Culture Shock in Students from International Academic Mobility

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Facultad de Bellas Artes y Humanidades
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Introduction

Humanity has innately flourished a spirit of inquiry for the unknown from the primeval ages to the present. In its pursuit of novelty, human beings have created models of society, have constituted social organizations, and have shaped their identities based on shared beliefs and behaviors that are determined by the cultures in which they exist. Thereby, in the hunt for the undisclosed, people have been actively exploring the wonders that the globe hides. Yet humans have found the necessity of educating themselves during their discovery voyages. Thus, one becomes a learner of life as well as a formal student that seeks to acquire the pivotal knowledge and skills to unwind in civilized communities.

Within the field of education, people have felt the need of expanding their professional profiles by crossing national and international boundaries to apprehend new skills and access better jobs in the future. As a result of this, globalization has transformed the panorama for academic mobility, demanding the acquisition of intercultural communication competencies (ICC) to facilitate academic and cultural interchange. Given that education has rapidly achieved the necessity of attaining diverse skills to master the imaginaries proposed by technology and globalization.

Consequently, when pupils start interacting with foreign systems, they are likely to experience culture shock; hence, this investigation attempts to identify to what extent international students went through this psychological and emotional phenomenon during their stays in the new cultural environment. Besides, exploring how the transnational exchange impacted their lives in the short term and broadened their standpoints. Bearing this in mind, this research stated three specific objectives that are based on the descriptive and interpretative nature
of qualitative methods, aiming to demonstrate the importance of considering students’ perceptions concerning living and studying abroad.

This project will be displayed through seven chapters: The first chapter exposes the neediness to carry out this inquiry. Followed by the issue to be studied, the theoretical foundations were established to enlighten the reader with the theory that shaped this research. Then, the methodological decisions that were taken into account and consequently implemented were exposed to support the process to be pursued while choosing the instruments for gathering the required information, selecting the participants, analyzing the data, and declaring the researchers' role. Chapter number four divulges the findings and its respective discussion. The last chapters, register the general conclusions, limitations, and implications for further research. Furthermore, the references are presented to demonstrate the theory involved in the development of this inquiry, as well as the data collection methods and research artifacts that are in the appendices segment.

This query was planned to serve as a model for future researchers interested in the same matters that were investigated here, and any other person who would like to deepen its knowledge about culture shock in students from inbound and outbound academic mobility, its footprint in the short term, and the internationalization of higher education in Colombia. In addition to the advancement of intercultural communication competencies to improve cross-cultural encounters.

Finally, the whole research was framed under the principles determined by globalization and interculturality. Today’s world is demarcated by its effects and the communicative needs among cultures have shifted. This growing link between culture, language, and socialization have transformed human relationships.
Abstract

This study describes the experience of international students while studying overseas, and how interacting with a new culture can cause shock at different levels. For doing so, this research was conducted under qualitative methods and implemented at a public university in Pereira, Colombia. The participants were pupils from inbound and outbound academic mobility that participated in exchange programs offered by the UTP. Every student represented a single case; therefore, this project was a descriptive multicase study. Bearing this in mind, the information was gathered through documents, semi-structured interviews, and questionnaires. To analyze the collected information, the researchers followed a process of contrast and comparison to develop a grounded theory and described the phenomenon under study. Furthermore, based on the findings, it was evidenced that all of the participants went through the four stages of culture shock established by Oberg (1960), and that engaging in these events influenced their lives in the short term; likewise, taking into account the outcomes of this inquiry, the researchers made some suggestions to the ORI, so they can help future international students in their adaptation process. According to Furnham (2010) to diminish the effects of culture shock, it is pivotal that pupils develop Intercultural Communication Competencies (ICC), along with enough accompaniment and orientation during the adjustment to the new cultural and academic systems.

Keywords: international students, inbound and outbound mobility, culture shock, Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC), short-term impact, adjustment.
Resumen
Este estudio describe la experiencia de estudiantes internacionales mientras estudian en el exterior, y como la interacción con una nueva cultura puede causar un choque en diferentes niveles. Por esta razón, esta investigación se condujo bajo métodos cualitativos y fue implementada en una universidad pública de Pereira, Colombia. Cada estudiante representaba un caso individual, por lo tanto, este fue un estudio descriptivo de múltiples casos. Los participantes fueron estudiantes de movilidad académica entrante y saliente que participaron en programas de intercambio ofrecidos por la UTP. Para analizar la información recolectada, los investigadores siguieron un proceso de contraste y comparación para desarrollar una teoría fundamentada y describir el fenómeno objeto de estudio. Considerando esto, los datos se recogieron mediante documentos, entrevistas semi-estructuradas y cuestionarios. Además, basadas en los resultados, se evidenció que todos los participantes vivieron las cuatro etapas de choque cultural establecidas por Oberg (1960), y que la participación en estos eventos impacto sus vidas a corto plazo, asimismo, teniendo en cuenta los hallazgos de este proyecto, las investigadoras hicieron algunas sugerencias a la ORI, para que ellos puedan ayudar futuros estudiantes internacionales en su proceso de adaptación; ya que, según Furnham (2010) para reducir los efectos del choque cultural es primordial que los estudiantes desarrollen Competencias Comunicativas Interculturales (CCI) y tengan suficiente acompañamiento en el período de ajuste a los nuevos sistemas culturales y académicos.

**Palabras Clave:** estudiantes internacionales, movilidad entrante y saliente, choque cultural, Competencia Comunicativa Intercultural (CCI), impacto a corto plazo, ajuste.
Acknowledgments

“Yo le pregunté a un sabio qué tenía para mí, y el sabio me ha respondido, que dejase los tiempos venir”

To my ‘Sereno Castellano-Manchego’, someone who was wise, brilliant, lovely, hard-worker, and enthusiastic; in your eagerness to help shaping my being, you always reminded me the importance of serenity and inner peace, you taught me the significance of belonging and cultural heritage, but most importantly I reaffirmed with you that I must love myself over all things, because if do not love myself anyone will ever love me. To my beloved grandpa, best friend, partner in crime, and life teacher, I will always be thankful to you for loving me unconditionally and supporting my dreams. Although your eyes are closed, from wherever you are, remember that I will be your eyes, and through my eyes I will keep discovering the wonders of life, to talk about them once we are reunited again, I love you more than words would ever express yayo.

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Statement of the Problem

Due to the rapid effects of globalization, education has become an important income for many countries, and because of this, numerous institutions have advanced internationalization processes at the Higher Education (HE) level. This action takes place as a result of the international academic mobility programs that have been promoted during the last decades. Exchange courses offer in their marketing campaigns the opportunity to gain intercultural sensibility, the acquisition of knowledge, better jobs, and higher wages once its participants return to their nations. Nevertheless, students have turned into an object of inquiry for the global market as means of increasing their economic resources and adding more prestige to their organizations. Many of these organisms have been centering their attention on the mart demands, ignoring the influence of culture shock in the stages of adjustment and adaptation that sojourns go through.

Foreign students are confronted with feelings of anxiety and stress that come from being deprived of their kin signs and symbols of social intercourse while socializing in unfamiliar cultural scenarios; these sentiments that arrived from living in a different environment are attributed to culture shock (Oberg, 1960; Furnham & Bochner 1986). That being so, the undergraduates who participate in academic mobility programs can experience this phenomenon once they start facing the discrepancies in the education system, language, and ways of life of the host country. Although some universities offer counseling programs for these students, in some cases the staff in charge is not acquainted with the challenges they will have to deal with; since they lack the required intercultural sensibility, knowledge, and skills to properly accompany pupils (Furnham, 2010).
Ensuring people’s well-being and human rights is one of the most important goals any government entity has. For that reason, they create multiple laws, decrees, and articles to guarantee the basic rights established by the Magna Carta, and reinforced by the Universal Declaration of Humans Rights (UDHR). They constituted hand in hand with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), that access to cultural heritage and education must be obtainable for any person. Then, article 27 declares that everyone can freely enroll in the cultural life of the community they belong to, delight in the artistic components of their society, and take advantage of any scientific advancement, as well as enjoy its benefits (UNESCO, 1948). The Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions, in its first article, furthers respect for diversity and encourages the dialogue between cultures to foster interculturality (UNESCO, 2005).

At the core of personal development, UNESCO (1948) places article 26, which emphasizes the empowering effect of education in societies, pointing out that primary schooling should be mandatory and accessible for all. In light of this, HE is also considered by this institution as a process that should stimulate creative, critical, and imaginative thinking. Thus, with the inclusion of HE in the global market, internationalization enters the equation as one of the most determinant factors in the frameworks shaped by globalization. Within the efforts that have been advanced in universities for advertising national and transnational academic mobility, ERASMUS+ (European Region Action Scheme for the Mobility of University Students) is on top. The program supports the Youth to apprehend knowledge and skills to participate in democratic life, creating a sense of solidarity throughout different learning experiences.

The European Commission (EC) has established many policies to facilitate mobility in the HE sphere with the Erasmus programs. They have built a partnership among the European
Union (EU) in collaboration with 111,000 organizations, and around 25,000 projects that constitute the principles for learning and teaching at the HE tier (Erasmus+, 2019). This, with the intention of strengthening the connection between education and research, promoting critical thinking skills at all levels of instruction, improving employability, increasing social inclusion, fostering innovation, and supporting environmental sustainability (Erasmus+, 2019). In 2019, approximately 940,000 people participated in the exchange activities offered by European institutions (Erasmus+, 2019). Furthermore, the EDINA (Education of International Newly Arrived Migrant Pupils) which was co-founded by ERASMUS+ and the EU, has offered a guide to provide teachers and professors with tools to properly approach basic concepts, to problematize them in a way that can be understood, and to reflect them based on identity, interculturality, and interaction.

Student mobility has been continually increasing during the last 20 years. In 2019, 6.1 million tertiary students crossed a border to study (OECD, 2021). The OECD (2021) declares that 67% of the students who access exchange programs are from developing nations, 38% of them are from upper-middle-income countries while only 3% are from low-income countries. At the top of destinations for international students, the United States heads the list with 18%, Australia and the United Kingdom with 8% each, and Germany with 6% (OECD, 2020, 2021). On account of this, Bilecen and Van Mol (2017) emphasize that inequalities are produced and reproduced in the HE field; in view of the fact that the major efforts to encourage these trials are directed toward countries in the Global North. Furthermore, the OECD (2021, 2021) states that students who are not part of the EU have to pay higher tuition and registration fees than local students; thus, around 40% of the students in ERASMUS+ have European citizenship.
Asian students are the largest group enrolled in exchange programs, representing 57% of all mobile students in the OECD countries (OECD, 2020). In contrast, Latin America and the Caribbean depict less than 1% of the total number of students enrolled in international academic mobility (OECD, 2020). Accordingly, Fernández et al (2016) assert that despite a high percentage of Latin American students who would like to access these exchange schemes, lack the economic resources and information to make it. In 2021 the OECD exposes that Latin America and the Caribbean are net importers of students; since there are more foreign pupils registering in their institutions than those leaving to study abroad. Therefore, at least 2% of the students enrolled in academic programs in Colombia, Mexico, Costa Rica, Brazil, Argentina, and Chile are international or foreign.

UNESCO created the International Institute for Higher Education in Latin America and the Caribbean (IESALC) to foster the development of HE systems in its member states. They promote internationalization throughout alliances in Ibero-American countries to facilitate mobility. The OECD (2020,2021) indicates that 40% of mobile students in Portugal and Spain are from Latin America, due to language, historical ties, and political frameworks. Moreover, 55% of Latin American students choose neighboring countries based on proximity, geographical distance, language, and bilateral relationships (OECD, 2020). Fernández et al. (2016) report that students also take into account aspects such as transportation, security, and political stability, but they do not consider cultural differences that can cause culture shock while adjusting to the new environment. Likewise, Terzuolo (2018) explains that the development of intercultural competencies when studying abroad is shaped by students’ personal history and demographic factors. In this same line, the OECD (2020) claims that mobility journeys are determined by historical patterns and geographical proximity.
Chile has made great advances in the internationalization of HE with its proposal of education as a Teaching Service in which they offer a strong institutional framework, availability of technology and infrastructure, qualified staff, and academic recognition (ProChile, 2012). In spite of the fact that they have been promoting an international dimension of formal instruction with intercultural and global purposes (Caiceo, 2010); their policies have entirely focused on selling education as a product to place the Chilean education system in the global market, ignoring the psychological and emotional processes that students go through when entering into a new culture (Geldres et al., 2013). For instance, in Mexico, Manzanilla and Navarrete (2018) declare that technology has reinforced a sense of international cooperation between institutions, professors, and students. However, the Mexican government has centered its attention on raising the prestige of its institutions to receive international funding, instead of upgrading its policies to favor international students in their adaptation stage (Manzanilla & Navarrete, 2018).

Additionally, the Pacific Alliance with its member countries Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru have been trying to contribute to academic exchanges by offering scholarships with a strategy of mobility from South to South and have based their policies on academic relations to contribute to the formation of competent human talent (Martin et al. 2016). Despite that, they have assumed a curriculum based on objectives rather than competencies; hence, the abilities to learn to do, to be, to undertake, and to coexist have been forgotten. This has diminished the opportunity to get better qualifications; insomuch as they have focused on technical instruction in specific fields to enhance productivity once students return to their home countries. Although the Pacific Alliance grants scholarships to promote mobility among its member states, they have many limitations for those who want to access university education and programs in arts and humanities (Martin et al. 2016).
The internationalization of HE in Colombia is shaped by article 38 of Law 30 of 1992, in which the Colombian Institute for the Development of Higher Education (ICFES) stimulates cooperation between institutions of tertiary education and international entities. In light of this, the National Accreditation Council (CNA) in 2013, established that in order to obtain academic high-quality recognition, both public and private institutions must have national and international visibility. Therefore, the National Ministry of Education (MEN) in collaboration with Colombia Challenge your Knowledge (CCYK) released a methodological guide in 2015 for the internationalization of HE in the country, which aims to strengthen five strategic areas — Internationalization Management, Academic Mobility, Research Internationalization, International Cooperation, and Internationalization of the Curriculum.— By means of providing tertiary education organisms with strategies to facilitate academic mobility, adapt the curricula to global needs, and mechanisms to gain accreditation.

Other entities have supported the internationalization process together with the MEN such as the Colombian Institute for Educational Loans and Technical Studies Abroad (ICETEX), which grants educational credit, and the Colombian Institute for the Development of Science and Technology (COLCIENCIAS), which encourages students to take action into science, technology, and innovation. Furthermore, the Association of Colombian Universities (ASCUN), and the Colombian Network for the Internationalization of Higher Education (RCI) have promoted international alliances to expand academic mobility in the country.

This research will take place at the Technological University of Pereira (UTP), which is a founder member and active participant of CCYK. This partnership has the objective of pushing the internationalization of HE in the country by offering Colombia as an attractive destination for international academic mobility. The university aims to foster the development of competent
intercultural communicators and reach visibility as a highly accredited institution. To achieve this goal, they have concentrated on the creation of programs that answer to the new social, economical, political, cultural, and environmental realities of the 21st Century. Besides, to take maximum advantage of the internationalization trend, they have been encouraging agreements of cooperation with other institutions, as well as bilateral mobility.

In this vein, the UTP hand in hand with the International Relations Office (ORI) have created certain policies to facilitate academic exchanges. In 2020, through agreements 31 and 32 of July 1st, they defined the guarantees and principles for international mobility, indicating all the requirements to participate in these programs. Nowadays, the UTP has 134 alliances with 23 countries and 26 with national universities. From 2015 to 2020, 31% of the students who decided to study abroad picked Mexico; additionally, 48% of the students who selected the UTP came from the same country. Even though the OECD (2020, 2021) notes that Colombia is a net importer of international students, according to the statistics presented by the ORI, the UTP has received 322 pupils in the last 5 years, and 455 have decided to study overseas.

The goal for achieving the internationalization of HE is influenced by the main objective of gaining international visibility and increasing the economic resources of the institutions that promote these trials. Hence, bearing in mind the aforementioned, some of the real needs of students still need to be taken into account by the UTP’s policymakers; inasmuch as they do not fully dimension yet how impacting can be to enter into a new cultural environment. As Xia (2009) mentions, the culture shock that results from the interaction with the host culture during intercultural encounters can negatively affect the psychological and emotional states of students. Therefore, this discomfort can lead to high degrees of stress and anxiety (Eschbach et al., 2001; Xia, 2009) that can drive to academic difficulties and adaptation problems (Zhou, Jindal-Snape,
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Topping & Todman, 2008). Furthermore, the staff of the ORI should prepare themselves better in terms of intercultural knowledge and skills to assist international students properly. The relations office complains about the low budget and shortage of resources; however, to somehow support mobile pupils they founded Amigo UTP in 2014.

The purpose of this investigation is to identify which stages of culture shock are experienced by students of inbound and outbound academic mobility. As has been mentioned before, language differences, discrepancies in the education system, the patterns of behavior, and values of the host country can cause disturbance to the sojourn. Hence, this can footprint pupils’ lives in the short and long term since they have to learn how to adjust themselves to the new cultural environment in order to successfully overcome culture shock. This project will only focus on acknowledging the short-term impact that studying abroad had on participants’ lives.

This research contributed to the ORI, providing some suggestions based on the obtained results, so they can have a basis to prepare future students of outbound academic mobility to reach the adjustment stage easier and faster. Also, this will facilitate the accompaniment process of students from inbound mobility since it will allow the ORI’s personnel to approach the problems of international students from an intercultural perspective. Furnham (2010) highlights that effective counseling programs can dramatically reduce the effects of culture shock, diminishing the feelings of stress and anxiety during the adjustment stage. Accordingly, it is fundamental that students and the university’s staff develop intercultural communication competencies to enhance the dialogue among cultures.
Research Questions

- To what extent does culture shock influence the experience lived by students of international academic mobility?

- What stages of culture shock were more impactful for students while studying overseas?
Objectives

General Objective:

- To identify how culture shock influences the experience lived by students of international academic mobility.

Specific Objectives:

- To describe which stages of culture shock were experienced by some students of inbound and outbound academic mobility.

- To explore how the experience of studying abroad impacted students’ lives in the short term.

- To present the results of this investigation to the ORI-UTP and make some suggestions for them to support future international students dealing with culture shock.
Theoretical Framework

Academic exchanges have been highly benefitted by the effects of globalization. These transfers have been especially supported by the expansion of technology, and the opportunity for interacting with diverse cultures that the internet has brought. Therefore, with the growth of students’ mobility, the internationalization of HE has become a goal for all tertiary education institutions. Applying this framework to its curricula and policies, allow these organizations to reach accreditation as well as national and international visibility. However, during intercultural encounters pupils can experience different levels of culture shock that can affect their study-abroad experience. Hence, to theoretically demonstrate the importance of conducting this investigation, this chapter exposes the academic foundations that have been exploited to support its significance.

The theoretical framework is divided into two parts. Firstly, the literature review includes five studies to help establish familiarity and understanding of the current issue, offering analysis and revision of some of the research that has been conducted at the international and national levels in regard to culture shock resulting from students’ mobility. Besides, these researches have demonstrated the importance of developing ICC to improve pupils’ encounters, and how these intercultural interactions have positively impacted their lives in the short term. Secondly, the conceptual framework is composed of eight constructs that widely display some of the definitions that are necessary to comprehend its nature, starting with the definition of culture and ICC which are the core concepts, and ending with the notion of international academic mobility.
Literature Review

The dominant and powerful effects of globalization have been contributing to people’s mobility and, as a result, the need to develop intercultural competencies to facilitate communication and interaction has increased. The youth has been particularly attached to the desire for exploration and apprehension of knowledge. According to the OECD (2021), around 6.1 million students decide to study abroad every year; therefore, exchange programs have been becoming increasingly popular, to the point that many institutions are offering global-oriented courses to promote the acquisition of intercultural skills due to its advantageous implications. However, international academic mobility comes along with multiple challenges that sojourners have to face when they get to interact with different cultures.

This research aimed to display some of the challenges sojourners find when merging with other cultures in their experiences studying abroad. For the aforementioned, five investigations were selected. Firstly, Aksoy, Uzunoğlu, and Akyar (2017) investigated students’ perceptions while studying abroad from the Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC) perspective. Secondly, Korkut, Dolmaci, and Karaka (2018) focused on studying communication breakdowns in cross-cultural settings during Erasmus exchange programs. Thirdly, the study by Sherry, Thomas, and Chui (2010) addressed the needs of international students when studying overseas, and suggested strategies for universities to assist pupils financially. Fourthly, Harrell, Sterner, and Lonie (2017) explored how studying abroad impacted students’ lives in the short and long term, and the motives they had for studying elsewhere. Finally, Otero, Giraldo, and Sánchez (2018) intended to analyze the perception Latinamerican students had of international academic mobility processes and the internationalization of universities in Latin America.
The capability of performing appropriately and effectively in different cultural settings is defined as ICC (Rogers & Steinfatt, 1999; Spitzberg, 2000; Deardorff, 2006; Fantini, 2009). Thus, Spitzberg (2000) suggested that to accomplish any communicative goal in intercultural contexts, individuals are expected to consider the cultural values and norms of the target culture to demonstrate proper behavior. The research conducted at the Izmir University of Economics by Aksoy, Ozunoğlu, and Akyar (2017), attempted to provide understanding of students’ motives to select the host country and city, prior knowledge and assumptions, shifts in the motivational and cognitive aspects of ICC, and the challenging factors of studying abroad (Aksoy, Ozunoğlu & Akyar, 2017). The study adopted qualitative methods, including focus groups and semi-structured interviews; besides, the data collection was divided into two phases, in the first phase the participants were 10 female and 10 males, and in the second phase there were only 10 participants (5 each). The sojourners took part in the in-depth interviews by answering questions associated with their perceptions before and after the Erasmus program.

In the first phase, the researchers found that the main reason students had for participating in Erasmus programs was the eagerness to explore different cultures from theirs. The initial sources of information they had from the host country included the media and the recommendations of others; the findings also exhibited that these information sources led to developing stereotypical images of the target culture, and became apparent when describing their cultural expectations (Aksoy, Ozunoğlu & Akyar, 2017). The second phase, encompassed the ICC knowledge and comprehension that are required to bloom awareness of parallel and characteristic aspects of cultures (Perry & Southwell, 2011). The researchers noted that differences in daily life practices, language barriers, and cultural distance, contributed to the

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1 Study Abroad Process from Intercultural Communication Perspective: An Exploratory Study on Erasmus Experience in Turkey
CULTURE SHOCK IN STUDENTS FROM INTERNATIONAL ACADEMIC MOBILITY

development of adaptability skills, and to gain ethnorelative perspective (Aksoy, Ozunuğlu & Akyar, 2017).

Miscommunication has been subject to many studies, Chick (1989) identified five drawbacks that impede effective intercultural communication, which are language barriers, different frames of reference, listening behaviors, differences in regulating turn-taking, and disparity in politeness behavior. Accordingly, intercultural misunderstandings can owe to discrepant perceptions of roles in a situation, patterns of time use, places in which the action takes place, roles that the audience can get in a situation, and scripts (Quin, 2014). Besides, verbal and non-verbal differences are likely to hamper communication (Novinger, 2001). The investigation carried out by Korkut, Dolmaci, and Karaka (2018), aimed to find out what kind of communication problems -if any- occur from cultural divergence in students’ interactions. The research used phenomenological design to collect the data through interviews; the participants were 39 Turkish students and 30 Erasmus students, who answered five open-ended questions to provide accounts of lived misunderstandings during their Erasmus experience; furthermore, an interpretative position was taken by the researchers to analyze the data.

As a result of the data analysis, the researchers found that the differences in cultural behavior which caused problems in communication were proxemics, oculotics, body language misunderstandings, and clothing preferences. The findings also revealed that differences in pragmatics may generate issues in delivery; the main area of miscommunication here was refusals since all students struggled with inviting and offering procedures (Korkut, Dolmaci & Karaka, 2018). Educative expectations played an important role in the Erasmus experience, students found multiple language barriers, and felt disappointed due to the low English

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2 A Study in Communication Breakdowns: Sources of Misunderstandings in a Cross-Cultural Setting
proficiency professors had; moreover, the differences in educational systems also affected the adaptation process. The data furthered some implications for teaching. “As intercultural knowledge is gained through experiences, it is likely to develop in a more implicit manner, in which learners are required to draw upon their comprehension and production skills” (Crowther & DeCosta, 2017, p.41). Walters et al. (2009) mentioned that “appreciation of diversity and difference can carry over to the teachers’ classrooms when these individuals become teachers themselves” (p.154).

Studying abroad offers the exploration of diverse cultures, learning new ways of thinking and behaving, as well as improving cross-cultural knowledge and skills (Andrade 2006; McClure 2007). However, the difficulties that may be appearing during the process can lead to feelings of disappointment, frustration, and unfulfillment. The study developed at the University of Toledo by Sherry, Thomas, and Chui (2010)³, aimed to highlight the problems students faced while studying overseas, in addition to certain strategies to reduce the adversities when arriving in a new country. The researchers conducted the study under qualitative methods, using online surveys; the participants were 85 males and 36 females from 30 different nationalities, who answered questions related to their experiences in terms of culture shock, language issues, inclusion in the local community, social support, financial difficulties, and the university's position towards their situation (Sherry et.al., 2010). At the end of the study, the researchers concluded that it was fundamental for universities to enhance cross-cultural understanding, increase economic assistance with tuition costs and scholarships, provide more opportunities for international students to become members of the target culture, and make them active participants in the campus (Sherry et.al, 2010).

³ International Students: A Vulnerable Student Population
Societies are progressively becoming more diverse and globalized, hence in order to succeed, students need to receive a multicultural education, which was defined by Forgues (2005) as a controlled process that is modeled to “foster understanding, acceptance and constructive relations among people of many different cultures. Ideally, multicultural education encourages people to see different cultures as a source of learning and to respect diversity in the local, national and international environment (p. 14).” The investigation directed by Harell, Sterner, Alter, and Lonie (2017) at The Pennsylvania State University, focused on examining how studying abroad changes students’ perceptions in the short and long term. The study was operated under the narrative inquiry methodology; the participants were 3 females and 2 males, who engaged in interviews based on storytelling. Nonetheless, due to its subjective nature, the scripts were checked by the participants to avoid misinterpretations of stories and perceptions. The questions attempted to acknowledge the motives for traveling and selecting the host country, the purpose for studying abroad, and how culture shock impacted their lives (Harell et al., 2017).

Overall, the researchers concluded that the main reasons for choosing the host country were willingness to interact with the culture firsthand, live authentic and new experiences, and the desire for immersion (Harrell et al., 2017). The factors that permeated the decision of studying overseas included improvement of language skills, changing sceneries, engagement and pursuit of better opportunities, academic goals, and exposure to diverse cultures (Harell et al., 2017, p. 61). The short-term impact consisted of habitual changes, new interests, and new ways of thinking about their home country, while the long-term impact comprised personality and attitude changes, personal growth, a new mindset, and independence (Harell et al., 2017).

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4 Students Perception of the Impact of their Diverse Study Abroad Experiences
Few researchers have documented the experiences Latin American students have had abroad (Frésan, 200), along with it, the publications related to the internationalization of universities are presented by means of indicators rather than qualitative perspectives (Didou, 2014); therefore, the study executed by Otero, Giraldo, and Sánchez (2018)\(^5\) intended to illustrate students' perception while interacting with another culture, the sense of autonomy, the capacity of adaptation, and teamwork abilities. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews; the participants were 10 females and 6 males, who answered questions related to their experience living in a foreign country, impressions after studying at the University of Los Llanos, Veracruzana University, University of Guadalajara, Chapingo University, and Autonomous University of Mexico, the financial support they received from the institutions they belonged to, as well as the level of preparation and infrastructure quality of these collages (Otero, Giraldo & Sánchez, 2018).

On the whole, researchers found that academic international mobility helped students improve their coexistence abilities, be more autonomous and collectivistic, increase their self-esteem, help them administer better their financial resources, and that novelty constitutes a positive assessment of the experience (Otero, Giraldo & Sánchez, 2018). Financial support brought by institutions will always depend on the country, and the number of resources available to each International Relations Office; besides, they emphasized that mobility processes should be capitalized as opportunities for positioning universities internationally (Otero, Giraldo & Sánchez. 2018, p. 192-193).

The studies aforementioned are relevant for this research due to the fact that they expose the cultural differences among exchange and national students based on their experiences and

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\(^5\) The International Academic Mobility: students experiences from Villavicencio, Colombia and Coatzacoalcos, Mexico.
perceptions, as will be done in the current investigation, but centering the attention on the stages of culture shock lived by students and the short-term impact of studying abroad. On one hand, the study done by Aksoy, Uzunoğlu, and Akyar (2017), stressed the importance of developing ICC, in order to be an effective communicator and facilitate interaction with other cultures while studying overseas, which is one of the principal foundations to adapt to a new culture. On the other hand, Korkut, Dolmaci, and Karaca (2018) focused on analyzing how interculturality can diminish communication breakdowns that might appear during the cultural exchange; the two previous investigations took place in Turkey, where the participants faced culture shock to different degrees, then, this contributed to the present research insomuch as it discloses the effects of ICC in the students experience while studying abroad.

The results obtained by Sherry, Thomas, and Chui (2010), are beneficial for the development of this inquiry since it emphasizes the relevance of the university’s guidance before and during the academic exchange, in order to train students for their experience overseas and support them financially if needed. The role of the experience builds the base of this study, thus, the query completed by Harrell et al. (2017) considered how the academic and cultural exchange impacted students’ lives in the short and long term, going from the willingness to explore to the acquisition of a new mindset. The conclusions obtained by Otero, Giraldo, and Sánchez (2018), landed this research to the Latinamerican and Colombian context in terms of internationalization and academic mobility; in view of the fact that this investigation aimed to make some suggestions based on the results to the ORI to improve the students experience when studying abroad. Overall, all the studies directed their surveys from a qualitative perspective, which is the data collection method this project exploited, insomuch as experiences cannot be measured as regards of numbers, but in a more humanistic focus.
Conceptual Framework

Communication is imperative for all human relations, and its patterns are framed by means of cultural values that have an unbelievable influence on human behavior; then culture appears to be intrinsically related to the explanation of its nature. People shape their reality based on values, beliefs, historical background, and social organizations that are shared by the members of the groups they belong to. Besides, culture is manifested in the identity one possesses, the language one speaks, the ethnicity one embodies, the norms one follows, and the social practices in which one participates. Nowadays, communication is highly permeated by the impact of globalization; hence, the current research exposed through the perspective of globalization, cultural matters that occur when intercultural interaction takes place in processes of international academic mobility.

On account of the rapid growth of globalization, people's mobility has been drastically increasing during the last decades. Therefore, diverse cultures are now in touch with each other, and throughout this chapter, some of the consequences and implications of those cross-cultural encounters were explored. Aiming to do so the concepts of culture, intercultural competence, Intercultural Communication Competence (ICC), culture shock, acculturation, enculturation, ethnocentrism, and international academic mobility were respectively described.

When sojourners cross any border, they are likely to experience culture shock, which was defined by Oberg (1960) as anxiety and stress that emerges from socializing in unfamiliar cultural scenarios. However, its impact can be diminished with the development of ICC which has been broadly explained by several authors such as Spitzberg (2009), Kim (1991), Samovar, Porter, and McDaniel (2009) among others. Moreover, scholars such as Ting-Toomey (1999),
Furnham (2010), Weinreich (1980-2009), and Berry (1987-2008) along with others, are part of the construction of all of the concepts aforementioned.

**What is Culture from a Global Perspective?**

Culture is omnipresent, possesses a complex essence, and is widely spread throughout all peoples in the world. Due to its complexity, it has been defined in multiple ways by different disciplines; nonetheless, there is no definitive answer or interpretation of what could be its absolute meaning. In this research, various authors were cited in an attempt to expose some of the definitions that fit better the present study. Moreover, this concept was developed from a communicative perspective because “culture is communication and communication is culture” (Hall, 1959, p.186). Therefore, when talking about these approaches, it is difficult to determine which is the soil and which is the seed.

Within the communicative context, Triandis (1994) states that “culture is a set of human-made elements [...] that are shared among those who can communicate with each other because they had a common language, and they lived in the same time and place” (p.23). To fully understand this idea, it is necessary to cite Kohls (1996, p.23) who claims that “culture is an integrated system of learned behavior patterns that are characteristic of the members of any given society.” Culture comprises the way of living any community possesses, including thoughts, behaviors, actions, worldviews, attitudes, perceptions, and feelings, these qualities are transmitted, learned, and shared from generation to generation (Kohls, 1996).

At the core of the basic functions of culture, Sowell (2009) claims that it exists to help fulfill the practical requirements of human life, to avoid that new generations start all over again from the ground up. Since it enables people to comprehend those grounded components of the groups they belong to, make sense of their surroundings, and set limits on their behavior. Culture
is composed of endless elements such as food, clothes, shelter, work, etc.; however, Samovar et al. (2009) considered history, religion, values, social organizations, and language as the principal elements of culture. Insomuch as they will allow others to grasp the conception that all cultures share a common set of components. Then the way in which these matters are performed often differentiates one culture from another.

Many aspects of culture are hidden under the surface and are not easily observable, for that reason the scholar Ting-Toomey (1999) compares culture to an iceberg. She places language, arts, traditions, religion, food, dress, institutions, and manners at the top layers. While beliefs, ideals, roles, norms, concepts, tastes, values, myths, assumptions, desires, and attitudes are at the deepest levels. Likewise, Peterson (2004) divides culture into two: big C culture and little c culture. The first one is classified as ‘classic or grand themes’ which is often labeled as objective or highbrow culture; in this category, the top layers of the iceberg are included (Peterson, 2004). The second one is allocated as ‘minor or common things’ which is normally designated as subjective culture; here little invisible culture comprises opinions, viewpoints, preferences, trivial knowledge, and facts; whereas little visible culture consists of nonverbal communication, clothing style, and hobbies (Peterson, 2004).

All human cultures share basic characteristics that are mainly transmitted thoughtlessly by observation and imitation. From the perspective of Samovar et al. (2009) culture is learned formally through structured institutions, and informally by interacting, observing, and imitating; this can be unconsciously done by using proverbs, art, folktales, legends, myths, and mass media. Havilland (2005) explains that the key elements of culture are shared by all of its members; therefore, it has a common denominator that makes the actions people display unambiguous to the other members of their societies. Besides, it is transmitted from generation to generation;
Charon (1999) defines this process as ‘social inheritance’ due to the fact that it consists of ideas that may have been matured in past generations.

The concept of culture based on symbols was developed by Haviland et al. (2008), pointing out that language determines the most symbolic facet of culture; considering the fact that it allows depicting objects and thoughts using words. Language enables communication and facilitates interaction; hence, Kluckhohn (1944, p.26) emphasizes that “human culture without language is unthinkable.” Although culture gives stability and toughness, it is never static and will always be dynamic due to its reinventive nature. The intensity of change has increased with globalization, the influence of mass media, immigration, population growth, and the fact that cultures are in contact with each other like never before (Samovar et al., 2009). All in all, culture is an integrated system; according to Ferraro (2008), all its components are somehow interconnected and should be thought of as integrated wholes, insomuch as, when cultures are seen as integrated systems, it will be easier to see how culture traits fit into the whole system.

Communication is very powerful; through it, individuals share their values, feelings, beliefs, ideas, and most importantly interact with others. People learn and share culture via communication, and parallel communication is a reflection of one's culture (Samovar et al., 2009). The link between these two approaches can be seen in how cultures vary in their ways of perceiving reality and ways of behaving (Peoples & Bailey, 2009). Nowadays, intercultural exchanges are taking place more than ever before, not only for people’s mobility but also for the undeniable influence of internet applications in these transfers. Thus, learning how to convey messages properly with other cultures is imperative in order to develop intercultural communication skills. Once individuals acquire these skills, they will become effective communicators and will enhance the quality of their intercultural encounters.
What is Intercultural Competence?

Being interculturally competent has become a goal for many people all around the globe. According to Bryam (1997), it is necessary to acquire certain knowledge about different cultures, its members, and oneself, as well as gain skills to interact with others and translate its values, behaviors, and beliefs. In addition, it is important to understand people's world views (Fong & Furuto, 2001; Ibrahim, 1985; Sue & Sue, 1990) to achieve “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one’s intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Deardorff, 2004, p. 194). Intercultural competence has been defined by Spitzberg and Chagnon (2009) as “the appropriate and effective management of interaction between people who, to some degree or another, represent different or divergent affective, cognitive, and behavioral orientations to the world” (p. 7). Appropriateness refers to the appreciation of others' outlooks to assess the interlocutor’s communication skills while effectiveness involves the accomplishment of one’s valued objectives (Arasaratnam, 2016).

With the increment of international trades among nations and the internet expansion, mindfulness, open-mindedness, flexibility, adaptability, empathy, and an ethnorelative view are required to perform effectively in intercultural environments (Deardorff, 2004). Thereupon, awareness of cultural divergences during the process will allow a better understanding of others and one’s culture. Furthermore, it is fundamental to listen, observe, interpret, analyze, evaluate and relate during cross-cultural communication exchanges (Deardorff, 2004). Gudykunst (1993, 2005) highlights that intercultural communication is successful when there are few misunderstandings or breakdowns.
Which is the Importance of Developing Intercultural Communication Competence When Venturing Into a New Culture?

The opportunity for wider and more diverse cultural interactions that globalization has brought is undeniable; then, communication is one of the most important approaches to explaining this concept that should not be seen only as an economic and political process. Giddens (1990) asserts that globalization makes social relations more intense at a world level, creating interdependence in the world. According to Baraldi (2003), globalization is based on three cultural forms: pluralism, modernism, and individualism. These models lead to a sense of openness that reduces boundaries in intercultural encounters and boosts communication. Thus, in a globalized world developing ICC is fundamental to avoid ethnocentrism when venturing into a new culture. Certainly, this research entails showing that international students should advocate blooming this competence with the objective of reducing culture shock during their study abroad experience.

Interculturality impedes the foundation of a single shared culture since it includes all perspectives and promotes respect for cultural differences (Carbaugh, 1990, 1994). To be a competent intercultural communicator, it is necessary to develop ICC, which was defined by Spitzberg (2009, p.381) as “behavior that is appropriate and effective in a given context.” To expand this definition, it is necessary to cite Kim (1991, p.259) who states that ICC is “the overall internal capability of an individual to manage key challenging features of intercultural communication: namely, cultural differences and unfamiliarity, inter-group posture, and the accompanying experience of stress.” For students to grow this competence, they need to gain the required skills to interact effectively and appropriately with the members of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds on their own terms (Pittinsky, Rosenthal, & Montoya, 2007).
Samovar et al. (2009) state that there are five components that influence the ability to advance ICC, which are: motivation to communicate, cultural knowledge, communication skills, sensitivity, and character. First of all, to mature this competence individuals must be motivated to communicate with others, and show an international viewpoint towards people who belong to varied cultures. Secondly, being self-aware of the ways of living that different cultures have will facilitate interaction (Pittinsky, Rosenthal & Montoya, 2007). Thirdly, an intercultural communicator should be able to listen, observe, analyze, and apply certain skills to their encounters (Pittinsky, Rosenthal & Montoya, 2007); as well as, adapt those skills to the norms of interaction each society has (Smith & Bond, 1994). Fourthly, according to Pittinsky, Rosenthal, and Montoya (2007), the capacity of being sensitive includes flexibility, empathy, curiosity, openness, and tolerance for ambiguity (Spencer-Roberts & McGovern, 2002). Finally, the intercultural communicator must be perceived as a person with good character, who acts out its choices appropriately to interact with others (Samovar et al, 2009).

Within the context of intercultural communication skills, to become competent communicators, people need to be aware of their own cultural background, ethnicity, gender, religion, age, profession, and life experiences (Kim, 2001). This consciousness will allow a contrast among cultures that will help individuals to fully understand their personal biases, based on their cultural beings (Kim, 2001). Once people are acquainted with the culture they belong to, it is crucial to examine their own belief system; identifying personal attitudes, stereotypes, prejudices, opinions, likes, and dislikes that might appear during their interactions in order to know how these patterns affect communication (Samovar et al, 2009). Therefore, it is paramount to be coherent with the way one communicates, and how others perceive the way one is communicating; hence, developing an adequate communication style will enhance intercultural
interaction (Samovar et al, 2009). Accordingly, the intercultural communicator must be sensitive to the feedback that is receiving from its interlocutor, carrying out a process of self-observation (Snyder, 1987).

Self-observation should stay apart from self-absorption, establishing a steadiness among attention to the environment, motivation, knowledge, and skills (Morreale, Spitzberg & Barge, 2001). Likewise, Argyris (1965, p.59) suggests that “one’s awareness of relevant factors” increases with the development of ICC, upgrading then the problem-solving process. Generally speaking, Kim (2009) places these abilities as “an individual’s overall capacity to engage in behaviors and activities that foster cooperative relationships in all types of social and cultural contexts in which culturally or ethnically dissimilar others interface” (p. 62). Additionally, the concept of ICC includes effective (from self’s perspective) and appropriate (from other’s perspective) communication (Arasaratnam 2016, p.3).

Learning a language cannot be isolated from cultural apprehension, then this process should not be coordinated by a linguistic focus, but directed from pragmatic and discursive competencies (Canale, 1983; Bachman, 1990; Kasper, 1997). As a consequence, Celce-Murcia et al. (1995) propose that language learning should be achieved within communicative competence, dividing it into discourse, linguistic, sociocultural, actional, and strategic competencies. Furthermore, Usó and Martinez (2008) pinpoint that the best way to accomplish language learning is through the development of ICC, followed by pragmatic, strategic, and linguistic competencies. Thus, this learning process is highly associated with motivation and openness to the uncertain.

When traveling around and socializing with people that belong to different cultures; culture shock can be present in diverse degrees, and located in one or more stages. Flourishing
ICC can diminish the impact of these first cross-cultural interactions; insomuch as, if students are intercultural communicators, they will be prepared to manage new scenarios more effectively. Promoting an intercultural dialogue can lead to a state of openness to novelty, reducing boundaries in communication, and increasing the growth of an aware cultural being. Lessening the space for the impact caused by culture shock by means of ICC can make the experience of learning a language, traveling, and studying overseas more advantageous for sojourners.

**What is Culture Shock and Which are its Implications?**

Traveling worldwide with fewer limitations than ever before is one of the effects of globalization; that being so, culture shock comes along as one of the subjects related to the well-being and mental health of sojourners (Pacheco, 2020). This concern can be analyzed from several perspectives, and mainly from a psychological point of view due to its implications for the psyche of the traveler. Entering a new culture can cause psychological discomfort because of unfamiliar cultural patterns (Xia, 2009). Therefore, people must face some stages at different cognitive and emotional levels while traveling. Immigrants, tourists, workers, and students experience culture shock distinctively. Thus, one of the principal aims of this research was to explore how international students experience culture shock.

The concept of culture shock was first mentioned by anthropologist Kalervo Oberg in 1960, who claimed that it “is precipitated by the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse” (p.177). The negotiation of meaning is possible thanks to symbolic portrayals of life, and one must restate those symbols when facing a novel reality brought by the interaction with foreign cultures (Irwin, 2007). When people have to use new symbols to describe and conceptualize the world, multiple feelings can appear, even those of isolation or loss of identity (Irwin, 2007). According to Furnham (2010, p.87) “going to ‘strange places’ and losing the power of easy communication can disrupt self-identity, world views and
indeed all systems of acting, feeling and thinking.” Irwin (2007), broadens this position by explaining that this issue results from the loss of meaning that arrives when two divergent realities face each other, this means that a member from one symbolic reality finds itself immersed in another.

Pedersen (1995, p.1) defines culture shock as “the process of initial adjustment to an unfamiliar environment.” This moment of adjustment not only affects the experience of living abroad, but also the production stage of workers, immigrants, and international students. Similarly, Furnham and Bochner (1989) claim that it implicates a powerful disturbance of one’s routines, ego, and self-image. As Pacheco (2020) notes, the level of the shock lies in the cultural differences, length of immersion, and cohort dynamics. Due to the unpredictability of psychological stress and emotional instability, the physical reactions of sojourners toward the novelty of the unknown cultural settlement are ambiguous. Additionally, Oberg (1960) describes culture shock as an intense fear of the new environment, a sense of uncertainty, and a high desire to go back to what is well known and makes sense to one's reality.

Oberg (1960) categorizes culture shock into four stages —honeymoon, crisis, recovery, and adjustment— which are helpful to better understand the phases people go through; however, they can be somehow artificial (Irwin, 2007). Everyone experiences culture shock differently; some may live all of the stages while others may not advance to the final stage. Firstly, the ‘honeymoon stage’ can last days, weeks, or months depending on the situation. This lap is characterized by excitement and captivation for the newness, Oberg (1960) argues that is psychologically romanticized by the individual. The transition to the ‘crisis’ arrives with a feeling of frustration and rejection to the environment that is causing anxiety; the individual starts sheltering an adverse attitude towards their host setting (Pacheco, 2020). Then, in the
‘recovery’ period the sojourn commences to learn the language, and therefore, is able to negotiate meaning in the symbolic system of its host culture. Finally, in the ‘adjustment’ stage, the individual “accepts the customs of the country as just another way of living” (Oberg, 1960, p.143).

There are three models to better understand international students’ situations — stress, coping and adjustment, culture learning, and social identification — which occur at both individual and societal levels (Zhou, Jindal-Snape, Topping & Todman, 2008). The stress and coping approach is based on how cross-cultural travelers can engage in cross-cultural encounters, developing coping strategies in order to reduce stressful situations (Zhou et al. 2008; Furnham, 2010). According to Furnham and Bochner (1986), the culture learning model focuses on the behavioral aspects of intercultural connections, and the growth of social skills to facilitate interaction (Argyle, 1969). The social identification theory involves a transition of the cultural identity that leads to changes in the adaptation process. Moreover, internal and external factors determine the levels of stress coping and the apprehension of social skills. Zhou et al. (2008) declare that the cultural differences in the learning processes lead to misunderstandings and high anxiety as international students commit to the labor (Furnham, 2010).

The experience of culture shock in international students has been quickly shifting into culture learning (Zhou et al., 2008; Furnham, 2010; Lefdahl-Davis & Perrone-McGovern, 2015; Belford, 2017). Technological advancements have highly influenced this immersion process, reducing the negative impact of culture shock (Zhou et al., 2008; Pacheco, 2020). Hence, exposure to technology eases the interaction with other cultures and social dynamics before going abroad. As a result, the stress and anxiety about the unknown have been decreasing whereas intercultural engagement has been increasing (Zhou et al., 2008; Li & Chen, 2014).
Furnham (2010) suggests that universities should guide students in order to lessen the impact of culture shock with counseling programs, and encourage them to be involved in their own adaptation process. Hannigan (1999) highlights that the effects of homesickness — language proficiency, employment, self-identity, social bonds, and stress — produced by culture shock, are related to personality variables (Van Heck et al., 1997); nevertheless, students can reduce this feeling with emotional company and appropriate resources to access social encounters effectively (Furnham, 2010). After some time, students will develop more independence and acceptance of the host culture (Adler, 1975; Belford, 2017; Smiljanic, 2017); being able to interact with others without feeling like an outsider (Pacheco, 2020). This stage is known as acculturation, which is fundamental to successfully engage with the host culture and overcome culture shock. Acculturation does not mean an extreme identity change, where the sojourn identifies as local, but the reduction of anxiety and social discomfort while being in the host environment (Oberg, 1960; Pacheco, 2020).

From Acculturative Stress to Acculturation

International students are not only a source of economical income for universities but also a spring of knowledge and skills across many disciplines that enrich the host culture (Bevis, 2002; Harrison, 2002; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). With their heterogeneous background and mindset, pupils can boost cultural awareness and appreciation (Bevis, 2002; Harrison, 2002). Studying abroad can be a challenging experience that may lead students into acculturative stress, resulting in difficulties to successfully achieve the acculturation stage. Insomuch as, the intercultural encounter may arrive with excitement for the novelty, as well as feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. Evidently, young sojourners perceive traveling from a distinct perspective and deal with problem-solving differently. The process in which students start acquiring social
knowledge and skills in order to survive in the host environment is severely influenced by technology expertise (Ward, 2005; Pacheco, 2020); thus, this competence influences their problem-solving ability.

Acculturative stress results from the life changes in the acculturation process (Berry, 2006). There are multiple acculturative stressors—language, educational difficulties, sociocultural stressors, discrimination, and practical problems—that can affect students’ psychological and emotional health (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). Language barriers in the academic sphere can disturb overall understanding and production (Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000); socially, can hinder communication and reduce the opportunity to make friends or interact with locals (Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000). Additionally, educational difficulties also appear when students’ expectations do not match the reality regarding the quality, and efficiency of services brought by academic institutions (Pederson, 1991; Chen, 1999; Mori, 2000); as well as the teaching and learning styles implemented by those institutions (Aubrey, 1991; Liberman, 1994; Edgeworth & Eiseman, 2007; Townsend & Poh, 2008).

The capacity to make friends and socially accommodate is influenced by students’ personalities, and can impact the adaptation process psychologically and socioculturally (Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; Ying & Han, 2006; Brisset et al., 2010). These sociocultural stressors can lead to loneliness or isolation, and make students unhappy with the host settlement or feel more homesick (Parr & Bradley, 1991; Hechanova-Alampay et al., 2002; Rajapaksa & Dundes, 2002; Khawaja & Dempsey, 2008). Smith and Khawaja (2011) claim that the host countries are in charge of fighting against discrimination against international students, making awareness campaigns on accepting diversity. Furthermore, there are some practical problems such as work restrictions, tuition fees, transportation, and accommodation that can contribute to the rise of
stress and anxiety. According to Safdar et al. (2003), if international students can overcome these inconveniences, they will be able to accomplish psychological and sociocultural adaptation.

Berry (2005, p.698) defines acculturation as “the dual process of cultural and psychological change that takes place as a result of contact between two or more cultural groups and their individual members.” Berry (2005) includes in his definition acculturative changes at the individual level (psychological acculturation) and group level (cultural acculturation) in both cultures. Researchers have described acculturation as a bi-dimensional approach (Berry & Kim, 1988; Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Williams & Berry, 1991; Berry, 1992, 1997, 2005, 2006); which is a balanced among acculturation and identity, where sojourners develop bicultural identity (Ramírez, 1984).

Berry (1994, 1997) conceptualizes a more complex taxonomy that includes four strategies to depict attitudes of both host and immigrant — integration, separation, assimilation, and marginalization. — Integration happens when sojourners keep their cultural identity and incorporate the host culture into their daily interactions (Samovar et al., 2009). Separation takes place when immigrants develop a sense of ethnocentrism, seeing themselves as low in host culture identification (Zhou et al., 2008). Assimilation occurs once the sojourn enculturates itself into the host culture, and has low home cultural identification (Zhou et al., 2008). Marginalization befalls when they perceive themselves as low in both cultural identifications, normally due to exclusion or discrimination (Zhou et al., 2008; Samovar et al., 2009).

Ward, Bochner, and Furnham (2001) propose the ABCs of the acculturation model — affect, behavior, and cognition— which respond to the changes in stress and coping, culture learning, and social identification. Berry (1997, 2006) affirms that the acculturative stress and adaptation frameworks aim to achieve adaptation in the host environment. Ward and partners
amplify this framework by making the distinction between psychological and sociocultural adaptation (Searle & Ward, 1990; Ward & Kennedy, 1992, 1993a). On one hand, psychological adaptation refers to affective responses comprising mental well-being, self-esteem, and physical welfare (Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001). On the other hand, sociocultural adaptation is based on how effectively the sojourn can bind to the novel culture executing the required tasks for intercultural encounters (Ward et al., 2001).

Acculturation is not only assimilation, instead is a mutual process in which both parties, insiders and outsiders go through changes (Berry, 2008). There are some acculturation strategies (Berry, 1997) and attitudes (Berry, 1980) that refer to the practices people follow to acculturate. Thereupon, the longer-term outcomes achieved after overcoming acculturative stress are a result of the strategies used during acculturation (Berry, 1995, 2005). To amplify this statement, Berry (2008) claims that individual members from non-dominant groups lack the power to decide how to acculturate. Nonetheless, these individuals can openly integrate when the dominant culture is inclusive and align towards cultural diversity (Berry, 2008). Overall, acculturation does not imply students losing their cultural identity, but adapting themselves to the new cultural setting contrary to enculturation which means learning the primary culture to which one belongs to.

How is Enculturation different from Acculturation?

Culture is a lifelong learning process; Samovar et al. (2009) state that throughout it people seek to define its reality. Therefore, the identity one develops from the early stages is shaped by the culture one belongs to. According to Weinreich (1980, 1983a, 1983b, 1985, 1986a, 1986b, 1989, 2003a) identity is a self-construction in a continuum where one builds itself in the present, taking into account the past, and considering the future. The course in which the development of identity takes place is known as enculturation. Hoebel and Frost (1976, p.58) define it as “conscious or unconscious conditioning occurring within that process whereby the
individual, as child and adult, achieves competence in a particular culture.” Gardiner and Kosmitzki (2008) argue that this learning process occurs in formal and informal contexts.

Herskovits (1948) portrays enculturation as a process of socialization, and in order to socialize properly, one must acquire a culture, its patterns of behavior, beliefs, values, and concepts. This social interaction also incorporates the cultural heritage one possesses. Accordingly, enculturation can be mainly described as the stage in which people, through their cultural heritage, mature their own cultural identity to socialize with others. Bates and Plog (1990) highlight that the ways one employs to explain the world and to define the perception of reality are based on enculturation processes. On the other hand, Kim (2017) notes that this theory supports the sense of equality in socialization since people can maintain their ethnic cultural rules. While in the acculturation stage, people have to adapt to the norms established by the host culture.

Immigrants enculturate differently because they are in touch with more than one ethnic group at the same time. The coexistence of immigrants with people of diverse cultural backgrounds can make them reformulate their cultural identity (Weinreich, 2009). It is at this point that Weinreich (2009) introduces the concepts of aspirational and empathetic identification. First, there is an idealistic-identification with another group where the individual finds similarities among both cultures and would like to possess those qualities as part of one’s ideal self-image (Weinreich, 1980, 1986a, 1986b, 1989, 2003a). But there are also some contra-identifications that are attributed by the immigrant and lead to a desire for dissociation (Weinreich, 1980, 1986a, 1986b, 1989, 2003a). Secondly, empathetic identification comprises the qualities one assigns to others, and those of the present self-image one has (Weinreich, 1980, 1986a, 1986b, 1989, 2003a).
Zhang and Moradi (2013) conducted research with Asian American immigrants and found that behavior, values, knowledge, and cultural identity are also dimensions of enculturation. From these findings, they proposed a three-factor model that was categorized into language-related behavior, cultural and sociopolitical knowledge, pride, and cultural group association. Contrarily, Weinreich and Saunderson (2003) created the Identity Structure Analysis (ISA) which investigates the identity processes that arise from migration and multiculturalism. ISA places individuals in a constant social engagement with the world with direct interaction or with imagination. This model considers how individuals endeavor themselves to make sense of different cultural arenas. Besides, ISA acknowledges cultural heritage, and the procedures of identification people follow to flourish a sense of identity (Weinreich, 2009).

The exercise of enculturation can be affected and highly influenced by intercultural contexts; inasmuch as, they can change the experience of identity formation (Weinreich, 2009). On one hand, Weinreich (2009) states that individuals who master a situationalist identification are likely to enculturate features from other cultures that allow them to reformulate their ethnic identity. The situationalist orientation comprises “a set of beliefs or discourses about the instrumental and socially constructed nature of the group, in which interpretations and reinterpretations of history provide rationales justifying the legitimacy of a peoplehood” (Weinreich, 1998; Weinreich et al., 1997, 2003, p.130). On the other one, Zhang and Moradi (2013) pinpoint that assessing acculturation, enculturation, and cultural orientation helps to know if people’s cultural identities are in conflict or not. Thereby, this investigation had the intention to explore both acculturation and enculturation processes in international students in their interaction with the target culture. Although enculturation is on behalf of persons' cultural adaptation as competent members of society, some people overpower a strong ethnic identity
based on their cultural heritage leading them to mature various degrees of ethnocentrism. This can preclude intercultural encounters, and block effective communication with people from diverse cultural backgrounds.

**Is Ethnocentrism a Stumbling Block to Develop Intercultural Competence?**

The identity maturing process is highly influenced by the ethnic traits of the culture one belongs to. Berry (1980, 1997, 2003) notes that ethnic identity is assumed as a result of cultural heritage, and this inheritance incarnates ethnicity (Weinreich, 2009). Those who are part of the same ethnicity tend to share the core values and beliefs that shape their reality (Romanucci-Ross, De Vos, & Tsuda, 2006). However, ethnocentrism may emerge in those who bear the same nationality. Shen and Starosta (1994) state that it helps to build and keep one’s cultural identity, and generates a sense of patriotism (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997, p. 389). Sumner (1906), on the other hand, suggests that people who are ethnocentric consider their culture to be central, and others to be less prominent. Hence, what looks acceptable for one culture might be inconceivable for others. Believing that one’s cultural practices are superior, and should be the standard for all cultural groups is an ethnocentric attitude. In consequence, the present study exposed why ethnocentrism can trigger misunderstandings in communication and interfere with the acculturation stage, as well as the development of ICC in international students.

Berry and Kalin (1995) claim that ethnocentrism is “the synonym for general antipathy towards all outgroups.” As well as “a lack of acceptance of cultural diversity, a general intolerance for outgroups and a relative preference for one’s ingroup over most outgroups” (p. 303). When people judge the world from narrow cultural lenses (Nanda & Warms, 2007), they open the door to stereotypes, prejudice, and racism (Samovar et al., 2009). Although ethnocentrism and racism are interconnected, it does not translate automatically into a negative vision toward other races (Hooge, 2008). Ethnocentric behavior sets boundaries concerning the
outsider group based on distinctive cultural differences such as religion, dress, language, accent, values, physical features, and so on. Students who are part of exchange programs can evolve ethnocentric attitudes against the host culture, this can lead to racism, reaffirmation of stereotypes, or the creation of new ones.

Ethnocentrism can be categorized into three levels: positive, negative, and extremely negative. The positive tier advocates the importance of ethnicity, and the identity one develops based on the native culture. At the negative level, people start evaluating the differences among cultures, believing that they are at the center and outgroups should be rated by its standards (Sumner, 1906). In the extreme negative arena, people over-empowered their culture, assuming that their values, beliefs, and behavior patterns should be acculturated by others (Samovar et al., 2009). Ethnocentrism is universal and mainly rooted from the education field, focusing the teaching practices exclusively on the native culture promotes this habit. When people are shown only one reality from the early stages, they will consequently find their opposites as inferior due to their ingrained cultural beliefs.

Within interculturality, ethnocentrism diminishes the opportunity for intercultural encounters (Lin & Rancer, 2003). Thus, in order to facilitate interaction with other cultures, people should flourish intercultural sensitivity and awareness (Chen & Starosta, 2000). Bennett (1993) by means of his Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS), suggested that there are six stages people must go through to evolve ICC (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). The three first stages of denial, defense, and minimization are classified as ethnocentric (Bennet & Bennet, 2004). Individuals state their culture in the center and perform “avoiding cultural differences through denying its existence, raising defense against the differences and minimizing its importance” (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p.153). The following three phases of acceptance,
adaptation, and integration are labeled as ‘ethno-relative’ (Bennett & Bennett, 2004). People skill themselves in the context of other cultures, it can be understood as “seeking cultural difference through accepting its importance, adapting a perspective to take it into account, or by integrating the whole concept into a definition of identity” (Bennett & Bennett, 2004, p.153).

Greenholtz (2000) incorporates the idea that establishing the model of intercultural sensibility increases one’s involvement with cultural diversity, and the capacity to unwind in intercultural situations rises. A study conducted by Williams (2005) exploring the impact of studying abroad on international students, showed that these students drastically decreased their levels of ethnocentrism by expanding their ethno-relativist abilities. Then, in order to boost intercultural communication skills, students should interact with the target culture avoiding ethnocentric attitudes (Dong, Day & Collaço, 2008). According to Samovar et al. (2009), people can prevent ethnocentrism by staying away from dogmatism, also by being alert to closeness and intolerance towards outgroups. Hales and Edmonds (2019), argue that this is a behavior transmitted from generation to generation; nonetheless, some cultural perceptions can easily change in an intragenerational context.

The lack of intercultural knowledge is one of the main factors that contribute to ethnocentrism. This can hinder effective communication with outgroups and lead to misunderstandings (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997) decreasing then the intercultural willingness to communicate (Lin & Rancer, 2003). To expand on this idea Lin and Rancer (2003) point out that eagerness to communicate is highly influenced by ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension. Daly (1987) argues that this event can be examined by exploring the relationship amidst communication traits and communication behavior. Predispositions constitute stumbling blocks to interacting with people from different backgrounds, precluding
appropriate communication and constituting difficulties to understand each other (Neuliep & McCroskey, 1997). Lin and Rancer (2003) based on Samovar and Porter (2000) argue that ethnocentrism is a perceptual framework that individuals use to construe other cultures and make judgments.

When international students are in the acculturation process, as a result of the adaptation stage they develop an ethnocentric behavior towards the host culture considering their cultural practices as inferior, and theirs as superior (Ting-Toomey, 1999, p.14). To reduce ethnocentrism, students should acquire a multicultural mindset to successfully develop intercultural communication sensitivity, foster respect toward cultural diversity, and guarantee great achievements in intercultural environments (Chen & Starosta, 2004). Therefore, understanding the nature of ethnocentrism and its effects is key to exploring the concept of academic international mobility; inasmuch as, overcoming this stage amid the flourishing of ICC is a determining factor in the experience of students who decide to study overseas.

**What is International Academic Mobility in Higher Education?**

Globalization has an imminent effect in today's world, and knowledge is not out of the equation. Due to its universal nature, knowledge has become an important income for universities all around the globe (Varghese, 2008). However, with globalization, education turned into a process conditioned by international market demands (Varghese, 2008). Thus, the programs offered at the HE level required reorienting its national focus introducing a global perspective; besides, the curriculum design should be approached from the development of intercultural competencies (Varghese, 2008). The mobility of students has been drastically increasing during the last 50 years, since studying abroad from the outlook of migratory processes is considered to be an investment for guaranteeing better job opportunities and increasing future income (Rothwell 2002; Morano-Foadi 2005; Waters 2009a, 2009b; Beine,
Noël & Ragot, 2014). The focus of this investigation is culture shock in international students, then it is paramount to explain the concept of international academic mobility at the HE level.

Academic mobility is defined as the action students commit once they move among the national area or cross territorial boundaries, this mobility is translated as a temporary stay in the host settlement (Kim, 2009: Teichler, 2015). Hence, this procedure takes place as a consequence of several factors such as the lack of skills that can be apprehended in the home country (Beine, Noël & Ragot, 2014); the quality offered by international institutions (Hanushek & Hanson, 2000); the opportunity to get better jobs once they return to their origin country due to the enhancement of their capabilities (Garcia-Aracil et al., 2014; Teichler, 2015; Partlo & Ampaw, 2018); or to increase their intercultural sensitivity (Rexeisen, 2008). Amidst the countries that offer academic mobility programs, the internationalization of education appears as a dominant determinator of the academic and living conditions of students.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 1999, established the concept of internationalization of HE as the amalgamation of the international and intercultural dimensions in order to incorporate these grasps in all the activities executed by universities, including teaching, research, staff, and service functions. In that vein, Teichler (2015) states that internationalization is set by policies and trends that pretend to increase knowledge transfer as a result of crossing territory borders, as well as creating similarities in HE across nations on account of globalization. Nonetheless, Kim (2009) argues that the internationalization of HE is encapsulated by market demands, and academic mobility is based on neoliberal policies and mart frameworks focused on competing, so universities can expand their economic income.
The top destinations of international students, according to the OECD (2020, 2021) have been the United States of America, the United Kingdom, Germany, France, and Australia. The immigration policies made by these countries are in favor of receiving international students to boost their economic systems and grow the prestige of their universities. Chadee and Naidoo (2009), amplify this idea by adding that English Spoken countries have opened the gates for international students from a commercial basis exporting HE as a service. For instance, the internationalization of education in the UK reflects the neoliberal policies created by means of the market frames (Kim, 2009). Their policies for HE have been centering its attention on international students, and the hassles around internationalization in their home countries (Kim, 2009). But they are created for selling education as a global business rather than for fostering interculturality in their institutions (Kim, 2009).

Students who are not part of the EU have to pay higher tuition fees (Scheibelhofer, 2006; Ackers 2008; Kim, 2009; Van Mol, 2014), have bigger academic loads, misunderstandings in communication, and homesickness, among others; as a result of the cultural differences not only due to the living practices but also the academic discordances. These difficulties intensify the inequalities in the educational field since academic mobility in first-world countries has created a reproduction of those matters (Bilicen & Van Mol, 2017). Nowadays, because of the labor market, the places in which students obtained their degrees play an important role in their Curriculum Vitae, and it is a determinant of better integration in the labor frameworks (Bilicen & Van Mol, 2017). However, due to the internationalization movement of HE, students can greatly benefit from these mobility processes and gain intercultural sensitivity.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, the internationalization of HE is illustrated in a framework of complexity (Knight, 2005). The socioeconomic conditions highly differ from those
in first-world countries; however, these places result as exotic destinations for some international students or as cheaper options for accessing international academic mobility programs. Countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, and Mexico are leaders in the internationalization of HE in Latin America and the Caribbean (Bruner & Ferrada, 2011). Chile (see Geldres, Vásquez & Ramos, 2013), for example, attracts many international students due to its security level and economic stability (El Mercurio, 2012), then in 2012 according to the OECD 10,000 students participated in the HE programs offered by Chilean universities. They export education as a Teaching Service providing its customers with multiple services such as infrastructure and technology, academic recognition, a strong institutional framework, and trained staff (ProChile, 2012).

The apogee of international academic mobility in Colombia started in the 1950s, but it was until the 1990s that HE opened its doors to internationalization with the creation of Law 30 of HE of 1992 (Jaramillo, 2005). This law provided a new framework for transnational mobility and education at the local level (Jaramillo, 2005). Other entities have supported the internationalization process together with the Ministry of Education such as the Colombian Institute for the Development of Higher Education (ICFES), the Colombian Institute for Educational Loans and Technical Studies Abroad (ICETEX), and the Colombian Institute for the Development of Science and Technology (COLCIENCIAS). Furthermore, the Association of Colombian Universities (ASCUN), and the Colombian Network for the Internationalization of Higher Education (RCI) have promoted international alliances to expand academic mobility in the country.

At the local level the Technological University of Pereira (UTP) working hand in hand with the International Relations Office (ORI), has facilitated academic exchanges for both
international and local students. To further these trials, they have constituted under agreements 31 and 32 of July 1st the guarantees and principles for international academic mobility, indicating all the requirements to be part of these programs. The internationalization model implemented by the UTP aims to foster the development of competent intercultural communicators and reach visibility as a highly accredited institution. Nowadays, they have 134 alliances with 23 countries and 26 with national universities to rise higher interaction and bonding with local and international contexts, encouraging a disciplinary, global and intercultural education. Additionally, they are founder members, and active participants of the network ‘COLOMBIA CHALLENGE YOUR KNOWLEDGE®’ (CCYK), which has the objective of pushing HE and advancing internationalization in the country, offering Colombia as an attractive destination for international academic mobility.

Overall, due to national and transnational mobility processes, people get to interact with realities that differ from what they consider to be the rule of behavior and understanding of the world. During these encounters culture shock might appear as a result of the novelty; accordingly, international students also experience that feeling of shock while studying overseas, because of the multiple differences they meet in the course of the trial. To successfully overcome that stage, pupils should accomplish ICC and achieve a certain degree of acculturation. This does not mean losing or drastically changing one’s cultural identity, which is shaped by enculturation but assimilating and adapting to the host culture. The enculturating action takes place at the first stages of self-building where people acquire the culture that determines their ethnicity, their self-identity, their mother tongue, and their specific patterns of behavior.

Within the bounds of enculturation, ethnocentrism ensues as one of the biggest barriers to intercultural interaction. On that account, international students should be open-minded,
reflexive agents, active participants in cross-cultural activities, and promoters of diversity in order to avoid racism, prejudice, stereotypes, and negative attitudes toward their opposites. Since those practices preclude effective intercultural communication and boost ethnocentrism. Consequently, pupils should blossom multicultural awareness and thrive with the pertinent knowledge and skills that are necessary to auspiciously socialize in intercultural encounters. All in all, international academic mobility and the internationalization processes advanced by universities, are crucial in the management of culture shock and its effects.
Methodology

This section presents all the methodological decisions that were taken into account to conduct this research project effectively. Then, the type of research and study, context, setting, participants, data collection methods and instruments, researcher’s role, ethical considerations, and data analysis were broadly explored throughout this chapter. This allowed the researchers to gather all the necessary information to identify how students from international academic mobility experienced culture shock during their stays in the host country, to describe how they felt while studying abroad, and to outline how it impacted their lives in the short term.

Type of Research

Historically, humanity has been looking for answers to its uncertainties throughout research. Then, when it comes to intercultural matters some sort of vagueness can flourish as a result of the cross-cultural intercourse that has been growing due to the rapid effects of globalization. Accordingly, people’s life experiences cannot be measured in terms of numbers; therefore, this research project was conducted under qualitative methods. Van Maanen (1979) explains that

It is at best an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with the meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world.

(p.520)

Furthermore, qualitative research is based upon an interpretative framework that can appreciate and describe people’s insights, considering their social and cultural context (Van Maanen, 1979). To better understand this idea Merriam (2009) declares that this type of inquiry can give discernment of how people build their own world, as well as give voice to their points
of view (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). Since the main purpose is to understand how the experience processes of international students are delineated, Patton (1985) asserts that to grasp how people interpret what they experiment it is important to comprehend the situations, and the context in which interaction takes place, so the participants’ outlooks can be better apprehended (Merriam, 2009). Overall, Merriam (2009) emphasizes that the nature of this type of investigation is highly descriptive and with a tendency to subjectivity (Hernandez et al., 2010).

**Type of Study**

In all fields of academic knowledge, scholars, and students produce research; every discipline determines diverse kinds of questions and has well-developed mechanisms that influence the strategies and methods to follow (Merriam, 2009). Thus, qualitative investigations comprise several approaches that help to reach the objectives of the inquiry. Distinct authors have proposed multiple procedures to be used while investigating; nevertheless, Merriam (2009) suggests that basic qualitative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, narrative analysis, critical qualitative research, and case study are the most commonly used. Therefore, taking into account the requirements that needed to be fulfilled with the present research, a case study is the most suitable one; in view of the fact that it focuses on collecting data about a specific phenomenon by identifying and describing the variables that intervened in the experience lived by the participants (Egan, 2002).

According to Merriam (2009, p.40), a case study is “an in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system.” Miles and Huberman (1994) broaden her definition commenting that the case is a phenomenon that happens in a bounded context. That being said, it is necessary to clarify that ‘case’ refers to the event, problem, entity, or person that will be researched with defined boundaries established by the researcher (Merriam, 1998,2009; Stake, 2006). Hence, the
case in this investigation is the students who took part in the international academic mobility programs offered by the UTP.

Considering the types of case studies, the current research is a descriptive multiple case study. On one hand, the description illustrates the intricacy of the situation by offering a “thick description” (Merriam, 2009, p.43) of the phenomenon under scrutiny, displaying the results with the implementation of various resources and the different points of view of the participants (Brown, 2008); besides, it portrays the case presenting the real-life context in which took place (Yin, 2003). On the other hand, analyzing multiple cases, allows the researcher to examine differences and similarities within and between cases (Campbell & Ahrens, 1998, as cited by Baxter & Jack, 2008). Multicase studies are composed of single cases that can be explored separately to come up with generalizations upon the studied phenomenon (Stake, 2006), also by comparing and contrasting the collected data, the precision, validity, reliability, and stability of the findings can be strengthened (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Stake (2013), the cases must be limited and carefully selected to establish the context, and get all the necessary information.

Context

“Culture Shock in Students from International Academic Mobility” is a research project that took place in Colombia, a republic situated in the northwestern corner of the continent where South America connects with Central America. The country has six regions and thirty-two departments, including Risaralda, which is located in the Andean territory, and whose capital is Pereira. The city has been counted in the World Cultural Heritage and declared by UNESCO as one of the principal members of the “Cultural Coffee Landscape of Colombia.” Likewise, Pereira has advanced distinction in the HE field with its nine private universities and one public
university. This public institution was issued by the Congress of the Colombian Republic under Law 41 of 1958 and founded by Jorge Roa Martínez. Over the years, this college started to launch technical, technological, bachelor's degrees, certified courses, specializations, masters, and PhDs.

The UTP is divided into ten schools: Fine Arts and Humanities, Environmental Sciences, Basic Sciences, Educational Sciences, Health Sciences, Business Studies, Mechanical Engineering, Engineering, Technology, Agricultural Sciences, and Agribusiness; offering more than 30 bachelor programs, 38 masters, and 8 PhDs. Moreover, the campus has several buildings, cafeterias, study areas, auditoriums, a library, an astronomical observatory, a planetarium, an archaeological museum, a botanical garden, and all of these are surrounded by green areas that allow people to enjoy the magnificence of Colombian nature, and also incredible masterpieces done by the UTP members. In addition, the university is ruled under 5 principles that were stipulated in 2019 by the Institutional Educational Project (PEI) that aim to maintain high-quality accreditation and promote internationalization processes to gain visibility.

Setting

At the present time, the UTP reckons around 18,500 students from both undergraduate and postgraduate programs. Therefore, to provide pupils with better opportunities the UTP created the ORI under the agreement 022 of 2000, to promote interinstitutional, national, and international relations to enhance the research area, make alliances, gain recognition, accreditation, and visibility. Bearing that in mind, in 2020 they released agreement 31, which states the guarantees and principles for international mobility at the undergraduate level, indicating there all the requirements to participate in these programs. The ORI’s director is in charge of achieving the internationalization goals of the UTP. For that reason, the relations office
facilitates academic exchanges through 134 alliances with universities from 23 different countries, and 26 with national colleges. Furthermore, in the statistics presented by the ORI, the UTP has received 322 pupils in the last 5 years, and 455 students from the UTP have decided to study overseas.

The UTP has been advancing the internationalization of HE in their accreditation processes with the incorporation of an international focus into the curriculum of every program, encouraging professors and students to teach and learn considering the necessities of the 21st century. Consequently, to attain the goal of internationalization this institution cheer pupils to access academic mobility programs. According to the archives provided by the ORI, the schools that have a major participation in exchange activities from 2015 to 2020 are Business Studies with 102, Mechanical Engineering with 77, Health Sciences with 73, Engineering with 52, Educational Sciences with 48, and Arts and Humanities with 35 students.

Participants

The participants of this research were students that previously participated in inbound and outbound mobility programs offered by the UTP before and after the pandemic COVID-19. On account of this, they joined voluntarily after the ORI contacted them via email due to their policy of Data Protection. There were four students from the UTP and six from other universities located in Argentina, Mexico, and Italy. Besides, the population was conformed by five males and four females from different schools and programs. The following table illustrates the participants' information:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Number</th>
<th>Pseudonym and Initial</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Year of Participation</th>
<th>Time Spent in the Host Country</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>University of Origin</th>
<th>Host University</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pedro Martínez (PM)</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>Industrial Engineering</td>
<td>Tecnológico Nacional de México en Celaya</td>
<td>Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Carmen Rodríguez (CM)</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>Logistics Engineering</td>
<td>Instituto Tecnológico de Puebla</td>
<td>Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Alessandro Almeida (AA)</td>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>1 month and a half at the time of the data collection</td>
<td>Mediazione linguistica</td>
<td>Università degli studi di Milano</td>
<td>Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Gloria Fernández (GF)</td>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>2022</td>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>Economic and Administrative Sciences</td>
<td>Instituto Tecnológico de Puebla</td>
<td>Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Martina Sosa (MS)</td>
<td>Argentinian</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2020</td>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>School of Geography and Tourism</td>
<td>Universidad Nacional del Sur</td>
<td>Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Camilo Sánchez (CS)</td>
<td>Colombian</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>Fine Arts and Humanities</td>
<td>Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira</td>
<td>Université de Sherbrook e</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ana Rojas (AR)</td>
<td>Colombian</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>Fine Arts and Humanities</td>
<td>Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira</td>
<td>The University of the West Indies-Mona campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Carlos Moreno</td>
<td>Colombian</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>Fine Arts and Humanities</td>
<td>Universidad</td>
<td>The Universi-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Collection Methods and Instruments

The purpose of qualitative studies is to gather information from people's perspectives of the world and their life insights. In this vein, Patton (2002, p.4) notes that this data is composed of “direct quotations from people about their experiences, opinions, feelings, and knowledge.” Thus, to collect the required information for this research three different methods were used. Moreover, prior to implementing the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires, the questions were validated by two experts in the field of intercultural communication, and also piloted before its execution with two international students who participated in the ERASMUS programs in Spain before the pandemic, one student of the UTP who took part of the exchange programs in Canada, as well as a professor from the degree in bilingualism who studied and lived in England.

Documents

The pandemic COVID-19 that humanity has been facing during the last two years has changed the scenario for international student mobility; as a result, these academic exchanges have been implemented online to keep knowledge interchange and institutional alliances. For this reason, it was necessary to obtain data from the ORI’s archives to select the participants of this study since it is pivotal to consider the cultural aspects that caused shock in pupils.
According to Merriam (2009), documents are a source of accessible information in existence prior to the research execution. Then, the researcher used private records from the ORI to get access to participants who voluntarily decided to participate.

**Semi-structured Interviews**

One of the main sources of data for this investigation was obtained through semi-structured interviews. DeMarrais (2004) declares that interviews enable researchers and participants to collaborate together in a conversation related to the topic of interest. Similarly, Patton (2002) points out that by using this method the investigator can gather all the information that was not able to observe, entering them into someone else’s outlook. In comparison, Merriam (2009) states that semi-structured interviews allow every individual to define the world on their own terms due to the flexibility of the inquiry. On account of this, the questions have been formulated in an open-ended way in order to identify which stages of culture shock students experienced during their international academic exchanges, and outline how this experience impacted their lives in the short term. The interview was piloted with a professor who lived and studied in England, and allowed the researcher to make all the necessary corrections before conducting it with the participants. Due to the flexibility of semi-structured interviews, some of the questions were modified and expanded depending on the participant’s answers (see appendix 1).

**Questionnaires**

Another source that was implemented for collecting data was a questionnaire on Google Forms with open and closed questions (see appendix 2). Hernández-Sampieri et al. (2010) assert that questionnaires obey the different needs of the researcher; thus, using both types of questions allowed the acknowledgment of some specific features related to pupils’ experiences while studying abroad. On one side, closed questions are easier to codify and analyze (Hernández-
Sampieri et al., 2010); additionally, the answers are less ambiguous, facilitating the comparison among them (Burnett, 2009). Open questions, on the other side, offer wider information when it is necessary to deepen into certain details related to opinions and patterns of behavior (Hernández-Sampieri et al., 2010). The questionnaire was first validated by experts in the field of interculturality and modified based on their suggestions. Then, it was piloted with three students, and adjusted according to their answers and feedback before its execution.

Researchers Role

The present study was guided by professor Clara Inés González Marín, who has a master's degree in applied linguistics and also broad expertise in the field of interculturality; besides conducting the investigation there was a second researcher who is a student from the tenth semester of the degree in bilingualism that offers the UTP. Accordingly, the main role of the second investigator in charge was to design the instruments for collecting data, gather the information after implementation, and analyzed the information to come up with the findings and make some suggestions based on the obtained outcomes to present them to the ORI. Along with it, prof. González was supervising the whole process to guarantee that the paper fulfilled all the requirements established by the research committee.

Qualitative research qualifies the investigators to assume different roles. Hence, Gold (1958) maintains that one can adopt any of several positions while gathering information — complete participant, participant as observer, observer as participant, and complete observer. — For this reason, the researchers will place themselves into the category of observers-as-participants. Adler and Adler (1998, p.85) claim that in this stance researchers “observe and interact closely enough with members to establish an insider’s identity without participating in those activities constituting the core of group membership.” Furthermore, Walford (2001, p.62)
pinpoints that being an observer is a “process of role definition, negotiation, and renegotiation.”

Then, while participating the observer should stay neutral, avoid judgment and respect others' opinions (Merriam, 2009).

Since the main purpose of being an observer as participant is to collect data, a semi-structured interview and a questionnaire with open and closed questions were carried out. That being the case, the interviews were recorded with the participant's permission and were transcribed by the researchers. The questionnaires included a signed consent form (see appendix 3) to use the findings for academic purposes, and the information gathered with them was stocked on Google. Overall, these methods were implemented to get data related to international students' insights about their experiences while studying overseas.

**Ethical Considerations**

When conducting research is indispensable to contemplate some ethical considerations. Thus, it is mandatory to supply the participants with all the necessary information before gathering the data (Mackey & Grass, 2005). Bearing this in mind, the subjects of study of this qualitative investigation were informed about the purpose, procedures, data collection methods, and the possible benefits that the findings may generate. They were told as well that their contributions will help the researchers to comprehend how the intercultural interchange impacted their experiences during their stays in the host country. Besides, the collected information was used to present some suggestions to the ORI to improve the experience of future participants.

Participation in this project was completely voluntary, and students had the option of withdrawing at any time. Likewise, to protect the anonymity of the participants, the researchers employed pseudonyms to guarantee confidentiality. Thereupon, all the raw information collected
through the interviews and the questionnaire was only accessible to the investigators, avoiding in this way its divulgation.

Before conducting the interviews, students were asked for their permission to record the meeting and the exploitation of the collected information to achieve the purpose of this research. Additionally, pupils were requested to sign a consent form before submitting the questionnaire, with the same objective of using the gathered data for the benefit of this study.

Data Analysis

For the execution of this research project, three instruments of data collection were implemented: archives, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. The information gathered was systematically analyzed to allow the researchers to come up with the findings through a process of contrast and comparison, developing a theory of a phenomenon based on a bounded context to understand that specific social event. The methodology of Grounded Theory as Glaser and Strauss (1967) have stated, must be guided by “theoretical sampling” in which “the analyst jointly collects, codes, and analyzes [...] data and decides what data to collect next and where to find them, in order to develop [...] theory as it emerges” (p. 45). Therefore, the data is analyzed under a “constant comparative method” to build substantive theory involving a “core category” which according to Strauss (1987) “must be central, that is, related to as many other categories and their properties as is possible, [...] must appear frequently in the data [...] and must develop the theory” (p.36).

A descriptive multicase study method that also includes grounded theory as a method of analysis is categorized as a methodology, assuming an interpretative assumption of the data that is under analysis (Halaweh et al., 2008). The interpretative paradigm states that reality is built and translated into meaning due to human behaviors, beliefs, and actions; for that reason, this
paradigm tries to understand the phenomena by making sense of the research problem through the meanings that are assigned by humans (Orlikowski & Baroudi, 1991; as cited by Halaweh et al., 2008). According to Khazanchi and Munkvold (2003), interpretative research follows a descriptive and neutral position. Overall, interpretative case studies that research social and organizational contexts are consequent with grounded theory (Hughes & Jones, 2003).

Interviews are the main source of data collection in both case studies and grounded theory (Yin 1994; Walsham 1995; Strauss & Corbin 1990; Allan, 2003). Besides, there is a specification of the boundary and the scope of the investigation, and the units of analysis (Halaweh et al., 2008), to develop emerging theory from the findings (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). The theoretical sampling from grounded theory enables the researcher to carefully select the information from the cases to develop concepts (Halaweh et al., 2008). Accordingly, the generalization of research findings by both methods can be applied to other situations and contexts; Yin (1994), claims that case studies drive to “analytic generalizations” that develop concepts and draw specific implications (Walsham, 1995).

Although the original version of grounded theory was proposed by Glaser and Strauss in 1967, the variant suggested by Strauss and Corbin in 1990 and 1998 was the one that better fitted the needs of this study. The Straussian approach offers a conceptual description of the phenomenon, the coding is rigorously defined by technique, the comparisons are shaped by the nature of the coding technique, and it grasps an inductive-deductive method (Onions, 2006). Coding is the “fundamental analytic process used by the researcher” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 12), and it comprises three steps: open, axial, and selective which is the core category (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), that allow transporting the data from transcript to theory (Walker & Myrick, 2006). These steps were strictly followed in the same order proposed by Corbin and Strauss;
however, as the theory started to emerge some modifications were needed; thus, the analysis was executed under the following sequence:

1. Transcription: The answers from the semi-structured interview were audio-recorded and manually transcribed in a Word Document to facilitate the analysis and proceed to code, group, edit, as well as categorized the essential units of information to come up with the assigned categories.

2. Open coding: This was the initial step of the coding process and consisted of “breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing and categorizing data” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p.61), throughout this analytic process the dimensions and properties of each concept were encountered in the transcribed data; inasmuch as it is necessary to first build the category based on its properties and the dimensions of those properties, to finally develop a category and a relationship among categories (Corbin & Strauss, 1990 as cited by Walker & Myrick, 2006). Therefore, each code represents a unit that is relevant to the study, these units are constantly compared to find similarities between the information collected with each instrument (Glasser & Strauss, 1967), during this process the data discrimination starts, so the information can be assigned to the defined categories (Dey, 1993).

The codes included information about the data collection method, participants’ pseudonyms (initials), the category, subcategory, and unit with its respective numbers. For the semi-structured interview, two different codes were implemented. The first codes allocated were of this kind: “SEICMC1U2”, here, ‘SEI” refers to the data gathering method which is a semi-structured interview,
“CM” stands for the participant’s pseudonym, “Carlos Moreno”, “C1” alludes to the “category 1”, “U2” makes reference to the specific unit of information, “unit 2”, in this case. The questionnaires were coded in a similar fashion. The first codes were sorted as follows: “QCRC2U1”, here, “Q” refers to the data collection method, that is questionnaires, “CR” for the participant’s pseudonym, “Carmen Rodríguez”, “C2” for “category 2” and “U1” for “unit 1”.

3. Axial coding: This was the second step of the coding course. The goal of this section is to place the fractured information back together “by making connections between a category and its subcategory” (Corbin & Strauss, 1990, p. 97). The refining of the category scheme gets started and is achieved by using the coding paradigm, which is centered on three different aspects of the phenomenon under study: the conditions or situations in which the phenomenon takes place, the actions and interactions of the participants; and, the consequences or results of the interactions (Corbin & Strauss, 1998). Furthermore, categories require a higher level of abstraction than the concepts and are developed under a constant comparative method to find similarities and differences amidst the categories and its subcategories. Hence, by using the paradigm model, the researcher can systematize the data and make the corresponding relationships (Halaweh et al., 2008) to trace the focus of the category’s axis (Strauss, 1987).

4. Selective coding: The third step was to build a core category in which propositions and hypotheses were made. To select the core categories, the concepts must be present oftentimes in the collected data. At this level, the researcher attains the maximum level of abstraction and the categories acquired a
descriptive nature (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Additionally, the integration of categories and subcategories occurs, establishing a line in which conceptualization takes place (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). As a result of the integration, the theory starts to get solidified, making the delimitation of the theory possible due to generalizations and comparisons.

For the semi-structured interview, the second codes that were assigned were of this type: “SEIDGC2SC1U1”, here, “SEI” is for the data collection method, which is a semi-structured interview, “DG” for the participant’s pseudonym, “Daniel Gómez”, “C2” for “category 2”, “SC1” recounts the subcategory of the second category, “subcategory 1”, and “U1” for “unit 1” to refer to the concrete bit of data. Likewise, for the questionnaires, the second codes were allotted similarly: “QARC2SC1U1”, here, “Q” is for the instrument that was a questionnaire, “AR” is for the pseudonym, “Ana Rojas”, “C2” is for “category 2”, “SC1” refers to the subcategory assigned to the main category, “subcategory 1” in this case, and “U1” for “unit 1” that stands for the selected bit of information.

5. Writing theory: The last step is merely inductive since according to Glasser and Strauss (1967) the investigator writes to “form a systematic substantive theory, that is a reasonably accurate statement of the matters studied, and that it is couched in a form that others going into the same field could use” (p. 113). Moreover, the titles that were given to each category were self-explanatory and enabled the researchers to write based on the analyzed data, to finally answer the research questions of this inquiry.
Findings and Discussion

In this section, two big categories with seven subcategories are presented. This was with the goal of answering the stated research questions and showing the accomplishment of the general and specific objectives. The information gathered was triangulated to validate what was indicated in the research questions, investigation objectives and the constructs explained in the conceptual framework. The main category is related to culture shock and it has six subcategories while the second category, refers to the short-term impact that studying abroad had on students’ lives and it has one subcategory. Thus, each category and subcategory have a general overview of the phenomenon that was reported. Moreover, each finding was described and supported both, theoretically as well as with the data collected from the semi-structured interviews and the questionnaire. Lastly, all sections have an explanation that allowed the generation of the general discussion and conclusions.

Culture Shock in Students from Inbound and Outbound Academic Exchanges

Making evident culture shock in students from international academic interchanges was the main pillar of this inquiry; thereby, it was pivotal to show throughout the collected data from the interviews and the questionnaire whether or not international pupils experienced culture shock during their study abroad participation. Hence, this first segment was devoted to disclosing the units of information that evidence culture shock and its stages, along with two acculturative stressors.

Pointing to reactivating the conceptualization of culture shock that has been presented by several authors, it is crucial to call to mind that culture shock can be understood as a psychological and emotional phenomenon that could affect any sojourner when in touch with foreign cultures. Oberg (1960) argues that is a sentiment caused by the anxiety or stress resulting
from losing one's kin symbols and signs of social intercourse. Additionally, Xia (2009) explains that it can affect the individual psychology of people since every person may experience culture shock differently when they face dissimilar situations from their former sociocultural contexts.

During the execution stage, some excerpts of the information gathered through the data collection instruments confirmed that the discernments made by the researchers are in agreement with the theory proposed by scholars in relation to the issue of culture shock, demonstrating as well how pupils go over different stages during their living overseas experience.

Considering the fact that the core of this research project is culture shock and intercultural communication competencies, the researchers intended to explore how the participants experience culture shock and what stages they went through during their stays in the host country. Thereupon, by means of the collected data, participants’ answers showed how pupils experiment this sentiment at different degrees and that intercultural communication competencies facilitated their adjustment to the new cultural settlement.

The following three fragments were taken from the interview and questionnaire conducted with participant seven, during the data analysis, it was confirmed that all the participants experienced culture shock:

**QARC1U1:**
As it was in an island, I found shocking their dress code. I thought they were used to wearing informal clothes, but they were very elegant in their workplaces.

**SEIARC1U3:**
You know, yeah, media, the internet, social networks? Yeah, because it's very common to see those pictures of memes? Yes! Yes! On Facebook, like, okay, Jamaican in well, so yes! And friends, well, you know how stereotyping works… yeah, like, everybody talks about it, but they don't really know, we don't really know.
SEIARC1U4: I also felt different in terms of… in terms of… interculturality because it was, I had different thoughts and stereotypes, and when I… was there, I realized things were different.

Taking into account what was explained by participant seven, it was evidenced that she was suffering from culture shock since stereotypes are part of the psychological discomfort that precludes the understanding of the host culture (Oberg, 1960). Nevertheless, due to her intercultural knowledge and sensitivity, she was able to get rid of those thoughts and adopt a different attitude toward Jamaican culture. Similar results were found in the investigation conducted with Erasmus students in Turkey, where Aksoy et al. (2017) analyzed pupils' previous knowledge in relation to the foreign destination. They concluded that international students tend to have stereotypical images and assumptions that are preconceived based on the media and their families' thoughts; however, once they are in touch with the host culture, their perceptions change in the wake of the apprehension of intercultural knowledge, awareness, and sensitivity. Equally, Korkut et al. (2018) inferred that stereotypes might result in deceitful expectations with respect to the outer culture; nonetheless, once pupils gain intercultural knowledge through experience, they develop a different attitude derived from the acquired intercultural awareness.

The concept of culture shock was first introduced by the Oberg in 1960, declaring that this state of mind is divided into four stages that he respectively classified as honeymoon, crisis, recovery, and adjustment. Bearing this in mind, one of the specific objectives of this inquiry was to identify which phases of culture shock were lived by inbound and outbound academic mobility, but in the course of the data analysis it was possible to ascertain that all of the participants went through all of the stages; however, they all experienced them at different degrees. Then, it was necessary to split this category into four subcategories that are related to
the previously mentioned phases, and two extra subcategories that are part of the acculturative stressors that are present in the second stage. In this sense, this finding was divided as follows:

**Honeymoon Stage in International Students**

This was the first subcategory that was found during the data analysis; Oberg (1960), declares that the honeymoon stage is the initial phase of culture shock. This chapter of the living abroad experience is characterized by the excitement and fascination that produces the novelty. The sojourn is captivated by the intrigue of those cultural differences and feels pleasant with its first superficial encounters with the local culture.

When analyzing the raw data, words such as exciting, happiness, new flavors, incredible landscapes, people’s politeness, and cultural diversity were used by the participants to define the primary phase of their experience while studying overseas. Therefore, their descriptions allowed to corroborate that these international students went through the honeymoon period. The figure below was taken from the online survey and is one of the proofs of the aforementioned:

**Figure 1**

*Students’ excitement for the novelty*

![Chart showing students' excitement](chart.png)

Note: This figure was modified to join the answers from the questionnaires since one was in English and the other one in Spanish. The online surveys had both the same questions.
The following pieces of information taken from the questionnaire and the interview with participants five, six, and seven complement what was previously mentioned:

**QMISC1SC1U2:**
Los paisajes increíbles, las instalaciones de la universidad, la amabilidad de la mayoría de la gente cuando se enteraba que estaba de intercambio y que soy Argentina

**QCSC1SC1U2:**
Lo multicultural que es la academia y la manera positiva en que acogen al extranjero.

**SEIARC1SC1U2:**
Well, when I was, as I told you before, I chose with my… best friend, yes, and we talked about that country a lot, of course, because we were very excited about it.

The pieces of data presented above reaffirmed what the researchers were trying to demonstrate from the beginning. Thus, it could be confirmed that all of the participants of this investigation went through the honeymoon stage; in view of the fact that they were fascinated and delighted about all of the new things they were experimenting with while studying abroad. Likewise, in the research directed by Harrell et al. (2017), they discovered that international students are motivated by the novelty that offers this new culture as well as all of the possibilities for adventure and discernment that it brings; besides, these scholars pointed out that the desire of traveling and exploration intensifies pupils’ excitement. Correspondingly, Aksoy et al. (2017) found similar results, concluding that the majority of international pupils are eager to venture into the new reality based on their first impressions and previous knowledge.

**Crisis Stage While Adjusting to the New Systems**

The second subcategory that was evidenced while analyzing the collected information was what Oberg (1960) defined as the crisis stage. For the duration of this period, the international student may experience stress or anxiety while confronting situations or events that
are perceived as obstacles. Furthermore, the sojourner could experiment with feelings of discomfort, disappointment, and discontent, among others; this is due to the life changes that moved from enchantment to reality. This phenomenon takes place once students have to adjust to the cultural and academic systems of the receiving country.

In the data analysis of the online survey, it was indicated by the results that seven participants felt stress or anxiety occasionally while the other two felt stress or anxiety most of the time. The following figure from the questionnaire exposes this finding:

**Figure 2**

*Stress and anxiety during the adaptation process*

Note: This figure was modified to join the answers from the questionnaires since one was in English and the other one in Spanish. The online surveys had both the same questions.

Participant four expressed on the online survey the following statement:

**QGFC1SC2U2:**
Me cuesta mucho acoplarme más en lo académico y en lo cultural.

According to what participant four claimed, she suffered from stress or anxiety most of the time; in as much as the academic and cultural systems resulted confusing and shocking for
her. This is one of the most common acculturative stressors and is also one of the factors that starts breaking the enchantment.

The interviews consolidated what was found in the online surveys. Here, the selected students amplified their answers and explained what caused them stress or anxiety during their adjustment to the new academic and cultural systems:

**SEIDGC1SC2U1:**

> Yo creo que el 90% del tiempo siempre estuvo la ansiedad, al principio más fuerte que al final, pero pues siempre.

The segment above is one of the samples that validated that international students suffer from stress or anxiety while adjusting to the new systems. The level of stress or anxiety will depend on the individual capacity to adapt and assimilate to the local customs beliefs and behaviors. Each person processes differently stressful situations based on their sociocultural backgrounds, and personality traits, along with their emotional and psychological states; this will also determine the degree of stress and anxiety as well as the time for recovering. Sherry et al. (2010) findings are in agreement with the prior statements that were thrown from the data analysis; these researchers argue that international students feel particularly challenged when they have to learn new cultural norms of behavior and politeness. They further their assertion by adding that most pupils, in spite of suffering from stress or anxiety, are able to adjust and cope with the new lifestyle. In this same line, Harrell et al. (2017) suggest that expectations influence students’ behaviors and attitudes; therefore, when the receiving country does not meet their expectations or they are not able to reach the expected outcomes, pupils tend to feel stressed or anxious.
Language Barriers in Social Contexts

The first acculturative stressor that was established while analyzing the data was language barriers. Chen (1999) considers that language anxiety is a stressor that appears in both sociocultural and academic scenarios. This stressor can impede or diminish intercultural encounters, due to the frustration that the impossibility of effective communication produces.

The following figure shows how effective was students’ communication with the locals:

**Figure 3**

*Communication effectiveness in the host country*

![Chart showing communication effectiveness in the host country](chart.png)

Note: This figure was modified to join the answers from the questionnaires since one was in English and the other one in Spanish. The online surveys had both the same questions.

Most students had language barriers while interacting with the local culture, due to language or idiomatic differences. Although the majority of the participants were Spanish speakers and used this same language as the vehicle for communication, they had trouble understanding the slang and expressions of the target country. For those who had to communicate in a different language from their mother tongue, the barriers were bigger and more common.

The units of information at the bottom exemplify how participant nine encountered language as a barrier most of the time during his stay in the receiving culture:
SEIDGC1SC3U1: 
Pues realmente la barrera más fuerte que yo sentí fue la del idioma, de yo poder expresarme y poder entender lo que el otro decía.

SEIDGC1SC3U2: 
Me frustraba mucho la barrera idiomática, tratar de expresar algo y no ser capaz, siempre he sido muy perfeccionista y siempre me gusta como expresar tal cual lo que estoy pensando, lo que estoy diciendo y digamos que cuando me hacían una pregunta y tenía que responder algo o quería expresar algo a alguien para mí era muy importante, pues era muy difícil cada minuto literalmente.

SEIDGC1SC3U3: 
Me sentía un poco tonto por no entender lo que me decían, y como te mencionaba, a veces llegaba al punto de fingir que sí entendía, pues como para evitar ese malestar en la conversación, y me sentía muy mal en ese sentido.

The three pieces of data above reconfirmed the researchers’ hypothesis in relation to the degree of anxiety and stress produced by language differences. Participant nine specified that he felt stressed most of the time because of the language barriers he experienced during his stay in Belize. Even though on the island, as he communicated, people spoke both English and Spanish, his language proficiency and the islanders' accent precluded effective communication. Therefore, his verbal interactions were constantly causing him stress and anxiety due to his personality traits and expectations in regard to the awaited outcomes.

Participant eight, also reported language as one of the main barriers during his stay:

SEICMC1SC3U: 
Because they… speak English? Yes! But they also speak patois. So, it's you know Creole, so I couldn't… get that. So, it was difficult to interact with them. That mainly, that was stressful sometimes.

Although participant eight was able to speak English fluently, he struggled when interacting with people outside of academia; in view of the fact that in Jamaica, the patois is the national language and English is the official one. Jamaicans mainly communicate with their English-based creole, while English is the language with legal and educational status; therefore,
is employed to run government operations, businesses and study. Taking into account the previous information, during the data analysis, it was evidenced that most of the participants who had to use different languages from their mother tongue and Standard English had to make an extra effort because of the characteristic features each English variation has.

All of the quoted segments proved what the researchers have stated in their hypotheses. Since language differences can lead to misunderstandings or in severe cases even impede verbal communication. In accordance with this, Aksoy et al. (2017) observed that language barriers could generate cultural distance and discomfort, preventing active interaction with locals; thus, to lessen the impact of these acculturative stressors they suggest that students should advocate developing ICC to make their cross-cultural encounters effective and appropriate. In the same vein, Harrell et al. (2017) emphasized that this obstacle prevents effective intercultural encounters to happen; besides, it reduces pupils’ confidence because they feel discouraged in their attempts. Language barriers can be stronger than students’ willingness to interact and use the language of the host culture.

**Homesickness During the Crisis**

The second acculturative stressor that was identified during the course of the data analysis was homesickness. Hannigan (1997) claims that there is a relationship among homesickness, psychological adjustment, and academic adaptation. Thereupon, the situations and events students have to face while interacting academically and culturally will determine their level of homesickness.

Through the following unit of information can be seen how participant nine communicated that he was feeling homesick, which is another acculturative stressor that drives the sojourn to the crisis phase:
The previous excerpt reinforced the initial hypotheses of the researchers that culture shock can affect to a certain degree pupils. After some weeks the initial state of excitement transcends to the crisis period because apart from missing their old lives in their countries of origin, what students miss the most are their friends and families. In this particular case, participant nine was aware of missing his grandfather because of his health conditions. Then, he occasionally felt the need to go back to his country to be able to take care of his relative. This confirms that the psychological and emotional factors that live each individual shape their degree of homesickness.

The piece of data below shows how participant three is constantly conscious of missing his friends:

**SEIAAC1S4U3:**
El otro día por ejemplo me llamaron que era el cumpleaños de un amigo y nada si, los amigos, el salir así todos juntos, a menudo los extraño, si un poco.

Most young adults manifest a big affect to their friends and place considerable attention to their social lives. College life is a unique period, which is why most students would like to live this process with their close friends not only for leisure time but also for the emotional and psychological support that their significant others could offer. Accordingly, participant three disclosed that he often missed partying and spending time with his friends. Besides, he indicated that he occasionally felt homesick while adjusting to the new cultural and academic systems and that this feeling was maximized every time, he found himself missing his friends.
The figure below exhibit that one participant felt homesick most of the time, six occasionally, and one not at all:

**Figure 4**

*Homesickness while studying abroad*

2. How often were you conscious of missing your family and friends while you lived in the host country?  
9 responses

![Pie chart showing the distribution of responses](chart.png)

- Most of the time: 22.2%
- Occasionally: 66.7%
- Not at all: 11.1%

Note: This figure was modified to join the answers from the questionnaires since one was in English and the other one in Spanish. The online surveys had both the same questions.

Considering all of the presented samples, the data confirmed that the stress resulting from the adaptation to the new cultural and academic systems, as well as the awareness of missing their friends or families, provoked homesickness and increased students’ levels of stress and anxiety. Harrell et al. (2017) encountered similar outcomes in their investigation, these researchers noted that exchange pupils found homesickness as a challenge; however, students who were single experienced this feeling to a lower degree. Closely to Harrell et al. findings, Sherry et al. argued that international students are vulnerable when they find themselves missing their significant ones; likewise, they suggested that to reduce this vulnerability, universities should promote cross-cultural encounters to help international students integrate better with the local community.
**Recovery After the Crisis and Strategies to Overcome it**

This subcategory was found when the researchers were analyzing the information related to the strategies students used to cope with stress and anxiety during their adjustment process. Oberg (1960) labeled this phase as recovery and stated that if the sojourn is able to get acquainted with the language used as well as the cultural differences will open itself to the new cultural settlement. In this stage, problems are seen as opportunities for improvement; moreover, the acculturative stressors do not have the same impact on students’ emotional and psychological states since they already built a scheme of strategies that are useful when facing difficulties in cross-cultural scenarios.

The figure below demonstrates that the majority of pupils were able to successfully cope with strategies to adapt to the new cultural and academic systems, only one of the participants felt helpless most of the time while trying to use such strategies:

**Figure 5**

*Strategies to adjust*

![Pie chart showing responses to the question: 4. Did you ever feel helpless or powerless when trying to cope with strategies (seeking for others’ support, being open-minded and curious, using observation skills, etc.) to adapt to the new settlement? with 9 responses.*

- **Most of the time**: 77.8%
- **Occasionally**: 11.1%
- **Not at all**: 11.1%

Note: This figure was modified to join the answers from the questionnaires since one was in English and the other one in Spanish. The online surveys had both the same questions.
The following figure from the online survey exposes how most students were able to successfully interpret non-verbal communication features while interacting with locals:

**Figure 6**

*Capability of interpreting paralinguistic features*

5. When talking to locals, how often were you able to correctly interpret their paralinguistic features? (Gestures, facial expressions, eye contact, body language, personal space)

9 responses

![Pie chart showing the distribution of responses. The chart indicates that 66.7% of respondents were able to interpret paralinguistic features most of the time, and 33.3% did so occasionally.]

Note: This figure was modified to join the answers from the questionnaires since one was in English and the other one in Spanish. The online surveys had both the same questions.

Using non-verbal communication is one of the most common strategies to make possible intercultural interactions when there are language barriers. Hence, it is crucial that students develop the necessary competencies to appropriately interpret paralinguistic features. The figure above shows that six of the participants were able to correctly identify non-verbal communication most of the time, while three of them only did it occasionally.

Participants seven and eight explain how they used different strategies to adjust to the new systems and overcome the crisis:

**SEICSC1SC5U1:**

We could like use their body language or do one thing or another, and then we were able to communicate with them.
SEIARC1SC5U2:
Well, ummm, when we… wanted to travel or well to go out, we started to check those places before on Google Maps. So, we took screenshots of the route, so we just followed the route and so it was easier… so yeah, … I think the resources were… technology! And body language, of course, it helps everybody.

Participants seven and eight explained some of the strategies they use to overcome ‘the crisis’ and adjust to the new cultural environment. They both agreed on the importance of body language, but they relied on it differently. While participant eight interpreted the locals’ body language to understand what they were trying to say, participant seven implemented body language as a strategy to make communication possible. Furthermore, she also had technology as a tool to lessen possible problematic events or situations and reduce in this way stress and anxiety.

The previously cited units of information validated the researchers’ assumption that using different strategies to adjust to the new living conditions is fundamental to successfully recuperate from ‘the crisis’ and move to the final stage. All students followed different paths to get to their final destination based on their personalities and goals; however, the majority of the participants placed reliance on body language, local support, open-mindedness, curiosity, and observation as the main tools to facilitate effective intercultural exchanges. Contrary to what was found in this investigation, Aksoy et al. (2017), asserted that students should attach to politeness strategies to decrease cross-cultural misunderstandings and consider diverse frames of reference to avoid communication breakdowns. Sherry et al. (2010), on the other hand, suggested that universities should be in charge of helping students to overcome ‘the crisis’ and adapt to the host country, this by offering counseling programs that actually meet the socio-cultural and economic needs of exchange pupils.
Adjustment to the new cultural and academic scenarios

During the data analysis this was the last subcategory that supported the principal finding. The anthropologist Oberg (1960) classified this period as adjustment; here, the sojourner accepts the attitudes and behaviors of the country as another way of living. This is the final phase and it is characterized by the understanding of the key elements that constitute the host culture; the student is now able to communicate better and function with a certain level of success in their daily activities (Samovar et al., 2009).

The adaptation to the cultural and academic systems of the host country is a determinant factor to make international academic mobility a successful experience; hence, the figure below from the online questionnaire, exposes how eight of the participants were able to adjust while only one was not:

Figure 7

Adjustment to the new scenarios

8. Do you feel you were able to culturally and academically adjust to the challenges of the host culture?
   9 responses

Note: This figure was modified to join the answers from the questionnaires since one was in English and the other one in Spanish. The online surveys had both the same questions.
Almost all of the participants of this research project agreed on this matter and supported their answer by explaining why there were able to successfully adjust to the new scenarios. The excerpts above were taken from the questionnaire and proved the researchers’ assumptions:

**QPMC1SC6U2:**
Son similares a México en muchos sentidos, el nivel parece el mismo en sistemas académicos, y la cultura es diferente, pero la imagino como una cultura “prima” a la mexicana.

**QCRC1SC6U2:**
Si, considero que al principio me costó un poco, pero hay grupos en los cuales me integre super bien los chicos eran increíbles siempre preguntando y recomendando cosas, lugares etc. Creo que cuánto a lo cultural me encantó fue algo nuevo para mí y la verdad aprendí mucho académicamente y culturalmente.

**QCMC1SC6U2:**
I had accostumed to the host country's dynamics regarding work, passion for sports and food. By the middle of the stay, I no longer felt as an outsider.

Participants one and two were able to adapt faster because they focused on finding cultural and educational similarities to adjust to the novelty; besides, participant three highlighted that she felt culturally and academically enriched due to the constant exchange because locals were eager to support her process. Likewise, participant eight noted that acculturated the country's live dynamics to a point that he did not feel like an outsider anymore.

Bearing this in mind, it is necessary to mention that once students develop ICC their intercultural encounters are more efficacious and appropriate; in view of the fact, they acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to interact under a base of empathy, tolerance, and respect for cultural divergencies.

To expand these ideas, the following units of information extracted from the interviews with participants eight and nine served as support:

**SEICMC1SC6U1:**
By the time, we had to return, I felt very sad. I was accustomed to that life, so I wasn't stressed anymore… you know they have this word irate, so I just like,
went… with whatever game. So, I also learned to understand a little bit of patois, like music [...] So it wasn't like, much of a problem. [...] Their food… when we just got there, everything like was spicy for us. I remember that I could feel like the smell, like a particular smell. But after some time, I didn't feel it, I didn't smell it anymore, because we were also like, … what they ate as well. Like, yeah, I think that … in most aspects or all of them were part of who I was, like, yeah.

**SEIDGC1SC6U2:**
En lo esencial, siento que si me adapté, sí, es decir, no es como que yo diga, yo aquí no puedo vivir o mejor dicho ya una semanita y me puedo quedar un año pero ya hasta ahí, yo perfectamente podría vivir toda la vida en Belice.

As participant eight previously enlightened, he acculturated the target culture and made it part of himself; in as much as he integrated into his life what Peterson (2004) calls little visible and invisible aspects of culture. In the beginning, he felt shocked by the foreign culture but during the course of his stay, he was able to actively interact with the host's ways of living and even incorporate them into his own. Furthering this statement, participant nine claimed that he could even live all of his life surrounded by the cultural wonders he discovered in Belize because although language represented a barrier at first, he reached a level of comfort and adjustment that enable him to adapt to the local norms of behaving and thinking.

The aforecited segments confirmed once again that the participants of this study went through all of the stages of culture shock. Validating the initial thought of the researchers and fulfilling the first objective that was declared. Moreover, this final period, reaffirmed that adjustment is attributable to ICC, and therefore, is imperative that international pupils flourish this competence to live a pleasant experience in the receiving country. Adjusting to the local norms of behaving and thinking make possible an efficient adaptation to the new academic and cultural scenarios. In the same fashion, Aksoy et al. (2017), emphasized that developing adaptability skills allowed pupils to assess situations or events from multiple perspectives and consider diverse realities, as well as augment tolerance for unknown behaviors and attitudes;
these scholars added to their hypotheses that maturing ICC helps students to adapt at the
cognitive, behavioral, and affective levels. In spite of that, Sherry et al. (2010) concluded that
adapting to new cultural norms is always challenging for exchange students and that universities
should be in charge of assisting international pupils during their acclimatization stage; alongside,
Sherry et al. (2017) asserted that tertiary education institutions should provide students with
cultural induction and learning in the orientation programs to avoid misunderstandings,
communication breakdowns, and isolation.

The Short-term Impact of Studying Abroad

The second challenge of this query was to explore how culture shock impacted students’
lives in the short term. For this reason, was necessary to demonstrate throughout the gathered
information that this experience can highly benefit international pupils. Thus, this section was
dedicated to exposing how this phenomenon impacted students’ lives in the short term, how it
broadened their worldview, and changed the way in which they see themselves and others.

While analyzing the raw data, the researchers observed that the information given by the
participants reflected how studying abroad impacted their lives in the short term. This verified
the initial speculation the investigators proposed in regard to the outcomes produced by culture
shock and ICC.

Taking into consideration that one of the main areas that the researchers intended to
analyze was the short-term impact of studying abroad, in the participants’ answers it was
evidenced that this experience had a positive impact on their lives. Furthermore, it expanded
their standpoints as we all the way in which they perceive themselves and others based on their
new cultural glasses.
The next four fragments were taken from the questionnaire, during the data analysis, it was confirmed that all the participants had short term impacts in their lives:

**QPMC2U1:**
Me ayudó a desarrollar habilidades personales, de socialización, comunicación, tener una mentalidad y visión más abierta, adaptarme, autogestionar mi vida.

**QCRC2U1:**
Si muchísimo impacto en mi forma de pensar, en mi vida personal, en mi vida social, y en todos los aspectos fue positivo.

**QGFC2U1:**
Fue grande el impacto que he tenido, por la diferencia en la enseñanza de los profesores y de igual manera en que lo personal no son tan exigentes como en la Institución de origen.

**QCSC2U1:**
Sí lo hizo, puesto que desde entonces nació un deseo de viajar más, conocer más personas, explorar campos académicos que no había descubierto, e incluso valorar más aspectos culturales de mi propio país.

The excerpts above showed that studying abroad helped students to improve their communication skills, become more open-minded, some acquired a strong desire for exploration inside and outside their own realities, and others grew at the personal level. Considering this, the researchers noted that the challenges pupils must face while adapting had positive results that impacted their attitudes and behaviors.

In the same fashion, the interviews supported the aforementioned information, here, the participants broadened their answers in relation to the immediate changes they notice during their participation and right after finishing. The next fragments are proof of that:

**SEICMC2U3:**
I was really like a shy person or like I was trying to come out of my shell. But after that, I was a completely… yeah, I was a different person.
SEIARC2U1:
One of those changes was my autonomy. I used to live with my family here with my parents, my sisters, my granny, and when I traveled, I had to live alone by myself, and it was new for me because I had to cook and I had to do different things I never did at home in Colombia, so yeah, so it helped me a lot.

SEIDGC2U2:
Por un lado, pues el hecho de vivir siempre pues en casa teniendo pues como todo resuelto digamos que hace que no te preocupes por muchas cosas, pero pues ya cuando estás viviendo solo, digamos que ya tienes que empezar como a pensar un montón de cosas; más si estás solo en un país donde realmente no conoces a nadie, entonces pues todo es un poquito más difícil o sea ya tienes que resolver donde vas a vivir qué vas a comer cierto.

Based on the cited excerpts of information, the researchers evidenced that exchange pupils also increased their sense of autonomy and responsibility, for instance, participants seven and nine claimed that they felt more autonomous; due to the fact they had to assume responsibilities, such as clean, cook, manage their time and spend their money carefully. This gained independence while studying abroad can footprint students' lives because they become more disciplined and committed. On the contrary, participant eight communicated that one of the biggest impacts he noticed was a renewed behavior and attitude since as he mentioned, traveling overseas helped him to ‘come out of the shell’. Therefore, this demonstrated that pupils’ confidence and self-esteem increase as a result of the intercultural exchange and personal growth. Similar results were found by Otero et al (2019), in their research about international academic mobility and internationalization of tertiary education; in their findings, these investigators indicated that pupils improved their coexistence skills, became more autonomous, incremented their self-confidence, and learned how to manage their resources more effectively. Harrell et al. (2017) studied the impact of studying abroad from a different perspective and reported that international students changed their interpersonal relationships, restated their
thinking about their home country, and expressed a desire for participating in other exchange programs.

The second specific objective of this investigation was to explore the impact of academic exchanges on students’ lives; however, during the data analysis, it was evidenced that all students broadened their standpoints as a result of the cultural interchange, and started to perceive themselves differently as well as others. Hence, it was necessary to add a subcategory that is related to the impact of studying abroad and the acquisition of ICC. In this sense, the concept was developed as follows:

**Intercultural exchanges broaden students’ worldviews, self-images, and perceptions of others**

In the course of the data analysis, this subcategory came into view from the scrutiny of students’ answers and intends to present how academic exchanges impregnated pupils’ lives even at the deepest level. The researchers observed that this extra information related to the impact of studying abroad displayed how this footprint went beyond cognitive and behavioral changes; in view of the fact that most participants declared that their standpoints and perceptions transmuted.

The following unit of data taken from the questionnaire reflects how participant nine disclosed that his worldview was broadened after the intercultural exchanges that he experienced while studying overseas:

**QDGC2SC1U1:**
Como apreciación general considero que la experiencia de viajar a otro país y conocer una nueva cultura es una experiencia sumamente enriquecedora que nos ayuda a ser más tolerantes y comprensivos hacia las diferencias, que nos amplia nuestros horizontes y que nos enriquece como seres humanos.

Participant nine claimed that he became more tolerant and comprehensive toward cultural differences. For this reason, the investigators based on more excerpts of information from the questionnaires and interviews hypothesized that cross-cultural encounters are both a challenge
and an opportunity for learning. Since students have to use multiple strategies to blossom into effective and appropriate intercultural communicators and smoothen the impact of the cultural barriers that may appear while interacting with locals and their ways of living. As a result of this, international pupils integrate new concepts and perceptions into their lives; thus, their open-mindedness increases due to the cultural learning they went through.

To support the aforementioned, the following units of information were implemented:

**SEICMC2SC2U1:**
The vision of what I could do was expanded for sure, and then, of course, also regarding, like, I would say, life dynamics, you know, because in Colombia, I feel that we were like, so hard, and we get up early, and we, you know, like… we think like we have to worry, we have to do this, we have to do that. But then when I was there, I was actually in Jamaica, and it was like a complete different vibe. So it was a different way of living.

**SEIDGC2SC2U1:**
[...] nosotros estamos inmersos en nuestra cultura, en nuestras formas de vida, en nuestras costumbres y viajar a otro país donde las costumbres son muy diferentes, las personas piensan muy diferente y donde el idioma es muy diferente, pues digamos que te fuerza un poquito a eso, a pensar diferente, a buscar soluciones.

Both participants agreed on the conception of adaptation to improve the quality of their stays in the host country. Besides, participant nine mentioned key elements that contributed to confirming the investigators' speculations, he pointed out that he encountered himself immersed in his own culture to a point that did not realize before the importance of valuing others' beliefs, ways of thinking, and behaving; therefore, when participant nine had to search strategies to adjust to the new systems he acquired renewed cultural lenses. Overall, these fragments reinforced the researchers' interpretations in regard to students’ standpoints after the academic exchange.
Bearing in mind the previous statements made by the investigators of this inquiry, it was
also found that as a result of boosting their worldviews, students also transformed the way in
which they perceived themselves and others:

**SEICMC2SC1U2:**
Well, yes, because the way I see myself like before, like, after I was there, I felt
like an international student, like, … I could stand out from the rest of my
colleagues, so that, and then what else changed? Like… probably the vision that I
could do things and that I could go anywhere and like, personal stuff, you know,
like, I think that it like the being there gave me confidence.

**SEIDGC2SC1U2:**
[...] yo siento que era una persona antes de Belice y siento que era una persona
después de Belice, digamos que me siento como que si hubiera de alguna forma
despertado [...] pude darme realmente cuenta de la importancia de los vínculos
con nosotros[…] porque realmente como que comprendí la importancia ¿no? de la
interacción con el otro, del vivir, del conocer, del compartir. [...] ese interés
genuino en conocer al otro, en generar una relación trascendental cierto,
conocerlo en su máxima dimensión.

**SEIAAC2SC1U1:**
Es un momento en el que cuestionas tú mismo, en el que conoces otras
perspectivas de una misma cosa y una experiencia a través de la cual tú puedes
crecer a nivel personal y sobre todo profesional.

Exchange programs offer the opportunity of expanding one’s worldview and change
one’s self-image. Therefore, their footprint is not only behavioral and cognitive but also
attitudinal, spiritual, and affective. This cultural interchange allowed students to rebuilt the way
in which they see themselves and others, along with a wider foundation of how to improve their
interpersonal relationships based on their intercultural learning and lived experiences during their
stays in the host country. Harrell et al. (2017) findings are in concordance with the previous
remarks since they highlighted those pupils had personality and attitude changes, as well as the
acquisition of skills to be fully engaged in a globalized world. In the same vein, Aksoy et al,
noted that students expanded their ethnorelative perspective, the capacity of adaptability, and cultural flexibility; insomuch as, pupils were able to experience their own culture through diversified cultural contexts (Bennet, 2004).
Conclusions

The current research project intended to analyze how students from inbound and outbound academic mobility perceived culture shock during their stays in the host country, as well as how the experiences they went through impacted their lives in the short term; as it was initially stated by the research questions and specific objectives that guided this inquiry. Due to this, it was possible for the researchers to categorize the findings into two sections that respectively answered the query. For doing so, it was necessary to conduct this investigation under qualitative methods, and framed by a methodology that comprised the pillars of descriptive multicase study and grounded theory. This permitted to analyze the data through a process of contrast and comparison, developing a theory of the established phenomenon that was based on a specific bounded context. Therefore, it was found that international students suffered from culture shock and experienced all of the stages instituted by Oberg in 1960, it was also disclosed that studying abroad has positively footprinted students’ lives in the short term; furthermore, the findings showed that most pupils successfully adjusted by using ICC.

The findings evidenced that the nine participants went through the periods of honeymoon and crisis while eight achieved the phases of recovery and adjustment. Even though most students spent few months in the host country, almost all of them experienced the four stages of culture shock, for instance, participant 3 lived the four phases in one month in a half while participant 9 also went through all of the periods in eleven months. Besides, the data exposed that all students had language barriers at some point, and seven students felt homesick when living in the receiving country. The strategies pupils used during the recovery stage were delimitated by ICC and determined the effectiveness with which the sojourn adjusted to the new cultural environment. Likewise, the researchers found that maturing ICC equipped international
students with cognitive, behavioral, and affective adaptability, enabling them to reach the adjustment lap.

In the course of the data analysis, it was revealed that this experience impregnated students’ lives at different levels and also impacted them in the short term. Studying abroad permeated the deepest layers of their beings; in as much as the changes transcended from the behavioral and cognitive aspects to the attitudinal, spiritual, and affective dimensions. Most pupils expressed that the academic exchange allowed them to expand their worldview, and also influenced the way in which they perceived themselves and others. The exposure to the new academic and cultural systems gave them a renewed mindset, broadened their realities, and transform their self-image.

Conducting this research permitted the researchers to expose an issue that has not been widely explored, and must be approached differently to help future international students adjust to the new cultural scenarios. Therefore, the ORI could try to offer better accompaniment to help pupils with academic matters. Although the participants expressed they did not feel the need of psychological or emotional support, they agreed on how important it would be if the ORI were more present to resolve doubts in regard to the new academic systems, registration process, email responses, and appropriate guidance for future students who would like to access academic exchanges.

In a globalized world, the urge for moving increases; thus, the internationalization of tertiary education became the goal for most institutions around the world. As was pointed out in the theoretical framework, the UTP has also included in their policies a framework that considers internationalization and advocates the development of ICC to graduate not only qualified professionals but also competent human beings who are able to successfully communicate in
intercultural contexts. Bearing this in mind, this inquiry exhibited based on the gathered information, that for the UTP to accomplish this goal more effectively, more involvement from the ORI is needed.

It was under these bases, that the motives to execute this investigation emerged. There is a gap between theory and reality; in view of the fact that international mobility has been extensively studied from the market demands but limitedly from the students’ perspectives. In light of this, the researchers attempted to divulge how academic exchanges impacted pupils’ lives along with their individual adaptation process to the new cultural settlements. Hence, to examine how they lived this experience at the individual level, the investigators selected a sample of four participants from the total number that was nine, and interviewed them, also because this was the main instrument to collect the needed data to prove the initial speculations that impaled this query.

Overall, all of the chapters were mindfully written under a strong theoretical basis that supported what was stated by the researchers and led to the general conclusions derived from the expected findings. Therefore, the phenomenon to be studied was specified, the bounded context was indicated, the theoretical foundations were exposed to support the reliability and validity of the investigation, the methodology displayed the path to follow, and the findings evidenced the initial hypotheses to allow the investigators to establish a grounded theory. Moreover, the limitations and implications were reported to show the constraints and possibilities for further research. Accordingly, the scrutiny of the different sources was thoroughly inspected to illustrate from the statement of the problem to the findings and discussion that international students are likely to suffer from culture shock, and that it can footprint their lives in the short term.
Limitations

There were several limitations during the development of this research project. To begin with, although there was enough theoretical support, the lack of experience regarding the endowment of the methodology and the data analysis entangled the natural flow that was present while writing previous chapters. Thereupon, various methodological adjustments and changes were needed to better fit the requirements of this qualitative inquiry; initially, the researchers determined that this was going to be a single case study; however, when the cases were established, it was necessary to indicate that it was a descriptive multicase study in combination with grounded theory to be able to analyze the data exhaustively considering the real procedural phases that were compulsory to come up with the expected findings to answer the research questions.

Additionally, the main limitation to accomplishing the objectives of this investigation was to collect the data; in as much as the ORI had a tight agenda and they took longer than expected to send the questionnaire and consent form to the participants. Thereupon, the population to gather the information was reduced, and fewer interviews were conducted. However, this did not affect the overall results that were expected by the researchers since the selected sample fulfilled the necessities of this inquiry.
Implications

The outcomes of the present study have important implications for future researchers who are interested in the fields of interculturality, academic exchanges, and internationalization of higher education. These findings exposed how international mobility can be studied from different perspectives considering the specific needs of the investigators. Thereupon, it was evidenced that pupils from inbound and outbound academic mobility experienced culture shock at different degrees and that studying abroad impacted their lives in the short term. Those who are willing to immerse themselves in the journey of examining students’ perceptions in relation to the cultural and academic interchange resulting from the programs offered by tertiary education institutions, could direct their inquiries to analyze the long-term impact of these processes or deepen how students develop ICC to adjust to the new systems.

Globalization has transformed the panorama for tertiary education, and as a result, international academic mobility has drastically increased during the last decade. Accordingly, further research should be done in relation to the internationalization of higher education, and how universities in Colombia could improve pupils’ experiences through better accompaniment and guidance. Likewise, research in regard to the global perspective applied to the curricula could be conducted, to emphasize the importance of flourishing ICC to enhance communication among cultures as is established by the principles of globalization and the needs of the twenty-first century.

Finally, the implementation of qualitative methods in the current project granted the measurement of people’s experiences from a humanistic and interpretative framework to avoid scaling their insights in terms of numbers. Consequently, future research related to students’ perceptions should be conducted under qualitative methods to fully explore their standpoints.
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