee shop and the interaction between a corrupt taxi driver and an L2 novice learner**

*Describing some of his class immersive practices during the Zoom interview, Dr. Campos indicated that during the first fifteen minutes before leaving the classroom, he informs the students that the class on that day is going to be about how to ask for a coffee in a coffee shop. He noted that he explains, speaking Spanish, the different types of coffee, helping students to prepare different types of questions with various levels of formality, from formal to less formal requests, the latter exhibiting direct language registers. He talks with his students about many possible interactions that can occur inside the coffee shop and together they create a mini-vocabulary list. Then, equipped with these tools, Dr. Campos takes his class to a coffee shop near the Center where he has spoken to the baristas in advance. With a smile on his face during the Zoom interview, he revealed that by informing the baristas about his class's upcoming visit, he prepares them to extend their conversations with the students beyond the simple "how may I help you?" or "what kind of coffee do you want?" to engage students further, including some relevant details (e.g., the type of milk, sugar, accompanying food, or serving preferences). Dr. Campos concluded his description exhibiting a mimetic gesture of surprise to represent his students' reactions to the baristas' committed questioning. He paused for a few seconds, gazing reflectively at the horizon while gently pushing back his long, black hair from his face, then he continued:*

*I like to create these simulations because it is to go from what could remain in the theoretical plane to the real world since you have the real world there in Valencia. I think students value these practices a lot because they aid them in their progress.*

*Students have memories that are not only linguistic, but also spatial, involving the senses*

*(i.e., hearing, sight, smell, taste, touch). Thus, I think these simulations enable a deeper and faster way to acquire knowledge.\**

*A different simulation that Dr. Campos uses in his classes at the UVA in Valencia Summer Program is intended to guide students on how to avoid getting robbed by a dishonest taxi driver:*

*Dr. Campos expressed, “I ask the class for a volunteer. I ask him to come to the front and then I tell him that we are going to do a simulation that we are in a taxi. I am a rogue taxi driver; I am a dishonest taxi driver.” Dr. Campos paused for a minute to collect his thoughts, then he proceeded, “So, we just finished the taxi ride and I say, “Sir, it is seven euros.”” Then, seemingly breaking character he said, “Do you have money there, Alex? Do you have a 20 euro bill?” “Yes!” “Give it to me.” He gives me the twenty euro bill and I give him three in return. And he says, “I gave you a twenty euro bill.” I say, “No, you didn’t. You gave me a ten!” Then I tell the class, this is a situation that can easily happen in Spain. So, I tell the students, you have to tell the taxi driver when you give him the money, “It is a twenty euro bill!” And so the risk ends.” Dr. Campos ended his description noting, “These are things that may seem silly but make students feel like they are able to control various risky situations.”*

The previous vignette illustrates how the teacher plays the role of a facilitator who guides the students, scaffolding the process by providing explanations, making meaning collaboratively (e.g., vocabulary list, local experts involvement - the baristas), engaging students progressively through active participation. Moreover, the described simulations suggest that these types of learning activities motivate students by making the coursework more engaging (see Eliza’s and Olivia’s comments in Assertion 5), help learners to set realistic and communicative goals, assess the features of a language use situation (e.g., vocabulary used at a coffee shop, linguistic

skills in the form of commands), and help students to plan responses and have control on the execution of such plans (e.g., responding to the baristas committed questions, assertive communication at the moment of paying the taxi fare).

Furthermore, another type of simulation that the faculty at the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* (e.g., Dr. Campos, Dr. Fuentes, Dr. Rivera, Dr. Rubio, Dr. Zamora) reported using consisted of in-class debates addressing various sociocultural issues. For example, Dr. Rivera expressed that these debates in his Culture and Civilization class (SPAN 4700) enable discussion among students while exploring controversial and polarized issues of Spanish society (e.g., the role of the Catholic Church and the royal family in Spanish culture, bullfighting, independence of Cataluña). He also noted that students gradually learn facts about these issues from the class discussions and the readings to support one side or the other of the debates. In addition, Dr. Rivera noted that these simulations prepare students for ensuing discussions with members of their host families or the local community.

These descriptions align with Tammy's and Vincent's recollections of the described debates. See Table 3 in Assertion 4 of this capstone. Further, the mediating function (i.e., scaffolding the process) of the instructor during the debates was crucial at the moment of elucidating confusions. In Vincent's case, he highlighted the importance of the instructor's presence to facilitate the conversation because his feedback aided them in clarifying some essential details to help them in their overall understanding of specific issues (e.g., the decline of religious practices among Catholics in Spain).

Vincent pointed out that he and some of his classmates experienced some confusion in class during a debate when they were trying to understand the decline in religious practices among Spanish people who broadly identify themselves as Catholics but do not believe all the

Church's doctrines. Related to this idea, they were uncertain about whether the Catholic Church still held any political power or influence with the government, as it did during the Franco regime. Vincent noted that they expressed their uncertainty to the instructor, who

stopped the debate for a couple of minutes to explain that the Catholic Church held political power during the Franco era, but that things changed with the new Constitution of 1978, which defined the separation between the Church and the State. So now we could continue the conversation, knowing that the Church and the State are separate entities and that seems like something obvious, but that was important for us to clarify at the moment. (Interview, Vincent, 7/21/21)

The previously described simulation suggests that participants can bring their own experiences, knowledge, and skills to the discussion and consequently enrich the learning process, change the academic setting to a real situation (e.g., follow-up conversations with members of the host community), and provide an effective and efficient language learning experience scaffolded by the instructor.

However, revisiting the data corpus, I noted that Amanda and Marius indicated that they felt that transitioning from the academic setting to discussing their ideas in real situations (e.g., conversations with host family members) was not always attainable to them due to the specific circumstances (e.g., feeling fearful of saying the wrong thing or uncomfortable for lacking enough background knowledge of the issues). Describing her host family, Amanda pointed out that, while a very nice and welcoming family, they were very conservative and supporters of the Franco regime. As expressed by Amanda,

[...] it was very surprising to me finding out that because I had learned in college about all the horrible things he did. It was one of those things where, at first, I was thinking, am

I not understanding what you are saying, and then it was like no I am, I just kind of listened nodding my head. I was not going to debate any points of view, especially being an American who didn't live in the times of Franco. (Interview, Amanda, 6/30/21)

In light of the language socialization framework, Amanda's interactions with her host family members implicitly socialized her into the complexity of her host culture (i.e., different and contrasting belief systems). Lacking the expertise, Amanda indicated that she chose to remain neutral in the affair, which, given the circumstances, she felt was the most appropriate option.

In sum, the described simulations employed by the faculty at the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* seem to provide a suitable environment to foster active learning among participants. They can also provide realistic sociocultural contexts for language learning and cultural awareness by bridging the gap between students and the host culture.

**Assertion 8: Faculty employed a combination of in-class and out-of-class guided practices and formative and summative assessments to support students' learning needs**

All the interviewed faculty expressed that some of the salient features related to their instructional role at the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* consisted of having the flexibility and creativity to adapt the curriculum to explore the affordances of being immersed in the culture (e.g., negotiations conducive to building linguistic knowledge, development of information that results from interactions that promote learning). Moreover, they indicated that this creative autonomy was precisely one of the most significant challenges. They had one month to accomplish what most of them (e.g., Dr. Campos, Dr. Gil, Mrs. Rossi, Dr. Rubio, Mr. Smith, Dr. Zamora) usually accomplish during one semester teaching the same course on the home campus. Despite this challenge, all the interviewed faculty coincided in many practices that demonstrate



their flexible disposition and adaptability to explore the local cultural settings to support their students' learning needs. Some of these practices include in-class and out-of-class guided learning activities to explore culture, support oral communication, and implement formative and summative assessments to strengthen students' linguistic ability and cultural awareness.

### **Using in-class and out-of-class guided practices to explore culture, strengthen language skills, and support oral communication**

The following analytic vignette describes some of the activities that exemplify how the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* faculty used in-class and out-of-class guided practices to help L2 learners explore culture, strengthen L2 skills, and support oral communication.

#### **Analytic Vignette: Dr. Rubio's and Mr. Smith's use of in-class and out-of-class L2 instructional practices**

*Dr. Rubio expressed that she creates an open music playlist on Spotify at the beginning of the term and asks her students to continue adding songs to the playlist throughout their short-term summer immersion. She noted that using Spanish songs in in-class activities (e.g., engaging the class to identify useful phrases in the lyrics and to brainstorm situations in which those lyrics would be applicable) prepares students for out-of-class interactions. She forms groups of five students each and assigns students tasks to cover the history of the music in Spain and the Spanish speaking world by decades, beginning with the '80s until more recent years. She indicated that she instructs her students to go out on the streets to ask people about their music preferences and help the L2 learners develop potential questions. Providing some examples of these questions, Dr. Rubio mentioned, "from the '80s, which was your favorite band? What was your favorite song? Who was the most popular singer for you at the time?" Then she pointed out that these questions help the students to communicate with people, who, at first, are surprised*

*that they are asked about their music preferences. However, as Dr. Rubio pointed out, “many people stop to talk to the students because music is a topic that people like to discuss with others.” She also mentioned that people in Valencia are usually nice and accustomed to seeing or interacting with L2 college students. She added that this activity surprises some students, especially those working with the 80’s music because they cannot stop to ask people of their own age. They have to stop people older than they are who would know about the music of that period. Further, Dr. Rubio noted, “I tell the students to take advantage of the people sitting on the terraces. The people are amicable in Valencia. If someone is sitting on the terrace, you can come up and explain, ¡Hola! I am studying Spanish, I am from the University of Virginia, and I have an activity on music from the '80s. Often, people invite students to sit down at their table and end up talking with them for up to twenty or thirty minutes.” Then, Dr. Rubio mentioned that, in class, she instructs her students to look for the songs that they consider meritorious enough or repeated many times in the surveys to add them to the Spotify playlist, which the whole class can access.*

*Consequently, in addition to engaging students to communicate with native speakers outside the class about music, a subject that seems enjoyable for most people, creating the playlist is a collective effort that starts with the instructor, continuing with the people of the streets of Valencia through the students, who end up completing it.*

*Furthermore, Dr. Rubio expressed that this list becomes a valuable resource for the class because many of the lyrics from the songs can be used to model target language forms included in the curriculum (e.g., the subjunctive vs. the indicative mood in Spanish). Dr. Rubio mentioned that she selects a song from the Spotify playlist that features the subjunctive routines explored in the lesson(s) (e.g., expressing contrary-to-fact situations, expressing desires and requests) and,*

*with the help of her students, she finds a suitable corresponding video on the Internet to use in class. Then, she noted that, through exploration and analysis of the video, the class identifies subjunctive verb forms and contrasts these forms with the indicative mood, discusses the singer's motivation for using the subjunctive, and applies the subjunctive to other student-created contrary-to-fact situations or situations expressing desires and requests. To accomplish this, she pointed out that she discusses the content of the video with the class and guides the process by asking questions (e.g., "what is happening? What is the conflict between the people in the video? What makes the conflict both universal and unique?"). Then, Dr. Rubio indicated that she shows the video with the lyrics included next and continues monitoring and guiding the process with additional questions (e.g., "how do the words support the feeling and the story of the video? What lyrics stand out as particularly meaningful?"). Dr. Rubio continued her description noting that she plays the video one more time with the Word lyrics displayed next to it, pointing out the subjunctive verbs and contrasting them with the conditional and present tense of the verbs (indicative). Then, she expressed that she engages class discussion by prompting questions (e.g., "why use the subjunctive there? What is the author (singer) trying to convey?").*

*Lastly, Dr. Rubio indicated that she further engages students through group work, guiding them to create a short story using sentences with the subjunctive to express perspectives, including wishes contrary to fact, and then asks the groups to explain their context and use.*

*In sum, Dr. Rubio's creative use of music in in-class and out-of-class learning activities suggests effective immersive practices to foster communication with native speakers, explore culture, and help L2 learners understand Spanish language forms, such as the subjunctive, focusing on conversation and expressing perspectives.*

*In Mr. Smith's case, he indicated that the instructional "planning was challenging, in a sense that you have to think of the students experiencing everything we were learning in class beyond the class setting," and doing it creatively and practically. One of the ways Mr. Smith approached this challenge was through an interactive activity using newspapers to practice reading, engage communication, and explore culture. He noted that he guided his students through various reading strategies in class before interacting with the students in out-of-class settings (e.g., reading newspapers at cafes). He mentioned that some of those strategies focused on improving reading skills and on how to deal with situations when students did not understand words or grammatical structures. For reading ability, he mentioned that he encouraged students to read often, to read aloud to help understanding, to skim through difficult parts, focusing on the main ideas, and to take notes while reading to synthesize key ideas and to check comprehension. In addition, to help his students deal with situations when they did not understand, Mr. Smith expressed that he encouraged students to guess possible meanings by using cues from the context of the newspaper articles (e.g., cognate words, images), to use a bilingual dictionary (e.g., free online [WordReference.com](http://WordReference.com)) to get a sense of what the equivalent word might be and to use a Spanish-Spanish dictionary (e.g., free online [rae.es](http://rae.es)) to see how words are defined by means of other Spanish words.*

*Mr. Smith expressed that sometimes he sent his students to buy the newspaper at the newsstand and encouraged them to read some sections that interested them in preparation for a group discussion. In addition, he mentioned that, on several occasions, he took his class to a coffee shop to sit at ease and discuss the news and that this activity forced students to read and ask questions. Mr. Smith also mentioned keeping certain continuity in having the students read the newspaper, highlighting his preference for using the physical newspaper so that students*

*could experience having it in their hands. For some students, he added, it was a surprise to find such a small newspaper compared to the size of the newspapers in their home country. And for others, like student athletes, he continued, it was exciting to find newspapers exclusively dedicated to sports (e.g., AS, Marca).*

*Mr. Smith also indicated that some students asked him about the editorial line of each paper. He responded that some of the most popular newspapers (e.g., El País center-left, La Razón more conservative) attract readers from both political leanings. Then he expressed that he generated debates by asking the students why they bought either a conservative or a liberal newspaper.*

The preceding analytic vignette illustrates some of the creative strategies that *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* faculty use to support L2 learners' oral communication, cultural exploration, and linguistic development. Employing the collective creation of the Spotify playlist, Dr. Rubio engaged students in out-of-class interactions with native speakers and employed songs from the playlist to support her L2 learners' development of Spanish language forms. In addition, she continuously assessed her students' understanding through questions and interactive feedback.

Seen through the lens of the language socialization framework, students had the opportunity to be socialized into the music preferences of local community members through what seem like natural interactions (e.g., sitting at a table on a terrace with native speakers to discuss music culture). Scaffolding the analysis of cultural elements (e.g., lyrics of a song, video), Dr. Rubio guided her students explicitly socializing them into Spanish language forms (e.g., subjunctive) to express wishes contrary to fact, express desires, or to make requests.

Mr. Smith's use of newspaper reading practice provided opportunities for students to engage in oral communication and explore the culture. He scaffolded the process by providing practical reading strategies and a frame of reference outside of the classroom.

The following section addresses supportive assessment practices employed by the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* faculty categorized by formative and summative assessments.

### **Implementing formative and summative assessments to support students' L2 skills and cultural awareness**

All of the interviewed faculty reported using a combination of formative and summative assessments to support the development of students' Spanish language skills (i.e., listening, reading, speaking, writing) and cultural awareness. They used formative assessment regularly (e.g., daily, weekly) throughout the short-term study abroad immersion to measure students' progress, to provide feedback, and to revise planned instruction. At the end of each unit of instruction (grounded on textbook content) and at the end of the term, they employed summative assessments to recognize students' achievements. However, except for the described L2 students' cultural dossiers from Dr. Rivera's class (see Analytic Vignette descriptions on p. 66), no additional data from the students about their experiences with the assessments described in this section was accessible for this study.

The following table depicts the instructors' reported assessments, followed by an analytic vignette that provides descriptions of some examples that show how these assessments enabled instructors to support their students' learning.

Table 4

*Faculty Ordered Matrix of Assessments Used*

<b>Instructor / Course taught</b>	<b>Formative Assessment</b>	<b>Summative Assessment</b>
Dr. Campos (SPAN 2010/2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cultural debates (e.g., art, festivities, news, short films, politics, sports)</li> <li>- Questions (e.g., follow up, impromptu)</li> <li>- Simulations (e.g., buying coffee and food at a café)</li> <li>- Vocabulary quizzes (based on notepad vocabulary building)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unit exams</li> <li>- Final written exam</li> <li>- Presentations</li> </ul>
Dr. Gil (SPAN 2010/ 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interviews (e.g., interview NS about current events)</li> <li>- Weekly reflective journals</li> <li>- Instagram (e.g., sharing photos and videos with comments in Spanish)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unit exams</li> <li>- Final written exam</li> </ul>
Dr. Fuentes (SPAN 3030, SPAN 3050)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In class group work (e.g., cowriting and coediting an essay)</li> <li>- Games (e.g., Kahoot, Quizlet)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Final Essay</li> <li>- Presentations</li> </ul>
Dr. Rivera (SPAN 4700)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Short analytical essays</li> <li>- Debates</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Comprehensive dossier</li> <li>- Midterm</li> <li>- Final written exam</li> <li>- Cultural presentations</li> </ul>
Ms. Rosales (SPAN 2010/2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Group work (e.g., dialogues)</li> <li>- Weekly reflective journals</li> <li>- Games (e.g., Kahoot)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unit tests</li> <li>- Final written exam</li> </ul>
Mrs. Rossi (SPAN 2010/2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Group work (e.g., dialogues, short film discussions)</li> <li>- Weekly reflective journals</li> <li>- Games (e.g., Kahoot)</li> <li>- Interviews (e.g., family members)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unit exams</li> <li>- Final written exam</li> <li>- Presentations</li> </ul>
Dr. Rubio (SPAN 3050 SPAN 2020/3030)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cultural journals</li> <li>- Discussions about culture (e.g., art, history, news, short films, songs, videos)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Essays</li> <li>- Presentations</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Movie analysis (e.g., cultural identities of different regions in Spain)</li> <li>- Games (e.g., Kahoot, Quizlet)</li> </ul>	
Mr. Smith (SPAN 2010/ 2020)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Group dynamics (e.g., dialogues, museum projects, short films, discussions)</li> <li>- Games (e.g., Kahoot, Quizlet)</li> <li>- Weekly reflective journals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unit exams</li> <li>- Final oral exam</li> </ul>
Dr. Zamora (SPAN 2020/3030)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Group work (e.g., dialogues, short films, discussions)</li> <li>- Weekly reflective journals</li> <li>- Written quizzes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unit exams</li> <li>- Presentation</li> </ul>

As shown in the Table 4 above, the faculty employed a variety of formative and summative assessments throughout their short-term summer instruction in Valencia, which they reported using to support students' Spanish language skills and explore culture, exemplified in the following analytic vignette.

**Analytic Vignette: Dr. Campos', Mrs. Rossi', Dr. Gil', and Dr. Rivera's use of assessments to support L2 and culture learning**

*Dr. Campos indicated that formative assessments (e.g., written quizzes, impromptu questions) enable him to identify students' learning needs early in the term. Moreover, he expressed that he uses these formative assessments "to adapt the instruction focusing on establishing a balance in his class so that no one gets behind." In addition to his instructional practices previously described in Assertions 5 and 7 ( e.g., supporting what students generate in Spanish, continuously engaging L2 learners in active participation, highlighting their progress, and strengthening their weaknesses), Dr. Campos expressed that he asks his students to*



*purchase a notepad on the first day of class and recommends that they carry it with them at all times to write down unknown words they encounter in their daily lives to create a vocabulary list. Then, he instructs them to ask him for the meaning of the unknown words and phrases or use the dictionary. He also indicated that he checks students' entries weekly and quizzes them about the vocabulary from their list throughout the summer and that often some phrases generate class discussions, which he scaffolds accordingly. This practice seems popular among his students, as suggested by the comments of two of his students who indicated that they found the practice useful. Maggie mentioned that making daily vocabulary entries helped her build a word repertoire that gradually supported her ability to communicate with native speakers (e.g., buying coffee and food at a coffee shop). In addition, Tammy mentioned that her roommate, who did not participate in this study, took the class with Dr. Campos and loved her notepad that she took everywhere. Referring to her roommate, Tammy noted, "wherever we went, she would say, "I have to bring my notebook," and when we were in a situation where she did not know certain expressions, she pulled out her notepad and would say, "I need to write down these new words, so I can ask the [instructor] what they mean in class." She was very committed to it. I almost bought a notepad for myself to do the same thing because it seemed very helpful."*

*Mrs. Rossi expressed that one way she measured her students' progress involved reviewing her students' in-class reflective journal entries every week. She indicated that, at the end of every week, she asked her students to write about their immersive experiences during that week. In addition, she noted that she used her students' entries to provide feedback and adapt learning activities (e.g., discussions, presentations) to reflect what students were experiencing outside class interacting with the host culture and its members. Moreover, she reported that she compared her students' first journal entries with their last entries at the end of their summer*

*immersion and noticed that her students "improved a lot." Further, she indicated that some of the most common topics that students wrote about were related to culture shock (e.g., times to eat, food, cost of living, relationships between family members), contrasting them with their own culture. She also pointed out that others wrote about their experiences of places they visited throughout the week or weekend (e.g., the beach, museums, historical sites around or near Valencia, other cultural sites in other cities in Spain).*

*A comparable assessment method was employed by Dr. Gil, who, involving technology (i.e., Instagram application), assessed her students' progress throughout their summer immersion. Dr. Gil expressed that she created an Instagram account, which she labeled "Wahoos in Valencia," and asked her students to report on their weekend experiences by posting pictures of their interactions and explorations (e.g., visits to cultural sites in Valencia, other cities in Spain and neighboring countries in Europe). In addition to their picture posts, Dr. Gil required her students to write comments in Spanish about the pictures and asked that each student write one follow-up comment to one of their classmates' entries. Then, she pointed out that she followed up by making written comments in Spanish to each student's entry. Her comments at that moment involved confirmatory expressions (e.g., "what a beautiful place! I love the colors in this picture!, You look thrilled there!"). Then, she noted that she resumed the activity in class the following Monday through a game she called "The devil is in the details," involving students' collective efforts to correct any mistakes from the written entries. First, she mentioned that she wrote some phrases with mistakes from the students' entries on the board without identifying anyone. Then, she formed groups and asked them about the details of the mistake, requesting them to identify the problem and make corrections accordingly. As Dr. Gil*

*pointed out, "this activity helped [her] provide any needed additional feedback, including grammar, vocabulary, and culture."*

*Furthermore, some of the applications of formative and summative assessments in Dr. Rivera's Spanish Culture and Civilization class (SPAN 4700) enable him to support his students' progress as they work on creating a comprehensive cultural dossier that students write in Spanish in various stages throughout their immersion in Valencia. As stated in Dr. Rivera's class syllabus, "students create a dossier indicating and explaining the cultural activities in which they participated throughout the semester."\* Further, during the Zoom interview, Dr. Rivera described some of these cultural activities by noting, "If students go to a conference sponsored by the program, they need to summarize the event and provide a critical evaluation of it. If they see a movie, they need to describe the movie's theme and give their opinion, focusing on being analytical. If they go to a restaurant, they need to describe their interactions, what they ate, and express how much they enjoyed it or disliked the experience, providing some critical opinion."\* Dr. Rivera also indicated that he asks his students to include comparisons of their experiences with those of their L1 culture. In this sense, the students' L1 culture represents the students' prior knowledge that helps both students and instructors to build on this existing fund of knowledge to better understand the new cultural aspects of their target language. Thus, as noted by Dr. Rivera, building on their previous knowledge, supported by the information they receive in class, students arrive to their own conclusions.*

*These remarks seem to align with some of the dossier entries made by students from Dr. Rivera's class that he shared with me for this study. For example, referring to the houses in Valencia, one student wrote:*

*“The houses in Valencia are different from most in the US. Many people here live in apartments. Also, the house is more of a personal place, most activities happen on the streets. One thing I loved about the houses in Spain is the terrace, a fun space to relax. Another thing I loved is the clothesline for drying clothes.”\**

*Another student wrote about his experiences with food:*

*“Tapas are very important in Spanish culture. When traveling within Spain, I tried a variety of tapas. For example, in Sevilla and Andalucía, typical tapas are a bit different from those elsewhere in Spain. My family and I ate spinach and chickpea tapa, something typical there, which was one of my favorites. Another example is the tapas in Granada. In Granada when you order a drink, the bars and restaurants give you a free tapa with the drink. It is interesting that tapas exist in all parts of the country, but in each part they are served a little differently. I enjoyed trying different tapas in Spain.”\**

*Yet a different student made the following comments in her concluding entry:*

*“Honestly, before coming to Valencia, I did not know what to expect because I had never lived so far away from my family and best friends. I felt excited, of course, but at the same time I was afraid. Now, I can say with confidence that I cannot imagine my life without the experience I have had this semester in Valencia. I love Spain and I am very grateful for this opportunity to learn, improve my Spanish in a Spanish-speaking community, meet new people, live with a Spanish family, travel, and experience things I would have not done without my time in Valencia. I will always remember my experiences in Spain and definitely want to come back soon and often.”\**

*While these students did not participate in this study, and they were part of the semester-long program, as opposed to the short-term summer immersion, their written entries provide*

*some insight into Dr. Rivera's ideas. They seem to confirm the comparative and analytical nature of his intentions. The student who wrote about houses clearly established a difference by indicating that most people live in apartments in Spain and demonstrated some analytical insight through her inference about the personal nature of houses in Spain, suggesting that it is out on the streets where most social interactions transpire. The student who wrote about "tapas," provided insightful comments through his comparative description of how tapas are served in different regions in Spain. As far as the other student's entry, her remarks suggest that her experiences were, indeed, life-changing for her.*

*Furthermore, inferring from his class syllabus, Dr. Rivera uses formative assessments in the form of reports of the students' dossiers that they submit periodically, which enable him to review their work and discuss their progress during office hours meetings. Further, Dr. Rivera uses summative assessments (e.g., final comprehensive dossier, student course evaluations) to determine students' achievements. As he stated, "students' work demonstrates how much their immersive experiences changed their view of the world." Or "judging by their course evaluations, I would tell you that 90% of their comments describe their experiences as an incredible opportunity that opened new perspectives in their life."\**

*Dr. Rivera's comments seem to align with Dr. Campos' preference for those students who had the immersive experience in Valencia. Dr. Campos indicated that when he has a waiting list of students at the SPAN4000s level in the home campus, he prefers those students who have studied in Valencia because their Spanish is much better than the students who did not have the experience. In addition, he pointed out that those students with the Valencia experience exhibit greater Spanish fluidity, understanding capacity, and a way of adapting to different learning situations that set them apart from the other students.*

As described in the previous analytic vignette, summative and formative assessments enabled *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* faculty to support their students' progress by providing continuous feedback, engaging their students in active participation, and affording opportunities to reflect critically about their cultural experiences.

Through summative assessments, instructors were able to identify students' needs and to adapt instruction accordingly. Dr. Campos sought to address his students' needs by implementing the use of a notepad to build vocabulary that he continuously scaffolded. Mrs. Rossi's use of reflective journal entries enabled her to identify her students' needs (e.g., linguistic, cultural) and to adapt instruction to meet those needs (e.g., providing linguistic feedback, implementing cultural discussions, presentations). Through the implementation of Instagram application by requiring shared contributions of photos and captions with commentary, then group discussion and correction, Dr. Rubio provided a supportive space for students to continue their Spanish immersion during weekends when students are exploring cultural sites away from the Center, where they are required to speak Spanish at all times. Her practical and creative approach engaged students in sharing their weekend experiences with their classmates and instructor and involved them in shared participation as they worked together to correct their written mistakes. Dr. Rivera's use of frequent dossier entries and office hours meetings enabled him to support his students' progress by providing continuous feedback and personalized conversations. Through summative assessments (e.g., comprehensive dossier) Dr. Rivera identified students' accomplishments.

Lastly, employing formative and summative assessments helps to confirm the synergy involved in achieving linguistic competence and socio-cultural competence, which is one of the central tenets of the language socialization framework.

**RQ4: How do students respond to using language and culture learning strategies, if any, during the immersive study abroad?**

This research question turns from how the instructors utilized instructional strategies in the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* to how students used cultural and language learning strategies during their immersive study abroad. The assertion that addresses this question is grounded on data collected from several sources: an adapted version of the *Language Strategy Use Survey* and the *Culture Strategy Use Survey* created by the Center for Advanced Research on Language Acquisition (CARLA, 2022) at the University of Minnesota. See Appendix M for the strategies that the participating students identified. Through these surveys, four out of the eight L2 participating students (i.e., Brenda, Maggie, Olivia, Vincent) identified many of the salient cultural and language learning strategies used during their program immersion in Valencia that they found helpful and, in some cases, not so helpful. This phase was followed by a Zoom interview where three out of the four (i.e., Brenda, Olivia, Vincent) provided details on how they used the identified culture and language strategies during their study abroad and, on one occasion, after the study abroad.

Further, an additional data source was the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program's End-of-Term Evaluation* survey, which L2 participating students completed to indicate their level of satisfaction with the program, assessing the different components and activities the program provided to them during the short-term summer immersion. Overall, this additional information aligned with students' perceptions of culture and language strategy use.

Lastly, the assertion descriptions are interwoven with explanatory remarks through the lens of the language socialization framework and the role of the strategies, exploring various

dimensions when applicable (e.g., cognitive, metacognitive, affective, social), introduced in Chapter 1, to elucidate students' language strategy use.

### **Assertion 9: Salient language and culture learning strategies used by L2 learners**

#### **Language learning strategies**

In addition to helping the L2 participating students who completed the survey (i.e., Brenda, Elizabeth, Olivia, Vincent) identify the strategies they used, the adapted CARLA's (2022) *Language Strategy Use Survey* provides a structure through classification by skill area: listening, speaking, vocabulary. The following narrative includes accounts of how L2 participating students used some of the salient strategies identified. Moreover, some of these strategies are referenced in previous assertions in response to RQ2 and RQ3.

#### ***Listening***

**All the L2 students participating who completed the survey indicated increased exposure to the target language.**

L2 students indicated that they attended out-of-class events where Spanish was spoken. Brenda, for example, went to a Catholic church mass often with one of her friends. She expressed that it felt very normal for her since she grew up going to church back home in the US. She noted that while she could not understand it all, she “recognized different words and phrases, so it was cool to experience that in another language” (Interview, Brenda, 8/16/21).

By relying on prior knowledge (i.e., church going) to understand new words and by attending a social gathering, Brenda delved into the cognitive (e.g., retrieval of language materials) and social functions of exposure to the target language in natural settings.

Furthermore, L2 learners indicated that they watched TV shows and saw movies in Spanish. For example, Olivia expressed that they watched several movies in her class to explore



different themes from their textbook (e.g., *Ocho apellidos vascos* aided them in exploring different Spanish regions and languages: Spanish, Catalan, Basque, Galician). Olivia noted that she found it helpful that her instructor scaffolded the process by stopping the movie at different moments to ask questions to check for understanding and provide explanatory remarks.

However, when referring to her experiences watching TV shows in Spanish, she was uncertain about the benefits of that activity. For example, Olivia mentioned that she enjoyed watching the Spanish version of “Wheel of Fortune” before dinner time but did not know whether it helped her Spanish acquisition.

Moreover, L2 students reported listening to conversations in restaurants or stores where the servers spoke Spanish. Vincent’s efforts to listen to native speakers interact with each other illustrate this point. In restaurants or on the subway, Vincent admitted to having eavesdropped on conversations between native speakers to check how much he understood. He found it interesting to hear the fast, authentic rhythm of the spoken language, trying to figure out what the conversation was about, even without context. In his own words, “I started to pick up what people were saying, and I’m still very far from understanding a complete conversation between two native speakers, but I think I made improvements along the summer” (Interview, Vincent, 8/15/21).

By employing cognitive tasks including retrieval of language components (e.g., phonemes, syntax) and comprehension of words and phrases, Vincent’s accounts suggests that he was able to use prior knowledge to gradually improve his understanding of the spoken Spanish in natural settings.

**All the L2 participating students who completed the survey indicated that they made efforts to become more familiar with the sounds in the language.** Students reported

that they tried to imitate the way native speakers talked. Brenda, for example, mentioned that she felt a little uncomfortable doing that at first until she gradually got used to it. She expressly referred to the way Spaniards pronounce letters “z” and “c,” used in many words (e.g., Barcelona, Ibiza), which is somewhat similar to the “th” sound in English.

This practice may involve a cognitive function in that the students summarize language information orally, including visualizing the word itself (when not actually reading a text) to store and retrieve information as needed.

**All the L2 participating students who completed the survey mentioned that they prepared to listen to conversations in the target language.** Students focused on the context of the conversation (e.g., tour guide descriptions and interactions with people) and read ahead before the event. Describing his visit to a contemporary art museum in Valencia, Vincent recalled reading through the museum’s brochure before his guided tour visit (in Spanish). He mentioned that he looked at the pictures of the artwork, read some general descriptions, and used the English version when he could not understand something. Moreover, Vincent pointed out that when the tour guide talked about the artwork he had read about in the brochure, he could understand some of the words and phrases with which he had familiarized himself and inferred the meaning of others. However, he also mentioned that there was much he could not understand.

As he planned his guided art exploration, Vincent applied a combination of cognitive and metacognitive functions by consciously identifying, grouping, and retaining related vocabulary. In addition, the tour guide represented the local expert who scaffolded the guided art exploration through explicit communication.

Further, students noted that they listened for key words that carry the bulk of the meaning. For example, Olivia reported using a strategy she learned from her Spanish high school

teacher. She indicated that she focused on identifying the known words and the verbs used, even if she could not get the correct verb conjugations at first. She expressed that this strategy helped her understand the gist of what her interlocutors were saying to her on many occasions, even if it was not exact.

By retrieving language material (e.g., known words, verbs) from mental storage (cognitive function), Olivia could infer meaning.

**All the L2 participating students who completed the survey indicated that they dealt with situations in which they did not understand some or most of what was going on.** Brenda and Elizabeth indicated that they asked speakers to repeat what was not clear to them or asked for clarification. However, Olivia and Vincent observed that, at times, they felt uncomfortable asking speakers to repeat or clarify matters for them. For example, Olivia expressed that beyond her known networks (e.g., school, host family settings), it was difficult for her to ask speakers to repeat or to clarify matters because she feared that they were not going to be as receptive and accommodating as her teachers or host family. A related opinion was shared by Vincent who, as noted in the analytic vignette in Assertion 5, indicated, “I [was] too afraid to ask for clarification or for someone to repeat themselves because I [did not] want to seem like I [did not] know what I [was] doing” (Interview, Vincent, 8/15/21).

Vincent’s remark seems to disconfirm other comments he made to illustrate his active role at the moment of interacting with members of the host culture at large. A possible explanation may be the context of the interaction. L2 learners were advised to exercise caution when interacting with taxi drivers because some of them are dishonest. Furthermore, the apparent fear of linguistic incompetence expressed by Olivia and Vincent may have hindered their interactions with the locals beyond their known networks, thus interfering with the

socialization (explicit and implicit) that could have occurred in those natural settings.

Developing social networks that L2 students build with local members beyond school and host family settings, including members willing to interact as sympathetic interlocutors in the L2 acquisition process, may take some time, and therefore can be difficult to attain during the short-term study abroad.

### *Speaking*

**All the L2 participating students who completed the survey reported practicing speaking Spanish with native speakers in various settings.** Olivia and Vincent indicated that they practiced new grammatical structures in different situations to build confidence in using them. For example, Olivia expressed that she made an active effort to use the grammar structures that she learned in class in conversations with her host family during dinner on the day that she learned them in class and the following days. In Vincent's case, referring to using different verb tenses and grasping the relationship between them, Vincent indicated that he made a conscious effort to use them in conversations with native speakers, asking questions and making statements where he used the conditional and subjunctive structures.

Olivia and Vincent explored a combination of functions (e.g., cognitive, metacognitive, affective, social) as they engaged with their host family members and other native speakers to practice new grammatical structures. As suggested by their comments, they strove to retrieve language material, rehearse, and check their progress with the consciously selected vocabulary words and grammar structures they planned to use. In addition, their comments suggest that their effort provided self-encouragement that may have increased their motivation. In this context, their host families may have taken the role of language and cultural experts, clarifying matters related to Spanish grammar and explaining related social norms and cultural beliefs.

**All the L2 participating students who completed the survey reported that they engaged in conversation.** Students reported that they regularly sought out opportunities to talk with native speakers. For example, Brenda expressed that whenever she went to a coffee shop or restaurant she would always try to order in Spanish or ask questions in Spanish. She highlighted that the servers at the coffee shops near the Center were very patient and accommodating (e.g., they waited until L2 learners completed their order in Spanish, provided clarifying remarks when needed).

Vincent noted that he would go into stores and buy things just to ask a question or talk to someone for a moment. In taxi cabs, he indicated that he would not let the drivers drive in peace because he was always asking questions to generate conversation exploring various themes (e.g., current events, soccer, weather).

Brenda's and Vincent's descriptions underscore one of the central affordances of study abroad: the interactions between novices and members of the host culture (the local experts) who implicitly or explicitly may socialize L2 learners. In turn, learners may “acquire pragmatic proficiency, or the understanding of the way language forms and how conversation constructions are applied appropriately in social interactions to make meaning and to structure social roles, relationships, and identities” (Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986).

**All the L2 participating students who completed the survey indicated that they dealt with situations in which they could not think of a word or expression.** In Olivia's case, she noted that when she was uncertain about how to express something in Spanish, she would try to express the idea in different ways through synonyms or descriptive phrases. However, she noted that, often, “the conversation would move on before [she] was able to respond, so that was a bummer but, it improved over time” (Interview, Olivia, 8/11/21).

Building on the improvement Olivia reported, though a slow process, the use of this strategy suggests that, as confidence builds, L2 learners create their own messages by applying learned vocabulary and structures in the new context (cognitive function).

### ***Vocabulary***

**All the L2 participating students who completed the survey reported that they learned many new words.** Brenda and Olivia indicated that they grouped words in ways that made sense to them. For example, Brenda thought that it was really helpful for her to group words according to the parts of speech or with related words (e.g., verbs, nouns, adjectives). This grouping strategy is a cognitive function that helps learners store and retrieve language material.

**All the L2 participating students who completed the survey indicated that they reviewed and recalled vocabulary regularly.** Olivia indicated that her instructor, Dr. Campos, “made a big deal about this” and made them go over new words often when they first learned them and reviewed them by quizzing them periodically. Further, Vincent reported looking at the meaningful parts of the word (e.g., the prefix or the suffix) to remind him of the meaning. He also noted that sometimes the meaning of words is easy to identify because they are cognates. These mental manipulations of storing and retrieving language material are cognitive functions.

### **Culture Learning Strategies**

The adapted CARLA’s (2022) *Culture Strategy Use Survey* arranges strategies in three major categories: pre-departure, in-country, and post-study strategies. Within these categories, functional subdivisions enabled L2 participating students (e.g., Brenda, Elizabeth, Olivia, Vincent) to identify the culture learning strategies they used and to provide insights into how their selected strategies supported their cultural awareness development. The following descriptions include some examples of their observations:

### *Pre-departure Strategies*

**All the L2 participating students who completed the survey reported that they experienced surroundings that were culturally different from what they are used to.** Brenda expressed that before her study abroad in Valencia, she was aware of some cultural differences that might be involved when encountering a conflict while abroad. She mentioned that she had visited Spain before on a family vacation trip and that, in restaurants, she noticed that some waiters were very direct and spoke loudly, which seemed rude to her at the time. She also mentioned that, during her vacation, someone explained to them that the waiters were not trying to be rude but that that was the way they usually spoke there. Brenda expressed that she shared her experience with her host mother in Valencia and that she confirmed what she had previously heard, "...they are not being rude, that is just how we talk" (Interview, Brenda, 8/16/21). Acknowledging her awareness, Brenda mentioned that she gradually felt more comfortable interacting with waiters in restaurants during her study abroad in Valencia.

Brenda's socialization into the described cultural difference seems to have transpired in two phases: implicitly through frequent interactions with the waiters at restaurants and explicitly through direct explanations about the way many people talk in Spain. The host mother (local expert) helped to socialize Brenda into the social norms (loudness and directness in conversation).

Further, Vincent indicated that, during the pre-departure orientation, he and his cohort were warned about the personal space differences between the American and Spanish cultures. He admitted that he thought the concept was strange and could not fully grasp it until he experienced it in Valencia, where he noticed how close people were to each other when they interacted. In addition, Vincent expressed that, over time, he started to adjust his tendencies to

those of the local people. For example, he mentioned that when his host mother often spoke to him, she would be a lot closer to him than what he was used to, but that he did not mind that too much. However, he mentioned that he was aware of one of his classmates for whom the lack of respect for personal space was somewhat of a culture shock as she was not accustomed to being so close to people while interacting with them (Vincent's classmate was not part of this capstone project).

Vincent's socialization into the lack of personal space took more than explicit communication. His comments suggest that, through daily interactions (implicit) with members of his host culture, he found his threshold tolerance so that his host culture "space-invading" practices would not deprive him of the benefits of the interactions.

### *In-Country Strategies*

**All the L2 participating students who completed the survey indicated that they made efforts to adjust to the new culture and to cope with culture shock.** For example, Vincent indicated that he explained his cross-cultural experiences to his host family whenever they asked him about his comfort level with some of the lifestyle differences (e.g., food, food quantities, eating times, tendency to stay up late yet still get up early the following day). Vincent noted that he appreciated the opportunity to open up a dialogue to explain his practices and routines back home (e.g., eating habits, leisure activities) and express his challenges while adjusting to the Spanish culture. However, he reported that, sometimes, even though he had informed his host mother that he could not remain seated and chatting at the dinner table for too long, they "would still sit at the table for an hour and a half or two hours well after [they] finished [their] food." As noted by Vincent, "honestly, I found that, towards the end, I could not sustain [...] the late



bedtimes because I would stay up so late that I could not finish what I needed to have done that night” (Interview, Vincent, 8/15/21).

Inferring from Vincent’s descriptions, his host family seemed open to welcoming his points of view and learning from him about his culture; however, they did not seem committed to respecting his personal time. As noted in the literature review of this capstone, language socialization involves bidirectionality. In other words, besides socializing the novice into their customs and norms, the experts (e.g., host family members) can be socialized in return by the novice into his/ her needs. Seemingly, that bidirectionality did not transpire in Vincent’s described scenario, thus resulting in his apparent frustration towards the end of his homestay.

**All the L2 participating students who completed the survey reported that they dealt with difficult times in the new culture.** Brenda, Olivia, and Vincent expressed that they kept in touch with friends and family back home by writing emails and text messages. Olivia expressed that she communicated with her friends and family every day. This practice seems like a valuable way to reconnect when things are not going so well (e.g., Olivia’s bumpy start with her host mother, described in Assertion 4). In Vincent’s case, he indicated that he felt a little isolated in Spain at times, especially with the pandemic restrictions. He mentioned that he would frequently reach out to his support network back home by contacting his parents to cope with his isolation. He noted that he felt better afterward, which helped him manage the next day of being in an unfamiliar environment.

However, there is a risk of spending too much time sending e-mails because it can make the novice feel like s/he never emotionally left home, which could defeat the purpose of the study abroad (CARLA, 2022).

Furthermore, Brenda and Olivia expressed that they strove to keep themselves physically healthy. Brenda indicated that she would go to the gym or would swim and that she found that helpful because it made her feel like she was keeping a little bit of her regular routine from back home. In addition, she mentioned that she could meet some of the older local people at the pool, where she was able to practice her Spanish. In her own words, “they thought it was cool that I was a good swimmer, so they talked to me, and asked me about it and what I was doing in Spain. I told them about the program and that I swim at college in Virginia” (Interview, Brenda, 8/16/21).

In addition to being calming and therapeutic, engaging in physical activities can create opportunities to develop a social network with the local people. As suggested by Brenda’s descriptions, the local people at the pool were friendly and welcoming, thus opening opportunities for socialization (e.g., language, culture).

**All the L2 participating students who completed the survey reported making judgements about the Spanish culture.** Brenda and Olivia indicated that they observed the behavior of people in their host country. For example, Olivia expressed that she was in Valencia in the middle of the summer and noticed that women wore pants and jeans, which seemed odd to her because it was very hot. She also noted that she did not see a lot of dresses, shorts, skirts, which she had brought to wear for the summer, so she was uncertain if she needed to dress the same as the locals. Brenda mentioned that she asked her host mother about it and that she ensured her that the clothes she had brought were fine to wear there.

Moreover, Vincent expressed that he analyzed things that happened in Spain that seemed strange or different to him. He mentioned that he noted a sense of social and collective responsibility regarding climate change and the conservation of natural resources in Valencia

that he had not experienced in the US. Vincent indicated that he noticed that people in Valencia were devoted to recycling through sorting waste (e.g., cardboard, glass, metal, paper, plastic) and keen on protecting the environment by passing laws regulating the use of the natural resources of Valencia, protecting the beaches, and stopping pollution. Wanting to learn about the nature of this “collective responsibility,” Vincent mentioned that he would talk to his host family and his teachers at the Center. He concluded that “it seems like in Spain there is a more of an understanding or importance placed on caring for the other, and not just for oneself. [...] Growing up in the United States that seems like a very far off idea because people are always espousing personal liberties and rights and that sort of impedes collective progress” (Interview, Vincent, 8/15/21). He further speculated about the source of such commitment by noting that it may come from the socialist political framework operating in Spain, observing that it differs from the US.

Brenda and Vincent experienced opportunities to become both implicitly and explicitly aware of customs (e.g., summer clothing) and beliefs (e.g., collective responsibility) of their host environment. Further, Vincent’s experiences seem to have rendered insights into how the socialist political system is manifested in his host culture, seemingly opening for him a wider spectrum of cultural values beyond those of his own culture where individualism seems a cultural norm.

### *Post-study Abroad Strategies*

**All the L2 participating students reported on what they planned to do upon arrival from their study abroad.** All the interviewed students expressed that they were not interested in continuing taking Spanish courses in the near future and were satisfied with the level achieved. However, Vincent indicated that he was planning to visit the Casa Bolivar (UVA Spanish House)

and become a member of the Spanish Club to participate in weekly cultural events (e.g., dinners, movies, current events discussions). In addition, he noted, “I am very conscious that I do not want to lose the skills I have developed” (Interview, Vincent, 8/15/2021).

Except for Vincent’s accounts, the described lack of interest by the L2 participating students in continuing studying Spanish seems to confirm Dr. Rivera’s remarks regarding L2 learners who participate in the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program*. Dr. Rivera (2021) noted that most L2 summer students are more interested in obtaining their required Spanish credits while exploring a brief study abroad than getting involved in the country. In addition, as noted in Assertion 1, p. 9, the apparent lack of post-program organized activities may have affected the continuity of Spanish learning and use among the participating students.

Nevertheless, the overall reported use of the language and culture strategies suggests that L2 participating students had positive experiences during their short-term study abroad immersion and benefited (linguistically and culturally) from interactions with members of the host culture. These overall reported accounts seem to align with L2 participating students’ *UVA in Valencia Summer Program’s End-of-Term Evaluation* (See Appendix N). Most of the participating students who completed the evaluation (i.e., Brenda, Maggie, Olivia, Tammy, Vincent) assessed the overall program offerings by strongly agreeing that they were satisfied with the different activities the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* provided to them. One participating L2 student (i.e., Eliza) rated her experienced by agreeing that she was satisfied by the overall program offerings.

**RQ5: What aspects of the PVCC context are most relevant for adapting UVA in Valencia Program model in productive ways for PVCC?**

The assertion that deals with this question highlights relevant characteristics of PVCC's students, addressing their cultural awareness and oral proficiency needs by making recommendations for adapting suitable features of the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* model.

Furthermore, Assertion 10 below is grounded on some of my colleagues' (see Appendix O) responses to a germane survey (see Appendix P) concerning PVCC students, the findings of this capstone, and my personal experiences teaching Spanish language and cultures (e.g., eight years teaching at four-year institutions, including three years teaching as a graduate student at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and 12 years teaching at PVCC).

**Assertion 10: Salient characteristics of PVCC students that merit the adaptation of UVA in Valencia Program model**

All of the interviewed PVCC faculty (i.e., Dr. Jones, Dr. Kempes, Mrs. Lavigne, Dr. Richards) agree with the following descriptions of the salient characteristics of PVCC students that merit the adaptation of UVA in Valencia Program model.

Community college (CC) students and undergraduate university students choose to pursue a degree because they hope it will open opportunities for a good job and, for many, a better life. Highly motivated and intelligent students attend both types of institution. As noted by one colleague from the English Department at PVCC who taught at UVA while he was in graduate school, "I would put the top 10% of students at PVCC up against the top 10% of students at UVA any day" (Dr. Richards, survey, 3/13/22). Related to this observation, another colleague indicated that "[m]any of our CC students aspire to and will soon become university students [and that] upon transfer, many differences will quickly dissolve" (Dr. Kempes, survey, 3/14/22). Moreover, my colleagues (e.g., Dr. Jones, Dr. Kempes, Mrs. Lavigne, Dr. Richards) and I have observed that many pre-transfer students study at PVCC for practical financial

reasons and seek entrance to university as a right to be earned rather than as a given. As noted by Dr. Kempes, “the motivation of PVCC students and other students is the same, but financially, the automatic high school to prestigious 4-year school pipeline is not an option” (Dr. Kempes, survey, 3/14/22).

Furthermore, as an open-access institution, a community college, including PVCC, accepts students from all walks of life and all life circumstances. Compared with traditional four-year students, CC students tend to be more diverse, older, and “represent a lower socio-economic income group (58% receive financial aid) [...] and the majority attend community college on a part-time basis (63%)” (AACC, 2020). As noted in the literature review chapter of this study, “this figure is even higher at PVCC, where 80% are part-time students” (PVCC, 2020). Like their university counterparts, these students enter college with the hope of being successful. However, many encounter significant difficulties (e.g., money, time) that hamper their efforts to achieve their academic goals. These ideas are supported by yet another colleague from PVCC who has taught Sociology courses to undergraduate students at UVA and PVCC for many years. She pointed out that “often, university students only focus on academics whereas community college students often work long hours and juggle various family and school commitments” (Dr. Jones, survey, 3/7/22). In this context, Dr. Kempes (2022) observed that some CC students may not have had the same expectations of academic success, the same level of choice, mobility, structured pathways, or, as already noted, financial independence. Nevertheless, many can still be as curious, disciplined, insightful, and driven as anyone else.

Dr. Richards (2022) estimates that perhaps 20% of the PVCC student population is quite sophisticated in self-awareness (e.g., awareness of themselves in relation to groups larger than their immediate family and friends), 60% is more or less in line with the general population, and

20% are mostly focused on day-to-day survival (e.g., concerns relating to issues with families, friends, and relationships) and have had little opportunity to widen their perspective, which often dictates responses to situations in life. Further developing these ideas, Dr. Richards (2022) noted that he sometimes asks a class a question about an issue trending in the news (e.g., immigration, climate change, election fraud) and that, based on his conversation with these students, he estimates that around 20% have practically no awareness or opinions regarding these current issues whatsoever. He attributes this apparent disinterest to their involvement with more day-to-day concerns. However, Dr. Kempes noted that, given the opportunity and proper guidance, many of these students welcome the chance to learn, improve research skills, and expand their worldview.

Concerning the experiences during their two years at PVCC that might profoundly impact students' ability to comprehend their own cultural context and different cultural contexts, my colleagues (e.g., Dr. Jones, Dr. Kempes, Mrs. Lavigne, Dr. Richards) and I have observed that, for many local students, PVCC seems to be the first opportunity to speak to people from different backgrounds or cultures. Many students participate in courses that examine their culture and contrast it with other cultures (e.g., Social science courses, Civic Engagement Courses). A small percentage of our students take courses that offer them the opportunity to travel (offered occasionally) and examine the history of cultures, thinking critically about their learning and relating it to their own experiences (e.g., Introduction to Latin American Culture and Civilization). As expected, these opportunities are accompanied by challenges. For example, for some students, it is difficult to grasp aspects of cultural identities, such as understanding "others," their cultural history, beliefs, feelings, and experiences of people who are mainly

unknown to them, unfamiliar, misunderstood, or poorly portrayed through the media. For others, it is an awareness of language itself, of language being something other than translated English.

Another distinctive characteristic about PVCC students that my colleagues and I have observed pertains to our students' international experiences and attitudes towards studying, working, or living abroad. We have observed that there seems to be little appreciation of the value of studying outside of American culture and the English language among CC students and Americans generally. Most of our students have not had international experiences; a small percentage of the student body are immigrants or the children of recent immigrants, in some cases refugees, who are more likely to understand cultures outside the United States. Others, as observed by Dr. Kempes, have served overseas in the military, some have traveled independently, particularly non-traditional college age students; thus, knowledge of the Caribbean, Central America, or Western Europe is common. Beyond recreational travel, study or work abroad is often unfamiliar or low priority.

In short, PVCC students share similarities (e.g., high motivation, intelligence) and differences (e.g., having to balance family and academic responsibilities, socioeconomic status, age, minority groups) with their university undergraduate counterparts. My colleagues and I have noticed that these similarities and differences correlate with students' self-awareness in that many of them know what they want, are driven, thoughtful, and realistically practical about their opportunities and goals. We have also observed that other students need more guidance, training, and practice in becoming aware of the role of education and how it can broaden their horizons in life. As students explore their academic opportunities during their CC experience, we have observed that many PVCC students struggle when facing viewpoints from individuals from



cultures different from their own. In addition, most PVCC students have had limited opportunities to explore the world beyond their own country.

Grounded on the previously described characteristics of PVCC students, it is important that we, as their educational institution, provide study abroad opportunities that consider their circumstances (e.g., socioeconomic status, age, minority groups) while addressing their educational needs. Therefore, by providing a short-term study abroad, PVCC students will have opportunities to explore and experience other cultures. In addition, as employers increasingly seek diverse candidates with global experiences, these opportunities will potentially aid PVCC students in finding more about themselves, strengthening their language skills, and having a competitive edge in the job market.

Furthermore, some of the noted above characteristics of PVCC students align with those of the target group of this capstone project. As stated in the problem of practice section in Chapter 1, “about 20% of PVCC’s Spanish language students do not reach the level of oral proficiency and cultural awareness that will give them the foundational confidence and curiosity to continue their language studies” p. 17. In these contexts, the adaptation of the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* model is a viable approach to address PVCC students’ learning needs. In order to maximize the productivity of this effort, I provide descriptions of the specific aspects of the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* model that can be adapted accordingly to address the PVCC students’ oral proficiency and cultural awareness needs (see III Position Paper section).

### **Summary of Findings**

The findings of this capstone study follow from deductive analysis (mostly) and inductive analysis (at times) of data collected from 14 hours of Zoom interviews with the *UVA in Valencia*

*Summer Program* participating faculty, including two administrators, 14 hours of Zoom interviews with L2 participating students, document analysis and relevant surveys administered to L2 participating students, and participating faculty from PVCC. The primary findings of this capstone study are as follows:

1. The *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* practitioners have designed a comprehensive summer study abroad around purposeful pre-program services and multiple during-program immersive activities and practices involving social interactions that foster active language and culture learning.
2. Most of the L2 participating students agreed that the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* homestay is the most supportive short-term immersive network to enable Spanish language and culture learning.
3. Faculty designed the curriculum around numerous creative and purposeful in-class and out-of-class immersive, student-centered learning activities involving native speakers and using assessments and technology effectively to support L2 learners' needs.
4. Students employed various cultural and language learning strategies exploring multiple functions (e.g., affective, cognitive, meta-cognitive, social) to develop language skills and cultural awareness.
5. Some of the most relevant characteristics of the PVCC context that merit the adaptation of the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* in productive ways to benefit its L2 students include: many students are highly intelligent, motivated, and driven as anyone else; they have experienced limited interactions with people from different backgrounds and cultures, they have struggled when facing individuals from cultures

other than their own; and their school (PVCC) does not provide credit-awarding study abroad opportunities.

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

While the homestays represented the most supportive short-term immersive network for L2 language and culture awareness development, other networks (e.g., group members of the host culture at large in various contexts) were also important. For most of the participating L2 learners, the effectiveness of the support from the homestay seemed associated with the accessibility, authenticity, and frequency of the interactions. As previously noted (see Assertion 9), "developing social networks that L2 students build with local members beyond school and host family settings, including members willing to interact as sympathetic interlocutors in the L2 acquisition process, may take some time, and therefore can be difficult to attain during the short-term study abroad" (p.75). This is consistent with previous research (Castañeda & Zinger, 2011) who indicated that the short period that L2 students had to establish social relationships with native speakers is a limitation of short-term study abroad.

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

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

Lastly, the distinctive characteristics of the PVCC context that merit the adaptation of the mentioned *UVA in Valencia Summer Program*'s features align with those of the L2 learners that constitute the problem of practice of this investigation. I discuss the recommendations to address the problem of practice in the following section, including implications for future research.

### III – POSITION PAPER

In order to address the problem of insufficient Spanish oral proficiency and related cultural awareness exhibited by some PVCC students, the overarching goal of this research capstone was to examine the *UVA in Valencia Summer-2019/2021 Program* to identify features of the program design that PVCC could replicate to create a short-term study abroad. Given the growing number of L2 short-term study abroad programs and the relatively limited body of research, there is a demonstrated need for qualitative research on how L2 short-term study abroad language and culture learning strategies are implemented. The practices relevant to this study include in-class and out-of-class language and culture learning strategies involving authentic social interactions (e.g., homestays, guided cultural explorations, restaurants and retail store exchanges) and contact with instructors and staff in the study center.

A single case study was designed to learn how L2 teaching and learning took place in Valencia's immersive short-term study abroad. This research study explored implementation from several angles in response to the research questions. These research questions began with the participating L2 learners' perspectives towards program design factors determined by their accomplishment of personal and academic objectives and their understanding of language and culture learning. They followed by asking how instructors and students utilized language and culture learning strategies during the immersive study abroad. Lastly, the research questions addressed PVCC students' salient characteristics that merit the adaptation of the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* model.

Furthermore, as suggested by the noted reflections (in the findings) through the lens of the language socialization theory, there is a structured strategic relationship between language development and culturally organized situations of use (e.g., homestays, museum visits) where

instructors and local experts (e.g., host parents, tour guides) scaffolded the L2 learners extensively, and instructors facilitated whole class tasks in group activities in-class and out-of-class exchanges involving native speakers. Through these exchanges, some of the participating L2 learners of this capstone project exhibited a personal agency that seemingly led them to the recognition of the sociocultural context and its norms.

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

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

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

progress was due, in part, to the program's immersive nature and the implementation of the Spanish-only policy in the program's Center.

Building on these findings and focusing on overcoming two of the most prevailing obstacles (i.e., money, time) that hamper PVCC students' efforts to study abroad, I recommend adapting the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* model to a five-week summer program, instead of offering two four-week sessions or a semester long SA. The program can be implemented to take place in Costa Rica to reduce costs and gradually transition to Spain according to increasing demand and available resources.<sup>20</sup> Further, the new program should implement a similar Spanish-only policy of the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* to require PVCC participating L2 students to use Spanish while at the new program Center.

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

Within this framework, pre-program services (e.g., pre-departure and on-site orientations) and in-country activities (e.g., in-class and out-of-class interactions with native speakers) can be adapted accordingly to meet PVCC students' linguistic and cultural awareness needs.

Additionally, post-study abroad program practices should be implemented for the new *PVCC Short-term Study Abroad* to have students reflect, assess, and share what they have learned while abroad. These recommendations are detailed in the following sections.

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

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

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



*Abroad Program* can provide and aid them in overcoming culture shock and obstacles when making connections with members of the host culture. As a result, PVCC L2 students could reach a deeper understanding of their target culture and language through immersive in-country exchanges (e.g., homestays, classes, interactions with local servers in various contexts).

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

Furthermore, the new program's pre-departure orientation should include a workshop to allow participating members the opportunity to explore and share L2 learners' awareness of language and culture learning strategies that they may have personally used and may have available to them, thus increasing their awareness of the variety of strategies available for language and culture learning. As referenced in Chapter 1 of this capstone project, Cohen et al.

(2019) point out that culture and language learning strategies relate to the learners' conscious and semi-conscious thoughts and behaviors employed to increase their knowledge and understanding of a target language and culture.

Building on these ideas and the findings of this study that resulted from the participating L2 learners' use of the adapted CARLA's (2022) *Culture and Language Strategy Use Surveys*, the recommended workshop should provide a space where instructors and L2 students can meet to explore various potentially challenging scenarios. For example, situations when L2 learners cannot understand what someone is saying to them in Spanish, determine what to do to recall vocabulary, decide what activities to use to practice speaking Spanish, or how to deal with difficulties and make judgments about the target culture. Moreover, the participating L2 learners of the new *PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program* should be able to use these strategies accordingly by function, as referenced in Chapter 1 (e.g., cognitive, metacognitive, affective, social) and reported in the findings of this capstone project. Some of the L2 participating learners' statements indicated that they used a combination of these strategies at times. PVCC L2 students should be able to take advantage of comparable simultaneity of functions to support their language and culture learning.

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

All the in-country features, including homestays, some classes, cultural workshops, and programmed excursions of the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* reported in the findings of this study, can be adapted to meet PVCC students' language and culture learning needs.

Acknowledging the reported learning contributions the homestays provided to the participating L2 students of this study as an essential supporting network (e.g., adjusting to the

culture, improving language skills, participating in family life and learning the culture, making new friends), homestays with host families need to be provided for PVCC college-age students. For older students, a different type of living accommodation (e.g., living in an apartment or house with adult native speaker roommate/s) needs to be arranged to enable immersive cultural and speaking opportunities in this contextual supporting network. As explained by the administrative director, many of the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* families favor hosting college-age students over older L2 students. These families have college-age students or younger kids living at home, and they treat their newcomers as one of their kids. This environment might not suit older independent students unaccustomed to this type of family living (Interview, Administrative Director, 6/16/2021).

Further, as reported by the L2 participating students of this study, the homestay was the most helpful supporting network of their short-term SA in their progress of oral skills and language use. This progress was due, in part, to the frequency and authenticity of interactions using Spanish. Moreover, as reported in the findings, the homestays provided a supportive environment where most of the L2 participating students felt comfortable asking questions and taking risks using Spanish without the fear of being judged. These ideas are in line with the concepts of the language socialization theory (see Recommendation 1), which was used as a framework in this study to elucidate L2 participating students' meaning making as it related to their language and culture learning. In addition to language gains, the homestay supporting network enabled many participating L2 learners to explore the target culture beyond the superficial level.

Furthermore, building on the connections *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* instructors made in the lessons combining not only the grammar, vocabulary, and culture with authentic

interactions with native speakers and the target culture outside the class, similar adaptations need to be implemented for the *PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program* (e.g., in-class simulations that prepare L2 learners for out-of-class interactions with NS, using technology accordingly to facilitate learning; in-class cultural debates of relevant themes that students can further explore through firsthand experiences with the target culture and its members; guided learning practices; use of formative and summative assessments to support students' learning needs).

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

Additionally, grounded on the reported success (see Chapter 1) of previous PVCC educational abroad experiences (e.g., visits to various Costa Rican regions exploring the tropical environment, including endangered ecosystems and rainforest preserves; Amazon River and Caribbean islands explorations onboard the MV Explorer ship) and the findings of this capstone research regarding cultural workshops (e.g., cooking classes, dancing classes) and programmed

excursions (e.g., thematic trips to relevant sites, museum explorations), the *PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program*'s participating language faculty should consider adapting homologous educational activities accordingly to promote language practice and culture learning.

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

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

In addition, the *UVA in Valencia Academic Program Review* (2018) makes recommendations regarding post-program best practices (e.g., reflection, sharing, assessment) as critical continuing activities to achieve many of the objectives of a successful study abroad program. However, these descriptions are limited to simple definitions and fall short of providing specific details on how to implement the recommended post-program practices. Consequently, focusing on addressing the suggested limitations and advocating incorporating post-program

practices for *PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program*, the following recommendations are based on the referenced best practices above, supported by CARLA's (2022) post-study abroad concepts and learning activities. As implied in the following descriptions, these practices are interrelated.

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

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

**Assessment:** *The PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program's* participating language faculty should consider adapting practices (e.g., guided critical reflections, journal entries) to

enable L2 learners to examine what they learned while exploring how their stated objectives were achieved. These learning activities may enable L2 participating students to see the U.S. and the world in a new light after their experiences abroad. Like many other SA students, they recognize that they may return home feeling aware of potential limitations concerning some cultural values of their own country. For example, Vincent's reported experiences and reflections that rendered him insights into how the dynamics of the socialist political system of Spain seemingly opened a broader spectrum of cultural values beyond those of his own culture, where individualism seems to be a cultural norm. In other instances, students report that they feel that they have acquired some sense of global citizenship due to their study abroad experiences (e.g., Maggie's recognition of her global citizenship that resulted from her study abroad participation and appreciation of the Spain's rich and varied cultural heritage: architecture, art in general, food, language, history).

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

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

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

Furthermore, building on the previously described insights regarding the language socialization framework (see recommendation 1) and its significance in helping understand L2 learners' linguistic and cultural development, the new *PVCC Short-term Study Abroad Program*' participating language faculty should consider including a collection of data (e.g., observations, pre- and post-tests, surveys), which can be analyzed through the lens of the language socialization framework periodically to assess program effectiveness and carry out adequate adaptations as necessary.

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

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



### **Implications for language practitioners and suggestion for future research**

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

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

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

Due to the limitations of self-reported data, future research could involve observations to study how students interact and use L2 and culture learning strategies during their interactions

with the target culture and its members. In this context, the researcher could act as a participant-observer to capture L2 learners' interactions in various immersive environments (e.g., home, in-class, restaurants, museums).

In addition, future research should examine how students retain and increase their target language and cultural awareness upon returning home. Faculty and administrators involved in study abroad could offer post-study abroad workshops exploring language practice and reflection activities regarding the study abroad experience. Lastly, students could be motivated and supported to participate in online communities from the target culture and seek out target language groups at home (Shively, 2010).

#### IV – ACTION COMMUNICATIONS

From: Jorge Grajales Díaz  
Doctoral Candidate  
University of Virginia  
School of Education and Human Development  
405 Emmet St. S  
Charlottesville, VA 22903

Dear Members of Administration,

I write to report findings and recommendations for the college (PVCC) based on a qualitative case study on the development of a sustainable short-term study abroad program design for community college: second language (L2) learners.

It is broadly agreed that study abroad provides L2 learners with rich opportunities and interactions that lead to positive outcomes such as linguistic and cultural gains. Given the growing number of L2 short-term study abroad programs and the relatively limited body of research, there is a demonstrated need for qualitative research on how L2 short-term study abroad language and culture learning strategies are implemented.

This study aimed to examine the *UVA in Valencia Summer-2019/2021 Program* to identify program design features that PVCC could replicate to create a short-term study abroad to expand PVCC students' Spanish oral proficiency and cultural awareness. In the process, this investigation explored pre-departure and during-program activities, including L2 and cultural learning strategies to examine the extent to which the *UVA in Valencia Summer-2019/2021 Program* could be used as a model on which to build focusing on identifying those features of the program that foster language and culture learning. These findings follow 14 hours of Zoom interviews with faculty and administrators, 14 hours of Zoom interviews with L2 learners, document analysis, surveys administered to L2 students, and participating faculty from PVCC.

The primary findings of this capstone study are as follows:

1. The *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* practitioners have designed a comprehensive summer study abroad around purposeful pre-program services and multiple during-program immersive activities and practices involving social interactions that foster active language and culture learning.
2. Most of the L2 participating students agreed that the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* homestay is the most supportive short-term immersive network to enable Spanish language and culture learning.
3. Faculty designed the curriculum around numerous creative and purposeful in-class and out-of-class immersive, student-centered learning activities involving native speakers. They also used assessments and technology effectively to support L2 learners' needs.

4. Students employed various cultural and language learning strategies exploring multiple functions (e.g., affective, cognitive, meta-cognitive, social) to develop language skills and cultural awareness.
5. Some of the most relevant characteristics of the PVCC context that merit the adaptation of the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program* in productive ways to benefit its L2 students include: many students are highly intelligent, motivated, and driven as anyone else, have experienced limited interactions with people from different backgrounds and cultures, some students struggled when facing individuals from cultures other than their own, and the lack of credit awarding study abroad opportunities.

Given the findings of this study, I would recommend that the college take the following steps to develop a sustainable short-term study abroad program to expand its students' Spanish oral proficiency and cultural awareness:

1. PVCC should consider adapting a short-term study abroad framework suitable to its students' characteristics and needs, including financial support mechanisms to ensure affordability.
2. PVCC should consider adapting pre-program services: pre-departure and on-site orientations, including culture- and L2-learning strategies. These are intended to help L2 learners adjust to the new culture, make connections with its members, and increase their awareness of the variety of strategies available for language and culture learning.
3. PVCC should consider adapting in-country activities to foster language and culture learning. These may include homestays, in-class simulations that prepare L2 learners for out-of-class interactions with native speakers, using technology accordingly to facilitate learning; in-class cultural debates of relevant themes that students can further explore through firsthand experiences with the target culture and its members; guided learning practices; use of formative and summative assessments to support students' learning needs.
4. PVCC should consider incorporating post-program activities in the new short-term study abroad program to enable L2 learners to reflect, assess, and share their experiences, insights, and learning upon return.

I look forward to reviewing your response to these recommendations. Should you have questions or comments, please email me at [jgrajalesdiaz@pvcc.edu](mailto:jgrajalesdiaz@pvcc.edu).

Sincerely,

Jorge Grajales Díaz,  
Associate Professor of Spanish.

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## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> In their writing, Cohen et al. (2019) insert a footnote to reference the works that “relate directly to this trend” (p. 41). These include Brown (2002); Chamot (2001); Chamot, Barnhardt, El-Dinary, & Robbins (1999); McDonough (1999); Oxford (1990, 2001); and Rubin & Thompson (1994).

<sup>2</sup> These ideas align with Dweck’s (2016) work on growth mindset to improve motivation, innovation, and productivity (e.g., success can be achieved by trying, welcoming changes, incorporating feedback to improve, learning about new things). They also relate to developments in neuroplasticity concerning L2 learning (i.e., by exposing learners to a stimulus, accurately, with enough recurrence and intensity, their brain functions can change or “re-wire” to facilitate L2 learning).

<sup>3</sup> Credit students refer to those students taking college classes versus students taking non-credit/workforce courses that do not carry college credit.

<sup>4</sup> This is a pseudonym.

<sup>5</sup> Some additional comments made by the students were, “sharing experiences with new friends from Piedmont and other colleges, learning to trust in the knowledge, abilities, and consideration of others, the variety of physical activities such as night hikes, boat tours, swimming in the Pacific Ocean, ziplining, and whitewater rafting.”

<sup>6</sup> Through system agreements, students who graduate from any of Virginia’s 23 community colleges with an associate degree and a required grade point average (contingent upon transferring institution) may obtain guaranteed admission to more than 30 of the commonwealth’s colleges and universities. Fulfillment of foreign language requirements applies

accordingly based on the students' major and transferring institution, e.g., UVA Spanish Department (VCCS, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> I teach 4 courses each semester with an average of 20 students per class. About 80% of the students obtain the grade of B and above, 15% obtain the grade of C, and 5% obtain the grade of D or below.

<sup>8</sup> This idea is linked to linguistic pragmatics, which is the study of how language is used in context to express such things as directness, politeness, and deference, conveying interpersonal meaning (Lightbown & Spada, 2013).

<sup>9</sup> Shively (2011) offers an appropriate framework for understanding the development of linguistic, cultural, and communicative competence through interaction with others more knowledgeable or proficient.

<sup>10</sup> Pragmalinguistic strategies help learners understand the relationship between the target linguistic forms and their functions. Sociopragmatic factors are those related to the understanding of the contextual and social variables that inform pragmatic choices (Hernández, 2010).

<sup>11</sup> As opposed to the natural direct reference, *me puedes dar* (the hearer-oriented form), which is the norm utilized in Peninsular Spanish, including service interactions.

<sup>12</sup> In addition to being the UVA in Valencia Program's director and Spanish Professor in the UVA Spanish Department, Dr. Fernando Operé is a distinguished scholar, poet, and the founder and director of the UVA Spanish Theater Group. In these contexts, I have attended many conferences that he has led through the years, involving many prominent scholars, and recognized Spanish literary writers. Also, I have brought our PVCC Spanish Club members to some of his theatrical representations.

<sup>13</sup> Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the program operated under strict safety protocols and the number of students participating in the Summer 2021 program was significantly lower than usual.

<sup>14</sup> Table talk or after-dinner conversation.

<sup>15</sup> The asterisk (\*) indicates that the quote is a translation from Spanish by the leading researcher of this study.

<sup>16</sup> According to the Administrative Director, approximately 80% of the students in the *UVA in Valencia Program* are females (Interview, Administrative Director, 6/16/21).

<sup>17</sup> Table 2, under “Participants” in Chapter 3, shows a layout of students’ names and the courses they took. In addition, Appendix D provides a detailed description of each course.

<sup>18</sup> Marius is a former PVCC student who transferred to UVA to continue his education. While at PVCC, he took the first four semesters of Spanish language. He entered the *UVA in Valencia Summer 2019 Program* at the 3000 level of Spanish language.

<sup>19</sup> The *City of Arts and Sciences* is an architectural, cultural, and scientific complex in the city of Valencia, Spain. It is the most important modern destination in the city of Valencia and one of the 12 Treasures of Spain. It was designed by the renowned architects Santiago Calatrava and Félix Candela (Spain.info., 2021).

<sup>20</sup> According to a senior educational abroad advisor from UVA, the summer budget for one of the sessions (4 weeks) of a language and culture course is \$ 1,000 cheaper in Costa Rica than in Valencia, Spain (Ms. Wellbeloved, personal communication, 11/30/21).

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Beginning Spanish courses' objectives (SPAN 101, SPAN 102):

- Speaking  
Spanish learners are able to:
  - ask and answer questions and participate in simple conversations on topics related to everyday necessities such as food, shopping, daily routine, time, and the weather;
  - communicate basic information such as who they are, what they do, what they like, to talk about their family, house, and school, and to describe their immediate environment.
- Listening
  - Spanish learners can develop sufficient comprehension to understand simple conversations based on school/work requirements and social situations, and conversations or narrations related to instructional topics.
- Reading
  - Spanish learners are able to read with sufficient understanding to follow a sequence of events, to extract information, and to identify main ideas in a variety of texts.
- Writing
  - Spanish learners are able to produce short, highly accurate descriptions or summaries of simple events.
- Culture
  - Spanish learners can broaden awareness of and increase sensitivity to Hispanic culture, and to embark on an appreciation of the geography, history, politics, and literature of the 21 Spanish-speaking countries of the world.



## Appendix B

### Intermediate Spanish courses' objectives (SPAN 201, SPAN 202):

- Speaking
  - Spanish learners are able to:
    - ask and answer questions and participate in simple conversations on topics beyond the most immediate needs;
    - communicate information and begin to express opinions and feelings relevant to themes of personal and contemporary significance.
- Listening
  - Students can develop sufficient comprehension to understand conversations based on school/work requirements and social situations, and conversations and narrations based on course-related themes.
- Reading
  - Spanish learners are able to read with sufficient understanding to follow a sequence of events, to extract information, and to identify main ideas in a variety of texts.
- Writing
  - Spanish learners can develop skills in writing short narratives including descriptions and cohesive summaries, and to initiate the development of creative expression and interpretation.
- Culture
  - Spanish learners can broaden awareness of and heighten sensitivity to Hispanic culture both within the United States and in the 21 Spanish-speaking countries of the world.

## Appendix C

Table 5

*UVA in Valencia Program – Students’ End of Term Evaluation – Fall 2017*

Program Offerings	Students’ Assessments (n50)
<b>Program Organization</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The majority of students expressed being satisfied with the overall organization of the program, reporting that they found the organization very helpful and that the organization did a good job.</li> <li>• For some, the program organization was excellent.</li> <li>• A couple of students expressed that the expectations, including the itinerary of the day trips, should be a little clearer.</li> <li>• One student expressed not having received a lot of information before departure and she attributed that to the fact that she was from a university other than UVA.</li> <li>• One student expressed that having more details about the culture shock information in the pre-departure information would have been helpful.</li> </ul>
<b>Homestay</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many students expressed that their relationship with their host families contributed greatly to their progress in language and culture. Students’ comments include:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (n16) “Good”, (n11) “Great”, (n5) “Amazing”, (n2) “Best experience”, (n2) “Best host mother ever”, (n2) “Incredible”, and (n2) “fantastic”.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Other students expressed:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (n1) "Good experience, but a minimal relationship"</li> <li>- (n1) “I never felt that we had a personal relationship, I felt like a guest the whole time, and was just in my room a lot”</li> <li>- (n1) “Only spent time with the host family during the meals did not feel comfortable much time outside my bedroom”</li> <li>- (n1) “The host mother did not eat the meals with us”</li> <li>- (n1) “I did not like the smoke”</li> <li>- (n1) “They provided light conversation sometimes”</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Some (n3) students reported having some problems related to cultural differences and personality conflicts.</li> </ul>
<b>Language Partners / Intercambio</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 38% (n19) of students indicated that they had a language partner exchange. Some of their comments were:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “it was a good match”, “it was great”, “very nice”, “it was okay, did not see her as much as I wanted”, “we met twice”, “did not meet the whole a lot”, “never met”, and “was not great”.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• 42% (n21) of students reported that they did not have a language partner exchange. A student commented:</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (n1) "I tried to get one, but she canceled on me".</li> <li>• 12% (n6) responded "N/A".</li> <li>• 8% (n4) did not provide an answer.</li> </ul>
<b>Cultural Activities and Thematic Trips</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 100% (n50) of students reported having participated in many of the program cultural activities and thematic trips. While not all students described their experiences, those who did offer the following remarks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (n8) "Peñíscola and Granada were amazing and well organized"</li> <li>- (n6) "Loved Granada, amazing, <i>impresionante</i>, <i>fantásitico</i>"</li> <li>- (n1) "exciting", "a lot of fun and well organized"</li> <li>- (n3) "Referring to Walking on the Camino de Santiago, "I cannot recommend it enough, I loved it", "It was great", "fantastic"</li> <li>- (n2) "Dance classes were difficult"</li> <li>- (n1) "All were great cultural experiences and enjoyed the opportunity to explore outside the city".</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Service Internship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some students indicated their participation in the following internships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (n4) Translation practices at the University of Valencia</li> <li>- (n1) Business learning project</li> <li>- (n1) Cardiology Division at the General Hospital</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Other students did not specify their Service Internship, but provided the following comments: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- (n1) "Great, very fun", (n1) "Good", (n1) "I enjoyed it".</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Overall Program Offerings</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 96 % (n48) of students recommend the program to others. Some of their comments were: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Loved it. Fantastic program"</li> <li>- "Great cultural experience"</li> <li>- "I do wish there was more interaction with Spanish students and also more information offered before getting here"</li> <li>- "Valencia is a fantastic city, surrounded by other amazing places to travel"</li> <li>- "Best semester of college – Great experiences"</li> <li>- "Full cultural immersion"</li> <li>- "Loved the immersive program and class material"</li> <li>- "It was an excellent experience that I will not forget"</li> <li>- "Great way to experience new cultures, make amazing friends, and learn"</li> <li>- "The opportunity to experience a new culture and language has been one I'll never forget"</li> <li>- "The best experience of my life"</li> <li>- "I wish there was more interaction with other Spanish people or the ability to take classes with other Spaniards"</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- “This program helped me grow, academically, and culturally”</li><li>• 4% (n2) students may recommend the program to others.</li></ul>
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## **Appendix D**

### **UVA in Valencia Summer Program: Spanish Courses 2019/2021**

Students attended either Session I (May 20 – June 22, 2019; June 13 – July 10, 2021 ), Session II (June 24 – July 27, 2019; July 11– August 7, 2021), or both sessions combined (Combo). Each course is worth three credits, and students complete six credits per session.

### **SPAN 2010/2020 Intermediate Spanish / Advanced Intermediate Spanish**

This course is intended for students who have already completed two semesters of beginning Spanish language courses. The focus of the course is on increasing students' vocabulary and improving their mastery of language skills in the following areas: listening, speaking, reading, writing, and cultural exploration. In addition, this course enables students to review important grammatical concepts. This course is taught as a one 6-credit course.

### **SPAN 2020/3030 Cultural Conversations**

This course is intended for students who have completed SPAN 2010 or equivalent intermediate Spanish courses. The culture conversations explore a variety of practical situations focusing on improving students' communication in Spanish, e.g., oral presentations about cultural and social Spain, current readings and quotations by famous people, debates, and acquisition of new vocabulary and expressions. This course is taught as a one 6-credit course.

### **SPAN 3050 Spanish for Medical Professionals**

This course is intended for those students working or planning to work in the health care field, focusing on helping them develop vocabulary, written and oral skills for the assessment of Spanish-speaking patients in various settings.

### **SPAN 3300 Texts and Interpretation**

This course focuses on analyzing contemporary texts in prose, poetry, and drama, representing significant movements and demonstrating the current state of affairs. Beginning Spanish majors and other interested students find the basic terminology and concepts involved in text analysis in this course. In addition, the course provides students with practice in writing analytical essays and examinations of literary topics that prepare them for more advanced studies in Spanish American and Peninsular Spanish literature.

### **SPAN 4700 Spanish Culture and Civilization**

This course aims to inform students about the distinctive characteristics that define and have defined Spain's social, political, ideological, economic, and cultural contexts both nationally and locally. Using a historic-political reference, the class helps students analyze the topics that best define Spain's cultural reality: festivals, bulls, music, gastronomy, art, etc., aiding students to grasp this reality beyond preconceived ideas and stereotypes.

**SPAN 4705 Spanish Mass Media**

Starting with a background of the history and structure of mass media in Spain, this course explores discussions about some multimedia texts to discover how they work and find out relevant information about Spain in different levels of interpretation:

- Implicit ideologies
- Gender roles
- Current controversies
- Spanish global vs. regional identity
- The influence of lobbying
- Images from the USA

**SPAN 4707 Introduction to Spanish Art**

Building on the rich and world-recognized artistic heritage of Spanish art, this class explores the art spanning from the pre-historic paintings of Altamira Caves to the significant figures of the 20th century, such as Gaudí, Picasso, Dalí, and Miró. It includes the rich architectural pieces left by the Romans on the Iberian Peninsula or the medieval Gothic with majestic cathedrals and castles; or the Golden Age paintings of artists like Velásquez, El Greco, Murillo, and Ribera, among others.

**SPAN 4708 Picasso**

This course explores the art of one of the most remarkable artists of the 20th century: Pablo Picasso. His art transformed all the art of his period, showing us a new way of looking at reality and the world. The course helps students understand Picasso's way of seeing the world through different artistic styles he either developed or assimilated throughout his creative life.

## Appendix E

### Instructors Interview Protocol

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

## Appendix F

### Students Interview Protocol

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

1. How did program design factors seem to affect students' perceptions of oral proficiency and L2 language use beyond the classroom environment during and after the study abroad?
  - What is your impression of how your participation went in the immersive study abroad in Valencia during Summer 2019?  
*Prompt: In terms of achieving personal and academic goals (e.g., did you learn as much Spanish as you thought you would? Elaborate).*
  - What aspects of the program were more effective in developing oral skills and language use during and out-of-class(es) during and after the study abroad?
  - How helpful was the pre-departure orientation?
2. How are out-of-class interactions during study abroad associated with students' understanding of language and culture learning?
  - Describe what happened on a typical day of your study abroad
  - How helpful were your out-of-class interactions with native speakers for your language and culture learning?

In the homestay context:

- How much did your family help you learn Spanish and culture?  
*Prompt: Encouraging you to talk, answering questions, etc.*
  - How much did your family integrate you into family activities?  
*Prompt: Helping in family projects (e.g., cooking, shopping, accompanying a family member outside the home on a trip or errand)*
3. How did students respond to using language and culture learning strategies, if any, during the immersive study abroad?
    - What resources (e.g., language and culture learning strategies) did you use to support your learning during and after the study abroad program?
    - What challenges did you encounter during and after the study abroad?



- What approaches did you take to address those challenges?

*Overarching questions*

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

## Appendix G

### Student Survey: L2 Background and Learning Survey

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

Use the following scale to indicate the degree to which the following reasons for studying

Spanish are (were) important to you.

Rating scale:

0 = Not important

1 = Slightly important

2 = Moderately important

3 = Very important

I am (was) taking Spanish because..

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

## Appendix H

### Language Contact Profile (LCP)

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

Course name

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

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

## Appendix I

Table 6

*Name-Ordered Matrix: Faculty Perceptions of Students' Performance*

<p>Dr. Campos (SPAN 2010/2020 Instructor)</p>	<p>“As soon as students gain confidence in their developing skills, the learning is much faster. They feel a strong need to communicate in Spanish and even experience a special joy while doing it. By the end of their summer month immersion, students’ Spanish fluidity has significantly improved. They are able to understand better, and develop, thanks to their immersive experiences in Valencia, a way of adapting to different situations, and become more open minded.”*</p>
<p>Dr. Gil (SPAN 2010/ 2020 Instructor)</p>	<p>“Most students were immersed in the language, and their progress was spectacular in a month. However, two students often spoke English between them and did not speak Spanish nor interacted much with their host families. Thus, at the end of their summer program participation, most of the class had made significant progress while those two students barely achieved an acceptable level to pass the course.”*</p>
<p>Dr. Fuentes (SPAN 3030, SPAN 3050 Instructor)</p>	<p>“I am always impressed by the excellent progress students make during the summer immersion in Valencia. I love to see their change from beginning to end. You see their faces of fear initially, especially in those students taking lower intermediate levels of the language. But then, they gradually become more relaxed, get rid of their fear and acquire confidence to take risks and to step out of their comfort zone.”*</p>
<p>Dr. Rivera (Academic Director / SPAN 4700 Instructor)</p>	<p>“The students’ progress in Spanish is extraordinary because they have classes for four hours every day in the Center and everything is in Spanish. Then they participate in many immersive cultural activities and speak Spanish to communicate with their host families. However, a month is honestly too short to expect students’ total cultural immersion. The majority of the students participating in the month immersion are more interested in obtaining their course credits than in getting involved with the country. Some do, but the summer student is more interested in having a short study abroad experience that enables them to obtain their L2 required credits.”*</p>
<p>Ms. Rosales (SPAN 2010/2020 Instructor). This instructor was a doctoral student at</p>	<p>“Teaching in Valencia during the summer was very successful for my students and me as the instructor. They experienced many interactions with native speakers and the culture they usually do not have at the home campus. In addition, I learned to deal with new challenges, like</p>

the time of her teaching.	dealing with the student who came to class hungover one day and who said to me that this was the worse vacation he had ever taken.”
Mrs. Rossi (SPAN 2010/2020 Instructor). This instructor was a doctoral student at the time of her teaching.	“One of the learning activities I used regularly in my courses was to have students write reflective journals about their weekend experiences. I asked students to work on their writing during class every Monday and to speak about those experiences to their classmates. I compared their first journal against the last journal they wrote for every student and noticed that their writing improved a lot during that month. I also noticed similar progress in their oral skills. In some cases, the writing exhibited more sophistication and analytical skills than the writing students generate at the end of taking similar course for the whole semester at the home campus. Students demonstrated similar progress in their speaking skills.”
Dr. Rubio (SPAN 3050 SPAN 2020/3030 Instructor)	“Students’ progress is evident in the assessments, showing how they achieve their goals. In addition, students’ feedback expresses their gratitude and the feeling of accomplishment, and the personal realization they experienced. This success is due, in part, to the feedback and continuous monitoring from the instructors.”*
Mr. Smith (SPAN 2010/ 2020 Instructor) This instructor was a doctoral student at the time of his teaching.	“In comparison to teaching for an entire semester course at UVA, I think the instruction and students’ progress in the summer that I taught in Valencia went better and worked more productively in some respects because student buy-in was much higher. This success was partly due to the connections we made in the lessons, connecting the vocab, the grammar, and culture and bringing everything together in what seemed more authentic. In some respects, the planning was challenging, in a sense that you have to think of the students experiencing everything we were learning in class beyond the class setting.”
Dr. Zamora (SPAN 2020/3030 Instructor)	“The progression of the students from week one to week four is outstanding. They are constantly surrounded by the language and culture everywhere they go. In class, we do many drills and practices that engage them to use the language and to explore culture outside the classroom. This approach is similar to the Rassias’ method that focuses on practice, exploring action, lots of moving around to engage students.”

## Appendix J

The information displayed in table 7 below is based on the Cultural adjustment Chapter of the *UVA in Valencia Academic Program Review 2018*.

Table 7

*UVA Academic Program Review: Strategy-Ordered Matrix.*

Be Open-Minded	Reminded that there are multiple “right” ways to do things, students are advised to learn what is appropriate, and why, in the host culture, thus suggesting that they try the host culture approach next time.
Be Patient	Acknowledging that no one gets it all right the first time, students are encouraged to take it one thing at a time and to remember each small accomplishment.
Communication	Students are encouraged to talk to the on-site program staff, host family, and other students to express their experiences and to ask for assistance in interpreting the situation. In addition, students are encouraged to write letters and emails to connect with family and friends back home, as writing can be a valuable way to reconnect when things are not going so well. Nevertheless, they are advised to set a limit because too much time sending emails could make them feel they never emotionally left home.
Cultural Baggage	Making students aware that just as their perceptions of another culture or society may not coincide with the perceptions of the people from that culture, they are reminded that others may not view them the way they see themselves. Stereotypes are formed, often stemming from entertainment or news media. While students may not see themselves as an embodiment of those characteristics, they do encompass the "cultural baggage" or unconscious assumptions that they carry. Students are encouraged to be aware of those perceptions and behave in culturally sensitive ways to aid them in understanding and being understood by their host culture.
Cultural Sensitivity	Students are advised to recognize the differences between cultures without making value judgements (right or wrong, better or worse) and are provided with the following suggestions to develop cultural sensitivity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research the country (Read books, talk to host nationals and previous visitors)</li> <li>• Get to know the people (Learn from local residents)</li> <li>• Observe (Attitudes, customs, roles)</li> <li>• Honor the customs</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Learn the language</li> <li>• Avoid generalizations (Seek to understand why certain actions, expectations, or beliefs exist and how they are developed)</li> <li>• Avoid spending all their time with other American students or hanging out on social media with L1 peers.</li> </ul>
Get Involved	Students are recommended to get involved in the host culture to meet new people and make connections in the community.
Racial & Ethnic Minority Students Abroad	<p>Acknowledging that no two students studying abroad ever have quite the same experience, even in the same program and country, this section advises students to know what they are getting into and to prepare themselves for it. Students are advised to find others on campus who have studied abroad and who can provide some guidance. In addition, this section offers the following websites for additional supporting information:</p> <p><a href="#">Diversity Abroad.com</a> This site is a valuable resource focusing on promoting study abroad opportunities for multicultural students. It includes blogs, profiles and forums from underrepresented students studying abroad, financial resources, and a searchable program database.</p> <p><a href="#">The All Abroad Website</a> offers mentors, including students, parents, and advisers, who are comfortable addressing diversity concerns in the context of studying abroad. Additional resources are available for various ethnic groups (e.g., African-Americans, Asian Pacific Islander American, Hispanic-American, Native-American).</p> <p><a href="#">Global Scholar Abroad</a> This is an online learning resource for students preparing to study abroad.</p>
Sense of Humor	Students are encouraged to step back and see the humor in their misunderstandings, missteps, and mistakes.
Sexual Orientation Abroad	<p>Students are advised to read about culture-specific norms of friendship and dating for relationships between people of any sexual orientation in the country where they are headed, as the laws regarding same-sex relationships differ from country to country. This section offers a list of resources, including travel guides, weblinks, and other types of information for LGBTQ students:</p> <p><a href="#">Lambada-lambada</a> Valencia Organization for LGBT in the community</p> <p><a href="#">International Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex Association</a> Students can use the site by clicking on the country/ countries they are</p>

	<p>going to visit to find out LGBT news, law, mood, and more information.</p> <p><a href="#">NAFSA's Rainbow Special Interest Group</a> offers additional resources and information for LGBTQ students abroad.</p> <p><a href="#">Diversity Abroad.com</a> includes information on diversity and inclusion abroad; information and questions to consider regarding sexual orientation abroad.</p>
Students with Disabilities Abroad	<p>This section informs students of the importance of disclosing any disability needs to their Education Abroad Advisory early, so appropriate arrangements and reasonable accommodations can be researched and made in advance. Students are encouraged to be flexible and open to new and different ways of accommodating their disabilities and they are provided with their following websites to start their research:</p> <p><a href="#">Diversity Abroad.com</a> This site can be a good place for students to start their research on managing their disability.</p> <p><a href="#">Mobility International</a> offers students additional assistance in finding programs and overseas support services.</p> <p><a href="#">Students Abroad</a> Offers travel information for travelers with disabilities.</p>
Women Abroad	<p>Acknowledging the role of students' personal beliefs about what women should do around the world, this section advises L2 learners to reach a balance of maintaining their identity while respecting the culture they are visiting. Thus, they are encouraged to make the most of their time overseas and participate in various activities. At the same time, they are reminded of the importance of being culturally sensitive in the process of understanding and integrating into their host culture. Focusing on female students, they are advised to observe the gender-specific roles, customs, and norms and to get to know women in the host culture to understand their observations and navigate the norms and expectations.</p> <p>Further, they are provided with the following websites with advice for women studying abroad:</p> <p><a href="#">Study Abroad.com</a> This website offers valuable information and study abroad safety tips for female students.</p> <p><a href="#">DiversityAbroad.com</a> This resource includes information on diversity and inclusion abroad: Women Abroad.</p> <p><a href="#">GoGirlGuides.com</a> This is a series of travel guidebooks made just for women.</p>



## Appendix K

### The Stages of Cultural Adjustment

**Stage 1. Cultural Euphoria:** In this stage, students exhibit excitement about being in a new culture, often called the “honeymoon” phase. Everything seems unique and wonderful and students are eager to explore. They see the new culture as better than it really is, focusing more on the visible cultural aspects (e.g., clothing, food, scenery). Further, students tend to pay more attention to similarities rather than differences in the early phase of their study abroad (Cohen et al., 2019).

**Stage 2. Cultural Confrontation:** In this stage, the cultural adjustment begins. It is the most challenging phase for the students because they experience confusion and frustration. Their feelings can change radically from very positive to very negative. They view their home culture and the host culture unrealistically, where one is superior while the other is lacking. They feel out of their comfort zone, and everything appears more difficult because of the new culture or language. As a result, they feel homesick, discouraged, and doubt their ability to learn the new language or adapt to the culture. Despite all of these, students make critical progress in expanding their cross-cultural awareness and consciously or unconsciously developing strategies to cope with cultural differences (Cohen et al., 2019).

**Stage 3. Cultural Adjustment:** This stage indicates changes from culture shock to significant cultural adjustments. Students gradually feel better and competent in the new culture, and these feelings overcome the frustration they felt at times or the feeling of being out of place. They may continue experiencing homesickness, but they interact more effectively with host culture members, thus increasing their self-confidence. They begin to look forward to more interactions in the host country and learning throughout their experiences (Cohen et al., 2019).

**Stage 4. Cultural Adaptation:** In this stage, students have reached a great deal of confidence in their ability to communicate and interact more effectively. While their understanding of the influence of the culture in peoples' lives deepens, as they acquire considerable cultural knowledge, students recognize that they still don't know or understand many things. Students have integrated many of the new culture's values, customs, and behaviors into their daily lives. They can examine and understand many cultural norms, values, and beliefs of the host culture (Cohen et al., 2019).

## Appendix L

The information displayed in table ? below was provided by the *UVA in Valencia Program* Education Abroad Advisor & Program Manager (Ms. Wellbeloved, personal communication, 11/30/21).

As noted in footnote 1, the program operated under mandated Covid-19 restrictions in the summer 2021, which explains the significant reduction of students participating in the program compared with the previous year.

Table 8

*Summer-Term-Ordered Matrix of Courses Taken*

Summer Term	Course	Number of Students
2019 Session I	SPAN 2010/2020 Intermediate Spanish / Advanced Intermediate Spanish	57
	SPAN 2020/3030 Cultural Conversations	16
	More Advanced Spanish Courses	102
2019 Session II	SPAN 2010/2020 Intermediate Spanish / Advanced Intermediate Spanish	39
	SPAN 2020/3030 Cultural Conversations	9
	More Advanced Spanish Courses	64
2021 Session I	SPAN 2010/2020 Intermediate Spanish / Advanced Intermediate Spanish	4
	SPAN 2020/3030 Cultural Conversations	2
	More Advanced Spanish Courses	32
2021 Session II	SPAN 2010/2020 Intermediate Spanish / Advanced Intermediate Spanish	12
	More Advanced Spanish Courses	27

## Appendix M

### Language Strategy Use Survey

The purpose of this survey is to find out more about yourself as a language learner and to help you discover strategies that can help you master a new language. Select the strategy you used and found helpful during your participation in the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program*.

#### Speaking Strategy Use

##### *Strategies to practice speaking*

1. Practice saying new expressions to myself
2. Practice new grammatical structures in different situations to build my confidence level in using them.
3. Think about how a native speaker might say something and practice saying it that way.

##### *Strategies to engage in conversation*

4. Regularly seek out opportunities to speak with native speakers.
5. Initiate conversation in the target language as often as possible.
6. Direct the conversation to familiar topics.
7. Plan out in advance what I want to say.
8. Ask questions as a way to be involved in the conversation.
9. Anticipate what will be said based on what has been said so far.
10. Try topics even when they aren't familiar to me.
11. Encourage others to correct errors in my speaking.

##### *Strategies for when I can't think of a word or expression*

12. Ask for help from my conversation partner.
13. Look for a different way to express the idea, like using a synonym.
14. Use words from my own language but say them in a way that sounds like words in the target language.
15. Use gestures as a way to try to get my meaning across.
16. Switch back to my own language momentarily if I know that the person I'm talking to can understand what is being said.

#### Listening Strategy Use

##### *Strategies to increase my exposure to the target language (Spanish):*

17. Attend out-of-class events where the new language is spoken.
18. Listen to talk shows on the radio, watch TV shows, or see movies in the target language.
19. Listen to the language in a restaurant or store where the staff speak the target language.

20. Listen in on people who are having conversations in the target language to try to catch the gist of what they are saying.

***Strategies to become more familiar with the sounds of the target language:***

21. Imitate the way native speakers talk.
22. Ask native speakers about unfamiliar sounds that I hear.

***Strategies to prepare to listen to conversation in the target language:***

23. Pay special attention to specific aspects of the language; for example, the way the speaker pronounces certain words.
24. Prepare for talks and performances I will hear in the target language by reading some background information.

***Strategies to listen to conversation in the target language:***

25. Listen for key words that seem to carry the bulk of the meaning.
26. Listen for word and sentences stress to see what native speakers emphasize when they speak.
27. Practice “skim listening” by paying attention to some parts and ignoring others.
28. Focus on the context of what people are saying.
29. Listen for specific details to see whether I can understand them.

***Strategies when I do not understand some or most of what someone says in the target language:***

30. Ask speakers to repeat what they said if it wasn't clear to me.
31. Ask speakers to slow down if they are speaking too fast.
32. Ask for clarification if I don't understand the first time around.
33. Make educated guesses about the topic based on what has already been said.
34. Draw on my general background knowledge to get the main idea.
35. Watch the speaker's gestures and general body language to help me figure out the meaning of what they are saying.

**Vocabulary Strategy Use**

***Strategies to learn new words***

36. Group words according to parts of speech (e.g., nouns, verbs).
37. Make a mental image of new words.
38. Write out new words in meaningful sentences.
39. Use flashcards in a systematic way to learn new words.

***Strategies to review vocabulary***

- 40. Go over new words often when I first learn them to help me remember them.
- 41. Review words periodically so I don't forget them.

***Strategies to recall vocabulary***

- 42. Look at meaningful parts of the word (e.g., the prefix or the suffix) to remind me of the meaning of the word.
- 43. Make an effort to remember the situation where I first heard or saw the word or remember the page or sign where I saw it written.
- 44. Visualize the spelling of the new word in my mind.

***Strategies to make use of new vocabulary***

- 45. Try using new words in a variety of ways.
- 46. Practice using familiar words in different ways.

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## **Culture Strategy Use Survey**

The purpose of this survey is to find out more about yourself as a culture learner and to help you discover strategies that can help you understand and adapt to cultures that are different from your own. Select the strategy that you used and found helpful during your participation in the *UVA in Valencia Summer Program*.

### **Pre-Departure Strategies**

*Strategies for when I am in surroundings that are culturally different from what I am used to:*

47. Consider ways in which different cultures might view things in different ways (e.g., how different cultures value “alone time” or independence).
48. Figure out what cultural values might be involved when I encounter a conflict or when something goes wrong.
49. Think about different cross-cultural perspectives to examine situations in which I seem to offend someone or do something wrong.
50. Counter stereotypes others use about people from my country by using generalizations and cultural values instead.
51. Make distinctions between behavior that is personal (unique to the person), cultural (representative of the person’s culture), and universal (shared by humans).
52. Look at similarities as well as differences among people of different backgrounds.

### **In-County Strategies**

*Strategies I used (could use) to adjust to a new culture and cope with culture shock:*

53. Explain my cross-cultural experiences (the good and the difficult) to my host family and friends at home.
54. Consider what my friends living in the host country say about people from my own culture, using what I know about cultural bias.
55. Strive to keep myself physically healthy.
56. Assume that some moments of culture shock are normal culture learning experiences and not worry about them too much.
57. Use a variety of coping strategies when I feel I have “culture shock overload.”
58. Keep reasonable expectations of my ability to adjust to the new culture, given the length of my stay and my particular study abroad program.

*Strategies for dealing with difficult times in the new culture:*

59. Keep in touch with friends and family back home by writing: emails, text messages.
60. Participate in sports or other activities while abroad.
61. Find someone from my own culture to talk to about my cultural experiences.

62. Relax when I'm stressed out in my host country by doing what I normally do back home to make myself comfortable.

***Strategies for making judgements about another culture:***

63. Observe the behavior of people from my host country very carefully.  
 64. Analyze things that happen in my host country that seem strange to me from as many perspectives as I can.  
 65. Consider my own cultural biases when trying to understand another culture.  
 66. Refrain from making quick judgments about another culture.

***Strategies for communicating with people from another culture:***

67. Don't assume that everyone from the same culture is the same.  
 68. Investigate common areas of miscommunication between people from my host culture and my own culture by reading books and by talking to people who know the two cultures well.  
 69. Help people in my host country understand me by explaining my behaviors and attitudes in terms of my personality and culture.

***Strategies to deal with different communication styles:***

70. Try a different approach when my communication style doesn't seem to be working well.  
 71. Listen to whether my conversation partners are indirect or direct in their communication styles.  
 72. Mirror the communication style of my conversation partners (i.e., if they are always indirect, I try to be indirect too).  
 73. Respect the way people from other cultures express their emotions.  
 74. Refrain from disagreeing right away so that I have a chance to listen to what others are trying to communicate.

***Strategies to understand nonverbal communication in another culture:***

75. Learn about the ways in which people in my host country use nonverbal communication.  
 76. Figure out how far people stand from each other in my host country and try to keep the "right" distance from others.  
 77. Observe the gestures that people use in my host country.  
 78. Ask friends in my host country to explain the different gestures to me.

***Strategies to interact with people in the host culture:***

79. Ask people in my host country about their perceptions of my country and culture.  
 80. Go to the market in my host country and interact with people in the shops.  
 81. Hold back on making judgements about other people based on my first impressions.

***Strategies to use with my host family:***

82. Find out from my homestay family what I can do to help around the house.
83. Get permission before bringing someone to my homestay family's house.
84. Share pictures of my own family with my homestay family.
85. Teach games common in my own country to my homestay family.
86. Figure out the household rules for eating, smoking, using the bathroom, dressing around the house, and helping out by observing and asking questions.

**Post-Study Abroad Strategies*****Strategies to use when I return home:***

87. Share my feelings and experiences with friends and family, without expecting that they will relate to all that I say.
88. Try to stay connected with friends I made while studying abroad.

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## Appendix N

Table 9

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

<b>Participating Student</b>	<b>Program Offerings</b>	<b>Student's Assessment</b>
<b>Brenda</b>  (SPAN 2010-2020 – Session I, Summer 2019)	Program Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I loved how much real life interaction in Spanish we had”</li> <li>• Pre-program services: culture shock, international travel, family and roommates information: 5*</li> </ul>
	Homestay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I loved both parents. The father was very nice. The mother made a real effort to have a relationship. Their daughters though were a little bit bratty. They were always fighting and whining.”</li> </ul>
	Cultural Activities and Thematic Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural activities: Visited “Oceanográfico” and rated it 4.</li> <li>• Didactic workshops: Participated in cooking class – tapas- rated it 5</li> </ul>
	Overall Program Offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rated it 5 and indicated that she will recommend the program to others by saying, “Yes! I think it was not only fun but I learned and improved my Spanish greatly. Valencia is a great place for students.”</li> </ul>
<b>Eliza</b>  (SPAN 2010—2020 – Session I, Summer 2019)	Program Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I liked how I could take both SPAN 2010 and 2020 in one session. I wish I knew more in advance my classes schedule.”</li> <li>• Pre-program services: culture shock, international travel, family and roommates information: 3.</li> </ul>
	Homestay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I did not really like the food my host mother cooked: hamburgers, pizza, and chicken nuggets.”</li> <li>• “My host mother talked really fast. I won't recommend her because she was not overly friendly.”</li> </ul>
	Cultural Activities and Thematic Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Day trips / Weekend trips: Went to Pamplona and rated it 4; Cullera: 5.</li> </ul>
	Overall Program Offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rated it with a 4* and indicated that she will recommend the program to others with a caveat, “I really like the class, teachers, and students. But I thought the people in Valencia were not friendly at all.”</li> </ul>
<b>Maggie</b>  (SPAN 2010—2020 – Session I, Summer 2019)	Program Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I loved the freedom we had on the weekends, and I loved my teachers and class organization.”</li> <li>• Pre-program services: culture shock, international travel, family and roommates information: 5.</li> </ul>
	Homestay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• My host parents were great host parents. They were very kind to me and accommodating of food allergies and really helped me to understand Valencia.</li> </ul>

		<p>However, their apartment was not meant for students. Apartment too small, too many pets.”</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I don’t recommend living there.”</li> </ul>
	Cultural Activities and Thematic Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural activities: Visited “Oceanográfico” and rated it 5.</li> <li>• Didactic workshops: Participated in cooking class – tapas- rated it 5</li> </ul>
	Overall Program Offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rated it with a 5 and indicated that she will recommend the program to others: “Yes, being in Valencia was an amazing experience and I was fully immersed in the culture, something I might not experience to this extent again.”</li> <li>• “I loved Valencia and everything about the program. My host parents were very good. They toured us around the city and took us to museums and tourist attractions. They made me love Valencia.”</li> <li>• “However, the only problem we had was with their apartment. With two dogs and two cats in such a small place, it ended up being a little uncleaned and we may have gotten fleas. Besides that, I loved living with my host parents.”</li> </ul>
<b>Olivia</b>  (SPAN 2010—2020 – Session I, Summer 2021)	Program Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I liked the emphasis on culture, learning common phrases, how to order food, etc.”</li> <li>• Pre-program services: culture shock, international travel, family and roommates information: 4.</li> </ul>
	Homestay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Good host family – attentive and concerned.”</li> <li>• “There were definitely cultural &amp; personality difficulties, but not failure to provide services.”</li> <li>• Indicated “Pros: good food , good room. Con: felt judged and dismissed sometimes.”</li> </ul>
	Cultural Activities and Thematic Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cultural activities: Walking tours: 5.</li> <li>• Didactic workshops: Dance class -Bachata &amp; Salsa and rated it 2; Cooking class – paella and tapas: 4.</li> </ul>
	Overall Program Offerings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rated it with a 5 and indicated that she will recommend the program to others: “Yes! I think it is a great opportunity to know your teachers, learn, experience new culture, and make new friends.”</li> </ul>
<b>Tammy</b>  SPAN 4700; SPAN 4707 – Session I, Summer 2021 SPAN 4705, SPAN 4708 – Session II, Summer 2021	Program Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “Good level of communication throughout. I liked how specific information was given in a timely manner and I always knew what to expect.”</li> <li>• Pre-program services: culture shock, international travel, family and roommates information: 4.</li> </ul>
	Homestay	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• “I loved my host mother. She is so kind and fun to be around.”</li> <li>• “She is extremely understanding and well prepared to host students. I had a very positive relationship with my host mother and really enjoyed living with her.”</li> </ul>

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

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

**Appendix O**

Table 10.

*PVCC Faculty\**

<b>Participating Faculty</b>	<b>Subject of expertise</b>	<b>Years of service</b>
Dr. Jones	Sociology	15+
Dr. Kempes	Spanish	15+
Mrs. Lavigne	French	15+
Dr. Richards	English	15 +

\* Faculty names are pseudonyms.

## Appendix P

### PVCC Students' distinctive characteristics survey

1. What are some similarities and differences between community college and undergraduate university students?
2. How do PVCC students' experiences (e.g., learning, life events, upbringing factors) help them develop personal identities?
3. Are these students' identities similar or different from traditional four-year or university students?
4. How self-reflective or self-aware do you find community college students to be?
5. How well informed are incoming students about their own state and country, in terms of history, geography, society or politics: a) when they begin their college education and b) upon graduation or transfer?
6. What experiences during their two years at community college might have the most profound impact on their ability to comprehend their own cultural context and different cultural contexts?
7. What concepts or aspects of cultural identity appear to be the hardest for students to grasp?
8. What are the prevailing attitudes towards the value of studying/acquiring other languages and learning about different cultures?
9. What international experiences might students typically have had? What attitudes do they display towards studying/working/living abroad?
10. What obstacles stand in the way of our community college students to pursue study abroad?

## Appendix Q

### A thoughtful return

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

### Reactions to the changes

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

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## Appendix R

### Understanding Yourself Differently

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

#### I now...

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

windows to many things were opened;

- feel like a “global citizen” and care more about what happens around the globe;
- am interested in a greater concept of justice and injustice as it is manifested differently in other countries;
- have the ability to think more critically about political events and take a look at multiple sides of current issues.

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