

*The importance of Globalization to engender a greater awareness and understanding of different attitudes, behaviors and perspectives of countries, economies, cultures, and people from around the world*

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Author has no known conflict of interest to disclose.

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I will always remember the year the world went on lockdown. When we were told that Education Abroad was being cancelled and we all became online educators in March 2020. Online meant learning *Effective* and *Affective* ways to construct our newly moved classes online, and in my particular case—teaching Italian and French—this also included an Education Abroad course. When one interacts in another language, one is also interacting with(in) the culture that speaks that particular language, and going abroad automatically exposes our students to this phenomenon. So, understanding someone else's culture without accessing that culture's language directly, and vice-versa seemed, at first, virtually impossible, no pun intended.

Thus, in what seemed an overnight radical change, we were then told that Education Abroad was also being cancelled and I realized that the students that had signed up for my Italian Education Abroad Program had saved, planned and had been hoping to go to Italy with the *Gruppo Italia 2020*, but now could not anymore. Some were seniors and did not have a second chance to go abroad with us next year—at the time we did not have the hindsight that this pandemic would last longer than that one summer. Therefore, I knew I had to do something and decided to create a virtual education abroad program... and this is how,

two years ago, I decided that I had to learn some successful tips for teaching, in this case, an Italian Language, Life and Culture virtual class, a class that is usually taught both on campus and abroad, while stressing the need to motivate the learners and by giving them access to the thoughts behind the words and by retaining the main focus of this experience, without ever leaving our homes while in quarantine.

Mamma mia!

It is thus that I started reviewing what was at the core of my classes, and what was so engaging to my students—especially when we moved the course abroad. What was I to be providing, that they usually only can get while overseas. I believe that culture is not learned by imitation alone, and mostly taught by oral instruction. There could be some imitation, of course, if the learner is still young, but in most cases, it is through language that, as native speakers, we learn about a specific culture: so why not try to duplicate the process in our classes, virtual or not? Moloney, Harborn, Fielding (2016) supposes that: “...teachers frequently believe that they are ‘doing intercultural’ if they are teaching static culture thus essentializing both culture as an entity and essentializing the activity of intercultural pedagogy.” With language, we can explain methods of social control, products, techniques and skills to

the learners. With Language we can access culture to access the target language and, as the title suggests, stress the importance of *Globalization* to engender a greater awareness and understanding of different attitudes, behaviors and perspectives of countries, economies, cultures, and people from around the world to our students. Therefore, following the “initial” tips for moving online, this is what I learned during the pandemic years.

If I strip my Education Abroad or my on-campus Language, Honors, and International Culture courses from everything to squeeze out of them the one and most important aspect(s) of every class, I get three key terms: *Internationalization*, *Cultural Humility* and *Intercultural Competence*. To be helpful, I will define these terms and show how these helped my virtual education courses maintain authenticity.

International education programs are the most effective high impact learning experience in fostering global citizenry, these programs can enhance and support the strategic priorities of the institution: student success, academic excellence, community partnerships and institutional prominence can be enhanced via Internationalization.

*Internationalization*, as I see it, is to prioritize all international aspects of a campus experience and helping the campus become aware

of international opportunities that exist domestically, locally or nearby. Other activities such as virtual embassy tours, passport fairs, and virtual or in-person educational tours to other communities involving students, staff, faculty, and the immediate community can enhance Internationalization of a campus. A university can provide leadership for the institution's global initiatives, by adopting and institutionalizing Internationalization.

*Cultural humility*, on the other hand, according to Alan Guskin (1991), "... refers to respecting the validity of the other person's culture and accepting the creative tension of holding two different perspectives simultaneously (162)," and it is the balance between validities that allows the language learners to tolerate ambiguity. This, in turn, allows for one's willingness to tolerate ideas and propositions that run counter to one's own belief system or structure of knowledge.

In "*Language, identity and the ownership of English*," Norton proposes that "... every time language learners use the foreign/additional language [...] they are not only exchanging information with their interlocutors; they are also constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. They are, in other words, engaged in identity construction

and negotiation” (Norton, 1997, p. 410). Such *construction of self and other* in relation to the language(s) being used “raise potential issues of power in intercultural interactions that can profoundly shape [...] participants” (Liddicoat 2020). Therefore, Intercultural competence becomes a lifelong process that includes the respect and valuing of other cultures, an openness, and curiosity that includes the knowledge of self, culture, sociolinguistic issues, local, glocal and foreign aspects of these, along withg the skills to listen, observe, interpret, analyze, evaluate, and relate, and of course, the qualities to adapt, be flexible, tolerant, empathic and in the end, cultural decentering. (Deardorff, 2006, p. 254)

These transform in a way student and educator alike, as in not only are the new and existing students in my classes exposed to internationalized course curriculums, but faculty members, like myself, whose courses are internationalized become ambassadors for promoting internationalization and globalization in their classes, including study away, study abroad, and virtual studies. This is when I realized that culture and Language are intertwined. When one interacts in another language, one is also interacting with(in) the culture that speaks that particular language. We cannot understand someone else’s

culture without accessing that culture's language directly, and vice-versa. I am not saying that language is culture or that culture is language—these are only clichés. I am saying that a certain language becomes a voice—an interpreter—for a certain culture, and the balancing of two or more voices within—aka cultures—create tolerance and humility.

This is when I thought of the particular the case of *The peace Corps*. In an article in the Michigan Times entitled *A way of being in the world: Reflections on the Peace Corps, 50 years later* (October 13, 2010), Dr. Alan Guskin, Peace Corps volunteer in the 60's, administrator in the creation of VISTA, the domestic Peace Corps, chancellor of the University of Wisconsin-Parkside and of Antioch University, sums up the Peace Corps experience in this way, quoting its first deputy director, Bill Moyers: "We are struggling today with the imperative of a new understanding of patriotism and citizenship. The Peace Corps has been showing us the way...To be a patriot in this sense means to live out of a recognition that one is a member of a particular culture and society, but so are all other human beings, and their kinship and bonds — their sacred places — are as important to them as ours are to us. Love of country, yes. Loyalty to country, yes, but we carry two passports — one

stamped American, the other human being...” “We knew from the beginning that the Peace Corps was not an agency, program or mission. Now we know — from those who lived and died for it — that it is a way of being in the world. It is a very conservative notion, because it holds dear the ground of one’s own being — the culture and customs that give meaning to life — but it is revolutionary for respecting the ground revered by others. This is the new politics and the new patriotism that may yet save this fragmented and dispirited age, and it is the gift (the volunteers) gave us.”

Guskin believes that Peace Corps “Volunteers develop this sense of cultural humility as a result of the psychological changes that occur as they integrate themselves into another culture. [They] identify with friends and colleagues who don’t share American ways of expressing personal emotions, norms regarding appropriate behavior, or meaning of individual and group pride. Volunteers learn and internalize the fact that people from other societies view their own culture as valid as we do ours and must be respected for doing so. And [they] realize that effective human interaction requires people to appreciate and respect the similarities and differences in cultural perspectives. In fact he goes as far as stating that “Developing a sense of cultural humility may well



be one of the necessary requirements for peace between people and among nations.” It is, he believes, the lasting contribution of the Peace Corps to American society, as embodied in the growing number of influential volunteers.

Returning to our three key components of *Internationalization*, *Cultural Humility* and *Intercultural Competence*, adding Service-Learning excellence to empower the students and connect them with the local community—something that can be done locally or virtually—and thus all the core components of International education experiences that help prepare global-ready graduates for the twenty-first century workforce are magically created, in what Darlene Bremer calls International educational experiences that “help improve social justice around the world. By having more educators and students studying and working abroad, increased cultural sensitivity is developed, along with the ability to better understand the attitudes of other peoples and to share their values and goals for social justice.” (Bremer, 44) Exposure to these International Educational experiences will in turn expose the students to different languages. Spoken language offers a vast quantity of usable information for the community. This helps to quicken new skilled acquisition and the techniques to adapt to new environments or

altered circumstances. So, learning languages through cultures is very similar to how the language student learns through immersion and abroad. And how best to do so, then by using culture to open the world, and the world to offer a language of possibilities in our classrooms—whether they be on campus, abroad or via zoom.

Per previous mention, another important aspect of an International curriculum is Intercultural competence, a lifelong process that includes the development of the attitudes (respect and valuing of other cultures, openness, curiosity), knowledge (of self, culture, sociolinguistic issues) skills (listen, observe, interpret, analyze, evaluate, and relate), and qualities (adaptability, flexibility, empathy and cultural decentering) in order to behave and communicate effectively and appropriately to achieve one's goals to some degree as defined by Deardorff (2006). That is a tricky one to reproduce on campus and on zoom, unless we invite our campus international students to come to our classes or connect via zoom and unless we can connect our students with international partners like senior centers, diversely abled adult centers and high schools around the world. COILing (Collaborative Online International Learning) is all about seeking a partner teacher to co-plan curricula and a great way to Internationalize one's course.

Because of these connections and collaborations that were created out of a desperate need to recreate a virtual international environment, students that participate in my Italian Language program now also receive a Service-Learning Excellence designation upon completion of these courses. This designation shows up on their transcript, like in Writing-Intensive courses, and it provides our students with the opportunities to develop civic engagement skills in the target language by making connections with the local organizations. By interacting with community members, students can enhance their group, organizational and interpersonal skills, they gain confidence and important experience, working with diverse members of the Italian communities. This happens both virtually and on site, if abroad travel is permitted, but not restricted only to abroad travel. For example, we can now virtually connect with Italian local music or elementary schools, we are able to engage in a virtual tandem learning with local Italian High School partners and participate in organized virtual events at Senior Citizen centers around Italy: (playing Tombolone, Canasta or Bridge Tournaments via Zoom or on site). The Service-Learning Excellence Program at Texas State University aims to enrich the collegiate learning experience by encouraging civic engagement, compelling student

reflection, and fostering meaningful community relationships. It helps our university's students and faculty find opportunities to serve that enhance academic understanding while also strengthening the local communities and beyond. Other class activities can include passport fairs and virtual embassy tours, as well as collaborations with the International Students Association, which assists new international students to acclimatize quickly to the university and San Marcos environment and organizes various academic and social events on campus.

**The perfect balance:**

Because of this, our international education programs are the most effective high impact learning experience in fostering global citizenry. Our courses have enhanced and supported the strategic priorities of our institution: student success, academic excellence, community partnerships and institutional prominence. These strategic priorities ensure focused planning and deliberate actions by Texas State University to prepare graduates who will compete favorably in ever-expanding global and technological workplace. My courses will offer students the opportunity to learn about aspects of their careers of choice in a different cultural environment. It will also provide them with

an additional understanding of one of the most significant trends of the current era: globalization. These courses will focus on this *global* aspect of shrinking distances, greater interpenetration of the world's peoples, and the rise, perhaps, of a so-called global culture, where no (wo)man is truly an island anymore.

Additionally, our students will learn the importance of International cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes on the evolution of foreign societies and will explore the notion that progress can be accelerated by (1) analyzing cultural strengths and weaknesses, and by (2) addressing cultural change as a purposive policy to apply through families, schools, churches, media, leadership, and/or the law. Nothing will be quite the same after students have studied abroad or have been exposed to these International educational experiences. Their perspectives will be global, their attitudes will be international, and they will have made memories that they will carry forever. Their resumé will be more attractive, in some cases their language proficiency will be advanced, and they will have developed lifelong friendships.

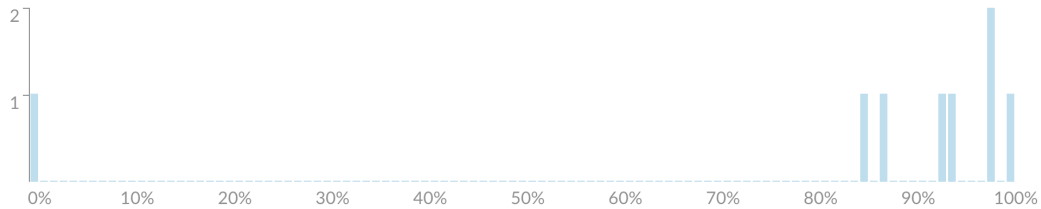
While available statistics on study abroad might still be limited, there are some notable studies on study abroad and careers, learning, academic performance, retention, and personality development. In my

students case, I detected a greater improvement in Quiz grades between the 1<sup>st</sup> and last Test, with improvement in GPA post-virtual study abroad. Let's see how one class improved the Quiz grades from Quiz 1, 4 and 6, the last Quiz.

**Quiz Summary**

Section Filter ▾ Student Analysis Item Analysis

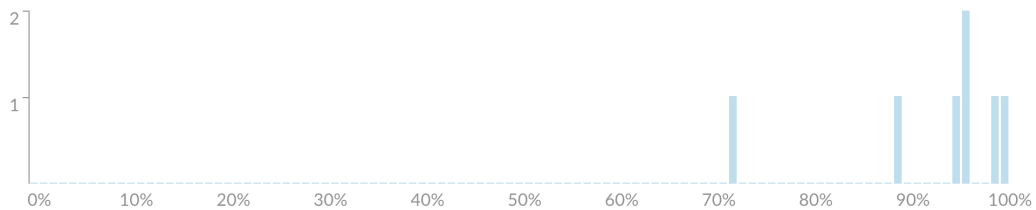
Ⓜ Average Score **82%**    Ⓜ High Score **100%**    Ⓜ Low Score **0%**    Ⓜ Standard Deviation **31.4**    Ⓜ Average Time **48:51**



**Quiz Summary**

Section Filter ▾ Student Analysis Item Analysis

Ⓜ Average Score **92%**    Ⓜ High Score **100%**    Ⓜ Low Score **72%**    Ⓜ Standard Deviation **8.96**    Ⓜ Average Time **54:05**



Quiz Summary

Section Filter ▾

Student Analysis

Item Analysis

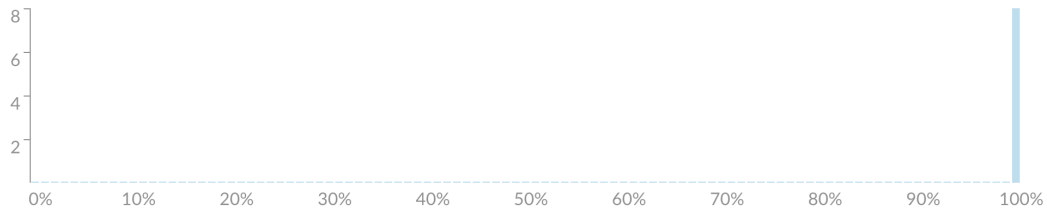
⊕ Average Score  
**100%**

⊕ High Score  
100%

⊖ Low Score  
100%

⊖ Standard Deviation  
0

⌚ Average Time  
32:51



When I compared personality development and my students' study abroad experience via questionnaires/blogs/journals, I found that students who studied abroad showed improvements in five core traits compared to their peers who did not study abroad: agreeableness, conscientiousness, extraversion, openness, and emotional stability—that is on top of better academic performance as you saw above. So why not Internationalize all our domestic curriculums, then? Education is a journey that can be enhanced by international perspectives, cultural enlightenments, and experiential knowledge.

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