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PRACTICE

Using Byram's Five *Savoirs* to Measure the Development of Intercultural Competence in the COVID-19 Era during an Engineering Sojourn Abroad

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Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has had devastating consequences. Worldwide, millions of lives have been lost, and the economic impact has been severe. Although the accelerated vaccination campaigns at the time of writing this article bring hope that the end of the pandemic is in sight, no one can predict how long we will suffer global health and economic consequences. In higher education, COVID-19 has changed the way we teach and learn. In March 2020, millions of face-to-face courses had to be adapted to be delivered in virtual classrooms. Faculty members felt overwhelmed by the sudden changes and unprepared to support their students in a remote learning environment (McMurtrie, 2020). Students felt isolated, depressed, and even betrayed.

These feelings were particularly acute for students who were recalled from their immersion programs abroad for an abrupt return home. Upon their arrival to the U.S., they had to self-quarantine for two weeks, which made their adaptation process even more difficult. For all these reasons, we know that COVID-19 had an impact on the year abroad of the students in our program. It altered their interactions with the local culture, it brought high degrees of uncertainty to their time abroad, and it cut short their experience by nearly five months. However, we did not know how the COVID-19 pandemic affected the development of students' intercultural competence. Were students able to interact enough before the pandemic to make some gains? Were students reflecting deeper on the value of their experience due to the intensity of the pandemic? Were students learning in different ways or about different things because of the pandemic? Through our analysis of various sources of written data from our students, we

see that despite the COVID-19 pandemic, intercultural learning took place and students made gains in intercultural competence. Furthermore, we see that the COVID-19 pandemic affected certain aspects of intercultural learning more than others, heightening some and diminishing others.

The International Engineering Program (IEP) at the University of Rhode Island (URI) had a total of 53 students abroad as COVID-19 began spreading worldwide. Established over thirty years ago, it is a five-year dual undergraduate degree program, in which students pursue a B.S. in an engineering discipline and a B.A. in a foreign language. During their fourth year, students complete a fall semester of coursework at one of our partner universities abroad (in China, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain, and Taiwan), followed by a six-month internship at a global company conducted in the target language. Students enhance their fluency in the target language and gain practical experience working on a six-month technical project related to their engineering major. During such an internship, students enroll in a six-credit internship course offered in the target language and taught remotely by an IEP program director. Berka et al. (2021) argue that such courses, which are designed to integrate students' workplace experience with their academic coursework and at the same time guide the development of their language proficiency skills, are beneficial for the participants' intercultural development.

During the 2019-2020 academic year, the IEP Program unfolded very differently. The first students had to return from China in January 2020, followed by those returning from Italy in February, and then from France, Germany, Spain, Japan and Taiwan in March. After their semester of study abroad, students had just begun to transition to their internship sites when they were recalled from abroad (URI travel policy followed CDC and DOD guidelines). These students reported significant difficulties and struggles. They felt "extremely devastated" and "upset" (S142_FIEP_COVID)¹, unmotivated, "sad and disappointed" (S93_SIEP_COVID), miserable (S186_GIEP_COVID), and some had to "deal with depression" (S146_FIEP_COVID). In certain cases, resignation kicked in: "I missed everything. I missed my job. Not only did I feel lost, I felt a loss" (S172_FIEP_COVID).

Based on such comments it may seem that the students' stay abroad was a complete loss. But despite these emotional drawbacks and the serious academic and professional consequences associated with the disruption of their year abroad, there is evidence that our students benefited from the limited time abroad before the pandemic hit as well as

¹ In order to identify the origin of the quotes we used the following system: the first abbreviation refers to the statement number, the second one is an identifier of the student's IEP program, the third and last part refers to the assignment/survey in which the student made such a statement. In our Appendix 1 we provide a table with the abbreviations used for each assignment/survey. A detailed description of the interventions and assignments that our students complete while they are abroad can be found in Erickson et al. (2020) and Berka et al. (2021).

from IEP-designed re-entry strategies such as internship placements in U.S. companies or engineering labs, online language courses to continue semi-immersion, re-entry reflection seminars to debrief and leverage skills learned abroad, and using their expertise as ambassadors for program recruitment and retention (Berka & La Luna, 2020). While some students were “sad about the fact that [their] year abroad had been shortened,” others understood that it was necessary and were “thankful the IEP took the safety of the students seriously” (S161_SIEP_COVID).

Given that the pandemic and its disruptions provoked such intense responses, we wondered what impact there might be on students’ intercultural competence during this unusual time abroad. Intercultural competence has been defined by Chen & Starosta (1998) as “the ability to effectively and appropriately execute communication behaviors that negotiate each other’s cultural identity or identities in a culturally diverse environment” (p. 28). Fantini (2009) adds that intercultural competence refers to “the complex abilities that are required to perform effectively and appropriately when interacting with others who are linguistically and culturally different from oneself” (p. 458). This has become a valued skill for employers and an important mission for higher education in the 21st century (Taguchi, 2015). In fact, the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) includes intercultural knowledge and competence as one of sixteen essential learning outcomes identified and defined as part of its Liberal Education and America’s Promise (LEAP) initiative (Rhodes, 2010). For students in our program, we give equal emphasis to the development of their engineering skills, their language proficiency, and their intercultural competence. Their year abroad provides a rich learning experience, and we strive to make sure that they make the most of their sojourn. Consequently, we completed a qualitative analysis of student reflections applying Michael Byram’s model of the five *savoirs* of intercultural communicative competence to find out: a) to what degree the pandemic affected intercultural learning in IEP students, and b) whether certain aspects of intercultural learning were more affected by the pandemic than others. We then proceeded to compare student intercultural learning during the phase leading up to the COVID-19 crisis with learning during the pandemic.

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

Learning during COVID-19

On March 11, 2020, the *World Health Organization* (WHO) declared COVID-19 a global pandemic. With a few exceptions, this led to a complete suspension of out-going mobility from U.S. institutions for the 2020-2021 academic year. 98% of U.S. colleges moved the majority of classes online and 95% suspended international travel (Inside Higher Ed and Hannover Research, 2020). The international education community reacted quickly with initiatives to stem the devastating impact of the pandemic on study abroad.

Byram's Five Savoirs of Intercultural Communicative Competence

Our study focuses on intercultural competence as we emphasize it within our program, which seeks to encourage students to interact with the host culture linguistically, professionally, and socially. As such, we see intercultural skills as being those which students develop through targeted learning and through interactive communication. We thus frequently refer to intercultural competence as intercultural communicative competence and as intercultural learning.² For these reasons, we are drawn to Michael Byram's Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) model developed in 1997 and revised by Byram in 2020 which identifies five *savoirs* of ICC (Byram, 2020). Byram uses the French word *savoir*, whose definitions straddle knowledge, know-how, and knowing, to refer to five interdependent factors of intercultural competence.

The five *savoirs* relate to each other in the following ways. Attitudes (*savoir être*) and knowledge (*savoirs*) are preconditions of, though informed by, intercultural communication, while the skills of interpreting and relating (*savoir comprendre*) and discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*) shape the process of intercultural communication, e.g. through the skills of mediation and negotiation of cultural misunderstandings. The learners can acquire the factors through experience and reflection without a teacher, but their acquisition in an educational setting can additionally stimulate the development of critical cultural awareness (*savoir s'engager*) "with respect to their own country and others" (Byram, 2020, p. 33). Furthermore, Byram argues that foreign language education should aim to develop students' competence in the foreign language and intercultural competence, as proficiency in the target language can provide speakers with more complex opportunities to understand and adapt to the host culture. As the participants of our study are all double majoring in a foreign language and an engineering discipline and participating in a long-term sojourn abroad which integrates their language and technical skills in an applied immersion setting, Byram's model suits our purposes well. In addition, Byram's model subdivides ICC into five distinct aspects which help us elucidate which aspects of ICC may be most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Byram's position can be summarized as an "interactionist perspective"³: foreign language teaching should not attempt to provide representations of other cultures, but should concentrate on equipping learners with "the means of accessing and analyzing any cultural practices and meanings they encounter, whatever their status in a society" (Byram, 2020, pp. 24-25). Emphasis should lie on preparing learners to become aware of their own culture, to guide them to be able to de-center and critique it, and to learn to view it differently through the lenses of other cultures. Only if learners know and critically analyze their own and the host culture can they challenge both, including by critiquing their values and turning their attention back on their own practices, beliefs, and social identities in their home culture (p. 27).

² Refer to Fantini (2009) for a discussion of intercultural communication as integral to intercultural competency.

³ See Spitzberg & Changnon (2009) who provide a categorization of intercultural competency frameworks.

Further, the goal of teaching a foreign language, in Byram's view, is essentially helping students to develop intercultural citizenship. As such, FL education is seen as education for democracy. In times when it has become difficult to separate fake news from facts, the nature of the logical reasoning skills and abilities in suspending judgment that students develop through their fact-finding missions and their interpretations of cultural products, practices, and perspectives have become essential competencies that FL learners develop in the FL educational experience with far-reaching positive impacts (Wagner et al., 2019).

In implicit alignment with the above-mentioned goal, students in the IEP program are enrolled in six-credit foreign language courses during their study and internships abroad. In these courses (see sample syllabus of FRN 315/316 in Appendix 3) they respond to assignments we developed to guide their proficiency and intercultural development. By doing so, learners also acquire the means of engaging and coping with unfamiliar situations, and arrive at their own position as what Byram calls an "intercultural speaker." As Spitzberg & Changnon (2009) explain, Byram's "intercultural speaker [...] is more of a mediator between cultures, able to negotiate in both, but possessing individual identity that is flexible in its ability to combine aspects of multiple cultures in performance" (p. 6).

We see great applicability of Byram's revised pedagogical model for the purpose of guiding our analysis. The fluid, dynamic, and unstable nature of ICC makes the very notion of assessment a challenge. That is why we chose our data through coding, thus quantifying our qualitative evaluation. The overall guiding principle was to apply Byram's model – which has so far mainly been used to inform curriculum design in the foreign language classroom – to evaluate ICC development while making students' voices the main basis of our analysis. Students were thus given "the opportunity to demonstrate what they have personally, individually experienced, what is personally meaningful to and developmental for them" (Wilberschied, 2015, p. 7).

Methodology

Participants

The participants in this study are fourth- and fifth-year students in the IEP programs who had begun the internship phase of their year abroad in Asia and in Europe. We more specifically examine the responses to essays and other prompts for a total of 53 participants from the 2019–20 cohort. This study is part of a Longitudinal Study on Intercultural Competence (approved under URI IRB1819-164). Within this larger group, three students studied/interned in China, two in Taiwan, five in France, 26 in Germany, five in Italy, four in Japan, and eight in Spain. We had 17 female and 36 male participants, and nine students self-identified as coming from underrepresented groups. Their first majors ranged from biomedical, computer, electrical, civil, mechanical, industrial, and ocean engineering to global business and supply chain management; their second majors included Chinese, French, German, Global Area Studies, Japanese track, Italian, and Spanish. The group's cumulative average GPA was 3.29.

Data Collection

Our data was collected beginning with their arrival in the host country and extending to a year after their return home, and involved four main sources. First, during the first four

weeks after their arrival, students filled out the IEP Scholar Travel Log (RSTL, see Appendix 2). Its goal is to get students attuned to observing cultural differences and to learning about the local culture. Students observe one specific setting per week and interpret and then evaluate in English what they learned. Second, throughout their entire sojourn abroad, students complete a series of targeted interventions, e.g., written essays and videos, most of them during a six-credit internship course they are enrolled in while working in a company. These interventions are designed to help students become more integrated into the local culture while using the target language (Erickson et al. 2020; Berka et al., 2021; see also Appendix 3). For this article, we particularly focus on student responses we deemed most pertinent to the theme of disruptions and transformations. The original statements, written in the language of study, have been translated into English for this paper. Third, students filled out a Study Abroad and Internship Survey (SAIS), in which we ask them a series of questions about their self-assumed technical, linguistic, and cultural gains during their year abroad, and their evaluation of our management of the program. Fourth, a year after they were recalled back home, students filled out an additional survey (COVID-19: Personal and Cultural Learning in Times of Crisis, see Appendix 4), in which we asked them questions about the impact of the pandemic on their sojourn abroad.

Data Analysis

As students were completing the same writing tasks and answering the same questions, we were able to observe multiple perspectives of the same phenomena. After reading through all of the collected raw data, we completed two rounds of coding. In the first round, researchers were asked to identify within their own language groups: a) discussions that indicated situations or factors students considered significant for their intercultural development; and b) discussions in which students make references to specific ways in which COVID-19 had impacted their experience abroad. We identified a total of 271 selections, some of which received more than one code.

In the second round of coding, and in an effort to increase our interrater reliability, each researcher was asked to independently evaluate if each of the selections represented one or more of the five *savoirs* described in Byram's conceptual framework. In order to assure the qualitative reliability of our codes and an acceptable intercoder agreement (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 202), we cross-checked our codes for such selections and discarded any for which we did not achieve a minimum of 60% agreement among the five raters. From the original 271 statements reviewed, such a high level of agreement was only obtained for 127 statements. Most of these statements represented only one of the five *savoirs*, with some representing up to three. In our analysis we favored the use of quotes for which the interrater agreement was the highest.

Results

Distribution across savoirs

Table 1 presents the overall distribution of the number of statements for each of the *savoirs*. The result of our rater agreement shows that 67.92% of our 53 students included indicators in one or several responses that they gained new *knowledge* about their own and/or the target culture during their time abroad; 39.62% describe what we identified

as change of their *attitudes*; 13.2% of students further developed their skill of discovery and interaction; the same percentage of students showed indicators of *critical cultural awareness*; and finally, only 11.32% of the students showed indications of having gained or worked on their *skills of interpreting and relating*. The low number of the latter skills may be due to the intervention prompts used for this study. Because of the students' early return, some of the prompts that required interaction with the host nationals had to be jettisoned; the remaining prompts had more of an emphasis on the other skills. We list the *savoirs* in the order that Byram presents them, which is to say from least to most complex to acquire. Within each of these *savoirs* we present students' statements made pre-pandemic followed by those made during the pandemic.

Table 1. Distribution of evidence of *savoirs* in students' statements
(a statement could show evidence of more than 1 *savoir*)

<i>Savoir</i>	Number of Students	Percentage of total students	Unique statements
Knowledge	36	67.92 %	80
Attitudes – Curiosity / Openness	21	39.62 %	28
Skills of Interpreting / Relating	6	11.32 %	7
Skills of Discovery / Interaction	7	13.20 %	7
Critical Cultural Awareness	7	13.20 %	8

Knowledge

Before pandemic: Byram maintains that there is a relationship of mutual dependency between *knowledge* and *attitudes*, not in the sense that increased knowledge may necessarily create positive attitudes, but to the extent that increased knowledge of the practices, beliefs and values of another culture makes it easier to navigate the unfamiliar. This *savoir* was the most prominently displayed in our student statements. We identified a variety of themes around conventions of interaction in local institutions, social life, lifestyle, health protocols, and communication practices. We hypothesize that communication became easier as soon as students became aware of the importance of some practices as a deep-rooted value in the host country, but it also made it easier for them to question what one's own process of socialization suggests is "normal" and "unchangeable" (Byram, 2020, p. 45). This could be the example of the "être poli" French practice or "always saying hello when you walk into the store" (S74_FIEP_RSTL), the easy access to public transportation and associated preferences of mobility (S45_GX_Ess3), or the fast-paced, efficient and, for newcomers, stressful grocery bagging in Germany (S47_GIEP_Ess3). Other students discovered that shopping in China revealed that the process of social interaction in one's interlocutor country can be significantly determined by the level of technological advances making the medium of payment what

shapes the message: [“the grocery clerks] seem to ignore the customers, and the customers keep to themselves, looking at their phones. Everybody uses apps on their phones to pay [...] Compared to [...] the US, where grocery clerks are eager to help out customers and be as friendly as possible, the environment here is more apathetic. Because you can find everything you need on your phone, there is no need to interact with the employees” (S58_CIEP_RSTL).

Students who had studied in Spain, on the other hand, discovered great value in the slower pace of life. This was not only true for social life, but also for the internship phase during which they experienced a different work culture: “At work, we would take coffee breaks frequently and would meet at the cider house for a group dinner. Well-being and happiness is prioritized over all else” (S14_SIEP_POS). Encouraged by their environment which valued quality food over fast food – “There are more restaurants with Michelin stars per square foot in Donostia than in any other region of the world” (SQ34_SIEP_Ess1) – many of them started to cook their own meals, something that they never did before, and this became part of their (new) way of living. They developed knowledge and appreciation of a different kind of food as might be observed by a tourist, and adapted a long-term sojourner’s practice of cultivating food as part of a new lifestyle. They gained knowledge of strong underlying values of quality and the love of indulging. As one student explained:

The region is famous for its gastronomy. A significant part of their culture revolves around food and drinks. [...] They also have gastronomy clubs [sociedades gastronómicas] in which you can reserve a table and use the common kitchen and prepare your own dinner there. (S31_SIEP_Ess1).

Additionally, several students shared their gained knowledge about the role that food plays in other countries’ society, culture, and national identity. It helped some of them to overcome stereotypes they might have harbored. A student previously thought “that a stereotypical German works a lot and eats heavy food” but observed the opposite: “Germans, on average, work less during the day and live more than we do in the US.” Also, people shared with him “how important it is for them to know where food originated” (S52_GIEP_RSTL). Similarly, a student interning in Austria noticed that the Austrians’ perception of quality is related to valuing the homemade products and food traditions. This insight expanded the students’ knowledge of the socio-economic dimension of certain foods. What was once part of the local farmers’ tradition (*Hascheeknödel* and *Gröstl*), became the student’s favorite dishes because they were delicious and “as a poor student working in Austria, they fit [them] perfectly” (S66_GIEP_RSTL). His newly gained knowledge about food origins also allowed him to reconnect with his family roots, since his grandfather was a poor Austrian farmer.

During pandemic: With respect to Byram’s knowledge category related to the processes of interaction on the societal levels, IEP students who had been abroad during the first part of the pandemic developed a keen sense of differences in countries’ COVID-19 policies. From their answers to the eight-question survey related to COVID-19 management it was evident that their first-hand knowledge of the practices, beliefs, and values of their host country made questioning their home country’s approach to COVID-

19 much easier since they had a unique point of comparison. Our students felt that the cultures in which they were living responded faster, asking businesses to implement health “protocols and regulations that took the U.S. weeks” and restricting the ability of their citizens to leave their homes (S167_FIEP_COVID). They also felt that the COVID-19 interventions taken were much more radical in Europe than in the U.S.:

I noticed that Italy was much quicker to establish some safety guidelines for its residents once things got serious. The major mandate that went into effect before I left was the closure of anything that wasn't a grocery store, pharmacy, or hospital, and the requirement to have some documentation of why you were leaving your house and where exactly you were going, as long as it was one of those three places. Upon my return to America, I noticed we didn't have any of these mandates (S201_IIEP_COVID).

The point of cognitive comparison became especially poignant when made by students who returned from Asian countries with much more elaborate health protocols necessitated by previous crises such as the SARS epidemic, “even though the numbers [of affected people] were a fraction of America's numbers” (S175_JIEP_COVID).

Attitudes Curiosity/Openness

Before pandemic: To a certain extent, the component *savoir être* in Byram's model may be the most foundational, or at least the one that seems most likely to be a prerequisite for the others. This component is often called an attitude, and more specifically the attitude of openness and curiosity toward other cultures. It refers to the willingness of an individual to adopt the perspective of another, or to decenter, which then leads to a transformation through a broadening of one's understanding of world views. We observed varying degrees of such decentering. We found this *savoir* as the second most displayed one in our students' statements. Some of the common themes that we identified are: leaving one's comfort zone, personal growth, maturity, independence, adaptability and change of perspectives, resilience and resolve, and strategies to engage with locals.

To begin, there was a cluster of student statements addressing the excitement of experiencing other cultures and moving outside of one's comfort zone. It could be “scary at first” but “forcing themselves out of [their] comfort zone,” meeting new people and making friends from different countries “opened [their] eyes to different cultures, lifestyles, and work ethics” (S3_SIEP_POS). For some students, especially those that had never been away from their families, this experience constituted an important first step in changing attitudes. Taking the big leap, confronting a scary situation, and returning transformed and ready for more experiences like this show a heightened degree of openness and curiosity about the world. A slightly greater degree of decentering is shown by a student who states:

I met so many new and amazing people that impacted me during my time in France. I was a pretty shy person before I left, this pushed me out of my comfort zone to meet new people and try new things. My time in France made me a better

version of myself. I feel that I am more open minded, I am more eager to meet new people and do new things I wouldn't have done before (S264_FIEP_POS).

As this comment suggests, this student was pushed beyond the familiar yet remained open to the unknown. Consequently, she was transformed into "a better version" of herself who is now "more open minded."

A much greater degree of decentering manifests itself in the following statement from a student: "I gained independence and I learned to value and appreciate the discomfort experienced in cultures that differ from my own. A city that once felt so foreign became a second home in a short seven months" (S4_SIEP_POS). Adopting the foreign culture as a second home is the indication that the student put aside existing values and accepted new ones. The comment on appreciating discomfort in other cultures is an interesting one since it foregrounds the challenges of living in a new culture while at the same time underscoring the pleasures to be gained from doing so as a learning experience. Byram's emphasis on the idea of decentering one's value system is particularly evident in the following passage written by a student:

My perspective on the world has changed. I am now more open minded. When I get to know people from a different culture, I no longer think that they are weird, but I reflect why they are the way they are. [...] I have a new understanding for people who learn English as a second language and don't come from the U.S. (S51_GIEP_Ess3).

The student's movement from labeling a new culture as "weird" to reflecting on the reasons for his values is an excellent illustration of what Byram calls the "readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own" (2020, p. 62). In the above statement, the student gives evidence of having acquired Byram's definition of the attitudes of openness and curiosity. In addition, the student demonstrates empathy by showing a new understanding of those in American culture who come from elsewhere, and like himself, had to learn a new language.

During pandemic: The reaction to the COVID-19 recall may have even heightened students' openness. It stretched the idea of decentering not only from other cultures but toward new attitudes about the world in general. For instance, one student explains that because of the COVID-19 experience, "My perspective on life has changed with respect to my outlook on my future plans. I learned that plans change very quickly and are never set in stone so there's no point in dwelling on changed plans" (S87_SIEP_COVID). The same attitude is expressed by another student in response to a question about what the recall due to the pandemic revealed about oneself. The student answered:

We all have to take things in stride. Yes, studying abroad in Taiwan was an amazing experience and yes, leaving friends and career opportunities was both heartbreaking and disappointing, but now I am even more determined to return. The excitement and challenge that is every day in a foreign land is something unattainable in the U.S. Since returning to America the passion to live abroad has not faded, it has only grown stronger (S98_CIEP_COVID).

This student acknowledges the heartbreak and disappointment of being brought back early, but also demonstrates resilience by “taking things in stride” and desiring to return to the excitement and challenge of living abroad. Open-mindedness and acceptance of different peoples and cultures thus extended to openness about one’s future and accepting a situation that is out of one’s hands. This is consistent with the views of Streitwieser & Light (2018) who write that the impact of an international experience can go beyond the specific parameters identified by a program and can influence “student learning in terms of more profound underlying changes in meaning and understanding” (p. 484). These attitudes show that the COVID-19 recall engendered a decentering of expectations about the future and an openness towards, or at least an acceptance of, disruptions.

Skills of Discovery/Interaction

Before pandemic: In Byram’s paradigm, all the *savoirs* are highly interdependent. The integrative aspect and the complexity of the skills of discovery and interaction are apparent, given that successfully maintaining social interactions with a person from a different culture “the individual needs to draw upon existing knowledge, have attitudes which sustain sensitivity to others with sometimes radically different origins and identities, and operate the skills of discovery and interpretation” (Byram, 2020, p. 49). In contrast with other components of his paradigm such as the *savoirs* (knowledge) or the *savoir comprendre* (skills of interpreting and relating) which could be considered more receptive skills, the *savoir apprendre/faire* (discovery and interaction) require an active role from the individual who, in real time, has to apply the knowledge, attitudes, and skills in social communication and interaction experiences. For the evidence collected from our students, we found codes clustered around themes of discovering and embracing cultural differences, cultural understanding, interactions in social life and workplace performing tasks, and interaction patterns embracing different value systems.

It is unquestionable that an individual will not be able to behave appropriately in a social context without a minimum development of this *savoir apprendre/faire*. As one of our students stated, this often means adopting local habits and changing personal behaviors, such as for a timid student becoming “a ‘regular’ at some of the cafes and bakeries around town” (S235_SIEP_SAIS). In order to be successful in such social interactions, individuals need to evaluate a different system of customs and norms and make a personal decision to embrace it. When that happens, the host country becomes “for seven months [...] a second home” (S135_SIEP_SAIS).

Although there is no agreement among scholars about the role that other factors such as the nature of communication, hierarchies, the concept of self and others, or linguistic competence play when helping an intercultural speaker socially interact with individuals from other cultures⁴, our students found this last factor extremely valuable in their

⁴ Regarding the dichotomy between intercultural competence and language proficiency, Byram states that “intercultural competence is important in other contexts where other social allegiances and social identities are salient but language competence is not problematic” (2020, p. 42). He also defends that there is an “instrumental advantage of speaking other languages” (2020, p. 57). Similarly, Sercu (2010) states that “lower language proficiency may impede the learner’s high intercultural competence” (p. 19). Conversely, Zaharna (2009) believes that “it is possible to be fluent in the language yet ignorant of the culture” (p. 190).

educational and social interactions. Not only because it made them feel comfortable and gain the necessary confidence to engage in such interactions (S40_SIEP_Ess3), but also because it helped them to develop a special sense of pride due to the fact that their linguistic abilities aided them to succeed in challenging engineering courses taught in the target language: “[T]he sense of pride that I felt from overcoming a difficult engineering class due to the language barrier was another experience that I cherish” (S235_SIEP_SAIS). It also affected the ways in which they perceived their professional selves and were perceived by their co-workers: “I believe that being able to speak with my co-workers about my job made me feel very professional and they were surprised to find out that my Spanish was better than what they expected” (S40_SIEP_Essay3). This sentiment is echoed by Byram’s conviction that competence in a foreign language allows the learners to “live into” various lifestyle practices (Byram, 2020, p. 57).

In a certain way, one could argue that this *savoir apprendre/faire* is the most important for making study abroad a positive experience for our students: it allows them to create positive social networks, and thus “so many amazing memories with some incredible new friends” (Q235_SIEP_SAIS). In fact, references to establishing new friendships appear in multiple testimonies of our students, regardless of their host country abroad. Once such friendships were established students were able to further develop other *savoirs*, because through their communication with their friends they were able to gain new knowledge and change their attitudes. We understand interculturality as a developmental process, which means that one can never reach a final destination: an individual can always further develop his/her intercultural competence. Discovering a new culture is a fascinating, absorbing endeavor that one of our students genuinely described by noting that it “open[ed] my mind to other ways that people lived and the way that they thought as well” (S5_SIEP_POS).

During pandemic: As mentioned above, the skills of discovery and interaction require individuals to apply their knowledge, attitudes, and skills to successfully maintain social communication and interaction experiences. During the first months of the pandemic, the CDC guidelines and recommendations required or strongly suggested that such interactions be limited or even non-existent. Once such policies were relaxed, we all needed to learn new ways of interacting with others: maintaining social distance, small social gatherings preferably outside, and wearing masks. As the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the world in Spring 2020, our students had already benefited from six prior months of in-country immersion and intercultural learning opportunities. We hypothesize that the adaptations they needed to make when arriving and adjusting to their study abroad locations may have helped them adapt more quickly and be resourceful when confronted with yet another rapidly evolving change.

As a more specific example, one of our students mentioned how the adaptation process became easier as his experiences continued to unfold. While at first he had a hard time adapting to the new country, the process was simpler when, after a semester in the country, he began an internship: “It took a long time before I became comfortable in Braunschweig, but I learned quickly about how to adapt successfully. For this reason, I was able to become confident and surrounded by supportive people in even less time when I started my internship” (S209_GIEP_COVID). A similar experience was shared by

another student who, responding to the question *What was the most difficult/challenging aspect of coming back home early? How did you navigate it?* (COVID survey) commented that, despite the difficulties, he was able to fulfill all the required paperwork before returning to the U.S.: “The de-registration with the city and other paperwork to officially leave the country were a little difficult to navigate. Finding someone to take my place in my apartment was difficult as well but I was able to find people through WG Gesucht and ended up finding a friend of a roommate already in Germany that would take my room” (S107_GIEP_COVID).

Not only did our students develop abilities to cope with change: they also became confident enough to help other individuals going through challenging times. The answer that one of our students gave to the question *What did the recall due to the pandemic reveal about yourself?* as part of our COVID survey is illustrative in this regard: “I found that I was able to keep a level head during a very confusing and stressful time. I knew I had a job to do (get home) and I remained calm and collected until it was done. I helped other students figure out solutions to problems and lent my help where I could” (S106_GIEP_COVID). The health rules and policies that were implemented by local, regional and national authorities forced students to adapt to those new behaviors and constraints in order to successfully “pack up their lives” and return to the U.S.

Our students also indicated that the adaptation to be back home was not easy. In the words of one of our students, overnight she went from being “a ‘regular’ at some of the cafes and bakeries around town” in a foreign country that had become “a second home” (S235_SIEP_SAIS) to experiencing two weeks of isolation. The change was extreme and placed our students in a kind of limbo, not being able to complete their internship abroad but also not being able to take classes back at their home university for the remainder of the semester until enrollment was again possible in the summer term. Having to return to their family homes, they felt they had lost their independence. For out-of-state students or those not being able to return to their parents’ house due to a high-risk family member the situation was dire. The difficult adaptation period imprinted in our students a clear understanding regarding the importance of self-care. And although at the beginning many looked for distractions that would help them ignore their frustrations, they realized later that living abroad had been a transformational and “invaluable experience” (S5_SIEP_POS) with a deep positive impact on who they were, on their identities. As one student summarized:

Without a doubt my time spent in Spain gave me confidence in myself as both an engineer, but more importantly, as a citizen of the world [...] and having this different perspective of the world has fundamentally changed my outlook on life (S9_SIEP_POS).

Skills of Interpreting/Relating

Before pandemic: The skills to relate and interpret make it possible to interpret cultural products, perspectives, and practices from another culture, to explain them and relate them to those of one’s own culture. It builds up on existing knowledge that can be acquired from within and beyond the classroom. In contrast to the skills of discovery and

interaction, relation and interpretation skills do not need an interaction with the communication partner. When the products are written texts, the readers can find their own timeline for the interpretation. When texts are interpreted and translated into the target culture, dysfunctions and contradictions need to be eliminated, or identified as unresolvable (Byram, 2020, p. 37). During the study abroad experience, the students have several opportunities to train their skills to interpret and relate to products from the target culture. In contrast to classroom activities, they are not limited to the documents the instructor brings to class, but a plethora of cultural documents, products, practices, and events are waiting for the students to engage with and analyze, compare, and contrast. The authors found evidence of these skills around the following themes: identifying causes of misunderstanding, identifying reasons behind differences in cultural practices, and contrasting one's own and another culture and relating it to societal contexts. As one student explained:

The experiences I went through, the people I met, and the events I survived formed a new part of my character that I was glad to take home with me. After my adventure in Italy and my return to the United States, I found that I grew the ability to analyze my American culture because I now have another culture to use as a comparison. The earliest memories that exist in front of my mind are the experiences I have had (S82 IIEP_ Ess6).

Another student who studied abroad in Germany had the opportunity to compare and contrast social events, patterns of friendship and how to relate with one another, in Byram's words "how the inhabitants of one country perceive another country and what effect that has upon the interaction between individuals" (2020, p. 64). In addition to relationality, "awareness that one is a product of one's own socialization is a precondition for understanding one's reactions to otherness" (Byram, 2020, p. 64). A clear example involves the different socialization processes, practices, and underlying values related to "becoming friends" in the US and in Germany. The student noticed that his German friends usually plan social gatherings with a few select friends, while their American friends try to see as many friends as possible at the same time. As described by this student:

I often talked to my roommate D. about how to build friendships and a social network in the US and in Germany. I quickly learned that the Germans have their own way of getting to know people and becoming close with them. [...] I can relate to people easily and was looking forward to assembling a large group of German friends. Quite to the contrary, D. does not understand why I know every single American student in [the exchange cohort] and want to spend time with them all. When he invites friends to stop by our apartment the group consists of two people maximum [...]. We Americans make plans in such a way that everyone has time to join; and nobody feels excluded. The Germans would rather have their leisure time, see only a few friends, and develop really close relationships with them (S42_GIEP_Ess3).

While the student may be overgeneralizing his experience by talking about what "the Germans" and "the Americans" do, they identify different perspectives and analyze what

the underlying meanings and values behind these different perspectives may be, including the urge for inclusion and connectedness on the American side and the value of leisure time and close relationships on the German side. While both parties value friendships, the student identifies that the concept of friendship has different connotations in different cultures. While this initially led to misunderstandings between the student and his German peers, it also resulted (due to the aforementioned openness and curiosity) in changed behaviors and perspectives on the student side. He reports that in the end he adapted to live with this “small group situation” and is “no longer [...] interested in engaging in small talk as much” (S42_GIEP_Ess3).

Further, the skill to interpret and relate is aided by the strategy to suspend judgement. This short quote from a French IEP student practicing DIE (describe, interpret, evaluate) – a strategy introduced in our pre-departure orientation and practiced with the help of the IEP Scholar Travel Log – demonstrates the ability to refrain from jumping to conclusions, allowing one to suspend judgement while coming up with hypotheses about what reasons might be behind a “strange” observation. Here it is applied to the practice observed of not refrigerating milk in supermarkets in France versus in the U.S. As the speaker hypothesizes:

[In Compiègne] the milk is not sold in the refrigerated section and it comes in boxes. Reasons could be that the milk is not pasteurized or the milk comes from nearby in France, or the French people like to drink sour milk. It's not better, not worse, just different. Buy the milk and get over it! (S78_FIEP_RSTL).

The student not only recognized a difference, but also related this observation to her own culture, where milk would not be found in supermarkets outside the fridge. This statement also shows how ready the student is to embrace change, a skill which would later help her manage the even more disruptive situations caused by the COVID-19 recall.

During pandemic: Once returned from abroad, students related and interpreted differences in cultural practices between their host and home culture with a heightened sense of awareness, including through comparison and contrast. Answering the post study abroad COVID survey question *How did the culture you were living in at the time respond to the COVID-19 pandemic? How was that different from the U.S.?* a student reflected:

I noticed that Italy was much quicker to establish some safety guidelines for its residents once things got serious. The major mandate that went into effect before I left was the closure of anything that wasn't a grocery store, pharmacy, or hospital, and the requirement to have some documentation of why you were leaving your house and where exactly you were going, as long as it was one of those three places. Upon my return to America, especially at the beginning, I noticed we didn't have any of these mandates, especially not ever needing documentation. We followed suit with the closure of most shops and restaurants but nonetheless America always seemed much more relaxed than whatever jurisdictions my Italian friends were under (S201_IIEP_COVID).

Another student went further and attempted to identify a reason behind differences in cultural practices and related them to societal contexts as in her answer to the question *What did your host country's response to the pandemic reveal about their values?* The students' increased level of knowledge of different values at stake in determining a country's COVID-19 procedures also enabled them, in turn, to look more critically back upon that very practice:

Germans LOVE order and especially bureaucracy. This is much more obvious with the vaccine roll out, where there are millions of unused vaccines because they're so much more concerned with following the procedure than with vaccinating people in a way that makes sense (S129_GIEP_COVID).

Although the above quote comes across as overly generalized, we felt that it conveyed important insight into a cultural practice (vaccine roll-out in a specific country) and how it might be related to cultural norms (strong belief in and reliance on rules and regulations in Germany). We accepted such generalizations in students' private writings such as the one above as a tool for understanding culture, which can be endlessly nuanced. As we now know, once Germany had developed its "orderly" system, the country caught up with and overtook U.S. vaccination rates later in Fall 2021.

Critical cultural awareness

Before pandemic: In Byram's model the five *savoirs* are in a relationship of mutual causality and interdependence and the fifth one, *savoir s'engager* or "critical cultural awareness," features prominently in the center as it is for Byram the crucial component. He derives it from a philosophy of political education or *Bildung* in the German educational system which includes self-reflection, the capacity for judgment and critique, autonomy and maturity (Byram, 2020, p. 58). As can be summarized, the decentering process of Byram's intercultural speaker is ideally accompanied by action, *éducation civique* or active citizenship (Deardorff, 2009, p. 327). Possessing all five *savoirs* of intercultural communicative competence, the intercultural speaker – as opposed to the native speaker – adds to the sheer experience of his/her own and other cultures a process of reasoning and reflection on the objectives he or she might pursue. Through the lens of multiple languages, the foreign language speaker has the vantage point of being able to compare and contrast the implicit processes, values, meanings, and beliefs of at least two cultures. We identified this *savoir* in themes clustered around awareness of and appreciation of lifestyle differences, contrasting underlying values related to differences in social welfare systems, work/life balance, public safety, pandemic response, and respect for governments, the elderly, and community versus the individual.

For instance, a reflection of a Portuguese-American student about what is valued in Italian culture and how this is related to the "Southern European" part of his cultural identity makes him that kind of "intercultural speaker" who, by contrasting insights gained through the languages and even dialects within the same culture, garners a critical cultural awareness of the best of both worlds, a synthesis of opposing cultures. As this student describes:

In the beginning, my Italian was so bad that communication consisted mostly of motions and nouns because I had trouble conjugating verbs. People's comprehension varied greatly from person to person because of all the different accents. Although, as I became friends with some of the locals and talked to these people more, my understanding expanded endlessly. In the end, the Portuguese and Italians are culturally very similar, this has protected me from any potential culture shock. The importance of food and coffee and spending time with friends and family is obvious, compare that to the work-obsessed culture of the United States! Europe and more specifically Southern Europe and America have very little in common. I think there has to be a balance of both mentalities, that's the healthiest (S85_ IIEP_ Ess6).

Although the student overgeneralizes, his mediating cultural lens allows him to become critically culturally aware of key differences in value systems between those he constructs as encountered in Southern Europe and those commonly attributed to people of his home country.

During pandemic: Probing deeper, COVID question #2 - *How did the culture you were living in at the time respond to the COVID-19 pandemic? How was that different from the US?* elicits an almost “*éducation civique*-style” call for a national welfare system – a longstanding cultural standard in Germany – in a student response. He observed how, in contrast to the U.S., the belief in a social welfare system in Germany led to activating immediate relief measures helping out people who lost their jobs due to the unfolding crisis: “Interestingly enough, Germany managed to give a lot more aid to citizens in addition to tax breaks for them. Valuing the health and safety of every citizen” (S105_ GIEP_ COVID). Likewise, critical cultural awareness is demonstrated in a student statement based on first-hand knowledge of the Italian and U.S. infrastructure and their contrasting approaches to the pandemic:

I would say Italy's response definitely showed much more concern for limiting the spread of the virus as much as possible, whereas in America it seemed like they were unwilling to take beneficial action, knowing how much it would upset people. America waited much longer to impose the necessary, spread-fighting restrictions, waiting until things started to get much worse (S202_ IIEP_ COVID).

While the European perspectives mentioned above reflect an understanding of the social welfare system and safety net inherent in those Western European countries, looking through the lens of an Asian society brings out the differences as compared to the U.S. in even starker terms, as is illustrated by this response to prompt #3: *What did your host country's response to the pandemic reveal about their values?* A student who returned from Taiwan developed critical cultural awareness as he compared the more “collectivist” approach to pandemic management of his Asian host country with the “individualistic” approach – the insistence on one's own personal choice/freedom – of his home country. He discovered the underlying belief that the community should be protected and that the enactment of cultural practices, e.g. mask wearing when sick, and communal pandemic management are natural consequences of a collectivist value system:

Taiwanese values align with the safety and wellbeing of their citizens. I often had to explain to my Taiwanese friends that those in the West do not often wear masks, unless terminally ill or if they were a doctor performing surgery. I learned at that time that culturally whenever the Taiwanese have a cold, the flu, or just are not feeling well they will wear a mask to protect those around them because they did not want to give their friends the flu. It surprised them that here in the U.S. we did not do the same. I admire Taiwan for their commitment to educating the youth about proper etiquette when feeling ill. I believe that these ideals persist in Asian culture, to place others before yourself and look out for the common good rather than just focus on oneself. I also saw that Taiwan was not afraid to adopt other countries' methods to help combat the virus, however the U.S. did not turn to Taiwan to try and learn why they combated the virus so well. Instead the World Health Organization played politics and insistently tried to discredit the Taiwanese efforts (S97_CIEP_COVID).

This comment not only reveals the student's awareness of contrasting underlying value systems towards community safety and well-being between Taiwan and the U.S., but also the curiosity and openness towards gathering critical intelligence from other cultures to aid in Taiwan's own pandemic response. Displaying "*éducation civique*," this student takes his role as a well-informed citizen of the world seriously, and abstracts from a country-to-country comparison all the way to critiquing the World Health Organization. We do not yet know whether significant intercultural insights such as this one will lead to the student's action-taking in the here and now or have a latent effect on the participant's learning and career trajectory. But according to Wong (2015), who references the SAGE project (Paige et al, 2009), retroactive alumni reflections may reveal changes in world view, attitudes, and career choices over a longer time frame. In the case of the student referenced above, the COVID-19-related disruption of his stay abroad resulted in transformational change and a strong desire to return to the country he had to leave behind so abruptly, in turn leading him to act upon this desire through a successful application for a Fulbright stipend to continue Masters-level graduate studies in renewable energy at National Cheng Kung University in Taiwan starting in 2021-2022.

Discussion

This study aimed at answering the first research question concerning to what degree did the pandemic affect intercultural learning among IEP students. Our analysis of 271 student statements showed that for the "COVID-19 cohort," whose seven-month stays abroad in 2019-2020 culminated in their host countries' lock-down measures and cut short their original sojourns by nearly five months due to their home institution's recall, resulted in general, overall gains in intercultural learning. Despite all the disruptions, the students developed their intercultural competency. For the second research question concerning whether certain aspects of intercultural learning were more affected by the pandemic than others, we found that the pandemic had a greater impact on some aspects of students' intercultural learning than others. Of Byram's five *savoirs*, knowledge was the one that remained free of variation due to the pandemic. In both the before- and during-pandemic phase of their stay, students provided roughly equal amounts of evidence of growth in this aspect of intercultural learning. For the *savoir* of attitudes of

openness and curiosity, we found a shift in when this type of learning was most activated. In the before-pandemic portion, students focused on the local culture and staying open to it and receptive to new experiences within it. After the pandemic, students shifted to a more abstract or even philosophical kind of openness toward the future in general. While this is not openness to culture, it may still reflect a shift in attitude that originated in the earlier growth in cultural openness and curiosity that took place during the before-pandemic part of their stay.

Given that the pandemic resulted in cascading levels of imposed isolation, the *savoir* linked to the skill of discovery and interaction was the most negatively impacted. Students simply had fewer opportunities to discover and interact once the restrictions were in place. While this may seem self-evident, it underscores the importance of creating targeted pedagogical interventions that encourage students to make connections while abroad during normal times. The fourth *savoir*, the skill of interpreting and relating, revealed deep intercultural learning concerning relating to people in the host culture and also in students' more sophisticated interpretation of cultural practices by suspending judgment. However, when we look at their reflections during the pandemic it seems that their understanding becomes even more nuanced and embedded in societal contexts since their sense of awareness was heightened by the contrasts they noticed in how their host and home cultures handled pandemic management.

Perhaps the most surprising finding is that the fifth *savoir*, critical cultural analysis, was positively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Certainly, in the before-pandemic phase, students shared insight relating to their comparison between cultures. However, the examples from this phase displayed a somewhat superficial appreciation of cultural difference. In contrast, the examples taken from the during-pandemic portion revealed a deeper understanding of the culture, including examples of students discussing the local context and of the future consequences. To some extent, the students' more sophisticated during-pandemic analyses could be due to their greater amount of accumulated learning since these comments came at the end of their stay. But this could also be a sign of the intensity of the pandemic, which focused students' thoughts in a more mature and critical way. While in the midst of the pandemic and perceiving it as traumatic and depressing, many of our students found in the crisis an opportunity to more deeply reflect on and question what they consider important in their lives and lifestyles. Given the fact that they were abroad and then returned home when the pandemic struck, students displayed a keen awareness of the stark contrast in COVID-19 management between their home and host culture and how the handling of the pandemic revealed underlying ethics of care and empathy. These students, aided by the unique vantage point their foreign language skills afforded them, arguably engaged as intercultural speakers which allowed them to develop agency, come out with a strong voice, and contrast and critique the cultural systems they became aware of, both abroad and at home. There is evidence that some became more critically culturally aware of their own and other cultural norms and value systems.

Limitations and Future Study

The participant group of this study was a bit uneven since forty-four students went to European countries and only nine to Asia. Additional limitations may have occurred

because of the authors' roles as directors of IEP programs and instructors of the six-credit language courses they were enrolled in. Although we selected student statements with the *savoir* model as our compass, we may have inadvertently drawn evidence from those students we saw as most successful in the program. Furthermore, the prompts in our data collection tools were not designed explicitly with Byram's model in mind and there may be an unevenness in the way the prompts elicit the *savoirs*. Nevertheless, we found Byram's framework helpful in capturing indicators of specific aspects of ICC in our students.

Future research could also compare the quantitative data we collected in our longitudinal study through the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to see if the quotient between students' developmental orientations pre- and post- study abroad confirm or contradict the qualitative analysis of student statements and their distribution among the five *savoirs*.

Conclusion

Our study adds to the voices in the field of ICC scholarship which see great value triangulating quantitative assessment and qualitative evaluation of students' cultural learning while abroad (Hu, 2008; Byram, 2009; Streitwieser & Light, 2018; Davis & Knight, 2018; Paras et al., 2019) or even challenge the validity of quantifying intercultural learning outcome assessment (Genkova, 2020). In agreement with Byram, we put our emphasis on seeing assessment through the lens of a holistic humanistic education as it is central to foreign language education. Byram states that foreign language education in some educational traditions, e.g. in Northern European countries like Norway, align such learning with opportunities for experiences like joy and personal development, the chance to develop insight into one's own conditions of life and own identity, and contributing to creativity, experience, and personal development (Byram, 2020, p. 57). Davis & Knight (2021, p. 126) summarize that to "address student learning and experiences in study abroad programs more holistically, it will be important to move beyond studies that focus on pre/post survey data and explore qualitative or mixed methods approaches." They also cite other authors who emphasize learning as a holistic process (Passarelli & Kolb, 2012) and who value students' understanding of their experiences as important outcomes of study abroad, which may in turn lead to learning or developmental outcomes (Streitwieser & Light, 2018).

Our focus on qualitative data analysis also fills a gap in ICC literature by applying Byram's framework not just for curricular design but for evaluative outcome assessment, with particular attention to COVID-19-related impacts on ICC. It was especially interesting to note that the disruption caused by the pandemic impacted different aspects of students' intercultural learning in different ways at different times, and also extended their learning beyond the intercultural. Arguably, intercultural learning takes a lifetime and the impact of learning abroad might not become evident to students immediately after their sojourn but potentially years afterwards (Wong, 2015). The following student statement illustrates that the process of conceptualizing the experience abroad is a long-term one that may have just begun upon the student's return:

I think a global perspective is important for any person regardless of their profession. I think being put in a position of ignorance is humbling. I think that this program should be pushed stronger towards new engineers since it is an experience no one would ever look back on with regret but rather with fondness and great memories (S227_JIEP_SAIS).

The fact that the pandemic hit after our students had already intensified their cultural learning while being immersed in their new respective cultures may have allowed them to adapt to the disruption more rapidly and reflect upon it more immediately. Living through both systems of COVID-19 management protocols and philosophies allowed for the stark contrast they perceived in regulations implemented abroad and at home, which afforded them an immediate critical cultural awareness of different practices and their underlying value systems.

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Appendix 1. Abbreviations used as identifiers to student statements

Abbrev.	Stands for	Description
RSTL	IEP Scholar Travel Log	Prompts that students complete in English during the first four weeks upon their arrival in the host country that help them to observe, interpret and evaluate cultural differences. One per week.
Ess	Essay + #	Written assignments (in the target language) that students complete as part of the <i>Internship Course</i> in which they are asked to describe technical projects, reflect on work culture and how they have changed. A detailed description of each assignment can be found in Erickson et al 2020; Berka et al. 2021.
POS	Poster	Final written assignment (in English) in which they summarize and reflect on the impact their time studying and interning abroad has had on them.
SAIS	Study Abroad and Internship Survey	Survey in which students are asked to self-assess gains in technical, linguistic and cultural skills during the semester of study and interning abroad; to rate our management of logistical aspects. Completed at the end of their year abroad.
COVID	COVID-19 survey	Survey in which students answered questions about the impact of the pandemic on their sojourn, their cultural learning and their observations relating to their host and home country's management of the crisis. Completed a year after their recall home (Spring 2021). Not part of the usual series of assignments.
IEP programs	CIEP, FIEP, GIEP, IIEP, JIEP, SIEP	Chinese IEP, French IEP, German IEP, Italian IEP, Japanese IEP, Spanish IEP
Example	S227_JIEP_SAIS	Statement # 227_Japanese IEP Study Abroad & Internship Survey

Appendix 2. IEP Scholar Travel Log France 2019

Week 1 Prompt: Go to a grocery store and purchase something. Observe the setting. What is it like, and how do people behave in this setting? Act like an anthropologist in an exotic setting. Responding to the prompt that you have been assigned, please reflect on your experiences from today's task. Remember, this is a free writing task in English, designed to help you gain a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the culture you are currently in. Write a short paragraph for the entries marked "long answer text" and think as deeply as you can so that you go beyond the surface.

Week 2 Prompt: Go to a café or restaurant and order something. Observe the setting. What is it like, and how do people behave in this setting? Act like an anthropologist in an exotic setting. Responding to the prompt that you have been assigned, please reflect on your experiences from today's task. Remember, this is a free writing task in English, designed to help you gain a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the culture you are currently in. Write a short paragraph for the entries marked "long answer text" and think as deeply as you can so that you go beyond the surface.

Week 3 Prompt: How do people get around town? Observe how people get around town, what they do, and how they behave while getting around town. Act like an anthropologist in an exotic setting. Responding to the prompt that you have been assigned, please reflect on your experiences from today's task. Remember, this is a free writing task in English, designed to help you gain a deeper knowledge and appreciation of the culture you are currently in. Write a short paragraph for the entries marked "long answer text" and think as deeply as you can so that you go beyond the surface.

Week 4 Prompt: What are the rhythms of a typical work day in your city? Describe the rhythms in your city and identify differences between your city and the US. Act like an anthropologist in an exotic setting. Keep in mind the goal is to get you to notice what is around you so that you can better adapt your routines to fit the local routines. Write a short paragraph for the entries marked "long answer text" and think as deeply as you can so that you go beyond the surface.

Describe your observations while in this location:

In your description, focus on the layout of the location, the behavior of others you saw there, interactions you observed, etc. Be as objective as possible, reserving your analysis/evaluations for later questions.

For one of the behaviors/practices that you observed today, come up with at least three possible explanations for what you noticed.

What are your main takeaways from this observation?

What emotion(s) did you feel as you were in this situation/location? Do you have any judgments on what you noticed today? Provide as much detail as possible.

Having reflected on your overall experience from today, what would be important for you to be able to successfully participate in this setting in the future?

Appendix 3. FRN 315 and 316 Syllabus 2020 Modified on March 20, 2020

Description: This an experiential learning class. You will be asked to complete assignments in French that will foster your involvement with the local culture and deepen your skills in French. The assignments are due every three weeks.

Objectives: Increase your proficiency in French. Increase your cultural involvement. Gain insights on your experience abroad.

Grading: Assignments will be graded on a 100-point scale. Numerical grades will be converted to letter grades according to the chart below. Late submissions will be penalized 15 points for the first day late, 10 points for the second day late, and 5 points for every additional day late. After fifteen days, the assignment is worth zero points.

A	93-100%	A-	90-92	B+	87-89
B	83-86	B-	80-82	C+	77-79
C	73-76	C-	70-72	D+	67-69
D	60-66	F	0-59		

Program: Below you will find a list of 9 tasks that you need to complete for the required FRN 315 and FRN 316 classes, each worth 3 credits. All the tasks need to be completed in French. They are designed to improve your language proficiency and to advance your intercultural competencies.

1. IEP Scholar Travel Log entries.

You have already completed these! You now have some of the fieldwork skills of an anthropologist! Keep using these skills as you encounter new situations abroad.

2. Rapport: Discover your internship area.

Present tense, description, paragraph: IM/ICH

Written

Presentational (possible interpersonal through email to club)

What will the town, region, city, or neighborhood of your internship be like? Do some internet research to find out what it will be like and write a 400-word presentation of the area. Write it in the present tense. Include geography and climate. Write about popular activities in this area. Find out about clubs in the area. You can look on the town hall's website for information about "la vie associative" which will list the clubs and associations in the area. Pick out three that sound interesting to you and email the club. In your email, say who you are, how you found out about the club, why you are interested in it, and include at least one question about the club (e.g. how to join, the range of their activities, the cost). Include a screenshot of the email you sent in an appendix to your 400-word presentation. Find out about the public transportation system, market days, special events, and anything the area is famous for. Include anything else that is of interest to you about the area. Conclude with some ideas of how you think life will be like for you in this area. Submit to the Drop Box in Sakai.

Language goals: Write present-tense descriptions of a town, city, or area. Cultural goals: Investigate an area to understand how people live there and how life might be like for you there. ACTFL scale target range: Intermediate Mid-Intermediate High depending on level of detail and range of topics discussed.

Due Date: February 9th at 3 pm French time

3. Vidéo: Compare cultural differences.

Present tense, description, sentences or paragraphs: IM/IH

Oral

Presentational (with some Interpersonal in the forum discussion)

What are the differences you have noticed between French and American culture? Watch this video by the French Youtuber, Cyprien, in which he comments on his perception of the US: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LtMS5eOOeQQ>

Then create your own three to four minute video in which you speak about 90% of that time, inspired by his style, in which you comment on your perceptions of French culture. Narrate in the past tense at least one example of something you saw you saw or experienced. Post to the Sakai forum. Comment on the videos of two other students by summarizing what the video shows about what makes the French tick.

Language goals: Oral description and comparison of cultural differences. Cultural goals: Become aware that perceptions of culture are themselves culturally situated. ACTFL scale target range: Intermediate Mid-Advanced Mid depending on level of detail and range of topics discussed.

Due Date: March 1st at 3 pm French time

4. Audio/vidéo: Scavenger Hunt.

You can do Version 1 of this assignment if you have already completed the interactions. If not, please do Version 2.

VERSION 1

Present and past tense (in the reflection), transactions/questions, sentences: IM/IH

Oral

Interpersonal

Make audio and/or video recordings of yourself making local transactions. Ask permission beforehand to record the conversation! Buy bread or pastries from three different shopkeepers and record these transactions. Go to the local open-air market and buy three local products from three different merchants. Ask each merchant about the local specialties that they sell. Record these transactions, too. Ask three people at work about restaurants or cafés in the area that they like and also about clubs or associations that they belong to. Don't forget to record your questions and their answers. Go to one club or association (either one recommended by people at work or one you discovered in your earlier research on the area) and inquire about joining. If you join and participate, you will get ten bonus points for this assignment, but you have to provide audio or video evidence! After having done everything on this scavenger hunt list, make a video or audio

of between 2 and 3 minutes in which you assess how well you were able to handle these tasks linguistically, how well you handled them culturally, and how challenging you found this assignment overall. Upload the scavenger hunt recordings to the Drop Box on Sakai. Post the video or audio assessment of how well you were able to handle these tasks linguistically to the Drop Box on Sakai.

Language goals: Engage in everyday transactions. Cultural goals: Communicate with others in culturally appropriate ways. ACTFL scale target range: Intermediate Mid-Intermediate High.

VERSION 2

Make a video or audio of 3 minutes in which you describe your favorite shops in France. Describe them, talk about the purchases you made at them, and explain how you interacted with the shopkeepers. Post the video to the Drop Box on Sakai.

Due Date: March 22nd (or no later than April 5th) at 3 pm US time.

5. Rapport: Write a technical description.

Present, detailed description, professional topic, paragraph: AL/AM

Written

Presentational

Create a glossary of 35-50 technical words or expressions in French that relate to your internship. Then write a detailed 250-word description of a technical process or object that is part of your internship experience. Conclude with a brief paragraph reflecting on how being able to use the right technical language has helped you become part of the professional culture at work. Submit to the Drop Box in Sakai.

Language goals: Create a detailed, profession-specific description. Culture goals: Use the vocabulary related to your workplace in order to adopt the specific professional language. ACTFL scale target range: Intermediate Mid-Advanced Low.

Due Date: April 5th at 3 pm US time

6. Vidéo: Describe a cultural incident.

Past, narration, paragraph/extended discourse: AM

Oral

Presentation (Interpersonal through forum discussion)

For these purposes, a cultural incident is a moment when you did something that was not within the cultural norms and it created a moment of awkwardness, humor, unease, or conflict. Make a video in which you describe in detail what happened. Describe the context, narrate the incident step by step, describe how people reacted, and how you felt. Conclude by reflecting on what you learned from this incident. Post to the Sakai forum. Comment on the videos of two other students.

Language goals: Talk in the past about a specific cultural incident. Cultural goals: Describe host cultural behaviors and how they differ from your own culture's behavior. Gain awareness of cultural differences. ACTFL scale target range: Advanced Low-Advanced High.

Due Date: April 19th at 3 pm US time

7. Rapport: Describe how you have changed.

Past, narration, hypothesizing, paragraph/extended discourse: AM-S

Written

Presentational

Write a 500-word essay, describing the ways in which you have had to change during your time abroad. Write one paragraph, describing how your language skills have forced you to change the way you communicate. Include specific examples. Write another paragraph about how the local habits and customs have forced you to adopt new ones and to abandon, at least temporarily, others. Include specific experiences. Write a third paragraph about the ways you have had to change your outlook on the world and yourself because of these modifications. Add an introduction in which you summarize the main change or changes. Conclude with a paragraph in which you explain how you think these changes will affect you upon return to the US. Submit to the Drop Box in Sakai.

Language goals: Write an essay reflecting on the impact of the experience abroad.

Cultural goals: Show how you have adapted to the local culture. ACTFL scale target range:

Advanced Low-Superior, depending on detail and depth of reflection.

Due Date: May 3rd at 3 pm US time

8. IEP Poster Presentation.

On your way back to the United States, prepare your IEP poster. This is a great way to reflect on your entire experience. Be prepared to present your poster in the fall semester at URI to other students. Follow the template on Sakai. This will be written in English.

Due Date: May 13th at 3 pm US time (note the new date)

9. Take the IDI and the Study and Internship Abroad Survey. Shortly after your return you will be prompted to take the IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory) and to complete a survey about your year of study and internship abroad. This will be done in English.

Due Date: TBD

Appendix 4. COVID-19: Personal and Cultural Learning in Times of Crisis

We are writing a paper on the topic of disruptions and transformations due to COVID-19 on international engineering education. For this reason, we put together some questions that hopefully will help us to address how your COVID-19 recall and interruption of your time abroad affected your personal and intercultural learning. In responding to this voluntary survey, you agree that you are ok with us using this data for this purpose (we will anonymize your responses.) Thank you in advance for your help with the research project!

*** Required**

1. Email
2. Name (first and last) *
3. Which IEP program did you study abroad with? *
4. How did your COVID-19 experience abroad change your perspective on life in the other culture / at home? *
5. How did the culture you were living in at the time respond to the COVID-19 pandemic? How was that different from the U.S.? *
6. What did your host country's response to the pandemic reveal about their values? *
7. How did your employer respond to URI's recall? *
8. What did the recall due to the pandemic reveal about yourself? *
9. What was the most difficult / challenging aspect of coming back home early? How did you navigate it? *
10. What was the most impactful / effective initiative you took to overcome the COVID pandemic? *
11. How did you feel when you arrived in the US? Were there any aspects of the host country that you missed? *
12. What impact did the early return have on your learning abroad?