

UNIVERSIDAD DE QUINTANA ROO

División de Ciencias Políticas y Humanidades

Intercultural identity shifts in college students who have participated in a Study Abroad Program: A case study.

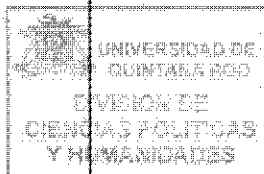
PRESENTA

Rita González Carballo

**Trabajo de tesis elaborado para obtener el grado de
Maestra en Educación**

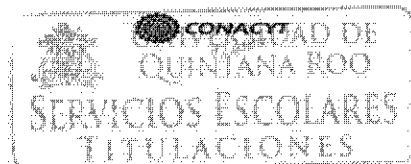
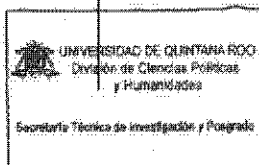
DIRECTOR DE TESIS

Dra. Griselda Murrieta Loyo



Chetumal, Quintana Roo, México, junio de 2017.

Esta investigación fue financiada por recursos del Consejo Nacional de Ciencia y Tecnología.





UNIVERSIDAD DE QUINTANA ROO
División de Ciencias Políticas y Humanidades


**Intercultural identity shifts in college students who have participated
in a Study Abroad program: A case study.**

Presenta: Rita González Carballo

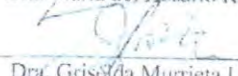
Trabajo de tesis elaborado para obtener el grado de
Maestro (a) en Educación

Aprobado por
COMITÉ DE SUPERVISIÓN DE TESIS:

PRESIDENTE:


Dra. María del Rosario Reyes Cruz

SECRETARIO:


Dra. Griselda Murrieta Loyo

VOCAL:


Mtro. Ezequiel Hernández Mendoza

SUPLENTE:

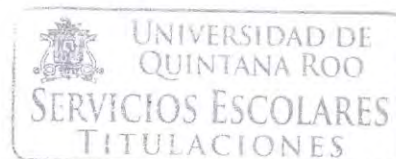

Dra. Edith Hernández Méndez

SUPLENTE:


Mtra. Emma Reyes Cruz



Chetumal, Quintana Roo, junio del 2017



DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this research project to my family. I extend my sincere gratitude to you all for providing me with unfailing support and continuous encouragement throughout this time. I would like to acknowledge my mother Catalina, my siblings Cecy, Fabian and Amour (Carmen), who stayed by my side, even during hard and stressful times.

I would also like to recognize the economic support of my father Desiderio and my brother Tely, who have been always an example of kindness, goodness and nobility, even though this entailed great personal sacrifices. I extend my gratitude to my brother Ivan, who has helped me by taking care of my mother during this process, and to my cousins Judith and Karlos, for their unconditional support, love and care during my years of study and beyond.

To my son Ian who is my “rock” and the essence of my life, thank you!

To God who has given me the strength and has kept me healthy throughout this process.

This dissertation fills me with satisfaction and pride. I have grown throughout this experience both professionally and personally.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation and thankfulness to all of the professors, administrators and students who have helped to make this dissertation possible. It is with sincere appreciation that I recognize the guidance and instruction of my thesis supervisor, Dra. Griselda Murrieta Loyo through the process of my writing dissertation. Her knowledge, experience, strictness and infinite patience helped me to overcome the demanding process. Without her guidance and assistance this thesis would not have been possible. I extend my gratitude to my thesis co-supervisor Mtra. Rosa Isela Sandoval Cruz for her invaluable support regarding editing of my thesis. I would also like to thank Dra. Gabriela Casillas Navarro for helping me in the beginning stages of my work. My appreciation to Dr. Beatrice Dupuy, for her guidance and support when my research process seemed to be unclear. I gratefully acknowledge to Dr. Moises Perales Escudero whose input and guidance has helped along the way. Finally, I would like to thank my thesis committee members, Dra. María del Rosario Reyes Cruz, Dra. Griselda Murrieta Loyo, Dra. Edith Hernandez Méndez, Mtra. Emma Reyes Cruz and Mtro Ezequiel Hernandez Mendoza for their helpful comments throughout the dissertation process.

I would like to express my thankfulness to the students from the Technological University of the Mayan Riviera (UTRM by its acronym in Spanish), Rebeca and Alex (pseudonyms), who volunteered to participate in this study as they were kind to share their time, reflections and experiences with me. I extend my gratitude to the coordinator of the UTRM, Mtro. Benoit Dagobert for his support throughout my research project.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends and classmates who have provided me with support and advice in these years of study. I would specially like to acknowledge my fiends Gustavo and Rosy for their unconditional support during our years of study and beyond.

Funding to support this work came primarily from the National Science and Technology Council (CONACYT by its acronym in Spanish).

LIST OF CONTENT

DEDICATION	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IV
LIST OF CONTENT.....	V
LIST OF CHARTS.....	VII
ABSTRACT	VIII
INTRODUCTION.....	1
The problem statement	5
Rationale.....	6
General Objective.....	6
Specific Objectives.....	7
Research Questions	7
Delimitations	7
CHAPTER I LITERATURE REVIEW	9
1.1. Studies on student’s expectations going abroad	9
1.2. Studies on intercultural encounters	15
1.3. Studies on intercultural identity	19
CHAPTER II THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	27
2.1. Conceptual framework.....	27
2.1.1. Culture	27
2.1.2. Expectations.....	32
2.1.3. Identity.....	33
2.1.3.1. Sociocultural Identity	34
2.1.3.2. Intercultural Identity	36
2.2. Theoretical framework.....	40
2.2.1. Sociocultural Perspective	40

CHAPTER III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	46
3.1. Research Design.....	46
3.2. Context.....	48
3.3. MEXPROTEC	49
3.4. Sampling	51
3.5. Data collection procedure	51
3.6. Instrument	53
3.7. Participants.....	54
CHAPTER IV ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION.....	56
4.1. The Pre-sojourn stage	58
4.1.1. Academic Issues	58
4.1.2. Motivators.....	61
4.1.2.1. Language as a motivator.....	61
4.1.2.2. Mobility, family and friends influence	63
4.1.3. Expectations.....	69
4.1.3.1. Social expectations	69
4.2. The Sojourn stage	72
4.2.1. Sociocultural awareness	72
4.2.1.1. Educational differences	72
4.2.1.2. Cultural practices	78
4.2.1.3. Expectations.....	91
4.3. The Post-sojourn stage.....	96
4.3.1. Education	96
4.3.2. Way of life	100
CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS.....	114
Implications for future research	117
Limitations of the study.....	118
REFERENCES.....	119

APPENDIXES 132
Appendix A: Consent Form 132
Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview 133

LIST OF CHARTS

Figure 1 Experiencing difference 43
Figure 2 Milton J. Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) 44
Table 1: Relation amongst stages, categories, families and codes.....57

ABSTRACT

The aim of this qualitative research study is to describe the impact that a study abroad experience had on two Mexican students' intercultural communication skills, adaptability and identity. I investigated the experience of two Mexican students from the Technological University of the Mayan Riviera (UTRM by its acronym in Spanish) who participated in a Long-term, 12-month Study Abroad (SA) program in France called MEXPROTEC. The experiences of both students have been explored in-depth in this case study research to understand the impacts of such experiences on their individual identities.

The results from the data suggested that a long-term SA program can impact intercultural identity, intercultural skills and knowledge regarding culture and language. Findings allowed me to state that our participants were mainly influenced by friends and teachers to first make the decision of applying and going on the SA program. Students' expectations in academic and language proficiency were fulfilled despite infrequent interaction with native speakers on the chosen communities. The lack of follow-through by Mexican and French institutions played an important role in their favorable or unfavorable intercultural encounters. Despite contrasting differences while living their sojourn, our two participants experienced some degree of cultural identity shift.

INTRODUCTION

In a globalized world in which contact between cultures is expanding rapidly, it is necessary to consider the development of intercultural sensibility in the process of language learning. Globalization is recognized as a meaningful force in the ways we conceptualize the world and our place in it. Furthermore, new conditions in which language learning and teaching take place are due to intensified worldwide social relations. Consequently, communicating in a foreign language has become a priority in the educational system in Mexico at all educational levels. This can be seen in the policy reforms related to foreign language teaching. For this reason, English and in some cases French, are taught as official school subjects in some public and private schools.

The 2013-2018 National Development Plan (PND by its acronym in Spanish) proposes profound changes in education, among other areas. It aims to improve access to and quality of Education in Mexico, as well as to create better links with science, technology and the productive sector. According to the PND, “in order to address the challenges of globalization of knowledge, it is necessary to strengthen internationalization policies of Education through an approach which takes into consideration creating coherence among educational plans and students’ and academics’ mobility” (p.62)

International cooperation in Mexico is promoted by several actors, such as the National Science and Technology Council (CONACYT by its acronym in Spanish), the National Association of Universities and Institutions of Higher Education (ANUIES by its acronym in Spanish), the Foreign Relations Department, the Mexican Association for International Education (AMPEI by its acronym in Spanish), and the Mexican Federation of Private Institutions of Higher Education. Within the latter, SA programs are seen as a mean to gain proficiency in a foreign language and to raise culture awareness. An interdisciplinary approach to education is imperative in order to integrate and build different types of research and modes of understanding among different cultures. The Undersecretary of Higher Education (SES by its acronym in Spanish) offers an international mobility program called Training Program for Higher Technicians (MEXPROTEC by its acronym in Spanish) which aims to prepare students linguistically,

socially, and culturally by travelling to Canada or France as part of a faculty-led long-term SA program.

In Mexico, the SES is the area of the Ministry of Education that is responsible for implementing a program to achieve the quality standards of education required in higher education institutions. According to the SES, high quality education is equitable, relevant, flexible, innovative, diversified and versatile. These characteristics offer a foundational framework of educational programs. To promote high-quality education for all, institutions have established programs which aim to support internationalization in higher education. “Internationalization refers to the specific policies and initiatives of countries and individual academic institutions or systems to deal with global trends” (Altbach, 2002, p. 6). This author gives examples such as policies related to recruitment of foreign students, collaboration with academic institutions or systems in other countries, and the establishment of branch campuses abroad. Therefore, internationalization is used to describe types of cross-border activities. In terms of education, it refers to SA Programs. These programs are seen as key means to acquire language competence and cultural understanding more effectively.

The SES is divided into different administrative areas; one of them is the General Coordination of Technological and Polytechnic Universities (CGUTyP by its acronym in Spanish). This coordination ensures the strengthening and consolidation of the System of Technological and Polytechnic Universities through the elaboration of educational policies, strategies and processes.

The Technological University of the Mayan Riviera (UTRM by its acronym in Spanish), as part of the CGUTyP, takes the concepts of high quality education to frame and guide its curriculum development and implementation. The attributes that give rise to mobility programs are diversified and versatile education. Thus, at UTRM, internationalization policies are seen as great opportunities for students to enhance intercultural contact, within home campuses or studying abroad. For UTRM studying abroad is a means to gain proficiency in foreign languages.

Literature on the subject of exchange and mobility programs report on great linguistic and intercultural benefits for students. As Blommaert (2010, p. xvi) states “The finality of language is mobility, not immobility.” UTRM has designed a program for students to be part of an international mobility program.

Dolby (2004) argues that contemporary study-abroad programs represent an incomparable method of promoting cross-cultural understanding, appreciation of difference, and a relational sense of identity. Nevertheless, SA experiences have been studied since not long time ago.

Freed (1998) integrated in a book, a group of cross-linguistic studies where the relationship between language learning and SA settings are explored. The book is divided in two sections. The first part shows studies based on the result of tests to demonstrate the linguistic advantages of a sojourn abroad (Carroll, 1967; Willis, Doble, Sankarayya, & Smithers, 1977; Dyson, 1988 among others). The second part focuses on large-scale multidimensional studies in America and Europe (Brecht & Robinson, 1995; Ginsberg, Robins & Wheeling, 1992; Meara, 1994 among others), and individual research studies of a sojourn abroad (Möhle, 1984; Raupach, 1984, 1987; DeKeyser, 1986, 1991 among others). According to Freed (1998, pp. 41-42), there are four different areas that are present in the development of linguistic and cultural competencies of the various types of SA experiences: 1) predicting and measuring language gains (Freed, 1995b; Milton & Meara, 1995 among others), 2) comparative studies –language learning abroad and at home (Lafford, 1995, Freed, 1995b among others), 3) the acquisition of sociolinguistic (Freed, 1995a, Siegel, 1995 among others), and 4) student views of learning abroad (Brecht & Robinson, 1995; Polanyi, 1995; Miller & Ginsberg, 1995 among others).

The Office of Study Abroad of Michigan State University identified four typical areas that may be enhanced through participating in a SA program: academic/intellectual, professional, personal and intercultural (as cited by Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard, 2006, p. 458). The nature of the SA experiences can be extremely complex since through these programs is sought to achieve multiple objectives. Therefore, cases studies are very helpful when it comes to understanding this type of experience. For instance, there are case studies (Jackson, 2010; Kinginger 2004, 2008), where individual differences in outcomes are documented on journals, interviews data and narratives, to understand the impact of SA on participants' expectations, intercultural encounters and identities. Kinginger (2004) and Jackson (2010) have studied the effects of SA on language learning in medium-term and long-term programs. Some other studies have shown that students gain a deeper appreciation for and understanding of other cultures as well as their own (Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004).

Some SA programs suggest that students will substantially improve their oral proficiency, they will cultivate intercultural skills and knowledge, improve personal growth and self-

confidence (Archangeli, 1999; Kuh, & Kauffmann, 1985), allowing students to be more competitive in the job market, as a result of their immersion in the target language and culture. Some other studies have informed that ethnorelative worldviews are considered more effective in fostering the mindset, knowledge, and skills linked to successful intercultural communication and adjustment in unfamiliar cultural settings (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Kim, 2001, 2005). Some other studies have proved that this cannot be done without a quality and quantity of intercultural encounters or social network (Isabelli-García, 2006). Some sojourners may return home with traditional negative stereotypes of their hosts and the host culture (Allen, Dristas, & Mills, 2007; Bateman, 2002; Stroebe, Lenkert, & Jonas, 1988).

Empirical studies in Mexico focusing on linguistic outcomes, social and cultural dimensions regarding SA experiences have been, to the best of my knowledge, extremely limited. I identified only two studies. Medina-Lopez-Portillo (2004) conducted a research project of US students coming to Mexico in a summer abroad program. She focuses on the linguistic outcomes of students as a consequence of their SA experience. Murphy (2007) researched some Mexican students going to Poland as part of a SA program. Murphy's research project aims to answer questions related to equality of opportunities and some characteristics of the internationalization in educational settings. These two former research projects take part in educational settings. However, expectations, encounters and identity shifts were not identified in any of these studies. Taking into account that UTRM policies aim at promoting intercultural contact it seems necessary to identify any intercultural change students who participate in exchange programs may face.

Based on these previous studies, I was interested in knowing how students from UTRM experienced the time spent in another country, their expectations, intercultural encounters and whether they have undergone any change regarding their identity and in relation to their own and foreign culture. The UTRM abroad program seeks to provide students with intercultural tools to contribute to our nation's effectiveness and competitiveness in today's globalized world. Thus, the aim of this research is to discern and explain the stages of the process that participants experienced in their intercultural communication skills, adaptability, and identity as part of a possible process of transformation of their intercultural identity.

This present research project then focuses on student's expectations going abroad, intercultural encounters and any identity shifts that two Mexican students experienced during

their SA program. It would be essential to analyze a possible intercultural identity transformation of the participants. Furthermore, this research foresees to enrich the body of literature in this area. The findings of this research may be of interest to determine if UTRM policies have reached their objective regarding the implementation of SA programs. Teachers may also benefit from the findings of this research since they may identify weaknesses in the students' training program.

The problem statement

Even though three cohorts from UTRM have been sent up to a SA sojourn in France, these academic experiences have not been analyzed by any of the participants of the educational setting (students, teacher or administrators). We do not have knowledge of their outcomes, in any area, after the SA program. Through MEXPROTEC, the UTRM offers to prepare students to be active and critical participants in society by acquiring multicultural experiences, technical practices and linguistic and intercultural competences during an experience abroad.

Students who have been part of abroad academic experiences have shared their opinions of the exchange program with few people. However, their experiences have not been systematically analyzed so as to identify weaknesses and strengthens of the program. Throughout their daily comments, students who have participated in foreign experiences have stressed the need to include more cultural activities as well as historical and ideological training to make it easier for students to approach the foreign culture. Despite these comments, those experiences have not been evaluated. Students' have not been inquired on their experiences and intercultural encounters. Thus, there is no evidence of the impact this program may have on students' personal and academic life. There have not been studies to determine whether the objective of the MEXPROTEC implemented at the UTRM through the SA program has been reached. Even though, this study will not focus on the evaluation of the degree to which the program's goals have been met, I may be able to stress some of the program's goals achieved by our participants based on the results.

This research then, aims at analyzing student's expectations going abroad, intercultural encounters and any identity shift they may have experienced during their SA program.

Rationale

Study abroad in a globalized era has changed conditions of language learning. To accept a diversity of cultures and their differences as societies, as well as individuals, are some of the abilities that need to be developed by students in order to communicate with people all over the world. Students' attitudes toward the management of differences in conversational expectations, cultural norms, and personal identities have an impact on the development of linguistic and cultural input during SA experience.

The SA experience offers students opportunities to interact socially and academically in the target language while immersed in a foreign culture, this experience could be reflected in intercultural identity transformation. The importance of an international experience should not be underestimated. Thus, analyzing the possible intercultural transformation of students through their abroad experience will help them, as well as teachers and administrators, to better understand their intercultural experiences. It is necessary to illustrate the kind of challenges students encounter while studying abroad, the struggle undergone to gain access to learning opportunities and first-hand experience of how it feels to be representatives of their nation.

Although SA programs may differ in varying degrees of immersion, it is presumed that spending twelve months abroad will provide ample opportunity for participants to interact with people of the local culture leading them to a potential identity transformation. Additionally, the results of this research study may be helpful to enrich academic programs of UTRM.

General Objective

Thus, taking into account the benefits that a SA experience may bring to academic development of students, this study's general objective is to describe the impact that the SA experience had on two Mexican students' expectations, intercultural communication skills, adaptability and identity.

Specific Objectives

To provide a comprehensive description of the students' social / interpersonal and individual experiences.

To analyze our subjects' expectation about the situation they decided to live in and how they reacted and behaved.

To know how and why participants interpret and ascribe meaning to what they lived, and to other aspects of the world (including encountering others).

To know how the experience impacted their academic and personal life when they returned to Mexico.

Research Questions

RQ1. Why did university students decide to participate in a SA program and what were their expectations of this experience?

RQ2. How did students experience cultural differences among French and Mexican culture during their sojourn in France?

RQ3. Did students negotiate and develop new cultural understandings of themselves and others during their sojourn in France? If so, what can account for this transformation?

RQ4. How did this experience impact students' academic and personal life?

Delimitations

Among the delimitations, this research focused on only two Mexican students from the UTRM who participated in the SA program. This research project started after the arrival of participants to Mexico. Therefore, the use of several instruments to compare a possible transformation of the Self, such as journals, blogs, surveys, proficiency language tests, could not be used. In contrast to

some of the literature that was reviewed, this study could not assess intercultural competences, sensibility, cultural awareness or language proficiency over the actual period of SA. However, by designing a semi-structured interview, I attempted to research three stages of the SA experience: before, during and after the sojourn. These stages contributed to a better understanding of the students' intercultural development from this program. Nevertheless, the contrast between real and perceived transformation of the Self could not be taken into consideration since participants were contacted after their SA experience. Another delimitation was that I investigated only two cases because of time constraints and my lack of experience in the area. Regarding the topics under investigation, it was expected that the delimitation of the number of constructs, would help me focus on some issues and invest more effort in their analysis.

CHAPTER I LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapter one is a review of relevant literature on SA programs among university students. The chapter is divided into three parts in order to examine students' experiences before, during and after SA programs. The first section presents studies on students' expectations going abroad. The second introduces studies on intercultural encounters and the last one presents studies on intercultural identity.

1.1. Studies on student's expectations going abroad

The first group of studies aims to identify students' expectations going abroad. Some of the aspects students expected to find in the following section are cultivating intercultural skills and knowledge, improving personal growth and self-confidence, travelling, meeting different people, experiencing a different way of establishing peer relationships and experiencing a different culture. These aspects will help us to gain understanding of the reasons that led university students to participate in a SA program.

Allen & Herron (2003) examined students' linguistic and affective outcomes after a summer program. This investigation sought to determine if significant changes occurred in two linguistic factors (oral and listening French skills) and two affective factors (integrative motivation and language anxiety) after a SA program. Participants were 25 university students (17 females, 8 male) enrolled in a 2001 summer SA program. The instruments used were interviews and evaluation programs based on Gardner's (1985) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). Course options were diverse and classes were held in a facility shared by other American university SA programs. Students met for one hour per day, five times per week, except when replaced by a group excursion. Students chose to live during their SA period either with a French family or in a *pension de famille* with a graduate student from the students' home institution and other students. The findings reported that students gained self-confidence concerning oral and listening skills in French. At this point, students' expectations of improving

their oral and listening skills in French were achieved. However, analysis of interviews and program evaluations suggested that participants faced two sources of language anxiety while abroad: linguistic insecurity and cultural differences. This was explained as a result of lack of out-of-class time invested in establishing contacts with target culture members. This finding suggests that even though students considered integrative motives (e.g. meeting different kinds of people, getting to know French) the most important factor for SA participation, they did not have opportunities to get to know the French.

Kinginger (2004) examined the case of Alice, a North American student in France. She studied the way Alice imagined French-speaking communities, her own role within those communities and symbolic capital she would gain through this endeavor. To collect information in this study, various instruments were used such as interviews, journals, e-mails and letters. The data was analyzed using HyperQual 3, a software used to explore and verify themes. Alice's expectations were to be herself in a new context where her social options were broadened and to have access to a life of cultured refinement. Her desire was to learn French with and from other people in order to become a teacher. Alice had to live the *real* France versus her *imaginary* France and that led her to have difficulties in her initial experience as a SA participant in social settings both in and out of school. Alice suffered from depression and demotivation. Nevertheless, by challenging herself and accepting others, she recovered her motivation and eventually succeeded and fulfilled her expectations. These findings reveal that, even though at the beginning Alice struggled with the mismatch between her expectations and what she actually found, in the end she achieved her goals. This may happen to my participants too. In Mexico, there are many myths about French people and culture. Students usually have a set idea about French schools and social life that may influence their academic expectations and behavior when being in France.

Kim & Goldstein's (2005) study firstly identified intercultural attitudes associated with favorable expectations about participation in SA programs. Secondly, it explored gender differences with respect to the intercultural attitudes addressed in the present study and, finally, it investigated the relationship between previous travel experience and expectations of SA. The participants were 282 undergraduate volunteers enrolled in a required 1st-year seminar course at a liberal arts college in the Southwestern United States. A questionnaire was completed by students and consisted of intercultural measures as well as items on basic demographics and

travel experiences. Exploratory items on academic and career concerns related to SA were also included. It measured their assessment in ethnocentrism, intercultural communication apprehension, language interest and competence, prejudice, intolerance of ambiguity, and expectations about SA. Findings revealed that the level of positive expectations were easily met by students who were genuinely interested in learning the language. Those who showed a low ethnocentrism were less apprehensive and more willing to try intercultural communication. Additionally, female participants were significantly more likely than male participants to have positive expectations of SA and showed significantly less ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension and greater language interest. Kim & Goldstein's (2005) findings reveal the correlation among positive expectations and students' interest in learning the language. These findings made me think about the possibility of identifying by gender differences, if expectations while studying French in Mexico changed while being in France.

DeKeyser (2010) developed a mixed method research and, even though the aim was to understand how and why accuracy in speaking develops during studying abroad, results were quite interesting regarding attitude, motivation and expectations. The participants were 16 US students of Spanish as a Second Language of the University of Maryland. Students were followed up during their 6-week program in Argentina. They were interviewed in Spanish pre- and post-sojourn. They were also given a questionnaire on their views about language learning and were observed under a wide variety of social contexts. Tests of writing and attitude were taken at the beginning of the program. Pre-sojourn data painted a picture of motivated students who were eager to practice and who hoped to improve their speaking skills. However, students lost their interest in achieving their expectations quickly, and consequently they lost their motivation. Data collection and analysis showed little progress regarding grammar knowledge due to the lack of grammar and proceduralized knowledge students had before travelling. Additionally, they showed little improvement when speaking accurately (even for basic structures) without trying to be fluent. The conclusion of the author is that expectations of students cannot be fulfilled without adequate preparation in the form of proceduralized or at least declarative knowledge of the second language grammar. This case shows that SA programs sometimes do not fulfil students' expectations and/or promises made by institutions. Even though the research of DeKeyser (2010) showed that an inefficient pedagogical instruction process pre-sojourn plays in detriment to motivation, similar studies demonstrated that students improved their proficiency over the course

of a semester or more. For instance, Isabelli-García (2003) states that when students do improve their proficiency over the course of an abroad experience, they do fulfil their expectations of immersion in the target culture to improve especially their oral production ability. This may mean that, even if motivation is negatively affected when students do not have the required pedagogical instruction and declarative knowledge, students' proficiency may raise.

Forsey, Broomhall & Davis (2012) conducted a mixed-method research during 2009 at the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences (FAHSS) at University of Western Australia (UWA). The aim was to gain a deep understanding on what students expected to learn and what they really learnt from the university SA program. The UAW claims a fundamental responsibility *to prepare its graduates to be active and critical participants in society* through a transformative process of internationalization. Participants were 219 undergraduate students from the University of Western Australia (UWA). The range of ages was from 17 to 64 years and the sixty-eight percent were women. The instruments used were surveys and focus group interviews consisting in semi structured interviews with 14 university students who had studied abroad. The survey reflected that the vast majority of respondents (91%) had already travelled abroad. However, just less than 6% of those surveyed had studied abroad. When answering why they might like to study abroad, *culture* was the first choice, followed by *independence* and *travel broadens the mind*. When asking why students would not want to study abroad, *cost* was the first response followed by *leaving family and friends*. Even though *culture* was the predominant answer for the question, when they were asked to describe their learning outcomes they found it difficult to articulate an answer. Then they gave superficial answers about food, student social life, the cost of transport and weather. Students also focus on personal experiences outside of formal educational settings, for instance: having fun, making new friends or travelling. The authors concluded that there was little insight or deeper understanding of the differences or similarities between *home* and *away*. When asked how, or in what ways, they felt more independent after SA program, replies focused on simple daily tasks such as washing, cooking, and making their own travel arrangements. Some said they wanted more independence from their parents, so they moved out of home when returning to their home town. Although most students reported high levels of confidence before their SA experience and many had travelled on their own before, some students thought they had become more confident, particularly when communicating with other people.

The last study from this section also researched students' expectations but they were more focused on linguistic skills improvement and their relation to expectations and motivation. Badstübner & Ecke (2009) research sought to contribute to the understanding of short-term SA effect by learning why students participated in the program, what they expected in relation to their language skill development and culture learning at the beginning of the program, and how much they thought they had progressed in language and culture learning at the end of the program. Participants constituted a sample of convenience. 23 students were chosen to participate in a SA program during the summer of 2006 in Leipzig, Germany. All Participants (14 females and 9 males) were undergraduate students, their average age was 22.6 years. The instruments used were two questionnaires based on Language Contact Profile (*Contact Profile*). Students were asked to fill in questionnaires pre and post sojourn. Data was analyzed using analysis of variance (ANOVA). Authors analyzed whether expected gains and reported progress were comparable and whether these correlated with each other and with participants' goals and their reported frequency of listening, speaking, reading and writing in German outside class. Findings showed that students rated their goals as followed: 1) "to study German," 2) "to travel," 3) "to be in contact with Germans," 4) "for culture enrichment," 5) "To get six-course credits," 6) "to find new friends from home university," 7) "to party," 8) "to be away from home," and at the end 9) "to conduct a research project." Correlations were found between the goal "to be in contact with Germans" and expected gains in speaking and listening skills and between the goal "for cultural enrichment" and expected gains in speaking and listening skills. By the end of the program students reported to have improved mostly in their cultural understanding, followed by listening, vocabulary growth, reading and speaking. The lowest rates of improvement were reported for writing and grammar. Regarding L2 skills for students' perceived improvements fell short on their expectations. However, in the area of cultural understanding expected gains were not different from improvements.

For the purpose of my research the findings reported by Allen & Herron (2003), Kinginger (2004) and Kim & Goldstein (2005) have proven to be relevant to explain the reasons why university students decided to take part in a SA program and what their expectations were. Reasons and expectations from Forsey et al. (2012) support the findings of other research presented in this chapter, such as Badstübner & Ecke (2009) or Allen & Herron (2003). These

studies will help us identify reasons or expectations our participants had previous sojourn and the relation those expectations may have with the learning outcomes from their experience.

The diverse approaches taken by the studies presented through this section are going to be helpful to reach the objective of my study, which is to analyze the discourse of our two participants regarding their expectations about their experience. As described in the literature presented above, the type of expectations plays an important role in motivation since higher expectations such as learning the language or making friends in a short period of time may tend to decrease students' motivation. Findings from the studies reported above have proven to be relevant to explain the reasons why university students decided to take part in a SA program and what their expectations were. These findings confirm that I could aim to identify expectations from different dimensions (academic, linguistic, social, etc.) to have a better understanding of how they influence participants' previous sojourn and the impact of them during their SA experience.

Most studies in the previous section were mixed methods, qualitative or/and quantitative design studies. In general, their objective was related to understand what participants think about their experience in other contexts different from theirs and how they act and behave before, during and after the SA program. These studies discussed above helped me to broaden my knowledge regarding students' expectations going abroad and to have a better understanding of what those expectations are. Most of the studies shared similar findings on the reasons students have to SA such as improving their linguistic skills, experiencing a different culture, meeting other people, cultivating intercultural skills, improving personal growth and self-confidence and travelling.

Some concepts were taken from these studies to state my perspective about the progress through the state of cultural awareness linked to students' experiences, motivation, personalities, and abilities to handle new situations in a complete different context.

1.2. Studies on intercultural encounters

The following studies focus on the importance of the quality and quantity of intercultural encounters for learners entering SA contexts. Some of the studies mentioned in the previous section are going to be shown here since some findings are relevant to this segment.

In general, SA is believed to improve intercultural awareness through a mediation process of *acculturation*. However intercultural contact should take place. The study of Allen & Herron (2003) found out that even though integrative motivation was students' most important expectations and reasons for SA participation, scholars did not appear to invest great amount of time outside university to establish contact with target culture members. This finding coincides with the research of Forsey et al. (2012) where findings revealed that at least half students made less contact with people from their host country than they expected, mainly because they were living in student accommodation with other international students. This contributed to their sense of being *global* but did not increase their understanding of the target society.

In contrast, in the case study of Kinginger (2004), Alice, the subject under study, had difficulties in her initial experience as a SA participant in social settings both in and out of school. Nevertheless, by minimizing cultural differences and adapting to the new and *real* environment, she recovered her motivation and eventually succeeded in gaining access to interaction with French language speakers on an informal basis. Kinginger's findings have shown that access to language is shaped not only by learners' own intentions, but also by those of the others with whom they interact.

The study of Crichton & Scariano (2007) aimed to explain how, across a range of disciplines, interaction between students, both local and international, and between students and staff, can contribute to the development of intercultural awareness, and how this contribution can be assessed and evaluated as *sites of intercultural interaction*. This means, interaction takes place even though you do not travel abroad by programming sessions in *sites of intercultural interaction*. This last concept refers to home university opportunities provided on courses and taken by students and lecturers to participate in practices of their disciplines and to, thereby, negotiate and develop new cultural understandings of themselves and their ways of learning things about others. The study was based on collaborative research methodology and involved participation over one year between researchers, lecturers and students in business, psychology

and foundation studies of the University of Southern Australia in 2006. Data for the study included participant observations of lectures and seminars, interviews with lecturers, course documentation and teaching materials, assessment tasks and samples of students' work and lecturers' assessments. The process of participation involved participants developing their own awareness of and capacity for intercultural understanding, as well as contributing to achieving the broader outcomes of the study. From this ethnographic study, accounts of the experiences of the three lecturers in their courses were developed, elaborated and communicated (psychology, business and Individual and Group Skills) in dialogue with the research team; each of these accounts was a case study in collaboration. This task was a starting point for participants to interact with others helping in developing intercultural awareness. The findings showed learners and teachers are themselves reflexively engaged with languages, cultures and in ongoing learning in their own lives, and, together, in relation to internationalization- In the context of internationalization, then, the development of intercultural dimension is integral to learning in all disciplines and across disciplines. Students' intercultural development within the context of disciplines and across disciplines was seen in terms of enhancing their capacities to work with their own and others' languages and cultures, to recognize knowledge in its cultural context, to examine the intercultural dimension of knowledge applications, and to communicate and interact effectively across languages and cultures. This research has shown that with appropriate and planned activities that involve intercultural encounters, intercultural skills can be developed as well as intercultural awareness.

Another author on intercultural encounters particularly in the field of Second Language Acquisition was Isabelli-García (2003). The author developed a mixed method research to examine the impact over a six-month SA program in Argentina on second language acquisition of three North American University Spanish learners. They were three participants who had studied two years of Spanish prior sojourn. The aim of this study was to prove that immersion in the target culture helps in improving oral production ability. The objective was proved. However, this study did not include the impact in second language acquisition that interaction with native speakers may cause. Therefore, Isabelli-García (2004) in her next research, suggested that the two vital factors that lead to acquisition gains in the SA context are motivation and extended significant target language interaction with native speakers in *social networks*. The authors refer to *social network* as individual interaction with others in multiple capacities (e.g. from colleagues

or classmates to friends). One of the aims of this research was to relate patterns of social contact via analysis of social network logs to development in oral ability. In her research, Isabelli-García described how differences in motivation and attitude can affect social interaction in the host culture giving as a result minimal social encounters with native speakers. Participants were five North American University Spanish learners. The study showed that students with a high-level of motivation were those that had more extended networks and that was correlated with their development of oral abilities. Furthermore, Isabelli-García (2006) in a mixed-method research stated that if learners are immersed in *extended networks* with native speakers will acquire linguistic norms that will help them to improve their oral abilities in L2. According to her, “for learners entering SA contexts, interaction with the context is more likely mediated by their various stages of *acculturation*” (2006, p. 234). The aim of this study was to know what individuals extra linguistic factors (such as motivation, attitude towards the target language and community, and contact with the host culture outside academic settings) can be related to the development of oral communication skills and abilities; and how differences in motivation and attitude can affect quantity and quality of social interaction in the host culture. Participants were four North American University Spanish learners (three males and one female) who participated in a semester SA program in Argentina. They were ranging in age from 19 to 21. The instruments used were pre and post-test Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI), five informal interviews in Spanish (L2), diaries entries for motivation/attitude orientation and social network contact logs. The quantitative measurements were derived from the SOPI and five informal interviews to collect data on pre and post-program proficiency. In addition, five 15-minutes informal interviews were conducted once a month to elicit data for language skills. The qualitative instruments were weekly diaries entries in English. Students wrote about their perception of their language progress and positives or negative events. The diaries as well as the five interviews measured the learners’ social attitudes, which were classified into positive, neutral or negative social attitude toward the host culture. The questionnaires helped them to measure learners’ motivational orientation; moreover, students had to fill out log sheets in order to identify the *social network* where they interacted. These networks showed how learners positioned themselves in their new environment and their *extended network*. Findings prove the connection between motivation, attitude and strength of *social networks*. All participants, at some point, felt frustrated during the program. However, their individual personalities help them to

deal with these situations. This study proved that students with a higher level of motivation created more *social networks*, allowing them for more practice in function of a more advanced level. Furthermore, all students went to all or some of Bennett's (1986, 1993) six stages of *acculturation*. Data show that students who incorporated more easily into *social networks* were the ones who integrated themselves to the new culture through activities regarding daily contact with the host community. They recognized, minimized and accepted cultural differences, providing participants to work their way to understanding and to interaction.

This section of studies on intercultural encounters, presents research projects that relate the importance of intercultural encounters in and out SA contexts. Crichton & Scariano (2007) stated that intercultural awareness and sensibility can be achieved through education and training that do not involve direct contact with other cultures by immersion. However, engaging in a range of activities with local and international people helped them to increase their intercultural awareness and sensibility. This means that students can develop intercultural awareness with an appropriate program designed on campus. Some other studies presented in this section have shown the importance of intercultural encounters to accomplish the act of integrating into the new context (Isabelli-García, 2004, 2006; Kinginger, 2004). Those findings concluded that there is a relation between the quantity and quality of intercultural encounters with the students' motivation and consequently with the way they interact in the new sociocultural context. Furthermore "the interaction with context is most likely mediated by the various stages of acculturation" (Isabelli-García, 2006 p. 234). Hence, in order to reach a state of ethnorelativism or *acculturation* students must pass the ethnocentrism state by an integration process. These findings will be helpful to understand the process experienced by my participants regarding cultural differences among French and Mexican culture. In order to do that I took into consideration factors such as the capacities to integrate and work with their own and others' languages and cultures, to recognize knowledge in its cultural context so they can apply that knowledge to communicate and interact effectively across languages and cultures. Furthermore, some findings are giving me a sense of understanding regarding how attitudes and motivation might influence the interaction with native speakers during their sojourn.

1.3. Studies on intercultural identity

The following studies focus on the transformation of an intercultural identity when students participate in SA contexts. Through socialization in a new context, learners not only convey information but also are creating and maintaining their identities. Therefore, a change on their identities is possible. In the following section some international studies on intercultural identity will be analyzed. Additionally, some of the studies mentioned in the previous section are going to be shown here since some findings are relevant to this segment.

Research on SA has revealed that students who go abroad experience enormous learning and growth in a variety of areas. They frequently gain a deeper appreciation and understanding of other cultures as well as their own (Medina-Lopez-Portillo, 2004). SA also offers other benefits such as personal growth and development, increased confidence and willingness to communicate, and expanded career opportunities (see for example, Archangeli, 1999; Kuh & Kauffmann, 1985). However, the assumption that residence in the host culture immediately encourages development in students' proficiency in the second language and intercultural sensitivity, is being studied by SA researchers and their findings show that this is not necessarily the case (Jackson, 2010). The lack of preparation, unrealistic/unmet expectations, and disturbing intercultural encounters can have unfavorable effects on sojourner perceptions, adjustment, and willingness to interact with host nationals.

Throughout her analysis, Jackson (2010) points out what some researchers have shown through their projects: sojourners may return home with traditional negative stereotypes of their hosts and the host culture (Allen, Dristas, & Mills, 2007; Bateman, 2002; Stroebe, Lenkert, & Jonas, 1988), 'a strengthened sense of national identity' (Block, 2007), and a higher dose of ethnocentrism (Isabelli-García, 2006; Jackson, 2008). Nevertheless, some psychologists have found that enhancing the metacognitive awareness of individuals can alert them to limitations in their knowledge and skills in a particular domain (Fischer, Greitemeyer, & Frey, 2007; Kruger & Dunning, 1999; Taylor & Brown, 1994) that means with appropriate guidance and support, sojourners can set realistic targets for self-improvement. Other studies have found that ethnorelative worldviews are considered more effective in fostering the mindset, knowledge, and skills linked to successful intercultural communication and adjustment in unfamiliar cultural settings (Bennett & Bennett, 2004; Kim, 2001, 2005).

Two studies that have been analyzed in previous segments are those of Kinginger (2004, 2008). Even though they were described before, it seems important to discuss her findings related to intercultural identity since this is the topic of this section.

In the case of Alice, Kinginger (2004) examined two research questions regarding the theme of intercultural identities: 1) How can her disposition toward language learning be characterized in terms of claims to a renegotiated identity? 2) Which aspects of her identity are negotiable, and which are not? For Alice, foreign language learning constituted a bid for a better life, a theme that gave coherence to her education, and a lesson in persistence. Through foreign language learning, she reconstructed her life having the advantage of flexibility and openness in her search for a satisfying professional life. Moreover, she developed political awareness becoming critical on her complacent attitude and eager to learn about the world news. Alice's journey involved negotiation of many facets of her identity: social and linguistic, gender and class identity. Her effort toward French language competence was an *investment* in social identity. Her personal mission was linked to professional aspirations since she wanted to become a French teacher. These findings will be helpful to understand the process experienced by my participants regarding acquisition of a foreign language, and whether or not they considered language acquisition as an investment in social identity.

The second study presented in previous sections is Kinginger's (2008). She analyzed six case studies. Three of them were the students who reported higher learning outcomes and the other three were the students who reported modest learning outcomes. The findings revealed that students going abroad have experiences deeply influenced by the process of globalization, moreover language immersion can be limited by the unwillingness or inability of interlocutors to manage differences in conversational expectations, cultural norms, and personal identities. Successful language learners (Bill, Liza and Louis) tended to be those who adopted an alternative interpretive approach of intercultural comprehension. This means, they engaged in the host culture and interacted with locals. The specifics of these three cases showed that Bill invested substantial effort toward enriching the quality of his interpersonal relationships. Liza framed SA as a concrete step toward a career in international relations, and Louis immersed himself in the study of French literature and criticism as well as in his own French-mediated literary writing. Kinginger (2008) pointed out that opportunities for learning language and culture through interactions with native speakers can be limited. Therefore, students who were truly engaged in

learning the language had to approach, in their own way, the target culture and sought the interaction they needed to achieve their goals. When they adopted an alternative interpretive approach they developed intercultural competences the others could not develop. Some of the factors shown in this research will help us to analyze if a transformation of our participants' identity took place since similar situations were lived by our participants when they tried to adapt to the target culture.

Medina-López-Portillo (2004) aimed to investigate the intercultural sensitivity development of 28 American university students who participated in either a seven-week (short term) program in Taxco, Mexico or a sixteen-week sojourn (long-term) in Mexico City. The findings show that the longer-term sojourners developed a more sophisticated understanding of the host culture and a higher level of intercultural sensitivity. However, both cohorts had inflated opinions about their degree of intercultural sensitivity, rating it at least one stage higher than their actual level. The findings of this study let us know that students may overvalue their experiences; thus, a careful and deep analysis is needed so as not to bias the results of this study.

Jackson (2010) examined the intercultural learning of Chinese students from a Hong Kong university who took part in a five-week sojourn in England in 2005. 14 participants were selected, 2 girls and 12 males, they were full-time English majors in the second year of a three-year Bachelor of Arts program at a bilingual (Chinese-English) University in Hong Kong. All of them were proficient in English. Most of them spoke two languages besides their mother tongue. The SA program aimed to enhance their English language proficiency, intercultural sensitivity, literary awareness, and intercultural communicative competence. In particular, it was expected that the participants would become more confident and display enhanced sensitivity when communicating in English with people from other cultures in a range of settings, including informal, social situations. The program consisted of three phases. The first phase was the pre-sojourn: 14-weeks preparation preceding the sojourn where seminars and courses were taught and a small-scale 'home ethnography' project was developed by students (a 30-pages dissertation paper based on their ethnographic data or explored a topic in English literature). This phase allowed the author to build up trust and rapport as she gathered data from students. Secondly, the sojourn—five weeks in England- included residence with a host family. At the host institution, the students took specially-designed literary and cultural studies courses, participated in excursions and had free time to explore the community and pursue individual interests. Finally, the post-

sojourn where students wrote a final entry in their diary about their sojourn and re-entry experiences. In order to track changes over time a range of instruments were used such as a language and cultural identity narrative, open-ended questionnaires, an intercultural reflections journal, surveys, field notes, ethnographic conversations, a diary, and the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI); this last instrument was administered frequently to provide an objective measure of their cultural sensitivity and add another element of triangulation. All courses, including sojourn fieldwork, were credit-bearing and integrated into the Bachelor of Arts program of studies. The first results indicated that some elements of the students' cultural world were experienced as universal and they had expectations of finding similarities among cultures. It also showed that all members of this cohort had a very unrealistic perception of their degree of intercultural sensitivity. The pre-sojourn narrative data offered further insight into the students' level of intercultural sensitivity on entry into the program and was generally in accord with the IDI scores. After the pre-sojourn, the results indicated that they were making an effort to avoid stereotyping but were still viewing their own values as universal; participants developed a higher degree of intercultural sensitivity. Their narratives (e.g., last entries in their intercultural reflections journal, pre-sojourn surveys administered just prior to departure for England) were generally in line with the IDI results. After sojourn, the third administration of the IDI revealed that, even though they were still in a transitional state of development, they were moving closer to a more ethnorelative mindset. The students continued to have inflated opinions about the level of their own intercultural sensitivity. However, their statements provided further insight into their intercultural adjustment and sensitivity during their stay in England and were, for the most part, in line with their actual and perceived IDI scores. The author observed that those students who had developed a higher level of intercultural sensitivity had diary entries that were richer in detail and more analytical; they were more aware of underlying cultural differences and made more of an effort to refrain from making snap, negative judgments about unfamiliar phenomena in the host culture. Their metacognitive awareness was better developed; accordingly, they displayed more awareness of gaps in their intercultural competence. On the contrary those who possessed an ethnocentric worldview were less mindful of host norms of behavior and gaps in their own intercultural communicative competence. They seemed unaware that some of their actions might be impeding relationship-building across cultures, they believed it was enough to just be themselves.

To summarize Jackson's (2010) findings, she suggests that specific program elements have the potential to promote deeper levels of critical reflection and intercultural competence. Further, the IDI results indicate that as their overall developmental intercultural sensitivity increases, they become more realistic about their limitations and areas in need of improvement. At the end of the study, students presented changes in their intercultural sensitivity, language awareness (e.g., sociopragmatic development), and identity (re)construction over time.

Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard (2006) conducted a quantitative ethnographic research. They researched 54 US scholars studying a semester in a SA program in London. This pilot study aimed to measure intercultural development, as a long-term, develop intervention strategies that can be used to improve the overall quality of the US institution's SA programs. The instruments used were the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) and the Global Awareness Profile (GAP). The first one measures students' intercultural sensitivity / worldview orientation to cultural difference (Hammer & Bennett, 2002) and the Global Awareness Profile (GAP) assesses the degree to which a person can recognize and appreciate the size, complexity and diversity of intercultural experiences and to be able to form an integrated worldview (Corbitt, 1998). The IDI was first administered at the beginning of the semester prior to the departure from the U.S.; the second administration of the IDI occurred at the end of the term but prior to the return to the U.S. and a final administration occurred four months later. After the students had returned to the U.S., collection of the data and analysis of results were conducted too. Forty-eight students out of 54 (89%) enrolled in the semester abroad program and completed the pre-test IDI survey. Findings illustrated that it was possible to have a measurable, positive impact on the intercultural development of students. The participants became more willing to accept cultural differences, lessening their ethnocentric tendencies. After returning home, many of them came to view the country they studied in as culturally superior to their native culture. Even though SA has a long-term impact on intercultural development authors were unable to conclude that SA resulted in a long-term significant overall intercultural improvement. However preliminary results suggested that well-designed short-term programs have the potential to foster the overall development of intercultural sensitivity in student sojourners. This SA program was not open admission, 50 students, out of 89, were admitted to the program based on a series of requirements they had to fulfill. Therefore, students constitute a non-probable sample where they self-selected into applying to the program. Some suggestions the authors made were that educators must

question whether their responsibility to their student ends when the term is over or whether they should be trying to develop a longer-term learning partnership.

In another study, Sussman (2002) aimed to test the following two hypotheses associated with adaptation and the repatriation experiences. Hypothesis 1 predicts the following general relationship between cultural identity strength and repatriation distress, and Hypothesis 2 predicts that, among repatriates, the weaker the home country identity, the more the repatriation distress. An innovative methodology was utilized in this study through the use of internet for participant recruitment and data collection. Participants were 113 American (62 women and 51 men) students of the Japanese English teachers' (JET) program sponsored by the Japanese government. The instrument used in this study to measure an identity transformation is called Cultural Identity Model (CIM). This model was used to measure five items: cultural adaptation, cultural identity strength, transition change, repatriation preparedness, and repatriation distress. For the purpose of my research, three sections are going to be presented in this description: cultural adaptation, cultural identity strength and transition change. In the first section of the instrument used, participants were asked to retrospectively assess three types of Cultural Adaptation (CA) to live in Japan: behavioral (CA/B), cognitive (CA/C), and affective (CA/A). The behavioral subscale (CA/B), a 14-items sub-scale assessed the degree to which the sojourner interacted with Japanese people and social rituals. It included statements such as "I used Japanese language in my daily interactions" or "When at home, I cooked Japanese food" or "When I wasn't working, I spent time with Japanese friends." In the second section the CIM proposes three single items to measure in a preliminary way, the construct of Cultural identity (CI): Identity Centrality (CI/C), which measured the centrality and importance of being an American. Affect (CI/A), which measured positive regard toward being an American, and In group-ties (CI/I), which measured similarity and bond with other Americans. A subtractive cultural identity change was measured by the item "in some ways I feel *less* American than I did before my international assignment." This item is referred to as American identity estrangement. An additive identity change was measured by the item "I feel *more* Japanese since my assignment." An intercultural identity was measured by the item "I feel that I am a *more* global or international person now." In the third section, a four-item scale (TCS), assessed the overall cultural change felt by the sojourners. Items included statements such as "I felt as though I changed as a result of living and working overseas" and "I have tried to incorporate some international customs and ways of thinking into

my work environment.” Findings regarding Hypothesis 1 reveal that, the more sojourners became emotionally attached to Japan and felt a sense of belonging, the less prepared were to return to the US. Additionally, the less central or important one’s American identity, the more sojourners effectively adapted to Japan or felt a sense of belonging to Japan. Finally, the less prepared the sojourner was to return home, the higher the repatriation distress. Findings regarding Hypothesis 2 confirmed that cultural identity strength would be inversely correlated with distress, this means, the *more* Japanese the sojourners felt, the feelings of being *less* American, *more* changed, and *more* global arouse. Another finding was that the more the global identity shift, the higher the life satisfaction. However, the author stated that, from the current measurements, it is unclear the extent to which cultural identity has shifted or been transformed as a consequence of the sojourn or whether sojourners possessed a subtractive or global identity prior sojourn. This study uses global identity shift as a synonym of intercultural identity transformation.

In this section I examined studies of intercultural identity. Since culture is part of a *Self*, when a person studies abroad, his/her cultural identity can transform. The perception of the *Self* can change as well as cultural identity due to the immersion into a host culture. A cycle of adaptation, grow and stress are experienced by people in different ways and can be analyzed through their experiences. Diverse approaches from the studies presented through this section will be helpful to analyze the discourse of my two participants regarding the students’ negotiation and possible development of new cultural understandings of themselves and others. Additionally, I aim to explain what could account for these transformations by using, for instance some of the items presented in the study of Sussman (2002), to compare them with the discourse of my participants. Studies presented here about SA experiences have revealed that students who go abroad experience learning and growth in a variety of areas such as intercultural communicative competences, adjustment in unfamiliar cultural settings, and understanding the host culture, among others.

In order to emphasize the relation among language, culture, and human activity, the studies presented in this chapter have focused on SA regarding students’ expectation, intercultural encounters and identity shifts during their experience. The research studies presented and examined in this chapter have revealed interesting findings regarding expectations, hopes, encounters and the nature of the sojourner. This last concept refers to sojourners moving to a new country and moving back home. From the studies presented before, I understand that in this

transition a process of adjustment is needed, that the outcome of adaptation to a new environment may reveal whether a possible transformation of identity took place. Findings have been divergent; some have shown that participants who had positive expectations were more willing to integrate in the host culture. Participants also showed a greater language interest, and were more reflexive about themselves. I also understood that the way others perceived sojourners and their knowledge of language are factors related to their intercultural encounters. Some other studies indicated that students who showed more ethnocentrism and intercultural communication apprehension did not fulfill their expectations and did not reach the stage of adaptation. Thus, their motivation decreased during the SA program and they were not willing to accept cultural differences. As part of this research the dynamic of interaction itself plays an important role, therefore through the analysis of several studies presented in this chapter it has been shown that interaction is shaped not only by the willingness of the participant but by the nature of their encounters. As a consequence, participants learnt new ideas, values and practices and, depending on their degree of internalization, they could experience a transformation of themselves and the way others perceived them. From the studies reviewed, it is apparent that specific program elements had the potential to promote deeper levels of critical reflection and intercultural competence; at the same time, sojourners become more realistic about their limitations and areas in need of improvement. They presented transformation in their intercultural sensitivity, language proficiency and identity over time.

Research shows that crucial studies concerning SA are mainly from US, Europe, Asia and Australia. Empirical studies in México focusing on the linguistic outcomes, social and cultural dimensions before, during and after a SA program, to the best of my knowledge, are limited showing that there is a paucity of studies regarding this topic in Mexico.

CHAPTER II THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The same subject of study may be approached differently. Thus, in order to state our perspective of study, in this section a set of concepts used to approach the topic of study is presented. In the second part, the relevant theories and models used for this research are explained.

2.1. Conceptual framework

In this section, theoretical concepts related to Culture, Expectations, Identity, Sociocultural Identity and Intercultural Identity are examined. A SA program is an educational process that not only includes formal education but a continuous and closer interaction with society in a different context. Therefore, the relationship between the concepts described in this section is analyzed, paying special attention to the development of Intercultural Identity. The aim of this section is to clarify the concepts used as they contribute to my understanding and will help me to answer the research questions under investigation.

2.1.1. *Culture*

In order to emphasize the importance of the concept culture in our research, I will present several definitions given through time from a sociocultural perspective. Banks, Banks & McGee argues that:

Most social scientists today view culture as consisting primarily of the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies. The essence of a culture is not its artifacts, tools, or other tangible cultural elements but how the members of the group interpret, use, and perceive them. It is the values, symbols, interpretations, and

perspectives that distinguish one people from another in modernized societies; it is not material objects and other tangible aspects of human societies. People within a culture usually interpret the meaning of symbols, artifacts, and behaviors in the same or in similar ways. (Banks, Banks & McGee, 1989, p. 8)

During the 1990's Matsumoto defined Culture as "the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next" (1996, p.16). The definitions of Banks & McGee (1989) as well as the one presented by Matsumoto (1990) involve interpretation and perception by a set of people and by each person as well. By the twenty-first century Díaz-Rico & Weed (2006) explains:

Culture is the explicit and implicit patterns for living, the dynamic system of commonly agreed-upon symbols and meanings, knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs, behaviors, traditions, and/or habits that share and make up the total way of life of a people, as negotiated by people in the process of constructing a personal identity. (p. 232-233)

Spencer-Oatey (2008) in her own definition agrees with Matsumoto regarding the set of attitudes, values, etc. and pointed out that culture impacts (but do not determine) each member's attitude and his/her interpretations of the *meaning* of other people's behavior. My interpretation is that even though this last definition of Spencer-Oatey (2008) shows culture as a set of "basic assumptions and behavioral conventions," it implies changes when she talks about personal interpretations. Related to intercultural communications Martin & Nakayama (2014) explain that "culture ... is not just a variable, nor benignly socially constructed but a site of struggle where various communication meanings are constructed ..." (p. 8). For Deardoff (2009) *culture* is a "theoretical term, concerned with enduring yet evolving intergenerational attitudes, values, beliefs, rituals/customs, and behavioral patterns into which people are born but that is structurally created and maintained by people's ongoing actions." (pp. 6-7). Therefore, concepts of assimilation, adjustments and adaptation have to be considered whenever we talk about culture.

The definitions presented in this section have special emphasis in culture as a set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors passed by generations. Since culture is a part of the *Self*, the interpretation of *the Self* in a specific context is related to the transformation of people and the way they interact with each other.

The Center for Intercultural learning in Canada explains that culture is taught and learned and shared. However, is not monolithic, it means that individuals exist within a culture. Additionally, culture is symbolic. For example, a "home," is a physical structure, a familial construct and a moral reference point – which is distinct from one culture to another. As we can see from this definition, culture is the conjunction of various components such as a home itself (its physical structure), its members as well as the relations (behavior and values) within the members of a family. This definition helped me understand that when analyzing how my subjects viewed the foreign culture I would have to identify and understand how they interpreted, if so, all these components from the other culture.

Culture is vital because it enables its members to function with one another without the need to negotiate meaning at every moment. Culture is learned and forgotten, so despite its importance we are generally unconscious of its influence on the manner in which we perceive the world and interact within it. Culture is significant because as we work with others it both enables us and impedes us in our ability to understand and work effectively together. (Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada, 2014).

Some authors state a close relation between culture and language. Buttjes (1990), for example, refers to ethnographic language studies and summarizes several reasons why language and culture are from the start inseparably connected:

1. language acquisition does not follow a universal sequence, but differs across cultures;
2. the process of becoming a competent member of society is realized through exchanges of language in particular social situations;
3. every society orchestrates the ways in which children participate in particular situations, and this, in turn, affects the form, the function and the content of

children's utterances; caregivers' primary concern is not with grammatical input, but with the transmission of sociocultural knowledge;

4. a native learner, in addition to language, acquires also the paralinguistic patterns and the kinesics of his or her culture. (p. 55)

The relation Buttjes states between these two components may help me understand the linguistic outcomes my students may relate to cultural encounters. Thus, since the aim of this research is to analyze students' experiences related to intercultural communication, encounters and identity, acknowledging a relation between language and culture enables me to identify the students' social / interpersonal individual experiences from a cultural perspective. The definitions presented through this section, as well as the four constructions of Crichton & Scarino (2007), clarify the term culture used in this study. I then, understand culture as a construct that evolves through contact, exchange and communication with others.

Through the use of a language, a person is able to communicate effectively with others. Nevertheless, language competence is not sufficient since in order to interact in a variety of cultural contexts, "a set of cognitive, affective and behavioral skills" are needed (Bennett, 2008, p.97). Therefore, another concept that is intimately related to culture is intercultural competence. Byram (1997) defines intercultural competence as attitudes such as curiosity, openness and readiness in order to "suspend disbelief and judgment with respect to other's meaning, beliefs and behaviors and a willingness to suspend belief in one's own meanings and behaviors, and to analyze them from the viewpoint of the others with whom one is engaging" (p.34). These, in practical situations mean to know how to request and provide information, to express regrets, to give compliments and to extend invitations in linguistically and culturally appropriate ways (Hall, 1995). Deardoff (2009) defines intercultural competence 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). Taking these definitions into account, it seems that the participants of this present study during the SA experience should acquire or improve intercultural competences as part of their interaction with people from different culture in a different context.

Kramscsh (1986) and He & Young (1998) argue that "interactional competence focuses less on individual linguistic competence and more on speakers' and listeners' conscious

acknowledgment and attempt to understand the intentions of other speakers” (as cited by Paulston et al., 2012, p. 457). An intercultural person should be able to recognize and understand the importance of his/her own culture with respect to others. The person should be able to interpret, discover and adapt cultural meanings when interacting with others in order to undergo from one culture to another in respectful manners. This means that the foreign language will allow students to interact with others but communication with other will not depend only on his or her ability to speak but also on the conscious acknowledgement and attempt the others may have to understand foreign students. This implies that their way of thinking will be analyzed and questioned by others as part of a self-reflection. Encounters with other people is thus, a way to gain linguistic but also cultural knowledge to communicate with people who do not speak your own language. Having in mind that one of the purposes of an abroad experience is to develop intercultural competence, language and cultural knowledge are both needed.

Apart from that, Crichton & Scarino (2007) have identified four other constructs: *the cultural as content*, *the cultural as communication skills*, *the cultural as relocation*; and *the cultural as diversity* (p. 04.5). *The cultural as content* or knowledge are the things we learned about; it is usually taught, learned and shared. Our subjects of study may have learned about many things related to the French culture while studying French, on TV and magazines but also when being informed by other people of the French culture. *The cultural as communication skills* is presented as behavior, words, objects and their meaning, for example behavioral expectations, norms of politeness, greetings, etc. Language courses usually take into account the study of cultural behaviors of the foreign culture, but, taking into consideration the fact that the context plays a significant role to understand cultural behaviors and meanings, I may infer that these Mexican students may have encountered many unexpected reactions and situations while being abroad. Crichton & Scarino (2007) define that *the cultural as relocation* in teaching and learning “is constructed as a matter of moving between culturally defined locations” (p. 04.9). Therefore, *the cultural as relocation*, in terms of internationalization in education, and within our subject of study is the SA experience. Regarding *the cultural as diversity*, it takes place during encounters with people from other cultures and it reflects the importance of respecting other cultures. In accordance with this last construct, our subjects of study by encountering others may have reflected on the importance of understanding and respecting other cultures.

For the purpose of this research, a SA program is considered to be an intercultural experience outside a person's own country, where an interaction with an individual or groups of people, whose culture is different from your own, takes place. The set of collective meanings and understandings presented through this section provides a common frame of reference to understand the process that members of a culture may follow to construct cultural identities.

2.1.2. Expectations

For the purpose of this research I will consider expectations as a belief that something will happen or be the case in the future. Anderson & Hair (1972) described expectations as "subjective notions of things to come" (p. 69). Therefore, I will consider expectations as a type of hypothesis formulated by the sojourner, on the understanding that expectations may be created by past experiences, opinions of family and friends, influence of massive media or general aspiration levels of language proficiency or better acknowledgement of the interaction between cultures. Expectations are confirmed when the sojourner receives what he/she expects. For the purpose of this research, fulfilled expectations occur when my participants experience what they imagined or even more than they imagined and unfulfilled expectations when the experience did not match what they imagined.

According to Badstübner & Ecke (2009) sojourners often have high expectations with respect to SA outcomes, and frequently participate in the programs for integrative reasons; such as getting to know people and participating in the target culture. This construct will be helpful to understand my participants' decision to be part of a SA program by identifying their expectations of this experience. Furthermore, as part of the analysis I will consider if their expectations were fulfilled.

2.1.3. *Identity*

Since culture is part of the *self*, the perception of the person can change due to the immersion and contact with others from a different culture. Thus, the importance of the term identity in this research study arises from the possible transformation of the participants' identity because of the SA experience. Transformation may be in different areas such as language, culture and identity.

There is not a single consensual definition of identity. According to Gleason (1983), identity, the concept itself, is difficult to define due to its subjectivity. In vernacular use, it implies a distinctive fixed essence which a person, a place or a group possesses. The bifurcation of identity is presented in two different senses: to describe people, personal projects of *self*, or to describe what a member of a group or social category have in common.

According to Erikson (1950) identity means something quite definite, but terribly elusive, and concerns a process located at the core of the individual and yet also at the core of his/her communal culture, a process that establishes, in fact, the identity of those two entities. Gleason's interpretation of Erikson's definition is that identity involves interaction between the interior development of the individual personality and the growth of a *self* or *selfhood* that arises from participating in society, internalizing its cultural norms, acquiring different status and playing different roles (Gleason, 1983, p.14). Thus, identity is not seen by this author as a fixed essence.

According to Paulston et al. (2012) studies of intercultural communication in education, influenced by practice-based theories in social sciences, often theorize identity as "multiple, shifting, and both reflected and shaped by human interactions" (Godley, 2012, p. 459), meaning that the things that we make relevant in social interaction contribute to the creation of an identity. As it can be seen, the concept of identity takes into account the individual as a *self* but also the individual as part of a society.

For the purpose of this research study, identity is seen as fabricated and constructed, as an evolving process that considers psychological and sociological factors. These definitions help me to understand changes the Mexican students may have experienced. This possible transformation has to be identified and analyzed, taking into account the individual as a *self* but also the individual as a result of a societal interaction. In this project, identity is understood as an evolving process of a person and or a group.

An intercultural experience (SA program) involves intercultural encounters that may influence the way participants see themselves and the world. Moreover, the interrelationship between the *inside* and the *outside* is needed to evolve: the personal and the social. Therefore, there is a presumably evolution of them as individuals and as a group. This bifurcation of identity and some of the complications during the SA program are considered.

2.1.3.1. *Sociocultural Identity*

The importance of sociocultural identity in this research study lies on the fact that the potential evolution of the identity involves not only an individual but a group. The concept presented earlier focuses on the personal identity (*self*). However, in order to understand the process experienced by the participants of this research, it is also necessary to comprehend the progress experienced in the new society. Therefore, the bifurcation of identity compels us to clarify the concept of sociocultural identity.

Gumperz (1982) points out that social identity referenced the relationship between the individual and the larger social world, as mediated through institutions such as families, schools, workplaces, social services, and law courts. Meanwhile cultural identity referenced the relationship between an individual and members of a particular ethnic group who are considered to share a common history, a common language, and similar ways of understanding the world. In the concept of cultural identity. Meanwhile, Norton (2006), after analyzing research projects regarding identity as a sociocultural construct in second language research, identified five characteristics of this conception of identity:

1. A sociocultural conception of identity conceives of identity as dynamic and constantly changing across time and place. I
2. Some research on identity conceives of identity as complex, contradictory, and multifaceted, and rejects any simplistic notions of identity.
3. Most researchers note that identity constructs and is constructed by language.

4. Most researchers note that identity construction must be understood with respect to larger social processes, marked by relations of power that can be either coercive or collaborative.
5. Much research seeks to link identity theory with classroom practice. (2006, p.3)

Kim (2007) designates “both a sociological or demographic classification, as well as an individual’s psychological identification with a particular group. Both sociological and psychological meanings of cultural identity are regarded as two inseparable correlates of the same phenomenon.” (p. 238). Nowadays, identity as a social construct is not opposed to a cultural construct due to the fact that interferences between social and cultural identities are more significant than their differences. In such a way identity is seen as *socioculturally constructed*. (Norton, 2006, p. 2). Kim’s conception of sociocultural identity conveys with Norton’s. Their definitions let me see that social customs, beliefs, values, and language are all part of what shapes a person's identity and his/her perception of the world. Norton (2006) points out the importance of the sociocultural relationships among “larger institutional practices in schools, homes, and workplaces (the social) as well as more grounded practices associated with particular groups (the cultural)” (p. 4). Additionally, she identifies that much contemporary research on identity and language learning shares an interest in the nature of identity. Furthermore, the range of theory can increase our understanding of the relationship between identity and language learning, and it can be considered *sociocultural theory*.

The participants of this research had to interact from the beginning of the SA program with different people in diverse contexts. Even though they had taken courses of French culture and society in Mexico, the real contact with the French started when they travelled abroad. Participants would go through a process of adaptation when they lived with a host family, in campus residences or shared apartments. Participants shared, or not, common values and beliefs with some members of this new society, thus they would have to develop cultural competence to adapt or undergo those experiences.

For the purpose of this study we adopt Kim’ and Norton’s conception of sociocultural identity as a developmental process that takes place through participation in cultural, linguistic and social interaction during the SA program experience. Students develop a deeper contact with

native speakers promoting their own culture and adopting the new one. What a person thinks are based on his or her sociocultural background.

2.1.3.2. *Intercultural Identity*

Through this section the concept intercultural identity will be analyzed. The aim of this study is to understand how students negotiate and develop new cultural understandings of themselves and others through the SA experience. So, to understand the process experienced by the participants of this research, it is necessary to comprehend the concept of intercultural identity.

This term, as most of the definitions presented in this chapter, has diverse meanings depending on the area of study from which it has been analyzed. Alfred, Byram, & Fleming (2003) explain that being intercultural involves “both the awareness of experiencing otherness and the ability to analyze the experience and act upon the insights into *self* and other which the analysis brings” (p.4). Bredella (2003) describes “an indispensable feature of the intercultural experience in that we refrain from imposing our categories and values on others but instead learn to reconstruct their frame of reference and see them as they see themselves” (p. 228). Alfred et al. (2003) and Bredella (2003) identify the skills a person should develop when living or studying in unfamiliar settings. Their definitions let me see that students should be critical and reflexive regarding their own culture and the new one. As a consequence of their critical thinking and reflective thoughts, a person adopts new knowledge, values and beliefs not only linguistically but culturally. The participants of this research may have to redefine themselves by questioning and sometimes rejecting values and beliefs from their own culture because of their participation in the SA program.

Alfred, Byram, & Fleming. (2006) explain that *interculturality* challenges us to be willing to involve with otherness, to take up others’ perspectives by reconstructing their perspectives for ourselves, and understanding them from within. According to these authors, taking up others’ perspectives do not imply abandoning our own perspectives but rather becoming more conscious of them” (p.2). In practical terms, students need to be aware of the *self* and *others*. Awareness will allow them to use language as a tool to interpret and create meaning in dialogues within and

across cultures. Students could use their knowledge to reconstruct the *self* through social interaction, being respectful when recognizing different ways of knowing, and applying this knowledge in different cultural contexts properly.

Crichton & Scarino (2007) find out that, even though the fourth construct of the cultural as diversity “may promote ‘justice’ and ‘fairness’ in teaching and learning” (p. 4.11), it does not develop cultural understanding regarding students being examples of cultural diversity and how to negotiate *themselves* and *others*. As a consequence of their findings, a last construct was developed: *the cultural as intercultural*, which involves five generic principles of intercultural awareness. These principles seek to acknowledge the interrelationship between language and culture focused on the way interrelationship shapes experiences by interaction between people. Therefore, this interrelationship is multiple and variable (p. 4.12). They also describe “intercultural capability as the capacity to negotiate meanings across languages and cultures” (as cited in Barker & Crichton, 2008, p.32). This last section refers to the capacity students must have to reconstruct the *self* through social interaction, being respectful when recognizing different ways of knowing and applying this knowledge in different cultural contexts properly.

The definitions above (being intercultural, interculturality, and intercultural capability) help me to understand a concept that involves awareness and adaptability. The authors use terms such as “reconstruction of perspectives (*self* and others)” and “negotiation of meanings” to refer to the progression (or change) of identity and the emergence of a new dimension within a person as a result of being in contact with the other in a meaningful way. Language proficiency is not enough to develop intercultural competences. However, high proficient in a language helps people adapt easily since they feel less anxious when they interact with others. Therefore, they could be more receptive to the meanings of language.

Kim (2015) refers to intercultural identity as “an acquired identity constructed after the early childhood enculturation process through one’s communicative interactions with other cultural groups” (p. 6). Identity changes are mediated by broader environments of the communities of practice in which individuals participate. If cultural identity referenced the relationship between a person and/or members of a particular ethnic group who are considered to share a common history, a common language, and similar ways of understanding the world; it is feasible to say that when students contrast their own culture with another, when they share their

cultural identity with different ethnic, religious, sexual or political identities, they can develop an intercultural identity.

Kim (2015) explains intercultural identity development and the emerging intercultural personhood as “an adaptive response when daily communication experience extends beyond the familiar world of their home culture interacting and adapting themselves to a diversity of cultures.” Kim’s Integrative Theory of Cross-cultural Adaptation (2007) explains that an extensive and prolonged intercultural communication experience is a gradual psychological evolution from your own culture to an increasingly “intercultural” way of relating to oneself and others (p. 3). International identity emerges from experiences of intercultural communication that stimulate cycles of stress, adaptation and growth patterns. The process of intercultural adaptation and development involves *acculturation* which is the learning of new ideas, values and practices and *deculturation* which is the questioning and rejecting of ideas and practices from the past. Kim (2007) defines intercultural personhood as a constructive way in which an individual step into the globalizing world and as ultimately a matter of choice for those intercultural communicators who are open to the possibility of being changed by the experiences of new cultural learning. Intercultural personhood signifies two interrelated facets of identity transformation: individuation, an ability to forego both social and categorical stereotypes and appreciate others as unique individuals, and universalization, an ability to locate commonalities in human nature among different members of culture, ethnic and other social groups.

This research project seeks to identify the transformation of sojourners’ identities because of an SA experience. This research approaches the use of language as a component of identity. The aim of this study is to analyze a possible transformation of the participants’ identity, developing intercultural competences. By analyzing the sojourners’ expectations and the specific social practices arising from contact with native speakers, it is intended to gain insights into their experiences. Moreover, for the purpose of this research, intercultural identity is defined as a process where an adaptive response of students in a different context takes place considering the contact between cultures through a cycle of stress-adaptation and growth. This process which involves *acculturation* (learning new ideas, values and practices) and *deculturation* (questioning and rejecting ideas and practices from the past) is presumed to lead them to a potential internal transformation of their identity. The definition used in this study is based on Kim’s *Integrative Communication Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation*.

Based on the definitions presented in this chapter and on the objectives of this research I may be able to find out whether the students' perception of intercultural experiences involve sensitive ways and respectful manners, what the nature of their intercultural encounters was, whether they questioned their own culture compared with the culture in the target context during and after sojourn; how they interpreted and developed their identities in a different context, and whether their identities were shaped by self-perceptions, desires, hopes, and expectations, as well as aspects of the social context that were beyond their control. Through a careful examination of their journeys, the study will lead to insights on what led them, or not, to a possible intercultural identity transformation.

2.2. Theoretical framework

In this section, I present the sociocultural theories and theoretical models that are best suited to this research. Firstly, Sociocultural Theory (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007), the Integrative Communication Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation (Kim, 2007) and the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (Bennett, 1993) are examined and explained. Secondly, I illustrate which constructs were taken from each sociocultural theory and theoretical models to approach the topic of study of this research project.

2.2.1. *Sociocultural Perspective*

This section includes the explanation of socio cultural theories used to interpret sociocultural practices and structures, thus helping to make sense of the perspective and vision which underpins this research.

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) sets its origins in the writings of L.S. Vygotsky and his colleagues. SCT argues that human mental functioning is fundamentally a mediated process that is organized by culture artifacts, activities and concepts (Ratner, 2002). The major theoretical principles and constructs of SCT focused specifically on Second Language Acquisition (SLA). The core concepts of the SCT are: regulation, mediation, internalization, imitation and the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD).

The first core concepts of SCT are the constructs of regulation and mediation. Both are associated with the work of Vygotsky. The construct of regulation refers to symbolic artifacts and interaction through a Second Language, whilst the primary means of the construct of mediation are language use, organization and structure. The development of oral competence takes place through participation in cultural, linguistic, and historically formed settings such as family life and peer group interaction, and in institutional contexts like schooling, organized sports activities, and workplaces among others. SCT argues that, while human neurobiology is a necessary condition for higher order thinking, the most important forms of human cognitive

activity develop through interaction within these social and material environments (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007, pp.201-202).

Lantolf & Thorne (2007) point out that higher-level cultural tools act to mediate the relationship between individuals and the social-material world. This means that, by transforming our social and material environment, we also change ourselves and the way we live. Regulation is the first higher-level cultural tool. This tool helps people to regulate their interaction through linguistic means by participating in activities in which they are initially regulated by others; later, they develop self-regulation. The authors recognize three stages of this first higher-level cultural tool: 1) object-regulation (mental activity is regulated by an object) 2) other-regulation (involving varying level of assistance by parents, siblings, peers, and so on) and 3) Self-regulation (through internalization). Mediation through the use of symbolic artifacts is the second higher-level cultural tool. Vygotsky reasoned that humans have the capacity to use symbols as tools to mediate their own psychological activity. For example, architects use plans to mediate the construction of a real building. The third higher-level cultural tool is mediation through language, either a first language or an additional one. The use of mediation through language suits my research project since participants learnt French in Mexico in order to participate in a long-term 12-month SA program. Mediation through language refers to the use of language to regulate our mental activity, firstly through private speech and secondly through social speech. Participants needed French to understand knowledge related to Administration and Information Technology and Communication. Mediation through language requires a cognitive process when we use private speech (abbreviations and their meaning) and carry out mental activities that we will use in social interaction.

The second core concept of SCT is internalization. It is the process through which cultural artifacts such as language take on a psychological function. It helps to reorganize the relationship between the person and social environments and future performances through gaining control over our brains. The third core concept of SCT is imitation, that is, the capacity of the human being to intentionally imitate the activities of other humans. It involves goal directed cognitive activity that can result on transformation of the original model (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007, pp. 207-210).

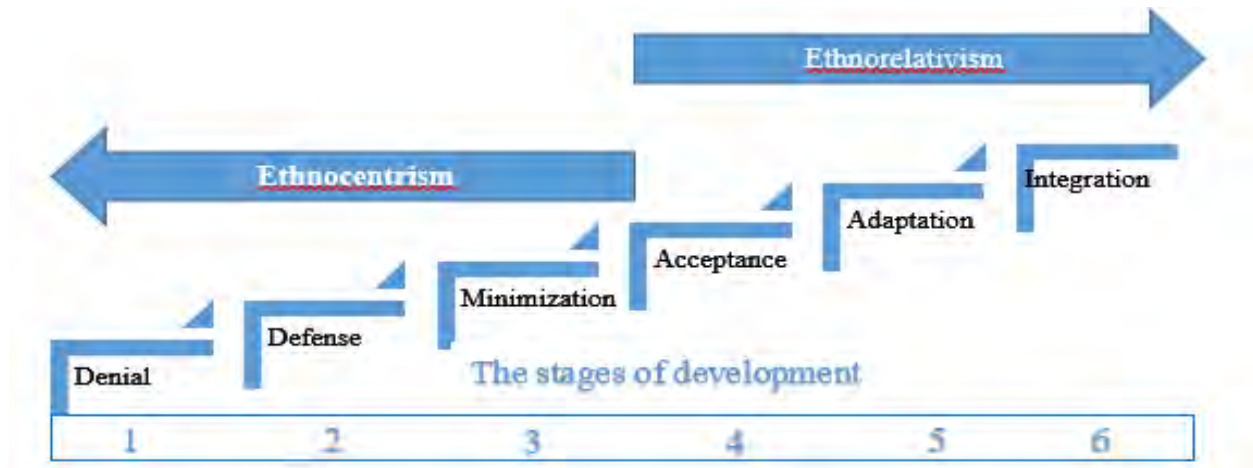
For the purpose of this research study, I will focus on the core concept of SCT. I have previously explained the third higher-level cultural tool which is mediation through language.

Since my participants experienced a year-long term studying abroad, this cultural tool was firstly used to interact with locals. Language as a cultural tool helps students to experience interaction with an individual or groups of people whose culture is different from their own. They have chances to improve in their linguistic performance. Additionally, they identify and compare the differences in rules, behaviors, communication and biases, based on cultural values that are different from one's own culture.

Another theory, which explores the change or transformation of the *self* is Kim's *Integrative Communication Theory of Cross-Cultural Adaptation* (2007). She explains that identity transformation of individuals through extensive, intensive and cumulative experiences of intercultural communication gives as result an "intercultural identity." She denies that a person's original identity is forsaken in the course of long-term identity evolution. According to this theory, the characteristics of adaptability and transformation of the human mind are the basis upon which individuals acquire an identity and personhood. The concept "adaptation" in this theory is explained as a stressful experience since a cycle of stress-adaptation and growth takes place in SA context. Kim explains that an extensive and prolonged intercultural communication experience is a gradual psychological evolution. People is able to evolve from their own culture to an increasingly "intercultural" way of relating to oneself and others. To reinforce this internal transformation are two interrelated processes of "individuated" and "universalized" in identity orientation (2007, p. 244). During these processes, cultural identity plays a decreasing role in a person's daily existence. A transformation of the *self* could be seen by the fading of some of the old cultural habits and / or the gaining of some of the new cultural habits. This construct from Kim's theory makes me think I could identify intercultural identity shifts by studying old and new habits of my participants. Analyzing certain old habits being replaced by new ones during and after sojourn, would be a starting point to explain long term adaptation processes.

Many approaches have been used by SA researchers to measure intercultural development. *The Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity* (DMIS) was developed by Bennett (1993) to explain why people respond differently to diverse experiences of cultural encounters. This instrument measures the respondent's overall development of intercultural sensitivity based on an individual's progression through six stages of cultural development (Denial, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration).

Figure 1 Experiencing difference



ADAPTED FROM BENNETT, J.M. (1986). A DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH TO TRAINING FOR INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY. *INTERCULTURAL JOURNAL OF INTERCULTURAL RELATIONS*, 10(2).

Bennett's (1993) DMIS centers on people's awareness and response to cultural difference. Central to this theory are the opposite constructs of ethnocentrism and ethnorelativism (Bennett 1993, 1997; Bennett & Bennett 2004; Landis, Bennett, & Bennett 2004). Since ethnorelativism is associated with "being comfortable with many standards and customs" and the "ability to adapt behavior and judgments to a variety of interpersonal settings" (Bennet, 1993, p. 26); ethnorelative worldviews are considered more effective in fostering the mindset, knowledge and skills linked to successful intercultural communication and adjustment in unfamiliar cultural settings (Bennett & Bennett 2004; Kim 2001, 2005). A person is thought to progress from ethnocentric stages (Denial, Defense, & Minimization) through ethnorelative stages of development (Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration) as they acquire intercultural competences. This chart of personal growth includes ethnocentric stages and ethnorelative stages.

Figure 2 Milton J. Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS)



Adapted from Bennett, M. J. (1993). Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In: R.M., Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience* (pp. 21-71). Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press.

Altschuler, Sussman & Kachur, E. (2003) summarize the first three stages contribute to an attitude of ethnocentrism in which one's culture is experienced as central to reality. Th

e final three stages form the basis of ethno relativism, an attitude in which one's own culture is experienced in the context of other cultures" (p. 389). These six stages are connected yet not necessarily progress in sequence. In order to accomplish the act of integrating into a new surroundings, Bennett presented the *acculturation* model, which consists in passing through a state of ethnocentrism in order to reach a state of ethnorelativism or *acculturation*. Diaz-Rico & Weed (2006) explain "...acculturate is to adapt to a second culture without necessarily giving up one's first culture" (p. 246). Isabelli-García (2006) also refers to ethnorelativism as a synonym of *acculturation*. For the purpose of this research we will acknowledge that. However, two concepts from ethnorelativism in Bennett's model will be core concepts for this research: Adaptation and Integration. The first stage explains that the participants adapt to the host culture and a sense of understanding arise. The second one explains that the participants accept differences between cultures and enters a state in which those differences become *essential to identity* (Bennett, 1986). Isabelli-García pointed out that interaction with the context is most likely mediated by their various stages of *acculturation* (ethnorelativism).

This qualitative research is based on the students' subjective self-report of their SA experience. It analyzes (1) the use of high-level cultural tools (mediation-internalization-imitation) that might have helped sojourners to change themselves and the way they live; (2) the potential transformation of their social and material environment which let them to an "intercultural" way of relating to oneself and others (cycle of stress-adaptation and growth); (3) the process that may involve *acculturation* (learning of new ideas, values and practices) and *deculturation* (questioning and rejecting of ideas and practices from the past) and (4) two stages of ethnorelativism: adaptation and integration.

CHAPTER III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this chapter the methodology and research design of this study is presented. Firstly, it is necessary to describe the characteristics of the research methodology explaining why it is suitable for this project. Secondly we will describe the context, the participants, the SA program, the procedure and the type of data analysis used for this research.

3.1. Research Design

Since the objective of this study is to understand a process or phenomenon from the point of view of different subjects, I conducted a case study. Thus, I considered this qualitative method, the best suited for this study in order to answer my research questions. The outcome of the SA experience lived by students from the UT has not being explored before. Thus, I conducted an exploratory study from the perspective of students. According to Creswell (2007) an exploratory research starts with assumptions, it explores the context where the phenomena is set and fully describes the participants of the research (it can be individuals or groups).

A qualitative approach enables me to build rapport and credibility with the participants of this study whilst data collection is taking place. Since a deep understanding of the topic is the aim of this research I selected a qualitative method to analyze participants' experiences regarding intercultural communication, intercultural encounters and intercultural identity.

The strategy of inquiry used in this research is the case study. It fulfills the characteristics I needed to complete this research project. Creswell (2007) describes case study research as a “qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (case) or multiple bounded system (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving *multiple sources of information* (e.g., observations, interviews, audiovisual material, documents and reports), and reports a case description and case-based themes” (p. 73) This is a very common and important approach that generally involves rich contextualization and a deep inductive

analysis of data from a small set of participants, sites, or events and allows researchers to make interpretations of what participants see, hear and understand.

Yin (2003) gives four reasons for using a case study design. The first one is when we aim to answer *how* and *why* questions. The second is when you cannot manipulate the behavior of participants. The third one is when you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study and finally, the fourth one is when the boundaries are not clear between the phenomenon and context (as cited by Baxter & Jack, 2008). Once a case is selected it is recommended, by many authors (Creswell, 2003; Yin, 2003; Stake, 1995), placing boundaries to avoid answering broad questions or many objectives in a case study. Suggestions on how to do it include: time and place (Creswell, 2003); time and activity (Stake, 1995); and by definition and context (Miles & Huberman, 1994). By following this methodology, I aim to understand how our subjects' expectation influenced their SA experience and how they reacted and behaved before, during and after sojourn.

Stake (1995) presents three kinds of case studies: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. While Yin (2003) divides cases studies in explanatory, exploratory, descriptive and multiple. The intrinsic approach should be used when the researcher wants to know well a particular case. This approach is not designed to understand some abstract construct, generic phenomenon or to build theory (although it is an option; Stake, 1995). The instrumental approach is used to accomplishing something other than understanding a particular situation. The case itself facilitates our understanding of something else. With this approach, insight into an issue is provided. It also helps to refine a theory. The case may or may not be seen as typical of other cases. Collective case studies (Stake, 1995) are similar in nature and description to multiple case studies (Yin, 2003). Such approaches enable a researcher to explore differences within and between cases. They have to be chosen carefully so that the researcher can predict similar results across cases, or predict contrasting results based on a theory. According to Yin (2003), the explanatory approach should be used if you were seeking to answer a question that sought to explain the presumed causal links in real-life interventions that are too complex for the survey or experimental strategies. The exploratory approach is used to explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear, single set of outcomes. Finally, the descriptive approach is used to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it took place.

By conducting a multiple or collective case study, I also aim to know how and why participants interpret and ascribe meaning to what they lived, and to other aspects of the world (including encountering others). I based my assumptions on a theoretical perspective to analyze the data collected. Even though I need to understand a particular situation, this case may not be seen as typical as other cases. The context is different for each of the cases. Additionally, having two participants help me predicting similar results across cases, or predict contrasting results based on a theory.

3.2. Context

In 2005, the General Coordination of Technological and Polytechnic Universities (CGUTyP by its acronym in Spanish) founded the Technological University of the Mayan Riviera (UTRM by its acronym in Spanish) in 2005 in the city of Playa del Carmen. This city has mainly focused on the tourism industry and it has been inhabited by people from Quintana Roo and other states from Mexico who seek for job opportunities. People from all over the world come to visit the city every year and some of them decide to have their residence in this city. On this basis, Playa del Carmen is a multicultural city where it has become a necessity to develop linguistic and intercultural competences.

The demand of university degree courses due to the faster growth of the region helped the UTRM to open six careers at the level of University Higher Technician (TSU by its Spanish acronym), University degree in Engineering and Bachelor degree: Gastronomy, Tourism, Administration, Maintenance, Physical therapy and Technologies of the Information and Communication (ITC). Regarding the profile of students and teachers, students are mainly graduates from public high schools either from Quintana Roo or the surrounding states. Most of them have not traveled to international destinations. In contrast, teachers from UTRM are from different states of the country or from outside the country. English and French teachers are from Mexico, Canada and France. It is worth mentioning that students at UTRM, regardless of the chosen career, have to take English or French as a foreign language in order to obtain a University diploma.

The development of cooperation and academic exchange agreements with universities and other higher education institutions, nationally and internationally, has been an integral part of UTRM's strategic guidelines. Furthermore, the curriculum promotes and supports mobility programs as great opportunities for students to enhance intercultural contact, within home campuses or studying abroad. Therefore, important projects have been implemented at the UTRM such as Language classrooms where international students from the schools Gateway and International House are invited to language courses in order to enhance linguistic competences through interaction with native speakers. Additionally, the UTRM participates in national programs such as Teachers' assistant program where young teachers from Canada, United States and Great Britain are invited to collaborate at UTRM for a year. Two more national programs in which the UTRM participates are Proyecta 100,000 and a Training Program for Higher Technicians (MEXPROTEC by its acronym in Spanish). In both cases, the Undersecretary of Higher Education (SES by its acronym in Spanish), the Ministry of Education (SEP by its acronym in Spanish) among international entities, invite Mexican students to participate in SA programs, either for a short or long period of time in Canada, United States of America and France.

3.3. MEXPROTEC

The UTRM participates in the National program of MEXPROTEC. The SES through the National Coordination of Higher Education Scholarships (CNMES by its acronym in Spanish), the Technological Metropolitan University (UTM by its acronym in Spanish), the General Coordination of Technological and Polytechnic Universities (CGUTyP by its acronym in Spanish), the Governments of France and the Government of Quebec, work hand in hand to invite every year 200 Mexican students, registered in the TSU, to study abroad. This mobility program aims to prepare university students linguistically, socially, and culturally to study in Canada or France as part of a Faculty-led long term SA Program (Programa de Movilidad Internacional Estudiantil MEXPROTEC 2015-2016).

In order to prepare students to participate in the national program MEXPROTEC, the UTRM has designed a 700 hours training program called “Programa de selección MEXPROTEC” which is divided in two phases. The first phase involves courses to prepare students in French as a foreign language in order to achieve an A2 level, in accordance to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). The University uses a scale from 0 to 10 to measure students' scores. In accordance to the process of selection, to be a suitable candidate to participate in the training program, students must maintain a minimum average score of 9 in all the assignments. It means, they have to maintain that score from the very first day of their university studies to the last day of the process of selection. The same score is required for French courses as part of the “Programa de selección MEXPROTEC” even though students do not obtain university credits for studying French under that program. During three 15-week terms, students take language courses, they are interviewed by teachers and by administrators. Then, students must obtain the A2 level official certificate. After meeting these requirements, students are selected to continue with the second phase of the program. In this phase, the UTRM offers the following courses: learning of French language (to achieve a B1 level), culture, motivation, learning strategies and international communication strategies in the host language. After two more terms (four months each), students take the exam called “Diplôme d'études en langue française” test (DELFF) to prove their proficiency in French (B1 level). If they do not pass the test DELFF, they have to present the “Test de connaissance du Français” (TCF) to prove their proficiency in French (B1 level). At the end, the UTRM proposes the candidates to the CGUTyP accompanied by the documentation required to apply to MEXPROTEC. The CGUTyP arranges an interview with a French-Mexican Jury to assess their oral and communication skills. After that, the CGUTyP sends a list of candidates with their documentation to the CNMES which approves the students who will participate in MEXPROTEC. The list of selected students is presented in the CNMES website.

During the SA program, the students that have been elected have to sit a 6-week intensive language course, followed by a six months course at a University in France or Canada and a four-month internship in the same country. Students do not obtain university credits in Mexico for their sojourn nor for their internship abroad. However, the French university delivers a certificate that endorses their studies in that country. It is worth mentioning that a third phase (post-sojourn) to complement the UTRM program is not required by teachers nor administrator of UTRM. Students who have participated in the SA program are sometimes invited to several events and

projects at UTRM, but their experience has never been studied. It means the measurement of learning outcomes in terms of academic objectives and cultural awareness have never being taken into account to improve the implementation of the MEXPROTECT program at the UTRM.

The national program of MEXPROTEC has been offered to students from the UTRM since 2013. In the first cohort in 2013, three students were selected; two of them studied “Sécurité Informatique” en la Université d'Artois in the city of Lens (Pas de Calais) and the third one studied “Management Informatique et Commercial des Relations Client-Fournisseur” in the Université Rennes 1 in the city of Lannion (Bretagne). In 2014, a female student was selected to study “Commerce électronique” in the city of Alençon (Basse-Normandie). In 2015, none of the UTRM students was selected. The third cohort of students that has participated in this program was elected in 2016. This time, three students departed to France in the summer of 2016.

3.4. Sampling

Teachers and university administrators provided me with a list of names from the first and second cohort of students who studied in France through the SA program MEXPROTEC. The sample used in this study was a convenience sample composed of those students going abroad who were willing and fully committed to participate in the research study (Johnson & Christensen, 2000). Two participants accepted to participate: Alex and Rebeca. Alex (pseudonym) from the first cohort, Jul 2013- Jul 2014; and Rebeca (pseudonym) from the second cohort, Jul 2014-Jul 2015. At the UTRM, Alex studied Information Technology and Communications (ICT, also known as TIC by its acronym in Spanish) & Rebeca studied Administration.

3.5. Data collection procedure

Data was collected from the last half of October 2015 to the first half of February 2016. The first step was writing formal letters to the people involved in this research (students, professors and administrators from the UTRM). The aim was to explain the process to follow at UTRM. The

researcher held meetings with administrators and teachers to secure the permissions required and setting dates for the meetings with the sojourners. After that, the researcher held the first meeting with the participants and administered questionnaires, which simply allowed us to collect personal information in order to set the participants' background. Due to the fact that the subjects of study and the researcher had their first contact post sojourn, a narrative retrospection was done by enhancing students remembering their experience. Each theory or model showed in our theoretical framework had diverse constructs, some of them were the foundation to design a semi-structured interview from a sociocultural perspective. This interview was piloted with a UTRM student who shared some characteristics with our subjects of study. The objectives of this pilot interview (see appendix A) were to analyze the sequence of the questions in order to restructure it based on three stages: before, during and after sojourn; as well as training the researcher in her position as an interviewer to be familiarized with the questions. Finally, after redesigning the semi-structured interview, I interviewed the subjects of this study.

The first encounter with Alex (pseudonym) and Rebeca (pseudonym) was in the last week of October, 2015. In both cases, the presence of the researcher was helpful to answer any queries or uncertainties immediately while the questionnaires were completed. Participants were given a consent form to acknowledge their agreement to participate in the study. They signed the consent form before starting the interviews. Each participant was asked for permission to be audio taped and was asked to choose a pseudonym.

The researcher conducted the semi-structured interview to Alex and Rebeca in different sessions and settings. Each participant was interviewed separately. Three interviews were held in private residences and natural open areas; the last two interviews were held at the UTRM. I decided to use a variety of locations, seeking the comfort and providing a right atmosphere to our participants. To carry out the third interview, the researcher asked participants to bring photographs and other objects to help them remember their experiences during their SA program. Rebeca's interviews lasted three and a half hours total while Alex's interviews lasted three hours total. A good relationship was established with the participants. The researcher was always willing to listen to their stories, their good and bad experiences while being abroad no matter how much time this would require from the researcher. As Rossman & Rallis (1998, cited by Creswell 2007) explains it is important that researchers build rapport and credibility with participants. It

involved active cooperation by participants as well as sensitivity from them and from the researcher.

3.6. Instrument

The instrument used was a semi-structured interview guide divided into three sections: a) pre-sojourn, b) sojourn and c) post-sojourn (see appendix B). These sections correspond to the different stages the participants went through once they have been selected to participate in the SA program. Even though we have three stages, the interview was divided in five sessions aiming to cover the different dimensions that I could identify based on the theoretical framework of this research and on the participants' life.

According to Stake (1995) when we organize our interview we need to bear in mind three types of questions: informative questions, evaluative questions and *issues*. Stake states, "issues are not simple and clean, but intricately wired to political, social, historical, and especially personal contexts. All these meanings are important in studying cases" (p. 17). Therefore, using Stakes questions and *issues* I organized the interview to guide my study as follows. The first section of the interview inquired about the participants' familiar and academic background before entering university. This was done bearing in mind the need to know well our participants. Therefore, this section helped me to provide a comprehensive description of the students' social, interpersonal and individual background. The second section aimed at identifying students' academic background at UTRM, as well as the reasons behind their decision to be part of the SA experience and their expectations regarding the program. This was done to analyze our subjects' expectation about the situation they decided to live in and how they reacted and behaved. The third section of the interview was focused on their SA experience in France. Therefore, in this section, questions were addressed to elicit the intercultural encounters students went through and the strategies they used to adapt themselves to their new life. These questions were asked to identify, and then analyze how students reacted and behaved in real life and to know how and why participants interpret and ascribe meaning to what they lived, and to other aspects of the world (including encountering others). The fourth section focused on their return and life after sojourn. The research interest was to identify any new understanding of life students' may have

developed because of their sojourn in France and why. I designed this section to know how the experience impacted their academic and personal life when they returned to Mexico. Finally, the fifth interview sought to find deeper understanding of particular issues analyzed in previous interviews in order to answer the RQ.

The interviews were transcribed and I set up a project database using ATLAS Ti. This software serves as a repository for data that enables us to code them. As Saldaña (2012) states, the data may be organized into categories, themes, codes and families.

Before the analysis of the data, some information about each informant will be presented to contextualize the story of each participant. This information was collected through a survey and during the first interview.

3.7. Participants

Rebeca is a 25-year-old Mexican woman. She was born in Mexicali, Baja California, a city located in Northwest Mexico, along the Mexico-U.S. border. Her native language is Spanish but she also speaks English, French, Portuguese and a little bit of German. Rebeca attended a private elementary school, then, to pursue the rest of her education she went to public schools. She struggled when making a career decision; this led her to move to Mexico City and later on to Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo. Rebeca's family members have successfully achieved University studies, her parents are university graduated and his youngest brother is studying at the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México (UNAM by its acronym in Spanish). By the time this research study began, Rebeca was studying Administration at the UTRM in Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo. Her expectations regarding her professional life is to be well prepared in Administration and after graduation, work in a transnational company. Rebeca describes herself as an "independent" person. Before going abroad, personal contact with French speakers had been frequent for Rebeca since her childhood best friend is French and they have been in regular contact since they met. During the first six weeks of her sojourn, she followed an Intensive French course in Montpellier, a city in southern France. The following six months she followed a course on "Gestion de la Relation Client et E-commerce" at the University in the city of Alençon (Normandie). Afterwards, she completed a four-month internship in Paris.

Alex is a 23-year-old Mexican man. He was born in Palenque, Chiapas; a city located in Southern Mexico. His mother tongue is Spanish but he also speaks English and French. He attended public schools in three different States of México. After finishing high school, he wanted to study a major related to the use of Information Technologies. Alex's parents have successfully achieved technical studies; one of his brothers is pursuing his studies at the UTRM while the youngest started working after he graduated from high school. By the time this research study began, Alex was studying Information Technologies at the UTRM in Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo. His expectations regarding his professional life are to be well prepared in Information Technologies, and to be able to work in some company related to Cisco Systems, Inc. Alex self-professed as introverted, describing himself as "shy." Before the SA program MEXPROTEC, personal contact with French speakers had been very limited, he had never been abroad before. However, he attended few activities at University that involved intercultural encounters. The first six weeks of his sojourn, he lived with a host family in Besançon, a city in eastern France. After that, he took a six-month course of "Sécurité Informatique" at the Université d'Artois in the city of Lens (Pas de Calais). Afterwards, he completed a four-month internship in the same city.

CHAPTER IV ANALYSIS OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter provides a detailed analysis of research findings. Comparisons with the studies found during the review of literature and the interpretation based on the chosen theories were made. The findings of the study are also discussed in relation to previous research studies and theories. The detailed analysis and key research findings are presented under three headings; which represent both a chronology of the participants' SA program and shifts in the process of their personal development: 1) the pre-sojourn stage, 2) the sojourn stage, and 3) the post-sojourn stage. Each heading is directed to answer a research question. The last section is a brief summary of the chapter.

In this research, the information was divided into the three stages of the SA experience: pre-sojourn, during sojourn and post-sojourn. Then, some categories were identified in each stage. The categories were determined based on the theoretical framework and the research questions. According to Saldaña (2012), the ideal streamlined scheme to codify based on the theory is to arrange things in a systematic order to create categories or *families* which share some characteristics. Thus, within each category, different families of codes were determined. The codes were significant phrases used to name specific information about each of the participants. A code in qualitative inquiry is more often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data (Saldaña, 2012). The process of coding allowed me to join codes based on my theories into broader categories of themes to display and compare data. Therefore, through Theory-driven coding, data was organized categorically, reviewed repeatedly and continually coded.

Finally, the most relevant information was selected to do the analysis and to help answer the research questions. To avoid wrong interpretations of the data, the supervisor and the researcher codified first separately and then together. We compared the codes and eliminated the ones we were not able to relate to the categories. To analyze data, we used different codes derived from the theoretical perspective.

Since the aim of this research was to analyze the impact on the students' intercultural communication skills, adaptability and identity, it was necessary to know their sociocultural and academic background before participating in the experience abroad.

The following chart shows the three stages, categories, families and codes used to organize and analyze the data.

Table 1: Relation amongst stages, categories, families and codes.

STAGES	CATEGORIES	FAMILIES	CODES
Pre-sojourn	Reasons	Academic Issues	Academic objectives
			Academic background satisfaction
		Motivators	Social factors: <i>Family, friends and teacher's influence</i>
	Personal mobility: <i>Independence</i>		
	Expectations	Social expectations	Massive media influence on expectations Academic Expectations
Sojourn	Sociocultural awareness	Education	Academic differences
		Cultural practices	Linguistic encounters
			French racism
			Daily life <i>Healthy Habits</i> <i>Finantial habits</i> <i>Host-family hospitality</i> <i>Community hospitality</i>
			Expectations
Post-sojourn	New cultural understanding	Education	Academic objectives
			Academic background satisfaction
			Academic and cultural training
		Way of life	Adaptability
			Cultural awareness
			French behaviour
	Self-esteem construction		
Positive attitudes toward a new culture			

Created by the author of this research project.

Concerning the pre-sojourn stage, the reasons that made students participate in an academic experience abroad such as academic issues and motivators were identified. Additionally, it was found that their expectations were related to two main families of codes: social and academic issues. During the sojourn stage, it was also identified one category related to sociocultural awareness. This category is made up of three different but related families such as education, cultural practices and expectations. Those families were composed of different codes: academic differences; linguistic encounters, French racist expressions, daily life practices, habits and hospitality; unfulfilled expectations and French people expectations. The post-sojourn stage was related to the category new cultural understandings. Two families were determined in this category: education and way of life. For each family, there was a set of codes. The education category had three codes: academic objectives, academic background and academic and cultural training. The way of life category contained five codes: adaptability, cultural awareness, French behavior, self-esteem construction and positive attitudes toward a new culture.

4.1. The Pre-sojourn stage

In this section, I analyzed both interviewees regarding the pre-sojourn category and the *families* in this stage: academic issues, motivators, and social and academic expectations. The codes contributed to explain internal and external factors that led students to participate in the SA program. Through their narratives, Rebeca and Alex, provided insight into their personality, family background and goals.

4.1.1. Academic Issues

Among the reasons that encouraged these students, Rebeca and Alex, to participate in the SA program were academic issues and social and personal motivators. Even though Rebeca and Alex had different academic backgrounds, in the end, they both had similar academic objectives: they planned to finish their technical studies (TSU by its acronym in Spanish) at UTRM and they were

willing to learn languages through a diversity of experiences. Both of them had academic and personal reasons to participate in the SA Program.

At the beginning of his studies, Alex was interested in learning topics regarding Information and Communication Technologies (ICT). He wanted to learn about security issues during his studies. He mentioned this issue as an important academic objective.

From an academic view, I expected [at UTRM] to deepen my knowledge of security issues and to be able to finish my technical studies (Alex, personal communication, October 28th, 2015).

After his registration at university, he studied in detail the syllabus and he discovered that his major had a few subjects related to ICT topics. However, he was excited about the curriculum offered by the UTRM. Parallel to this, Alex found out that learning a Second Language was a main issue in this educative institution since language courses are mandatory regardless of the university degree. This means that, English is taught each quarter (15 week-term) along the six quarters of the TSU. Alex studied English in High School and he knew its usefulness to understand technical issues in ICT. However, he never thought learning another language was necessary.

Before my registration at university, I sincerely did not have in mind to learn another language, besides English. (Alex, personal communication, October 28th, 2015)

After knowing more about the mobility program offered by the UTRM, the desire to learn French arouse.

[To be part of the mobility program] Started out of curiosity. It was not that I wanted to study abroad but I got interested in learning French. (Alex, personal communication, October 28th, 2015)

In Alex's case the mobility training program was his chosen path to ensure him the study of French in the following two years. By contrast, Rebeca seemed to be more determined than

Alex to be part of the SA program since the beginning of her university studies. She was enthusiastic about the mobility program.

From the beginning I saw there was of a Mobility Program that motivated me a lot, it drew my attention. I asked for information, they told me that unfortunately, I could not apply because I was attending the University's evening shift. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 23rd, 2015)

When Rebeca enrolled University, she was working at Xplor Park, an amusement park that offers extreme activities for visitors all over the world, and hence, the work force has to speak several languages. At UTRM students of English are exempt if they prove a B1 level of proficiency, either with a certificate or by taking a challenge test. That was Rebeca's case, therefore, she had a two-hour gap in-between class periods. This gap coincided with French classes. So, Rebeca took French lessons at UTRM since it was beneficial for her current job and for her future plans.

I saw those [French courses] as opportunities to pursue my objectives of travelling and working in an international enterprise. I knew French was going to be helpful (Rebeca, personal communication, October 23rd, 2015)

The UTRM offered the mobility program to morning shifts and Rebeca was studying in the afternoon, she knew she did not have access to that opportunity. However, after Professor Françoise's recommendation she moved to the morning shift to take courses as part of the mobility training program.

Rebeca's academic objectives change dramatically when she was chosen to study abroad. At the beginning of the training program, when students are suitable candidates to apply to the SA, they are asked to investigate four cities where they would feel comfortable to study in during the mobility program. They had to take into consideration their academic objectives, the syllabus from the university in France and some other aspects they would like to consider. At the end of the selection process, candidates are interviewed and, if they received the scholarship, they are assigned to one of the four cities the student included in their file.

In Rebeca's case, the interviewer realized that she knew more about E-commerce (business transactions conducted by internet) than Administration (her major in Mexico). The reason of this knowledge was her part time job focused on customer care. By the time the interview was held, she was a Community Manager's Assistant in a hotel. As a consequence, when Rebeca was selected, she was assigned to a city that she did not consider firsthand, to pursue a major she was not following in Mexico. That was a big challenge for her. As Rebeca stated during interviews, she is a very organized and talented student, therefore she is usually prepared when it comes to doing things. The decision of studying in a different city, and in a different major, was informed to her four weeks before her departure. My interpretation is that, it was, above all, her resilient personality and her motivation that made her take this opportunity full of challenges to SA even though it was not what she had planned to. This enables us to visualize the opportunity area that teachers and administrators have in the training program. No one is exempt to live this kind of situation, therefore, students who take part in the training program have to be prepared for this type of changes before sojourn.

4.1.2. Motivators

Since I wanted to identify the reasons that led our participants to study abroad, I needed to find out what prompts them to want to live a new experience abroad. The participants found in family, friends and teachers the advice needed to motivate themselves to participate in the SA program. They wanted to improve their linguistic skills in French and their professional training skills to get a better job in the future.

4.1.2.1. Language as a motivator

One of the reasons why Rebeca and Alex wanted to participate in the SA program was their motivation to improve their linguistic skills. Rebeca has always thought about languages as useful tools to help her during her travels. Even though she did not have a specific date to travel,

she was always thinking on her future trips. Therefore, when she decided to take French she had in mind its usefulness for the future.

I always thought that I would, one day, have the chance to travel and work in an international enterprise. So, I thought it would be helpful, at least to have a good basic knowledge of French. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 24th, 2015)

Meanwhile, Alex said that although he did not have in mind to study a new language, when the opportunity of learning French came across, he just took it. However, besides learning grammar and vocabulary by reading, writing, listening and speaking, he was taught about culture and ways of being. Since the teachers were French, Alex started to feel excited about being selected to study abroad. Furthermore, he felt satisfied regarding his level of French. So, during his preparation process to apply for the scholarship abroad, Alex developed certain strategies to practice French in Mexico. Alex's strategy to improve his communication skills was to practice on the Fifth Avenue in Playa del Carmen. On Fifth Avenue, local and international tourists walk down and interact among each other. Another strategy he used to improve his oral and listening skills was to visit a couple from Quebec, Canada. During those visits, he learnt that his professors' accents (all of them French) and the couple from Quebec's accent were very different.

Well, I was satisfied... before finishing the French course, we [candidates of MEXPROTEC] went several times to the 5th Avenue to test our French skills. When we achieved B1 level, we used to visit a couple from Quebec to practice French. We were aware of the differences between the French and the Quebecois accents. We got used to listening to Silvie and Benoit, our French teachers. That is why at the beginning, we did not fully understand the Quebecois couple. (Alex, personal communication, October 28th, 2015)

When Rebeca and Alex concluded their training program at UTRM, they felt very optimistic in their proficiency of French. They sought to practice their French as a way to improve their communication skills prior sojourn.

(Rebeca thoughtfully stated) “I finished, I passed all my exams,” and a month before leaving to France I was selling tours and I happened to talk to three French persons. They were very nice and they seemed to understand me when I spoke in French. That made me happy. I said to myself “Yes, I speak French.” (Rebeca, personal communication, October 24th, 2015)

One of the reasons presented by Buttjes (1990) when learning a second language is that the process to become a competent member of society includes exchanges of language in particular situations. Alex and Rebeca sought intercultural encounters outside their academic settings to *measure* their linguistic performance prior sojourn. Alex’ and Rebeca’s achievements and the provided effort by the end of their training arouse on them feelings of satisfaction concerning their linguistic competence.

Rebeca and Alex wanted to improve their skills to be effective agents in reaching their desire goals not only linguistically speaking but professionally. They were very interested in mastering topics regarding culture and academic issues. They knew improving their linguistic skills would bring them a lot of benefits in other areas such as social and academic life.

4.1.2.2. *Mobility, family and friends influence*

Having experience mobility, within and outside the country, seem to be indirect factors that made Rebeca and Alex think they could go through an abroad living experience.

Rebeca started travelling at an early stage of her life. Her family used to travel frequently to the United States of America (USA) because of family meetings. Therefore, personal mobility was part of Rebeca’s *normal* life.

...besides I didn’t travel that much when I was a child and so I always dreamt of visiting many places. I had been to San Diego, I had also been to Los Angeles, they’re close to the border, but we used to go to specific places. I mean sometimes we would go to Disney, some others to Six Flags and then we would come back. I have aunts. One of my aunts

lives in San Diego and so we used to go to visit her over the weekend but it wasn't as if we were taking a trip. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 23rd, 2015)

For Rebeca, going to the USA was a common activity she would do without any problem. When being interviewed, she said she had never being abroad; meaning for her, going to the USA, did not mean being abroad. Probably, having travelled so many times to the USA made her gain confidence regarding trips. She seemed to be a confident person regarding travelling, she expressed no fear in having to travel to other places on her own.

Through his entire life, Alex had lived with his mother and two younger brothers. As a child, he experienced mobility twice with his family when moving from one state to another. For him mobility was seen as a *shocking experience* because they had to leave their friends, schools and house to start all over again. When he decided to study ITC, he had two options: the University of Valladolid, located two hours away from Playa del Carmen, and UTRM located in Playa del Carmen. By that time, he was living in Playa del Carmen with his family. So, he decided to go to UTRM because the other option required him to move and live by himself. He describes that situation as problematic.

... I had thought of a University located in the state of Yucatán, the University of Valladolid, but because I had to move there and since I did not know anyone there, well, moving would be a problem. (Alex, personal communication, October 28th, 2015)

While in college, Alex learned about the SA program from a friend who was enthusiastic about learning French. Alex pointed out that he sought information of SA out of curiosity.

I was curious, I wanted to learn French. It wasn't about travelling it was about learning a new language. (Alex, personal communication, October 28th, 2015)

Thus, in the case of Alex, having lived in different places does not seem to have influenced him directly. Nevertheless, he knew he was intrinsically motivated by his curiosity and for the desire of traveling and was motivated by his best friend.

Isabelli-Garcia (2006) pointed out that “intrinsic motivation involves the arousal and maintenance of curiosity” (p. 233). Additionally, she describes that motivation may cause Second Language Acquisition (SLA) achievement and it is possible to say that motivation is a result of learning. Even though Alex did not have the intention to study abroad, he did not hesitate to be part of a mobility program in order to learn French. Thus, language acquisition (SLA) played a motivational role making him forget the *problematic* situation of moving to another city when he had to move to a city in France.

When chosen as suitable candidates to participate in the mobility program, my participants took courses offered by the UTRM. These courses contemplated learning French, their culture and international communication strategies in the host language. During the process, Alex got interested to travel to a university in Northern France where he was going to receive education regarding a specialization on CISCO related to his bachelor studies (TICs) in Mexico.

[Regarding the academic program in France]. I read and sought for information before taking the decision and, you see, I wanted to learn more about security in both networks and programming. (Alex, personal communication, February 25th, 2016)

Sociocultural Theory (SCT) states that, by transforming our social and material environment, we also change ourselves and the way we live. From a cultural perspective, Rebeca’s and Alex’s effort to improve their communication skills led them transform their social environment prior sojourn. Rebeca and Alex had been preparing for future performances through gaining control over their brain when learning in a nonacademic setting.

The choices the participants have made regarding their formal education or their personal mission have sometimes been influenced by family, friends and teachers. Two people who had great influence on Rebeca were her brother and her father. Her brother studied at the Universidad Autonoma de Mexico. He had to move from Mexicali to Mexico City to pursue his studies. Her father, who does not live with her mother, is a university graduated who travelled to France during his university years. Finally, her grandmother had great influence on Rebeca’s life regarding travelling.

She [her grandmother] has travelled all over the world, when I was a child she would always bring me something, a gift, a t-shirt from Barcelona or from The Bahamas, or a cap. I used to have a gift collection from my grandmother.... I have no memory of her telling me about her trip or where she had been to. Yet I always wanted to travel. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 23rd, 2015)

Another great motivator for Rebeca seems to be, since an early stage of her life, seeking independence. When she was 10 years old, she asked her mother for money to start her own *business selling sweets and junk food*. She wanted to work since she was little. Rebeca describes this experience as “an economic act of independence.” Then, when she was 15 years old, she asked her mother for permission to go to Calexico, California, USA, on her own. The city is located along the border and she felt excited to go alone. Even though Rebeca’s mother was waiting for her on the other side of the border, she felt very excited to experience independence.

And so I told my mother that I wanted to take the bus and go to Calexico which is a town along the border. At that time Calexico did not even have a central plaza, I used to go to the shops alone I was so excited to be elsewhere on my own. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 23rd, 2015)

Rebeca’s mother’s strictness was a greater motivator to Rebeca for seeking independence through mobility.

Besides (she sighs) I did not have a good relationship with my mother I wanted to leave home, she was very strict (she frowns), well, she still is but I’m older now (she smiles). Going far away on my own was the best thing that ever happened to me. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 23rd, 2015)

Another of Rebeca’s great motivators was her friendship with Julie. She is Rebeca’s best friend and she is French. They met when they were 6 years old and since that moment, Rebeca experienced closely encounters with people from a different culture. Rebeca met people from other countries whenever she visited Julie’s home in Mexico.

“(…) French was the only language spoken at Julie’s house so she could practice it [Julie spoke Spanish and French]. I remember that her father would not allow us to watch soap operas. We loved them but he would say “Julie, don’t watch soap operas” I did not understand everything they said, I remember they had Cable TV in French everything was in French” (Rebeca personal communication, October 24th, 2015)

Thus Rebeca felt motivated when Julie and she made future plans to study high school abroad and even though it did not happen, the regular contact with her until now has played an important role in Rebeca’s decision making. Julie was always her dearest friend who later moved to live in Paris.

Regarding Alex, Henry played an important role as a motivator for him. When he entered university, his friend Henry helped him to feel enthusiastic regarding the mobility program and, to some extent, he pushed him to apply for it.

Well, this all started [the sojourn in France] with my peers who were also my former high-school classmates. One of them was really interested in the program and when the time came he warned me the date has come. We went to see professor Benoît and he told us what to do. That’s how it all started. (Alex, personal communication, October 28th, 2015)

In order to be selected by the university administrator and teacher to participate in the training program of UTRM called “Programa de Selección MEXPROTEC,” students had to be interviewed by the program coordinator. After that, they had to take six quarters of French. Alex had to tackle a major problem during the mobility selection process. Indeed, his profile was deemed inadequate to participate in the program. Fortunately, his professor and advisor advocated for him.

Professor Pedro was the one who staked everything on for us. The rest of the teachers did not want to accept us into the program so he said he would pay if we turned out to be incompetent students” (He nods) (Alex, personal communication, October 28th, 2015)

Therefore, Alex's great motivator was Professor Pedro. The relationship they had was close and the attitude of solidarity and love showed by him motivated Alex through the selection process.

Teachers were told who were the accepted students and, since I saw him smiling (his voice trembles) he said to me: "one of my beloved student has been accepted" and the ones he loved the most, (I mean his favorite students), were Henry and I. I told him "It is fine, Prof. Pedro, (looking downwards), I have no idea who's the chosen one, but it is fine, do you already know?" After that, I went to his office and he hugged me. He said, "I knew the two of you would be accepted. Not only one but both of you" (Alex, personal communication, October 28th, 2015)

As Isabelli-García (2006) points out "integrative motivation embraces socio-cultural, socio-educational and socio-psychological issues like belonging in a group, receiving affection and identifying with the foreign language community" (p.233). Motivation arises when those aspects are present. Alex and his friend embraced a strong relation regarding the possibility of going abroad to study. This relation was supported by one of his teachers. To Alex and his friend there was no other possibility but being accepted to participate in the SA program.

Rebeca and Alex were influenced by family, friends and teachers helping them to make important decisions in their lives. Since an early stage of her life, Rebeca decided to seek independence leading her to live in different places (Mexico City and Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo) even before her SA experience whereas Alex did not seek for independence as a personal goal, but curiosity and friendship support were great motivators until the end of the whole experience. Rebeca and Alex were both selected to go abroad thanks to their academic and personal objectives in life that made them feel motivated to gain knowledge and to seek out new challenges.

4.1.3. Expectations

4.1.3.1. Social expectations

Kinginger pointed out that the quality of SA experiences emerges from an interaction of students' desires and expectations (2008). Rebeca and Alex both had personal desires and academic expectations; they also shared linguistic expectations that played an important role to participate in the SA program.

Rebeca' and Alex's acculturation started when they decided to seek opportunities to interact with French speakers in Playa del Carmen, back in Mexico. Additionally, they had a perception of the target culture through the impact of massive media such as magazines, movies and internet news. Their own perspectives based on massive media led them to have social expectations. Rebeca thought that her social integration into the new context was going to be relatively easy.

I thought I would integrate [into French society] very well, socially speaking, since I was willing to do my best. Despite cultural differences, I wanted to adapt. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015)

She also imagined all French with a high level of sophistication and knowledge since according to her, France is the country with the highest number of Nobel Prize winners.

Well, I thought French people were the most learned (she laughs), that they were very smart and cultured since France is the country with the highest number of people who have been awarded with the Nobel Prize. So I imagined they were all alike (she nods) (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015)

Her expectations regarding the students' residences were reinforced when she watched a movie before travelling.

...we had already looked for accommodation and we found out that we were going to live in University halls. Back then, I imagined them like the ones I had seen in American movies... Well, I imagined polite and friendly people organizing occasional meetings where everyone shows great attitude towards foreign students. In fact, when we obtained the DELF B1 certification we saw a movie called “The Spanish youth hostel.” It is about a student who goes abroad. After watching that movie, I thought everything was going to be like in the movie. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015)

Rebeca’s expectations of friendly and polite French people grew after watching a movie. She was prepared to be part of an understanding and sensitive across culture French society. This perspective concurred with Alice’s case (Kinging, 2004) who expected to have access to a life of cultural refinement in her *imaginary France*. On the other hand, the influence that massive media had in Alex’s expectations was focused on academic settings.

In that regard, I had an idea created by watching films and so. I imagined the shape of the classrooms like the shape of an amphitheater where the rows of the seats were arranged in different stages. Yet the University I went to was not like that. The classroom seating arrangement was similar to the one in México where you find chairs and the board in a one level floor and the teacher is in front of you. (Alex, personal communication, October 28th, 2015)

The idea Alex had in his mind regarding the academic settings in France might have had an impact on Alex attitude towards his academic performance. He was aware of the fact that he was going to face varied and different situations he was not used to.

The influence that massive media had on the participant’s expectations were etched into their subconscious at many different levels: the way they dress, their personal hygiene, their understanding and sensitivities across cultures, their level of education, their behavior, the way buildings or houses are built, even the materials used in constructions. In one way or another the participants had stereotyped French people through massive media. Additionally, their French teachers in Mexico reinforced some ideas during the pre-departure training. For instance, the way

teachers dress tells them they are French, since they dress similarly to those in French movies. In summary, Rebeca and Alex had constructed their *own imaginary France* prior to their sojourn.

DeKeyser (2010) pointed out that expectations of students cannot be fulfilled without the adequate pre-sojourn preparation. Rebeca and Alex received pre-sojourn preparation. They learnt French through mediation. By mediation we refer to the constant use of the radio and the movies to practice French. By listening radio, they aim at improving their listening skills and by watching movies they expected to improve their reading skills and pronunciation. Additionally, as part of their courses, French students went to their classrooms to practice the target language. Furthermore, Rebeca and Alex sought for opportunities to interact with French people outside the UTRM to use the French language itself. Rebeca seemed to have a higher degree of expectations regarding culture, friendship and fashion, whilst Alex expected to find a well-organized and educated community.

In contrast to Rebeca, Alex based his expectations on communication he previously had with Mexican students who were studying at the university he had chosen. Those students gave him advice on sociocultural and academic matters, allowing him to have a much clearer idea of what he was going to face during SA.

In the research of Badstübner & Ecke (2009) students rated the goals as followed: 1) to study German, 2) to travel, 3) to be in contact with Germans, 4) for culture enrichment. Their findings revealed that students graded integrative motivation as important to participate and it did not change after the experience. This last finding coincides with Allen and Herron's findings (2003). They found out that the most frequently reported reasons for participating in SA program are integrative in nature. My findings revealed too that integrative motivation was the most important influence in their interest to participate in the SA program. One of Rebeca's reasons to participate in this SA program was meeting different kinds of people and getting to know the French (Integrative motivation). Regardless of their expectations before sojourn, the enthusiasm was palpable through their narrative retrospection. They were definitely willing to integrate themselves into society in the best way they could.

In this section of the chapter, we identified the reasons and expectations that made students participate in a SA experience and the expectations they had of the experience they would live abroad. The participants received during their preparation at UTRM several courses of French culture and international communication strategies in the host language. They felt

prepared to integrate efficiently to the French culture. They both agreed on the difficulty to prepare themselves in social skills, nevertheless they expected to find friendly and polite people with a certain level of education willing to welcome and support them to quickly fit into a new sociocultural context

By investigating the participants' academic issues and motivators we have gain insight into their decision to participate in a SA program as well as their expectations about the experience. Through a comparative with their experience during sojourn we can gain an understanding of the complex learning process that occurred during the SA in France.

4.2. The Sojourn stage

In this section, we will analyze both interviews regarding the sojourn stage, the categories and families that contributed to understand students' cultural experiences in France. The following descriptions fit the traditional approach of culture learning through a contrastive method. By way of the interviews, Rebeca and Alex provide insight into how they experienced cultural differences among French and Mexican culture.

4.2.1. Sociocultural awareness

4.2.1.1. Educational differences

Sociocultural awareness relates to the educational differences and social practices students encounter during their sojourn in France. Some of the academic struggles students faced were related to a lack of sociocultural awareness on the part of people from both cultures: Mexican and French students.

Regarding education, Rebeca and Alex found differences between their formal education in Mexico and in France, mainly concerning the teaching-learning process. Rebeca pointed out:

Lessons in France were not taught in the same way they are taught in Mexico. Here [Mexico] there is a continuous interaction between the professor and the students. Students' opinions and suggestions are taken into consideration. In France, everything has to be done the way the professor says, nobody says anything or asks any questions. Professors projected power point presentations during the lesson. The file was sent to us at the end of the class. Mainly, that is the way classes were conducted. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

Rebeca did not communicate with other students from the University of Alençon before going to France. She was part of the first cohort of foreign student to be at university of Alençon, France as part of an exchange program. Rebeca was not sent to any of the cities she had selected during his training program because of the professional knowledge she acknowledged to have when being interviewed. However, academically speaking she was expecting to find something similar to the courses in Mexico.

Alex's description of a class matches Rebeca's.

...professors are always in front of the class explaining the theme, answering questions. It is like that in every class. (Alex, personal communication, October 29th, 2015).

Alex and Rebeca experienced a new classroom culture where the image of the teacher was the main one in the learning process. Students and teachers' relationship was different from the one they were used to. Spencer-Oatey defines that intercultural interaction refers to the behavior (including, but not limited to, verbal and nonverbal communication) that occurs when members of different cultural groups engage in joint activities (2008). Mexican and French students were engaged in joint activities during their major classes in France. Rebeca and Alex expected differences in language but not in the learning process. Soon, they realized that the learning-teaching process was focused on teachers. Additionally, Alex and Rebeca found that they interacted with French students at lunch time differently that in Mexico.

During lunch time [in France], we all [Mexicans] sat down together. And most of the time, French students from the major of Domotics invited us to have lunch with them...we got along pretty well. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 24th, 2015).

Rebeca seemed happily surprised when she stated that students from the major of Domotics, which is the use of robotic technology at home, invited Mexican students from the major of E-commerce to have lunch with them. However, according to Rebeca's experience the major was not an issue for the French to invite Mexicans to socialize during lunch time. This time as well as the interaction among students was immediately noted from Alex previous experience back home, since in Mexico neither he nor Rebeca have a specific time to eat lunch between classes. Therefore, interaction was null.

Something that I did not like at school [in Mexico] was that we did not have time for lunch. Regardless of the fact that we had a straight schedule of classes. (Alex, personal communication, October 29th, 2015).

However, some of the encounters between French students and Mexicans were not good. Rebeca developed some negative feelings stemming from academic settings when she wanted to work with French people:

...we had to do some team presentations (she paused); and none of the teams [of French students] picked us up. I asked three French teams (smiling but without enthusiasm) if I could join them and they said no... And the Mexicans said to me laughing, "There you go again to be mistreated," to which I replied, "Ok, forgive me, I know that I can count on you. Give me a break, ok?" I said and I joined them again (the Mexicans).

Intercultural interaction takes place in a diversity of sites; the university is where my participants spent most of their time. A lot of their experiences and learning processes took place there. Rebeca wanted to extend the interaction beyond the class and tried to get involved with French classmates in grouping work. Steinberg (2002) argued, "Learning is not isolated in a classroom, but involves a total experience. Learning takes place outside of the SA classroom in

the student's living situation, associations with peers, and participation in extracurricular activities" (p. 211). Rebeca experienced a contradictory situation because outside the classroom, French students seemed to accept their Mexican partners at lunch time, for instance. However, in academic situations or when planning extracurricular activities inside university, they refused to accept Mexican students' participation. Rebeca once again tried to approach them when she heard that some classmates were planning an extracurricular activity.

They were in a somewhat opened circle and as soon as I reached them, they closed down the circle. Then shrugging my shoulders and gesticulating I said, "Well, I don't think they want to invite us," to which a very close girlfriend of mine replied, "No, don't worry, we will make our own Mexican gathering."that was horrible for me, I mean, I felt very bad about it. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015)

She realized that the experience of rejection left her feeling angry and frustrated in her efforts to fit into the new environment. Rebeca felt she was being mistreated.

In one occasion, a French teacher asked for volunteers to present subjects that she would assign. She asked "Any volunteer?" and no one raised the hand. I raised my hand and she made a gesture (an annoyed face) but obviously she could not say no, and then she said (to the rest of the group) "well, someone else?" She was going to assign the topic to me but she was asking for other people, right? So I got really upset. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

Rebeca, at some point, encountered racist attitudes from French teachers.

We [Mexicans] always felt it towards all of us [feeling of racism]. There were teachers...who would always ask questions to everyone except us, like "hey, what do you think about such topic?" Then he/she [the teacher] would grab the attendance list and there were days when they [teachers] would ask questions to everyone except us (Rebeca with an annoyed face) and that would bother me a lot. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

As Isabelli-García (2006) pointed out that integrative motivation embraces, socio-cultural, socio-educational and socio-psychological issues like belonging in a group, receiving affection and identifying with the foreign language community (p.233). Opposite to Isabelli-García statement, Rebeca did not find integrative motivation, on the contrary, she experienced rejection from students and teachers. Those attitudinal factors arose in her a sense of inequity. Since she did not have any professional help to understand and learn how to deal with those destabilizing situations, her cycle of stress-adaptation-growth took longer than Alex's because she experienced unpleasant interactions with social speakers in social networks.

By contrast, Alex received help in academic settings.

At least where I lived, people don't wait until you go to them, it comes from them to help you...they [French students] wouldn't wait until we said "Hey, I didn't understand," they would ask us, "Did you understand? May I help you?" (Alex, personal communication, October 26th, 2015)

Nevertheless, and despite all academic differences and unpleasant encounters Rebeca faced, her efforts during a presentation were recognized by the teacher. The teacher congratulated her after the presentation.

... [After the presentation] even the teacher said to me, "Oh, that was really good. Congratulations," she (the teacher) herself was surprised. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

Regarding administrators, both of our participants agreed that their French advisor performed well preparing and coordinating all the paper work needed before and during sojourn. Alex's French advisor asked him every now and then if he needed something. Alex emphasized the frequency of their communication.

Our French advisor looked for us once or twice a month. He used to ask if we needed help. With my Mexican advisor, Prof. Pedro, we were in touch every day though. (Alex, personal communication, February 12th, 2016).

Under the same vein, Rebeca pointed out the good performance of the University Dean.

The University Dean advisor was also our teacher. I never felt racism from him, he was very professional. (Rebeca, personal communication, February 10th, 2016).

Regarding Alex, bad news from Mexico were received. That made him feel without a moral and academic support after fifteen days of his arrival to the University of Lens.

A friend from Mexico called me, he said he had bad news and asked me to look for my best friend. When we were together he told us that our advisor Pedro had a heart attack and he had died. (Alex, personal communication, February 12th, 2016)

Alex was very close to his advisor Pedro, he considered him as *a member of his family*, therefore that news made him feel very sad and demotivated. Additionally, no one replaced the job position of Prof. Pedro in several months.

Prof. Pedro died on September 14th. After receiving such bad news, I felt different, I felt lost for a moment...also, academically speaking, the job position of advisor Pedro was not given to anyone until February, when we were almost ready to do our internship. (Alex, personal communication, February 12th, 2016)

Alex felt emotionally affected. As he stated, he used to talk every day with his advisor from Mexico. After the death of Prof. Pedro, the lack of follow-through from the institution for several months made him experience strong feelings of loneliness. Furthermore, he also developed a feeling of unfairness from the Mexican administrators and teachers. However, his resilience helped him to continue with his studies in France the best way he could.

Alex and Rebeca's realistic training with French students and teachers did not match their *imaginary* French academic context. However, our participants arouse feelings of satisfaction when they experienced new intercultural encounters that enriched her sojourn during their SA program. Rebeca and Alex were willing to integrate to their new sociocultural context by using the principles of Sociocultural Theory (SCT). According to them, learning takes place through participation in cultural system of activities, and knowledge itself is viewed as a cultural entity embodied in physical tools, social tools or symbolic tools (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007).

4.2.1.2. *Cultural practices*

Culture has been defined in this research as a construct that evolves through contact, exchange and communication with each other. Through the interviews, I could recognize some cultural practices that may lead our participants to sociocultural awareness. Linguistic encounters, healthy habits, community and host-hospitality or, even the opposite, like expressions of racism gave us an insight into their experiences among the French culture.

In the previous section, some racist attitudes within the educational setting between French and Mexican students, and French teachers and Mexican students were presented. Racist attitudes and behavior may be based on Mexican stereotypes and the lack of information society had regarding international students in education settings. The acculturation model of Bennett (1986) consists on passing through a state of ethnocentrism in order to reach a state of ethnorelativism or *acculturation*. The adaptation and integration process of our participants into a new society depends on others too. If a sense of understanding and acceptance between cultures is not part of society, the interaction within the local community might present some obstacles.

Even though this racist attitude from teachers and French students were quite disturbing for Rebeca, she did not become discouraged from trying to be respected and recognized as an international student who had been selected to participate in this program because of her own merits. Some personal characteristics of Rebeca such as a positive attitude and optimistic spirit have been identified by intercultural communication specialists "as vital for successful intercultural communication and adjustment" (Jackson, 2010, p. 171). Rebeca's resilience helped her to continue during the cycle of stress-adaptation and growth (Kim, 2007).

In terms of social interaction, Rebeca found difficulties since her very first day in Paris; she and other Mexican students had to deal with a hostile behavior from French people.

... At the hotel, they knew we were a group of foreign students, but still the receptionist was very rude to us (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

...At the Bistro, the waiter slammed the dishes to us... (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

Rebeca acknowledged her statement of the rude behavior perpetrated on her by the receptionist in Paris by pointing out differences between cultures. She contrasted her experience when she worked in resorts in Playa del Carmen, remarking that the way of treating foreign customers was very different.

... He [the receptionist in Paris] did not treat us badly; maybe it was more a cultural difference between both cultures because Mexicans are always smiling and saying hello to each other. In my particular case, I had worked as a receptionist in resorts and the way I behaved and interacted with tourists in Playa del Carmen, was the opposite of the way the receptionist behaved toward me. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

By her statement, it can be stated that Rebeca's perception about Mexicans tourism in Playa del Carmen is that service providers in there have developed a polite treatment with foreign tourists. In contrast, she had experienced people from France and Spain being rude with Mexican students; nevertheless, this shows a common natural French behavior that seems not to match Mexican culture regarding attitudes towards foreigners.

In contrast to Rebeca's experience, Alex was pleasantly surprised by the French courtesy and friendliness. He felt an unexpected and very warm welcome.

They [French] were very kind, to tell you the truth. At least in the north, where we were, people are very similar to us Mexicans. They are very warm people. (Alex, personal communication, February 12th, 2016)

Additionally, Alex arrived with a host-family that gave him a very warm welcome.

Well, at least the family that hosted me was very kind. I even felt as if they were Mexicans (he grinned). Yes, because they made a banquet for us the night we arrived (he smiles). (Alex, personal communication, October 29th, 2015)

... On that regard, I felt as if I had never left my home. I felt (with a surprised gesture, lifting his eyebrow, and smiling) at home, because they treated me as such. (Alex, personal communication, October 29th, 2015)

In México, Rebeca was told that a host-family would receive her in Montpellier. During the Training Program of MEXPROTEC, she was asked to choose four possible cities she would like to study in France. After she chose the cities, she talked to students who had previously studied in those cities and talked to them to know about their experiences. They told her that staying with a host family was a very positive experience in terms of sociocultural encounters and language learning. Later on, she was informed that, instead of staying with a host family, she was going to stay in a student's residence for five weeks. She felt frightened.

I was afraid because I thought I would be practicing and they [host-family] would help me all the time with my pronunciation, conjugations, etc. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

Even though the host-family support was something Rebeca did not experience during the whole SA program, she felt confident regarding her linguistic competence. Nonetheless, the second day she arrived to Montpellier she lived a situation that made her see that her proficiency in the language was not as good as she thought.

...on the second day, I talked to a woman, she let me know that she didn't understand my accent (Rebeca stops smiling). The lady said that if I wanted to ask her something in French I had to do it through my companion. She was an elderly woman. This first contact with her made me aware that I didn't speak French that well (gesticulating and smiling) (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

Right after this experience, Rebeca felt insecure regarding her language proficiency. This conveys with Allen & Herron's findings (2003), where sojourners faced one source of language anxiety called linguistic insecurity. Although Rebeca felt depressed after this incident, her willingness to adapt made her study harder and look for interaction with French speakers.

I mean, I was completely out of it because the tone she used was one that I was not used to (placing her hand on her chest). Then I went to my room and reflected on it, and, well, I had taken a few books with me from the time I was studying French here [in Mexico]. Thus, I started reading them and said to myself, "no, I have to start going out and practice French." (Rebeca, personal communication, October 26th, 2015).

Kinginger (2008) pointed out that language immersion can be limited by the unwillingness or inability of interlocutors to manage differences in conversational expectations, cultural norms, and personal identities. Rebeca's experiences led her to reflect on her context and on the need of being immersed into the French culture. She decided to participate in social encounters. However, due to the lack of French students in her intensive language course, she had to go out with international students so she could practice French.

I started to relate with boys that were from other countries and, well, we had to speak either French or English because I didn't speak their languages. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 26th, 2015).

Rebeca decided to integrate herself by doing outdoor activities with international students in order to practice the language and to encourage social encounters with native speakers.

...After class [the intensive French course classes] we [international students] would go on a picnic somewhere. Well, the Languages School always had extracurricular activities. One day it was the movies; another day it was a picnic or going to the beach. The city where we lived, Montpellier, has a beach. In the occasions we would go to a bar and we did sort of *trivias*, I was on a microphone, there were TV screens and we did *trivias*, etc. I used to do all these also with the boys from Cancun, because not all the MEXPROTEC guys would mingle with the international students. There were people that did not go out at all. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

When Rebeca arrived to Alençon, she found out that some of her roommates at the students' residence were from France but had lived in other countries. She also found out that some of them were from other countries too.

In the University residence? I got along very well with my neighbors. One of them was very good at sport, he was French but had lived in Egypt because his mother worked at the Embassy in Egypt and had lived there for, I don't know, ten or fifteen years. We didn't have much in common but he was really nice...and we would always be chatting together with another boy called Corinent, who was in the same floor. Only Corinent was on and off at school, "I mean," that he would attend school for three weeks and then he would attend a company for another two weeks. Corinent and his friend always did the cooking. Daniel is a Ukrainian who was about 25 years old too, my age, but he had been living like 20 years in France, so I got along very well with them. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

However, soon enough Rebeca realized that academic encounters were different. She noticed that her university classmates did not share some of the characteristics from her friends at the students' residence, for instance travelling abroad or getting to know people from other cultures.

They never said anything really, [referring to the French students] they never got close to us to chat; they always had their own circle. (Smiling) (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015)

Additionally, one of her classmates let her know that her proficiency in the language was not good enough.

...Once, we ran into Marvin [a classmate] in a bar and he introduced us [Mexicans] to his friends. I started speaking Spanish with one of them, but because he did not speak fluently, I said “do not worry, I speak French” and he said “Really? Marvin told us there were some Mexican students at University but because they cannot speak French, the subjects are too difficult for them.” (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015)

Marvin’s comments about Mexican students made her feel so upset that she decided to talk to his classmate Marvin and leave the bar. However, instead of feeling depressed regarding her performance in French, she questioned the types of thoughts of her classmates.

For me, that type of thinking, was silly and illogical. We all [Mexicans] thought the same. I mean, how could they possibly think that? we were studying at the same University and the same subjects as them, in French. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015)

Bennett (2004) states that people who consider themselves as part of a dominant culture are likely to experience *defense* as an attack on their values. *Defense* is likely to be expressed by membership in groups that exclude cultural difference or in outright attacks people of other cultures. Rebeca perceived *defense* of her classmates from Alençon when they [Mexicans] got a better grade in an oral presentation in class and her classmates complained with the teacher.

They [French classmates] argued it was impossible that Mexicans in an oral presentation would have performed better than French students did. Then, I said to one of them: “And

we do not know how to speak French! Would you imagine our performance if we knew how to do it?” (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015)

At that point, Rebeca understood that her classmates from Alençon were not ready to understand or accept foreigner students were studying the same subjects as them, and performing as well as any other student. Allen & Herron’s findings (2003) point out that sojourners faced two sources of language anxiety called linguistic insecurity and cultural differences. This was explained as a result of lack of out-of-class time invested in establishing contacts with target culture members. By this time, Rebeca have lived linguistic insecurity and cultural differences. Additionally, Rebeca judged French behavior as wrong or bad. However, at the beginning she may have found some of these behaviors hard to deal with or accept, but later she did not feel threatened by them anymore. This stage in Bennet’s model is called *acceptance* (Bennett, 2004).

In contrast, Alex stated that the French did not make him feel different, on the contrary, they were always open to help; outside school through leisure activities he became friends with his classmates.

Yes, in Besançon and Lens people would not see us any different. We went to the soccer matches many times because they have a local team. And they have a very good stadium. We were there in the party with all of them, with no difference, and our classmates felt the same. “*A todo dar*” as we say in Mexico (meaning something like “having a great time” or “feeling great”), there was no difference, they wouldn’t see us like “You don’t belong,” no, we were all celebrating with them. (Alex, personal communication, October 29th, 2015).

Before sojourn, Alex had already talked with Mexican students who were living in Lens, the city in France chosen by Alex, and besides giving him information of topics from school they told him that the French were warm and polite and they made them feel welcome. Alex stated the following regarding this issue.

When you need something or you ask for something, they did explain everything. We went to the post office frequently because we needed to send something, they would say, “you need this, and write down here.” Yes, people are very kind. (Alex, personal communication, October 26th, 2015)

Alex may have developed the idea of the French as polite people out of his pleasing experience with the host-family he lived with. As Isabelli-García (2006) points out “integrative motivation embraces socio-cultural, socio-educational and socio-psychological issues like belonging in a group, receiving affection and identifying with the foreign language community” (p.233). Even though the host-family only hosted him for the first five weeks of his twelve-month sojourn, the bond they developed made them invite him over for Christmas and New Year’s Eve. Additionally, their support was crucial when he had health problems during sojourn.

...and I was in pain when boarded the TGV and left to Besançon. I had called them [the host family] beforehand, and they already knew [he was in pain]. And as soon as I arrived I dropped my luggage, and they rushed me to the hospital. I spent the whole day at the hospital, which was the 25th, the 25th of December (Alex, personal communication, October 29th, 2015).

Schmidt-Rinehart and Knight (2004) state that by living with a family, students will probably have a more intimate view of life in the target culture than if they were merely to make friends with other native speakers. In living with a host-family, Alex might have developed a better understanding of the foreign culture and this could have made him more aware of the difference between both Mexican and French culture. Alex noted habits and routines from French since his arrival.

Well, you can tell people are calmed, because even in Paris, where everybody is in a rush, they give themselves time for a coffee, a meal; they do look very relaxed. (Alex, personal communication, October 29th, 2015).

Through the relationship with his host family he recognized and got used to healthy habits and routines.

... when I was with the family, well, I got used to the table talk, (he smiles) taking up to 2 hours to eat and drink wine. We would also go out on the weekends; that was pretty much always. (Alex, personal communication, October 30th, 2015).

These social encounters were favorable to Alex. The core concepts of the Sociocultural Theory (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007) are regulation, mediation, internalization and imitation. Through them, Alex started to change some old habits from his life, and he developed healthy habits and routines. It is worth mention that, the concepts of SCT such as mediation and regulation were identified when analyzing the SA experience lived by my participants. The construct of regulation refers to symbolic artifacts and interaction through a foreign language, whilst the primary means of the construct of mediation are language use, organization and structure (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007). For instance, Alex used symbolic artifacts such as computer software in French, listening to the radio or watching movies in order to improve his proficiency in French. Additionally, the good interaction with peers and the host family through French helped him to integrate to his new social environments. His capacity of intentionally imitate the activities of French, helped him to reorganize the relationship between himself and his new social environments. Alex, was immersed in the cycle of stress-adaptation and growth (Kim, 2007) in a *smooth* way. Through the family background and the association with a local community which were used to receiving international students with goodwill, Alex got used to their idiosyncrasies and cultural differences in a positive way.

Rebeca always thought that her willingness to adapt would help her to make friends and integrate to her new environment relatively easy.

My friend Enrique and I were focused on adapting ourselves to our new environment. But everyone talked to him first, instead of me. Maybe because he was a man. Anyway, whenever I saw him speaking with them [French students] I used to approach and join the conversation (Rebeca, personal communication, February 10th, 2015).

In contrast with Alex, Rebeca developed some negative feelings stemming from academic settings. Furthermore, the reactions of French students to her presentation's grade was one of indignation.

We did a team presentation and our grade [of the Mexican team] was really good. We were ranked as the third place in the group. After the presentation, all of them [the French students] went on to complain that we had ranked better than they did. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

After the presentation, her French classmates and teachers did not change their attitude towards Mexicans. Lam's findings are a reminder that it is not only sojourners who constantly adapt to the new culture (as cited in Byram & Fence, 2009). The authors said "her findings clearly indicate that the adaptation process was, and should be, reciprocal" (p. 4).

People from Alençon were not used to receiving international students and Rebeca felt it that way. However, Rebeca's situation changed when she moved to Paris. She had favorable intercultural interaction mainly during her staying in Paris.

When I arrived to Paris for the internship I had the opportunity to be in touch with the boys from ERASMUS program, there I integrated much better little by little. Anyway, they weren't French after all, they were from the European Union, but none of them French (short pause). With the girls, I started hanging out with a girl from Oxford University and then another one from Germany, from Frankfurt, they were interns. I started to get along with them and then little by little with all the rest of the interns that happened to be all French, well except for us three. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

Additionally, having her best friend living in Paris was a great opportunity to finally feel engaged with French lifestyle.

And my friend Julie knew I studied there and always told me, “Well, come out with me.” And she began to introduce me to her friends, to her French friends, and I started to get along with them... (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

Through Rebeca’ and Alex’s experiences it can be seen that the students’ destination choices previous to the sojourn played an important role in their favorable or unfavorable intercultural encounters. Studying in a place where sojourners were received previously made Alex feel welcome, on the contrary Rebeca struggled whenever she tried to integrate into a society where international students had not been previously received. Alfred et al (2006) explain that interculturality challenges us “to be willing to become involved with otherness, to take up others’ perspectives by reconstructing their perspectives for ourselves, and understanding them from within it does not imply abandoning our own perspectives but rather become more conscious of them” (p.2). In practical terms, students need to be aware of the *self* and others.

Even though Rebeca was aware of herself and others regarding challenges of integrating into a new environment, the regrettable academic incidents where French teachers treated Mexicans unequally made her feel uncomfortable. Therefore, she reinforced an *us* [Mexicans] and *them* [French] perspective. This means she could not relate to French culture right away.

[After some teacher’s comments] I mean it was weird to me. I said to her [French teacher], if we won a scholarship, it is obviously that we are better than some other Mexican students (putting a finger in her temple as if saying “think” while she was talking); therefore, it is not possible to think that we are not good students. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

In order to engage with her new environment, Rebeca tried to understand differences among cultures. Therefore, to be part of their new social environment in Paris, she started to change the way she dressed, her hair, her make-up, etc. She took as a reference the images she had seen on magazines and the girls she could see during her internship.

I adapted very well when I moved to Paris. I sort of change the way I dressed, I didn't want to be left out, and I wanted to look a bit like them to see if I could be part. Once I went to hang out with my friend Julie, uh, she was waiting for me in the subway and I said "hi." Well, I smiled and she didn't answer until I spoke to her in Spanish and said "oh, sorry, I didn't recognize you, you look very French now." Every day I straightened my hair for the practices because the girls always wear their hair straightened. I dressed with coats and tennis shoes or flats. The company was a music company so the dress code was a bit alternative. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

To Rebeca the fact of being a student would help her to be accepted by French people. She expected to be welcomed by people --probably from the movies she had seen before coming to France. It can be stated that she had high expectations and probably that is why she would show rejection to some expressions she considered rude or unjustified arguments. According to Kim (2007) a transformation of a social and material environment lead people to an "intercultural" way of relating to oneself and others through the cycle of stress-adaptation and growth. Rebeca lived some difficulties during this cycle. That, made her realize she should be focused on the differences concerning attitudes, values and look among cultures. So, after she was recognized as a good student, she opened herself to new ways to behave within the French environment such as changing her way of dressing and hair style. Additionally, she adopted healthy habits such as running, eating healthy food and reduced portions of meals. Even though she did not like some unhealthy habits as smoking or drinking coffee, she eventually was part of the *work-pauses* Parisians had so as to try to engage in their "social activities."

They drink too much coffee, they always drink espressos...they smoke a lot too. At work they had breaks to go for the coffee; so, I ended up drinking coffee to have breaks and socialize. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

Rebeca was aware of the lack of integration she experienced when she lived in Alençon; therefore, she used the core concepts of the Sociocultural Theory (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007), which are regulation, mediation, imitation and integration, to become part of the French society. This process experienced by her could be stated that she acculturated herself in order to fit in

society. Lantolf & Thorne (2007) point out that, by transforming our social and material environment, we also change ourselves and the way we live. Regulation was used by Rebeca when she interacted through linguistic means by participating in activities in which she was regulated by others. For instance, when she offered to prepare a presentation for a subject and explained it in front of the class. Later, when she moved to Paris, she was assisted by colleagues and friends until she developed self-regulation. She also used mediation through the use of language in social interaction. Through internalization, she reorganized the relationship she had with the social environments and future performances. Finally, she used imitation, when she adopted habits such as drinking coffee to interact in “job pauses”. All these factors led her to a concern over the image she conveys to French people as a mechanism to prevent the social exclusion she felt in Alençon.

Alex reported he was living in an organized world. Therefore, he was forced to become an organized person in all aspects of his life. He had to learn to deal with financial matters since the French institution in charge of paying half of his rent did not make those payments. Consequently, Alex’s personal budget was cut off in half during his sojourn.

Rebeca and Alex experienced intercultural encounters in many different ways. According to Rebeca’s experiences she was aware during the whole experience of the lack of integration she lived in the French culture. As a consequence, she changed radically the way she dressed, her makeup and hair. Additionally, she changed her health habits. She did everything she could in order to be accepted. These changes might be the result of “the awareness of experiencing otherness and the ability to analyze the experience and act upon the insights into *self* and other which the analysis brings” (Alfred, Byram & Fleming, 2003, p.4). Whilst Alex felt successfully adapted to his new environment, the academic and sociocultural differences were part of the learning process and internal change he experienced. Alex’s case staying with a host family was a very positive experience in terms of cultural awareness and language learning. Results found through the analysis of Alex’ and Rebeca’s match with the study of Crichton et al. (2007) where he explains how a range of disciplines, interaction between students, both local and international, and between students and staff, contribute to the development of intercultural awareness.

4.2.1.3. *Expectations*

Rebeca had a high level of social expectations. This weighed upon her perception of the treatment she received considering it in several cases as inequitable and even racist. Rebeca evaluated the differences in context highlighting in particular the way she expected to be treated regarding social and academic relationships. She felt that her efforts for adaptation in Alençon were pointless. This would make this finding comparable to that of Kinginger's study (2004). Kinginger reported that Alice gained access to interaction with French people in formal and informal basis when she adapted to the "real" France and forgot her "imaginary" France. Even though it was difficult for Rebeca to insert into the foreign culture she finally succeeded; and this seemed to help her realize there was a France she would have to accept the way it was.

Even though support from friends helped participants in the adjustment and functioning in a new language and culture, expectations about the French culture placed Rebeca in an uncomfortable situation. On the contrary, Alex did not have high expectations which along with the good welcome from the French family made her acculturation process easier than Rebeca's.

Everybody thought that because I was Mexican I would dance reggae ton really well, so they asked reggae ton to be played and it was a disaster. In the end, I kind of go with the flow but not quite, so I was feeling weird. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015)

Additionally, Rebeca had as a personal goal to do her internship in Paris and that played again in detriment to her integrative expectations. People from Alençon believe that people from Paris behave aggressively, showing derogatory treatment to people outside Paris. Jackson (2010) found out that some students from the SA program seemed unaware that some of their actions might be impeding relationship-building across cultures. Those students believed that it was enough to just be themselves. Alençon's students' beliefs regarding Parisians and Rebeca's strong desire to go to Paris may have affected, unconsciously, her relations with his classmates. The continuous confidence and eagerness of Rebeca seeking opportunities to do her internship in Paris might have prevented people from Alençon from being socially engaged, not only with Rebeca, but with their Mexican classmates.

Alex's expectations regarding French people were fulfilled through his positive encounters. He found a well-organized, friendly and educated community.

Of French people, well, I thought and still think, that they are very honest people in everything they do. And, very, how do you say? Methodic, they plan everything. They don't leave anything to chance or to another day. And, this is the idea I had of them, of being very organized people. (Alex, personal communication, October 30th, 2015)

I thought I would meet people with a high academic level. And, yes, all the people I met were like that, they had bachelor degrees, and things like that. Culturally, I was expecting very respectful people, and in all honesty they are like that. You can see that right away in the traffic. Even if the light is in green if someone is crossing the street, they don't blow the horn, they don't make the engine roar, nothing, they just wait for people to finish crossing. (Alex, personal communication, October 30th, 2015)

Additionally, Alex realized that French people were not as serious as he thought.

Well, they left me a good impression of them, of being very nice. They are not that much of party people...but they are very nice. And they are not as cold as I thought. (Alex, personal communication, October 30th, 2015)

Rebeca expected French people to be organized and clean. However, she found the opposite during her sojourn.

I have a good image of French people being organized. In general, that is why I thought of Europeans. But, I went out at night a few times and it was all littered; everybody would throw garbage in the streets, on the floor. Then, about five o'clock in the morning the garbage collectors would be picking up the garbage, right? The government and those employees were the ones that had to clean, then, that really surprised me. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 24th, 2015)

The same in Paris when you are in a picnic at Saint-Martin channel or in the Sienna River...it was quite strange to me. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 24th, 2015)

Rebeca's efforts to adapt and integrate into the French culture were ineffective to the point that they threatened her self-confidence and self-image.

...They would always look at us in a weird way. (Frowning her brow) Even one time, I felt I didn't fit in the group, once we were in an outing in the Salon du Paris in an exhibition, well it was one show about e-Commerce related to what I studied. We dressed up as business casual...and always, they would stare at us the whole time. According to me, I was looking fine and I even checked the fashion magazines to have an idea if my outfit would be adequate or not, and yes, I would look normal but they would still be staring at me. (frowning her brow) And, they wouldn't be discrete at all and it was like (she has a surprised face) surprised and I said (shrugging my shoulders) what's going on? (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

Hernandez (2010) confirms that student motivation and interaction are important factors in predicting success in a study-abroad context. Rebeca did not expect to find herself immersed in a community where service and goodwill was not part of their background. Thus, the community made her feel excluded at some point. However, she justifies people's lack of cultural competences in Alençon, by explaining that the city was quite small and had never received any international students before.

The university where I studied was too small, same as the city and they were not used to receiving international students. (Rebeca, personal communication, February 10th, 2016)

As Byram & Feng (2006) claim, sometimes students are isolated not by choice yet "as a result of social processes that do not offer an entry, even to the most willing student committed to the idea of integration." (p. 2). Because values tend to influence attitudes and behavior, there is a possibility that from some university classmates' perception she "ought" to be treated the same way they have been treated by Parisians. Nevertheless, Rebeca was continually eager to

experience the very distinct culture of France and other countries. In Alençon, her circle of friends was limited and her motivation to be part of the community diminished. In her pre-sojourn interview, she expressed her desire to do travelling to experience new cultures. Therefore, she travelled quite often while she was living in Alençon.

I travelled to a lot of places. On the weekends, my Mexican friends and I tried to travel to cities in France like Caen, Wilstermann beach or to Paris. (Rebeca, personal communication, February 10th, 2016)

On holidays, she travelled to some other countries.

On the “Toussaint” holidays, a week in October, I went to Berne, Geneva and Zurich in Switzerland. In December, when I had two weeks, I went to Cork, Dublin, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and London. On February, I travelled to Turkey and Greece and on May, I went four days to Belgium. I visited Monaco, Niza and Cannes during a short holiday of four days. I also had a free week when I moved from Alençon to Paris and I travelled to Spain. And, after I finished my internship I bought an unlimited train ticket to travel for a month to Germany, Hungary, Denmark and to some other countries. (Rebeca, personal communication, February 10th, 2016)

Hernandez (2010) participants reiterated their interest in becoming fluent in the target language in order to be able to communicate with native speakers, and, at the same time, expressed their desire to use the language for future traveling. Both expectations had Rebeca prior sojourn. After all she was fulfilling her expectations in her own terms too. It is interesting to notice that some personal characteristics of Rebeca such as a positive attitude and optimistic spirit, have been identified by intercultural communication specialists “as vital for successful intercultural communication and adjustment” (Jackson, 2010, p. 171). Her optimism and positive attitude seemed to have helped her to overcome every unpleasant encounter she experienced.

Regarding intercultural encounters with native speakers, Rebeca pointed out that the courses offered at Montpellier created opportunities for them to have meaningful interaction with French speakers but not with native speakers. Rebeca stated that communication was not always

made in the target language, since students were from all over the world, they tended to use English or Spanish whenever they needed. Regarding the five-week courses that Alex took in Besançon, he pointed out that after classes he would go on excursions only with SA participants. Consequently, contact with native speakers was limited to superficial or transactional contact.

According to Rebeca, teachers and students did not know how to behave or how to interact with foreign students.

[French teacher] “What have you written down in my class? [Rebeca’s answer] “since it is a review I wrote down that it refers to the last class and here are my notes” and I showed my notebook to him, to which he replied “well, I don’t teach tourists” and I said to him (with a face of surprise and disbelief) “Excuse me?” To which he replied, “Yes, and if you don’t like my class I don’t come here to teach tourists”; (she smiles with incredulity) and that was it. I got really annoyed. Other Mexican girl said to him, “we are not tourists, we are students.” (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

Neither French teachers nor students received an intercultural training course so as to improve their cultural awareness and understanding of the impact of cultural differences. Denial, Defense, & Minimization are the three stages of ethnocentrism (Bennett, 1993). This last concept emphasizes the belief that the own culture is the best, so it should not be mixed or “contaminated” with some attitudes, beliefs or ideas from other cultures. According to some of the studies reported here, ethnocentrism may diminish intercultural communication competence by reducing culture-specific and culture-general understanding (Wiseman, Hammer & Nishida, 1989) and creating misperceptions about the behavior of culturally different individuals (Gudykunst & Kim, 1997). These may explain why Rebeca experienced situations and French racism expressions. For Rebeca, that was something unexpected to find during her sojourn, and we suggest those situations prevented her from engaging in meaningful interaction with native speakers. Furthermore, neither Alex nor Rebeca took into consideration society’s expectations of them.

4.3. The Post-sojourn stage

This section will address the possible transformation of intercultural identity our participants experienced because of their SA experience. It is worth mentioning that their expectations regarding the cities they would study in, their own ideas learned from media and people, and personality played an important role along the process. Students seem to have developed new cultural understandings about education and the way of life of French people. Thus, I will analyze the two families that would help understand the new cultural understanding Rebeca and Alex experienced.

4.3.1. Education

Regarding Education, Rebeca and Alex had high expectations. Rebeca thought French people in general would be very educated, literate, and thus the classes at the university would be of high quality performance on the side of teachers and students. According to Rebeca that was not the case. Most of the classes were teacher-centered and students would never ask or express their opinions about any topic.

There were teachers...who would always make questions to everyone except us, like “hey, what do you think about such subject?” Then he/she [the teacher] would grab the attendance list and there were days when they [teachers] would ask questions to everyone except us (Rebeca with an annoyed face) and that would bother me a lot. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

There were certain events that made Rebeca question her ideas and expectations about French education, teachers and students. These events contributed to replace former ideas about the French education system with new ones; these ideas helped her feel more comfortable with herself as a foreign student. Once, Mexican students, including Rebeca, talked to their advisor to

explain they did not understand teachers' lectures and the answer their advisor gave them was not to worry because their French classmates did not understand them either.

All of us [Mexican students] talked to our French advisor. We told him that we were not understanding topics covered in some subjects and he said: "do not worry, your French classmates do not understand either." We did not like that answer, none of us. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

Their teacher advisor's answer surprised them very much and at the same time gave them confidence in themselves. However, they did not like the answer since he did not give them a solution to their problem.

On the other hand, the teaching method and expertise of some of the teachers were not as good as Rebeca thought they would be. She disapproved some teaching processes during her classes.

In one class the teacher talked about HTML programming, after that she said "OK, I want a webpage for next Tuesday" and then we thought to ourselves "this is not enough", I mean, she did not teach the topic, she just vaguely talked about it. We [Mexican and French students] considered that the teacher was not teaching how to program and design Web pages, she just asked us to do it. We learnt from YouTube in order to do the homework of that subject. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

These facts changed Rebeca's attitudes towards her capacity to do certain things in life such as studying and working abroad. She and her Mexican friends realized that they had the ability to do many things abroad and felt quite proud of being Mexican.

Rebeca was rejected by French classmates and teachers many times. Nevertheless, these experiences made her Mexican group of classmates be more united and eager to continue learning. She could never have explained to herself why her teachers and classmates were not able to understand that they had been chosen to study in France because they were good students and had the strategies required to do so.

[After some teacher's comments] I mean it was weird to me. I said to her [French teacher], if we won a scholarship, it is obviously that we are better than some other Mexican students (putting a finger in her temple as if saying "think" while she was talking); therefore, it is not possible to think that we are not good students. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

Alex also had high expectations regarding education but his personality was less extroverted than Rebeca's. He was quite timid. Thus, that is why he did not expect to be taken into account as Rebeca did. Unlike Rebeca, he did not report having experienced any racist act from French people while studying at the University.

While being in France our French teachers treated us the same way. Well, actually they treated us differently but in a positive way. They used to ask if we had questions in a very respectful manner. (Alex, personal communication, February 10th, 2016).

Alex wanted to study at CISCO for his major (ITC) in France. In the end, he did not study this topic as he pointed out:

[Formal education] So, I did not learn about topics I wanted but I learnt unexpected themes. At the end it turned out to be a positive experience. (Alex, personal communication, October 29th, 2015).

Crinhton and Scariano (2007) describe intercultural capability as the capacity to negotiate meaning across languages and culture. This being said, academic differences did not prevent Rebeca and Alex from acknowledging the learning process lived during their sojourn.

Alex and Rebeca both improved their communication skills as a consequence of studying ITC and E-commerce in France. In the end, the formal education received in France turned out to be a very positive experience.

[Formal education] There are several things that have been useful. Besides I think some subjects are better taught in France. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 29th, 2015).

Benson et al (2013) state that an effective SA program identifies, explores, builds, and supports second language identity understanding and development (p. 161). In a way, these two Mexican students did explore, build and receive support to develop their language skills in French, they received a five-week intensive French course that helped them to improve their performance in France. Nevertheless, this course did not prevent them from facing language communication difficulties. Rebeca faced communication problems during the first months of her sojourn in France but as time went by she overcame those problems and reached a good level of proficiency in French. She had many opportunities to practice and develop autonomy in the language such as when she decided to go to Paris for her internship.

Regarding academic and social support, the exchange program in France did not seem to have provided them with enough social and academic support during the sojourn. Even though their respective advisors in France helped them in administrative issues, they were not culturally aware of the implications of being a foreign student in France. Additionally, participants were not clearly informed of the subjects they would sit in France and French teachers and students were not culturally aware either. Lantolf & Thorne argue that, while human neurobiology is a necessary condition for higher order thinking, the most important forms of human cognitive activity develop through interaction within these social and material environments (2007, pp.201-202). It seems that in Rebeca's case the cycle of stress, adaptation and growth took longer since society was not aware of sociocultural practices regarding international students. However, Rebeca's resilience helped her to continue and reached the academic goal of graduating from the French university. Alex, on the other side, did receive more linguistic support on the side of the family he stated with the very first weeks. The family was always close to him and helped him a lot to adapt to the use of the French language. Maybe his relation with the French family helped him understand better than Rebeca the cultural aspects of the use of the language.

Although Rebeca and Alex faced some problems regarding education, both of them agreed this was a great experience from which they learnt a lot. Rebeca explained that she understood that the idea she had about French people in terms of education was not completely

correct. She joked saying that she now knew not everybody could ever get a Nobel price, making reference to the idea she had before travelling to France. She thought France was a country of literate people because many French have got a Nobel price so far. Thus, in a way, her idea about the level of people's education in France changed a little bit but she still thinks it is a good country to study.

4.3.2. *Way of life*

Adaptability as an internal change can be seen in diverse parts of Rebeca and Alex's discourse. During their formal education in France and the experience of living in a different context they negotiate new cultural understandings of themselves and others. In this section we analyzed some experiences that may account for their transformations.

Rebeca experienced changes in her personality before coming back to Mexico. When she moved to France to do her practice internship, she explained she felt she was not the same person that had come to France some months ago.

When I was in Paris, I stopped smiling. I did not want my colleagues to misinterpret again my smiling face. Although, by that time (after three weeks) they knew I was Mexican and most of them smiled at me every morning (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

The changes she had experienced in herself, however, were consciously done as an adaptation strategy to be accepted in the working group she would work with.

Every day I straightened my hair for the practices because the girls always wear their hair straightened. I dressed with coats and tennis shoes or flats. The company was a music company so the dress code was a bit alternative. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

... I did not laugh aloud, I did not smile much, I dressed up in a different way, I ate

differently. These made me feel a little bit sad because I felt I was losing my essence. I was different. I was not the same girl that was when I arrived in France. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 25th, 2015).

These were adaptation strategies she did not feel very comfortable with. Nevertheless, regarding an overall cultural change, Rebeca's statement matches the ones that Sussman's (2002) used to assess cultural changes, such as "I felt as though I changed as a result of living and working overseas." Additionally, when being in Mexico, Rebeca kept some of those transformation such as eating healthy, practicing sports and trying to be more ecological. This incorporation of French customs is related to Sussman's research where cultural identity changes of sojourners were proved using statements such as: "I have tried to incorporate some international customs and ways of thinking into my work environment." However, Rebeca understood that some of those changes she had made when being in France were not useful anymore in Playa del Carmen, Quintana Roo, Mexico such as recycling, since she considers there are not conditions to do it.

De Vita & Case (2003) argue that intercultural learning entails the discovery and transcendence of difference through authentic experiences of cross-cultural interaction that involves real tasks, and emotional as well as intellectual participation (p. 388). By understanding of differences between cultures Alex could appreciate and enjoy their daily routine.

When I was with this family [in France], they always had extracurricular activities besides working or going to school; like learning to play a musical instrument...When we got asked "What do you do besides school or work? or What do you know besides certain topics?" ... We, well, mmm (with a doubtful expression), well, not much (Alex, personal communication, October 30th, 2015).

Alex experienced *acculturation* and *deculturation* by learning new ideas, values and practices that led him to question ideas and practices from the past. The stage from adaptation to integration of Bennet (1986) is defined by anything that favors the development of empathy with the other culture as well as the ability to communicate interculturally. From my point of view, Alex felt empathy since the beginning of his experience, showing a sense of security about his

culture and, at the same time, curious to learn about the target-culture. By analyzing his statements, it can be stated that he felt comfortable when he adapted to the host-family. After living with them, he went to live on his own, in a university residence. He adapted to the new environment by living an independence process he did not seek firsthand.

... I feel that in spite of all the time I have lived with my family and never lived by myself [in Mexico] that it was not so difficult for me to adapt to the change of living on my own. (Alex, personal communication, October 30th, 2015).

Nevertheless, the sudden death of Prof. Pedro from a heart attack played an important part in his demotivation during sojourn. The cycle of stress-adaptation-growth slowed down for a time since he described he lost himself for a moment. However, thanks to his attitude, he finished his studies and internship in France. After coming back to Mexico, he did not want to continue studying. Despite that, he enrolled at the UTRM but on the first partial of his seventh term (15-week term) in Mexico he suffered an accident that immobilized him for a year. After the accident, he reported severe demotivation to continue his studies. However, he returned to university after a slow recovery. He reported he did that, among other things, in memory of Prof. Pedro.

Neither before nor after the accident I wanted to come back to school, but I came back to finish a cycle. I wanted to have my certificate and to find a good job. I also did it in memory of my Prof. Pedro. He would have liked to see me ending my studies here [at UTRM] (Alex, personal communication, February 10th, 2016).

The death of Prof. Pedro and Alex's accident, challenged his capacity to overcome bad experiences in life. Even though he was not able to fully understand the process he went through, he decided to continue with his goals of graduating from ITC and to have a good job as a result of his academic preparation. Furthermore, he wanted to pay tribute to the memory of his Prof. Pedro finishing his studies at the UTRM. Alex developed strategies in effective ways to achieve his personal goals. It seems he perceived differences as process of adaptation.

Thus, adaptability as an internal change can be seen in diverse parts of Rebeca' and Alex's discourse. Rebeca reported progress in her understanding and adaptation to the new society after several months living there. Actually she could perceive her transformation of their social and material environment which let her adopt a more sensitive attitude towards the French culture when she moved to Paris.

And yes, I adapted very well when I was in Paris (moving her head from side to side) I changed the way I dressed (short pause), I would see them and I didn't want to be any different. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 26th, 2015).

Rebeca's statement pointed out an increase of cultural awareness bias adaptability.

At the end of the day, I was different. I had to adapt to others and not vice versa... I was not there for them to adapt to me, yet I had to adapt to them because I was not at home, I was not in my country. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 30th, 2015)

Bredella's (2003) describes "an indispensable feature of the intercultural experience in that we refrain from imposing our categories and values on others but instead learn to reconstruct their frame of reference and see them as they see themselves" (p. 228). Her reflection regarding adaptation involves her position as a foreign student in France. and matches Bredella's (2003) explanation. Additionally, when she refers to her integration process she pointed out that it took a long time, first she interacted with international students, afterwards with French.

I arrived to Paris to make the practices and there I had the chance to share with the guys from ERASMUS, well, I was sort of getting integrated little by little but, they were not French. I mean, they were from the European Union but none of them was French. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 30th, 2015)

According to Rebeca's statement, her integration to French society started when she left Alençon and moved to Paris, nine months after her arrival to France. She argues that by that time her proficiency in French helped her to achieve her goal to integrate to the French community.

... In Paris let's say that I spoke much better because I have already spent nine months speaking French. The fact that I was in customer service helped me a lot. I read and read every day in French. I was improving it and my boss was so nice and always spoke to me in French. And with the guys all day long we spoke in French. When we went eating, we spoke in French. For that time, I was speaking it well. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 26th, 2015).

Lantolf & Thorne (2007) notes that the development of advanced foreign language ability represents a long-term effort, accompanied at times by struggle, yielding new conceptual knowledge and realignment of one's relationship to the world.

[The SA Experience] helped me to be more independent, to think things before I say them or not judge that much, and to make an effort to try to understand people because there I lived with people from other cultures and other religions; for example, with Arabs, Afro Americans, Muslim, so it was something completely different to Mexico... And it made me a little bit more tolerant. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 26th, 2015).

Bennett (1993) stage of adaptation is defined by the recognition and acceptance of the fact that my own culture is just one of a number of equally complex worldviews. Whilst Dervin (2011) states that many *citizens* are not born in the target-country but they also represent the *local life* (p. 44). Rebeca seemed to be aware of the importance concerning language proficiency for a better integration into society. Moreover, she was aware of the reality of a cosmopolitan city where people all over the world interact as locals and not as visitors. Additionally, through her speech the concepts of integration are present since she tried not to judge and she arouse an understanding from other's perspectives.

Alex's transformation as a consequence of the SA program made him build a favorable impression of himself. Jackson's (2010) finding shows that when developmental intercultural sensitivity increases, participants become more realistic about their limitations and areas in need of improvement. As Alex stated, this experience helped to his self-esteem construction.

Now, I appreciate myself more. I mean, I was much shyer than now. I didn't even stand staring at myself in the mirror, this I can say. I was so shy that I didn't recognize myself. This, in fact, made me realize that I am a great person, I can do a lot of things and, in fact, it seems that the shyness has completely fallen apart. (Alex, personal communication, October 30th, 2015).

According to Kim (2007) the characteristics of adaptability and transformation of the human mind are the basis upon which individuals acquire an identity and personhood. To reinforce this internal transformation are two interrelated processes of individuation and universalization in identity orientation, by which cultural identity plays a decreasingly role in a person's daily existence presented by fading some of the old cultural habits and / or gaining of some of the new cultural habits. This is the case of Alex and Rebeca, who seemed to have built up their identity because of this experience. It does not mean that they kept all new habits and values learnt during the sojourn. However, going back and forth can be seen as their own way of *being*, their own way of integrating into different cultures. Rebeca pointed out:

I changed the way I nourish myself. Now, I eat more organic or bio as they say in French. Now, I exercise and run every day. I have the impression that Europeans are more conscious about the environment, and now I am more conscious about it too. I do not recycle because here in Mexico there are no containers, and anyway, even I recycled there would be no much difference. In the end the recycling process is not completed here in Mexico, but I try to avoid using plastic bags. When I go shopping I carry my own fabric bag. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 26th, 2015).

Rebeca learnt new ideas, values and practices as part of her acculturation process. So, when she returned to Mexico she continued practicing these new habits. Even though she considers some of them as non-practical (like recycling) she adapted them to her context.

During their sojourn, Rebeca and Alex both experienced many emotions and face intellectual challenges that changed their life. In Rebeca words, she improved the perception she had of herself because of this abroad experience.

Isabelli-García (2006) pointed out that interaction with the context is most likely mediated by their various stages of acculturation in order to accomplish the act of integrating into a new surroundings. And Rebeca went through different stages while being in France till she finally accepted she had to adapt herself to the French culture.

...I learned to adapt to any circumstance, I learned to live out of my comfort zone, with unknown people around me. When I travelled I met people from other cultures that in spite of being in the same European Union, weren't that similar to the French culture. Mmm, they were different from each other and also different from my culture and my education. (Rebeca, personal communication, October 26th, 2015)

Kim (2007) explains that identity transformation of individuals through extensive, intensive and cumulative experiences of intercultural communication gives as result an "intercultural identity." Alex's conclusion regarding the whole experience is:

In my general opinion, it is an experience that whether you want it or not, you have thought about it or not, it changes your life. And, well, it definitely changed mine for good because it makes you see new things, you grow in mind. You see more things that you didn't think were like that. It gives more ideas of what you can do, in which you can help. It helped me a lot in that. (Alex, personal communication, October 30th, 2015).

Through analyzing Rebeca's and Alex's journey, as part of a Faculty-led long term SA Program, I have seen they were involved into negotiation of many facets of their identity: sociocultural and linguistic. Isabelli-García (2006, p. 234) suggests that "an investment in SLA is also an investment in their social identity which is constantly changing and shifting." Alex' and Rebeca's effort toward improving their French language competence was a step forward to develop an intercultural identity. Some aspects that Bennett (1993) points out in a stage of adaptation is that the person is able to empathize with people from different cultures without giving up their own or birth culture's values and beliefs but by integrating aspects of other cultures into it. Rebeca and Alex, after accepting differences without judging them as bad or

wrong, adjusted their own behavior to be accepted into new society. By doing that, they redefined themselves.

Related to intercultural communications Martin & Nakayama (2014) explain that culture is a “site of struggle where various communication meanings are constructed” (p.8). This definition can be related to Kim’s cycle of stress-adaptation and growth in which our analysis was sustained. In summary, there is evidence here of the importance of the SA program on the participants’ life. I have furthered my understanding regarding the stages of the process that the participants lived in their intercultural communication skills, adaptability, and identity as part of the process of transformation of their intercultural identity.

This chapter provides our key research findings. I investigated two students’ experiences regarding expectations, intercultural encounters and intercultural identity by providing a comprehensive description of the participants’ social, interpersonal and individual experiences in a long term (12-months) SA program in France.

The former analysis allowed me to answer the research questions of this study. Thus, regarding the first research question about why Rebeca and Alex decided to participate in a SA program and their expectations about the experience they would live in France, we will first attempt to state the reasons why Rebeca and Alex decided to apply for a place to study abroad. Even though they had very different backgrounds, Rebeca and Alex were both strongly influenced to travel abroad. From very young, Rebeca was in contact with foreigners, used to travel to the USA frequently and members of her family used to travel to different countries around the world.

These findings allow me to state that Rebeca was mainly indirectly influenced by family and friends to first take the decision of applying for a place at the MEXPROTECT program and after accepting the opportunity to study for a year in France. This is said to be an indirect influence because Rebeca was not directly told to go abroad. Her family frequent trips to the USA, her father’ and grandmother’s trips abroad made her think it would not be impossible for her to travel abroad. Even though she does not clearly state it, having a good level of English seems to also have been a factor that gave her a lot of confidence to move on to learn another language and learn about other cultures. It is well known by previous studies that factors such as motivation, attitudes, perceived competences and language anxiety played a role in determining

willingness to integrate to the new environment. Another reason to participate in a SA program was her desire to be better prepared to get a better job in Mexico or abroad.

On the other side, Alex had never thought about going abroad before he came to the UTRM to study. Nevertheless, he explained that, for a long time, he had been interested in getting a job at an international enterprise. One of the strongest influence in the case of Alex was his best friend. Together, Alex and his best friend, came to the conclusion this was a good opportunity to learn more about their professional area. There was also the influence of a teacher from the UTRM. He convinced Alex he could aim at getting a place in the SA program. Another very strong influence in the case of Alex was his advisor, Professor Pedro. This professor advocated for Alex when his profile was deemed as inadequate to participate in the program.

Rebeca and Alex were motivated students who were eager to practice the language, who hoped to have a high improvement in their speaking skills and wanted to learn more about their careers. Additionally, they both had high expectations with respect to meeting people and participating in the target culture for cultural enrichment.

Regarding expectations, results from the analysis of finding again revealed dissimilar expectations from both students. Rebeca had high expectations about her performance and the treatment she expected to receive from people while being abroad. Alex, on the contrary, was not concern neither aware of the way he would be treated by people in France. Thus, it may be thought that their expectations had a strong influence on the way they dealt with the problems. Rebeca seemed to have struggle much more than Alex did.

Rebeca's higher level of social expectations weighed upon her perception of the treatment she received. She acknowledged some situations as inequitable and even racist acts against her and her Mexican friends. Nevertheless, Rebeca through a critical reflection seems to justify French behavior. She mentioned that people from Alençon has not received international students before the group she was in. Moreover, she explained people from this place they did not have the culture of travelling, thus they saw foreigners as "different" and did not know how to treat them. I consider the critical reflection of Rebeca might be sustained, since the local community was not accustomed to international students.

Alex said in his pre sojourn interview that he had unclear social expectations. A possible reason might be that he had never travelled abroad neither lived with a host family. Be that as it may, he was prone to perceive the treatment he received as unprejudiced. His critical reflection

was that people from Lens are used to receiving international students. Furthermore prior to departure, he communicated with Mexicans that had travelled to Lens and they gave him useful tips in academic and sociocultural matters. I consider the critical reflection of Alex might be sustained, since local community was accustomed to international students.

In accordance with their level of satisfaction and regarding their intense training at UTRM, Rebeca and Alex felt prepared to integrate efficiently to the French culture. Besides that, our participants were willing to integrate to their new sociocultural context to learn and know more about language and culture. Rebeca and Alex agreed on the difficulty to prepare them in social skills; nevertheless, they expected to find friendly and polite people with a certain level of education willing to receive and support them to integrate quickly into society. Alex and Rebeca, perceived improvements in their L2 skills, therefore they reported that their expectations regarding language proficiency were fulfilled.

The second research question aimed at finding out how students experienced cultural differences among French and Mexican culture during their sojourn in France. With respect to how Rebeca and Alex experienced cultural differences between French and Mexican culture, both students lived very different experiences. Rebeca encountered many difficult situations and racist behavior from French teachers and students. Rebeca struggled whenever she wanted to feel integrated to her new social environment. She never hid her enthusiasm and intentions to study in Paris. It seems that her high interests in doing her professional practices in Paris might have prevented University classmates from Alençon to be socially engaged with her. A possible interpretation of this negative reaction from French people is that some of her university classmates from Alençon considered that she shared the same characteristics and preferences - they dislike- from Parisians.

When Rebeca moved to Paris, her social network increased. Her best friend Julie introduced Rebeca to her friends and included her in activities with them. She socialized much better in Paris with her colleagues at work and some French friends. By that point, her investment in learning the target language was reflected in her self-confidence when speaking French. She had also understood it was her who had to adapt to the French rather than the other way around. Thus, it can be stated that she went through a process of acculturation and deculturation, back and forth. In other words, the process of intercultural adaptation and development included the learning of new ideas, values and practices when she was in Montpellier and Alençon. Then, this

was followed by the questioning and rejecting of ideas and practices from the past. Then again, in Paris she passed through the learning of new ideas, values and practices followed by the questioning and rejecting of ideas and practices previously learnt in Alençon. This process of acculturation and deculturation, back and forth, helped her to achieve her goals.

Concerning Alex, staying with a host family was a very positive experience in terms of socio-cultural encounters and language learning. Additionally, studying in a place where sojourners had been previously received made things easier for him; people knew how to treat foreigner students. Alex felt welcome by French people. University classmates were socially engaged with their Mexican classmates due to the fact that the community was accustomed to foreign students. Therefore, they may have become acculturated at some level to international students.

Alex underwent difficult situations while being abroad. The sudden death of Professor Pedro caused in him a feeling of loneliness; nevertheless, Alex continued his integration process the best way he could. Thus, it can be stated that he, as was as Rebeca, went through a process of *acculturation* and *deculturation*, back and forth. The process of intercultural adaptation and development lived by Alex was “smoother” since the learning of new ideas, values and practices lived by him was through the contact with a host-family. The questioning and rejecting of ideas and practices from the past were less stressful while he was being considered a member of the host-family in Besancon. Then again, in Lens he experienced the same process of adaptation among a society accustomed to international students. This process of *acculturation* and *deculturation*, back and forth, helped him to achieve his goals.

In terms of students’ needs during the SA program, Rebeca received support from their classroom teachers, advisor, and from the program administrators in México. However, she did not receive any help from students and teachers in France. Regarding Alex, at some point during the sojourn he was left –for several months- by his teachers, advisors, and program administrators in México when his beloved advisor Pedro passed away. This made him arise feelings of emptiness and demotivation during the first month of his studies at the University of Lens. Alex stated that his interaction with his advisor Pedro could be compared with a close relative relationship. Therefore, the strictly academic approach of French teachers and advisors during sojourn could not fill out his sense of emptiness.

Both participants agreed that the lack of follow-through by both institutions, in different moments of the SA program, affected them in various class situations. Regarding out-of-class situations they had to seek opportunities to make connection with native speakers in their new environment. For Rebeca, it turned out to be a difficult task, these findings support the conclusion that not all SA participants can exploit the advantages of SA learning environments (Dekeyser, 2010; Golonka, 2006). Even though she thought her level of proficiency in the target language was good to communicate, she found out that some students did not understand her French. She realized she was still struggling to express her thoughts using a limited of linguistic code, therefore she studied French in her leisure time to improve pronunciation and vocabulary. She states that she listened to the radio to improve her L2 skills, since opportunities of interaction with native speakers were not frequent.

Alex seemed to have had less traumatic experiences regarding the use of French and none racist situation. The family Alex stayed with helped him a lot even when he was not living with them anymore. The family mediated many different situations, thus, Alex probably felt comfortable and did not face any situation that contributed to make him feel bad or rejected by the French society.

In relation to the third research questions, which attempted to report negotiation and development of new cultural understandings of themselves and others during their sojourn in France, it can be claimed that both students experienced significant changes about the foreign culture. The analysis of data shows that many and varied misconceptions about beliefs, identity, culture, intercultural communication, and language use led Rebeca to evaluate their social experiences negatively in terms of encounters when living in Alençon. However, she described her experience as rewarding when she moved to Paris. The data showed that she perceived improvements in socialization, therefore in integration to the new environment. Her critical reflection of herself and others helped her to act in consequence. She decided to participate more in academic tasks, like offering to do presentations in class. As a consequence, she was congratulated by her teacher and classmates. However, she realized that her efforts to be accepted as a member of the host culture were in vain. She stopped seeking for opportunities to interact with native speakers outside the classroom. When she moved to Paris, with an optimistic mindset and determination she made better use of her experience in Alençon. She reshaped herself creating new spaces of knowledge and understanding of herself and others. In Paris, as she was

immersed in a cultural diversity environment at work her integration was gradual, firstly socializing with international students and then with French colleagues. Rebeca experienced an early change in her personality and behavior when moving to Paris for her internship practice. Nevertheless, some of those changes were not permanent but a way to integrate her into the Parisian culture.

Thus, regarding the third research questions about how this experience impacted students' academic and personal life, it can be said that Alex and Rebeca's adaptation was considerably different in each case; nevertheless, the impact this experienced had on both students' life was particularly strong. They underwent different changes in their personal life. Rebeca experienced changes mainly personally. She explained this experienced made her accept people have to be open minded and willing to adapt to others. Alex learnt to relax and to value certain activities that he was not aware of before such as taking enough time to eat and cultivate vegetable for personal consumption.

Alex's adaptation, socially and culturally speaking was considerably easy, reaching the point of being friends with his classmates and host-family from the beginning of his sojourn until now. According to Kim's *Integrative Theory of Cross-cultural Adaptation* the process of intercultural adaptation and development involves acculturation and deculturation. Both participants through their discourse reported to have improved in their cultural understanding by learning new ideas, values and practices and by questioning and rejecting ideas from the past. The two final stages from ethno relativism in Bennett's model are seen in these findings: 1) when Alex and Rebeca adapted to the host culture and a sense of understanding arouse and 2) when by accepting differences between cultures entering a state in which those differences become "essential to identity" (Bennett, 1986, p.27). There was a change in Alex and Rebeca's identity. The data revealed good reasons to hypothesize that the following factors impacted students' intercultural identity: language skills, motivation to learn the target language, interaction with native speakers, and relationship with host family.

The findings of this study have indicated, early and post sojourn transformations. In the case of Rebeca, she underwent transformations while still being in France and after the sojourn. Regarding Alex, he experienced important changes related to the way he sees himself now. In both cases, intercultural transformation of identity was identifying in our participants.

Throughout this chapter, I have analyzed research in relation to previous research studies and theories. Additionally, I have summarized the present study's findings with reference to each of the research questions. The results have been considered in relation to relevant previous studies. Participants of the present study reported the impact of SA on their expectations, intercultural communication skills, adaptability and identity.

CHAPTER V CONCLUSIONS

This chapter begins with a restatement of the aims of the study. Then, a summary of the key findings of the research is presented. Furthermore, this chapter includes the evaluation of the study's contributions and implications for further research. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the limitations of the study.

The objective of this study was to describe the impact that the SA experience had on two Mexican students' expectations, intercultural communication skills, adaptability and identity. I aimed at providing a comprehensive description of the students' social/interpersonal and individual experiences and analyze our subjects' expectation about the situation they decided to live in and how they reacted and behaved. It was intended to know how participants interpret and ascribe meaning to social, academic and personal experiences they lived. Finally, this study sought to know how the experience impacted their academic and personal life when they returned to Mexico.

I investigated the experience of two Mexican students from the Technological University of the Mayan Riviera (UTRM by its acronym in Spanish) who participated in a long term (12-months) SA program in France. The National SA program is called Training Program for Higher Technicians (MEXPROTEC by its acronym in Spanish). The students are from different cohorts; Alex is from the first cohort, Jul 2013-Jul 2014 and Rebeca from the second cohort, Jul 2014-Jul 2015. The research provided a comprehensive description of the participants' social, interpersonal and individual experiences regarding expectations, intercultural encounters and intercultural identity.

With regard to why the participants of this research decided to join the SA program and the expectations they had about the experience they would live in France, data showed that Rebeca and Alex, had different a background that influenced their decision to apply for a place in this program. Rebeca was mainly influenced by family and friends, while Alex was influenced by his best friend and his beloved advisor. Both concurred in their desire to be better prepared to get a job in an international enterprise whether in Mexico or abroad. Additionally, they had expectations of improving their speaking skills, learning more about their major, meeting people and participating in the target culture for cultural enrichment. This study results revealed that

both fulfilled their expectations regarding language proficiency. Additionally, Rebeca fulfilled her expectations regarding academic interests. However, Rebeca's social expectations were high and her experience showed her a totally different French society to what she expected. Meanwhile, Alex rearranged his academic interests since his academic expectations were based on a non-updated curriculum of the French University.

Concerning differences between French culture and Mexican culture, Rebeca and Alex experienced them in completely different contexts. The findings illustrated the type of expectations, the change of motivations and the attitude maintained toward the host culture. As a consequence of their experience, they changed beliefs and ideas they had of French people and society. Alex and Rebeca learnt sociocultural factors by a contrastive method of culture learning. This study confirms that culture must be understood with reference to the nature of social relationships. The data showed that the acculturation lived by participants combined with the acculturation of the community regarding international students, weighed on the transformation process they lived. The differences in learners' progress through the state of cultural awareness is linked to their experiences, motivation, personalities, and abilities to handle difficult new situations. Furthermore, in academic settings some experiences were found to be a source of motivation and a means of improving in several factors.

Regarding the negotiation and development of new cultural understanding, Rebeca and Alex perceived sensitive ways and respectful manners to situations of French racism. Factors like the nature of intercultural encounters as positive or negative and the learning of new ideas or the questioning of the Mexican culture compared with the French culture, seemed to reveal a change in their perception of themselves as individuals, and their perception of Others.

Concerning how this experience impacted students' academic and personal life, Alex and Rebeca reported a transformation of themselves and the way they lived as a consequence of their multiple experiences during sojourn. MEXPROTEC might also be seen by Rebeca as a platform to develop deeper intercultural understanding. Upon Rebeca's return to Mexico, as a student, she travelled to the USA in a short-time SA program. Later on, while still studying, she became a French teacher and travelled to Spain in another short-time SA program. During internships, Rebeca moved to another state of Mexico. Nevertheless, she has been very active promoting and seeking mobility for herself and new generations. Alex, on the other hand, valued some of the practices that emerged after the SA program. After his accident, he started seeking for

opportunities to learn about security in both networks and programming related to his major ITC. He also continues helping others as part of his daily life. Alex's statements suggest that this habit was in France. He stated that French people were always helpful, regardless of the setting or context and that this kind of actions surprised him a lot and made him wanted to behave in the same way with other people. Regarding academic settings, Alex did his internship in one of the best resorts of the Mayan Riviera during his last term of University. He was also studying networks and programming on line.

Findings from this study pointed to a number of factors that participants perceived as being of most importance in benefit to the SA program and the following generations to come. One of these factors was the city of destination. The city they settled down in France played a different role in their experience. In the case of Alex, the conditions of the place were in favor of his well-being in France. On the contrary, the place Rebeca stayed to live in was to the detriment of her live at the beginning of the sojourn. However, this factor did not seem to have prevented participants from developing strategies in other equally effective ways to achieve their personal goals.

Throughout MEXPROTEC, UTRM aims to improve students' proficiency in the specialized technical language and to help them acquire professional and multicultural competences. According to UTRM, it is stated that as a consequence of their return, there will be an improvement on students' socio-economic level of life. Also, it is stated that students will be more competitive in the job market. They will also contribute to improve the socio-cultural and economic level of their state. Through the analysis of data, we can determine that the improvement of the technical language and the acquisition of some professional and multicultural competences have been achieved. By analyzing their discourses, it is seen that our participants improved their technical language when they were assisted by their French classmates and teachers, or by searching and studying by themselves. Additionally, during the internship they improved their social skills, either through contact with the host-family and community or through social pauses while being in the internship. Regarding improvement of their socio-cultural life and their surroundings, after her graduation, and by the time this research was finished, Rebeca was not part of the job-force in Quintana Roo. However, she was working at the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL by its Spanish acronym) at the sub regional headquarters in Mexico City. Meanwhile, Alex was part of the job-force in

Quintana Roo. After his successful internship in one of the best resorts of the Mayan Riviera, he was invited to join them and work as a system and programming engineer. It is worth noticing that these conclusions are consequence of our analysis but not the aim of this research.

There have been no previous studies, to the best of my knowledge, to determine whether the objectives of MEXPROTEC have been reached. Although, it is not possible to measure the degree to which the program's goals have been met, these findings help us to recognize those specific goals that are present through the discourse. It is worth noticing that these conclusions may contribute to some future research. Future researcher may concentrate on the study of some of the specific factors that influence students' personal, academic and social development.

Implications for future research

There is a lack of research in Mexico in terms of the outcomes of the SA experiences regarding students' expectations going abroad, intercultural encounters, and identity shifts during the SA experience. Thus, future research in this area could contribute to a better understanding of the learning outcomes from this program. Findings could help identify intercultural and social aspects that should be part of students' training program before going on an academic experience abroad.

For the purpose of future research, it would be helpful to measure the linguistic proficiency and the intercultural sensibility level of participants before going abroad, in order to register the impact on intercultural learning outcomes after a SA experience. It is also necessary to identify if these two aspects: linguistic proficiency and intercultural sensibility undergo any change pre-sojourn, sojourn, and post-sojourn and which factors may influence those changes among students' perceptions and intercultural identity. It is also recommended to include other sources of data such as Mexican or French teachers so students' point of view can be compared and validated. Future research could also include a students' diary of their whole experience.

Limitations of the study

It is important to recognize the limitations of this study. One of the broadest limitations was getting in contact with the participants of the SA program. It was also difficult to convince them to be interviewed and taped during more than one session. Based on their comments, I inferred that they thought it was useless to spend so much time being interviewed about something that does not seem to bring any immediate benefit to other people. Another limitation seems to be the fact that it has been a lot of time since they came back from the sojourn. Students may have forgotten some of the impressions they experienced when being there for the first time.

A more accurate study would have required more time to apply more instruments, such as pre and posttests, diaries (during sojourn) and observation to support the data obtained from the interviews. For example, the Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity DMIS has an instrument (IDI) which can measure the stages of Bennett's model (1993). This instrument was not used in this research. So, the grade of development regarding intercultural identity or intercultural learning outcomes is uncertain. A variety of instruments was not applied for several reasons: due to the lack of experience from the author, to the constrained time of the research and to the high price of the instruments such as the IDI.

Although the sample size was adequate for a qualitative research, as the study progressed, it became obvious, that having more participants to contrast the findings with would have provided more valuable information that would have enhanced our understanding of the topic under study.

Before embarking on this process, it is imperative to understand the importance of concerted and collaborative efforts by researchers, participants, and academics to conclude successfully our research. Finally, it should be mentioned that even though the topics under investigation are extensive and all are important, the absence of literature from Mexico related to intercultural shifts was a gap that this study aimed to fill.

REFERENCES

- Allen, H. W., Dristas, V., & Mills, N. (2007). Cultural learning outcomes and summer study abroad. In M. Mantero (Ed.), *Identity and second language learning: Culture, inquiry, and dialogic activity in educational contexts* (pp. 189-215). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.
- Allen, H. W., & Herron, C. (2003). A mixed-methodology investigation of the linguistic and affective outcomes of summer study abroad. *Foreign Language Annals*, 36 (3), 370-385.
- Alfred, G., Byram, M., & Fleming M. (2003). *Intercultural experience and education*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Alfred, G., Byram, M., & Fleming M. (2006). *Education for intercultural citizenship: Concepts and comparisons*. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Altbach, P. (2002). Perspectives on internationalizing higher education. *International Higher Education*, 26(2), 6–8. doi:10.6017/ihe.2002.27.6975
- Altschuler, L., Sussman, N., & Kachur, E. (2003). Assessing changes in intercultural sensitivity among physician trainees using the intercultural development inventory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27(4), 387–401. doi: 10.1016/S0147-1767(03)00029-4
- Anderson, P. H., Lawton, L., Rexeisen, R. J., & Hubbard, A. C. (2006). Short-term study abroad and intercultural sensitivity: A pilot study. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 30(4), 457-469. doi: 10.1016/j.ijintrel.2005.10.004
- Anderson, R. E., & Hair, J. F. (1972). Consumerism, consumer expectations, and perceived product performance. In M. Venkatesan (Eds.), *SV—Proceedings of the Third Annual Conference of the Association for Consumer Research* (pp. 67–79). Chicago, IL.: Association for Consumer Research.

- Archangeli, M. (1999). Study abroad and experiential learning in Salzburg, Austria. *Foreign Language Annals*, 32(1), 115-122.
- Badstübner, T., & Ecke, P. (2009). Student expectations, motivations, target language use, and perceived learning progress in a summer study abroad program in Germany. *Die Unterrichtspraxis/Teaching German*. 42(1), 41-49. doi:10.1111/j.1756-1221.2009.00034.
- Banks, J. A. Banks, & McGee, C.A. (1989). *Multicultural education*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon.
- Barker, S., & Crichton, J. (2008). Assessing and evaluating intercultural teaching and learning: an information management case study. *Journal of International Education in Business*, 1(1), 29-42. doi: 10.1108/18363261080001588
- Bateman, B. A. (2002). Promoting openness towards culture learning: Ethnographic interviews for students of Spanish. *The Modern Language Journal*, 86, 318-331. Retrieved from: [http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/\(ISSN\)1540-4781](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/journal/10.1111/(ISSN)1540-4781)
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544-559. Retrieved from <http://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol13/iss4/2>
- Bennett, J. M. (2008). Transformative training: Designing programs for culture learning. In M. A. Moodian (Ed.), *Contemporary leadership and intercultural competence: Understanding and utilizing cultural diversity to build successful organizations* (pp. 95-110). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Bennett, J. M., & Bennett, M. J. (2004) Developing intercultural sensitivity: An integrative approach to global and domestic diversity. In: D. Landis, J. Bennett, & M. Bennett. (Eds.), *Handbook of Intercultural Training* (3rd ed., pp. 145-167). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE. doi:10.4135/9781452231129
- Bennett, J. M., Bennett, M. J., & Allen, W. (1999). Developing intercultural competence in the language classroom. In R.M. Paige, D. Lange, and Y.A. Yershova (Eds.), *Culture as the*

core: Integrating culture into the language classroom (pp. 13-46). Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Bennett, M. J. (1986). A developmental approach to training for intercultural sensitivity. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 10(2), 179–196. doi: 10.1016/0147-1767(86)90005-2

Bennett, M. J. (1993). Towards ethnorelativism: A developmental model of intercultural sensitivity. In: R.M., Paige (Ed.), *Education for the intercultural experience* (pp. 21-71). Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press.

Bennett, M. J. (1997). How not to be a fluent fool: Understanding the cultural dimensions of language. In: A. E. Fantini (Ed.), *New ways in teaching culture* (pp. 16-21). Alexandria, VA: TESOL.

Bennett, M. J. (2004). Becoming interculturally competent. In J. S. Wurzel (Ed.), *Toward multiculturalism: A reader in multicultural education* (2nd ed., pp. 62-77). Newton, MA: Intercultural Resource Corporation.

Benson P., Barkhuizen G., Bodycott P. & Brown J. (2013). *Second language identity in narratives of study abroad*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan. doi: 10.1057/9781137029423

Block, D. (2007). *Second language identities*. London, UK: Continuum. [doi: 10.1080/15348458.2010.486279](https://doi.org/10.1080/15348458.2010.486279)

Blommaert, J. (2010). *The sociolinguistics of globalization*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from www.cambridge.org/9780521710237

Brecht, R.D. & J. L. Robinson. (1995). On the value of formal instruction in study abroad: student reactions in context. In B. Freed (Ed.). *Second language acquisition in a study abroad context*, (pp. 317-334). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins. doi: [10.1075/sibil.9.19bre](https://doi.org/10.1075/sibil.9.19bre)

- Bredella, L. (2003). Afterword. What does it mean to be intercultural? In G. Alfred, M. Byram, and M. Fleming (Eds.), *Intercultural experience and education* (pp. 225-239). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Buttjes, D. (1990). Teaching foreign language and culture: Social impact and political significance. *Language Learning Journal*, 2, 53-57. doi: [10.1080/09571739085200471](https://doi.org/10.1080/09571739085200471)
- Byram, M. (1997). Teaching and assessing intercultural communicative competence. Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Byram, M., & Feng, A. (2006). Living and studying abroad: Research and practice (12). Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Carroll, J. B. (1967). Foreign language proficiency levels attained by language majors near graduation from college. *Foreign Language Annals*, 1(2), 131-151.
- Corbitt, J.N. (1998). *Global Awareness Profile*. Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press.
- Creswell, J.W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd Ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J.W. (2003) *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. (2nd Ed.) Thousand Oaks: Sage. Retrieved from [file:///C:/Users/rita/Downloads/John%20W.%20Creswell-Research%20Design_%20Qualitative,%20Quantitative,%20and%20Mixed%20Methods%20Approaches-SAGE%20Publications,%20Inc%20\(2013\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/rita/Downloads/John%20W.%20Creswell-Research%20Design_%20Qualitative,%20Quantitative,%20and%20Mixed%20Methods%20Approaches-SAGE%20Publications,%20Inc%20(2013).pdf)
- Crichton, J & Scarino, A. (2007). How are we to understand the “intercultural dimension”? An examination of the intercultural dimension of internationalization in the context of higher education in Australia’. *Australian Review of Applied Linguistics* 30(1), 4.1–4.21. Retrieved from <https://benjamins.com/series/aral/openaccess/aral.30.1.02cri.pdf>
- Deardoff, D. K. (2009). *The SAGE handbook of intercultural competence*. Thousand Oaks, CA.: Sage publications.

- Dervin, F. (2011). A plea for change in research on intercultural discourses: A 'liquid' approach to the study of the acculturation of Chinese students. *Journal of multicultural discourses*, 6(1), 37-52. doi:[10.1080/17447143.2010.532218](https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2010.532218)
- De Vita, G., & Case, P. (2003). Rethinking the internationalisation agenda in UK higher education. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, 27, 383-398. doi: 10.1080/0309877032000128082
- DeKeyser, R. (1986). From learning to acquisition? Foreign language development in a U. S. classroom and during a semester abroad. Unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation. Stanford University.
- DeKeyser, R. (1991). Foreign language development during a semester abroad. In B. Freed (Ed.), *Foreign Language Acquisition Research and the Classroom*. (pp. 104-119). Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath.
- DeKeyser, R. (2010). Monitoring processes in Spanish as a second language during a study abroad program. *Foreign Language Annals*, 43(1), 80-92. doi:10.1111/j.1944-9720.2010.01061.x
- Díaz-Rico, L. T., & Weed, K. Z. (2006). The crosscultural, language, and academic development handbook (3rd ed.). Boston, USA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Dolby, N. (2004). Encountering an American self: Study abroad and national identity. *Comparative Education Review*, 48(2), 150-173. Retrieved from http://downloads.apistudyabroad.com/Dolby_CER.pdf
- Dyson, A. H. (1988). Negotiating among multiple worlds: The space/time dimensions of young children's composing. *Research in the Teaching of English*, 355-390.
- Erikson, E. H. (1950). *Childhood and society*. New York: Norton.
- Fischer, P., Greitemeyer, T., & Frey, D. (2007) Ego depletion and positive illusions: Does the construction of positivity require regulatory resources? *Personal and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 33(9), pp. 1306-1321. doi: 10.1177/0146167207303025

- Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada. (2014) *What is Culture?* Retrieved from: http://www.international.gc.ca/cil-cai/what_is_culture_quest_ce_que_la_culture.aspx?lang=eng.
- Forsey, M. G., Broomhall, S., & Davis, J. (2012). Broadening the mind? Australian student reflections on the experience of overseas study. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 16(2), 128-139. doi:10.1177/1028315311407511.
- Freed, B. F. (1998). An overview of issues and research in language learning in a study abroad setting. *Frontiers: The interdisciplinary journal of study abroad*, 4(2), 31-60. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ608212>
- Freed, B. (1995a). Language learning and study abroad. In B. Freed (Ed.). *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context* (pp.3-34). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins. doi: 10.1075/sibil.9.03fre
- Freed, B. (1995b). What makes us think that students who study abroad become fluent? In B. Freed (Ed.). *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context* (pp. 123-148). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins. doi: 10.1075/sibil.9.03fre
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social psychology and second language learning: The role of attitudes and motivation*. London: Edward Arnold. Retrieved from <http://publish.uwo.ca/~gardner/docs/SECONDLANGUAGE1985book.pdf>
- Ginsberg, R., R. Robin & P. Wheeling. (1992). *Listening comprehension before and after study abroad*. National Foreign Language Center Working Papers. Washington D.C.: National Foreign Language Center. Retrieved from <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED358718>
- Gleason, P. (1983). Identifying identity: A semantic history. *The journal of American history*, 910-931. doi: 10.2307/1901196
- Gobierno de la Republica. *Plan Nacional de Desarrollo 2013–2018*. Mexico. Retrieved from: <http://pnd.gob.mx/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/PND.pdf>

- Godley, A. J. (2012). Intercultural discourse and communication in education. In C. B. Paulston, S. F. Kiesling, and E. S. Rangel, *The Handbook of Intercultural Discourse and Communication* (pp. 449-475). Oxford, UK: Wiley Blackwell.
- Golonka, E. M. (2006). Predictors revisited: Linguistic knowledge and metalinguistic awareness in second language gain in Russian. *Modern Language Journal*, 90, 496–505.
- Gumperz, J. J. (1982). *Language and social identity* (Vol. 2). Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Retrieved from <https://antro-ling.wikispaces.com/file/view/Gumperz.Language+and+Social+Identity.pdf>
- Hall, J. K. (1995). “Aw, man, where you goin'?” Classroom interaction and the development of L2 interactional competence. *Issues in Applied Linguistics*, 6, 37–62. Retrieved from <https://archive.org/details/issuesinappliedl2no1univ>
- Hammer, M., & Bennett, M. (2002). *The Intercultural Development Inventory: Manual*. Portland, OR: Intercultural Communication Institute.
- He, A., & Young, R. (1998). Language proficiency interviews: A discourse approach. In R. Young & A. He (Eds.), *Talking and testing: Discourse approaches to the assessment of oral proficiency* (pp. 1–2). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins.
- Hernandez, T.A. (2010). The relationship among motivation, interaction, and the development of second language oral proficiency in a study abroad context. *Modern Language Journal*, 94 (4), 600-617. doi.: 10.1111/j.1540-4781.2010.01053
- Isabelli-García, C. (2003). Development of oral communication skills abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 149-173. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1020&context=hispsstu_scholarship
- Isabelli-García, C. (2004). *A case study of the factors in the development of Spanish linguistic accuracy and oral communication skills: Motivation and extended interaction in the study abroad context*. Preface by Barbara Freed. New York, NY: Edwin Mellen Press.

- Isabelli-García, C. (2006). Study abroad social networks, motivation and attitudes: Implications for second language acquisition. In: M. A. Dufon, & E. Churchill (Eds.). *Language Learners in Study Abroad Contexts* (pp. 231-258). Clevedon, U.K.: Multilingual Matters. Retrieved from http://digitalcommons.iwu.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1000&context=hispstu_scholarship
- Jackson, J. (2008). *Language, identity, and study abroad: Sociocultural perspectives*. London, U.K.: Equinox.
- Jackson, J. (2010). *Intercultural journeys: From study to residence abroad*. London, U.K.: Palgrave Macmillan. doi: 10.1057/9780230277083
- Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. (2000). *Educational research: Quantitative and qualitative approaches*. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn & Bacon. Retrieved from <https://www.amazon.com/Educational-Research-Quantitative-Qualitative-Approaches/dp/0205361269>
- Kim, R. I., & Goldstein, S. B. (2005). Intercultural attitudes predict favorable study abroad expectations of US college students. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 9(3), 265-278. doi: 10.1177/1028315305277684
- Kim, Y.Y. (2001) *Becoming intercultural: An integrative theory of communication and cross-cultural adaptation*. Thousand Oaks, CA, USA: SAGE Publications.
- Kim, Y.Y. (2005) Adapting to a new culture: An integrative communication theory. In W. Gudykunst (Ed.), *Theorizing about intercultural communication* (pp. 375- 400). Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.
- Kim, Y. Y. (2007). Ideology, identity, and intercultural communication: An analysis of differing academic conceptions of cultural identity. *Journal of Intercultural Communication Research*, 36(3), 237-253. doi:10.1080 / 17475750701737181.

- Kim, Y. Y. (2015). Finding a “home” beyond culture: The emergence of intercultural personhood in the globalizing world. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 46(2015), 3-12. doi: 10.1016/j.ijintrel.2015.03.018
- Kinginger, C. (2004). Alice doesn't live here anymore: Foreign language learning and identity reconstruction. In A. Pavlenko & A. Blackledge (Eds.), *Negotiation of identities in multilingual contexts* (pp. 219-242). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Kinginger, C. (2008). Language learning in study abroad. *The Modern Language Journal*, 92, 1-124. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4781.2008.00821.x
- Kramscsh, C. (1986), From Language Proficiency to Interactional Competence. *The Modern Language Journal*, 70, 366–372. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-4781.1986.tb05291.x
- Kruger, J., & Dunning, D. (1999) Unskilled and unaware of it: How difficulties in recognizing one's own incompetence lead to inflated self-assessments. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 77(6), 1121-1134. Retrieved from http://psych.colorado.edu/~vanboven/teaching/p7536_heurbias/p7536_readings/kruger_dunning.pdf
- Kuh, G., & Kauffman, N. (1985). The impact of study abroad on personal development. *Journal of International Student Personnel*, 2, 6-10.
- Lafford, B. (1995). Getting into, Through and Out of a Situation: A Comparison of Communicative Strategies Used by Students Studying Spanish Abroad and ‘At Home.’ In B. F. Freed (Ed.), *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context* (pp. 97-121). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Landis, D., Bennett, J., & Bennett, M. (2004). *Handbook of intercultural training*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lantolf, J. P., & Thorne, S. L., (2007). Sociocultural theory and second language learning. In B. VanPatten & J. Williams (Eds.), *Theories in second language acquisition* (pp. 201-224). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates

- Martin, J. N., & Nakayama, T. K. (2014). *Intercultural communication in contexts*. New York, USA: McGraw-Hill.
- Martinsen, Rob (2011). *Predicting Changes in Cultural Sensitivity among Students of Spanish during Shortterm Study Abroad*. *Hispania*, 94 (1), 121-141.
- Meara, P. (1994). The year abroad and its effects. *Language Learning Journal*, 10, 32-38.
- Medina-Lopez-Portillo, A. (2004) Intercultural learning assessment: The link between program duration and the development of intercultural sensitivity. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 10, 179-199.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis: An expanded source book* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Retrieved from: <http://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/qualitative-data-analysis/book239534>
- Miller, L. & R. Ginsberg. (1995). Folklinguistic Theories of Language Learning. In B. Freed (Ed.), *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context* (pp. 293-315). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Milton, J & Meara, P., (1995). How periods abroad affect vocabulary growth in a foreign language. *ITL Review of Applied Linguistics*, 107-108, 17-34.
- Möhle, D. (1984). A comparison of the second language speech of different native speakers. In H. W. Dechert, D. Mohle & M. Raupach (Ed.), *Second language productions* (pp. 26-49). Tubingen, Germany: Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Murphy, M. (2007). Experiences in the internationalization of education: Strategies to promote equality of opportunity at Monterrey Tech, *Higher Education*, 53(2), 167–208. doi:10.1007/s10734-005-3664-9
- Norton, B. (2006). Identity as a sociocultural construct in second language education. In K. Cadman & K. O'Regan (Eds.), *TESOL in Context [Special Issue]*, 22-33. Retrieved from <http://faculty.educ.ubc.ca/norton/Norton%202006%20in%20Australia%20TESOL.pdf>

- Paige, R.M., Jacobs-Cassuto, M., Yershova, Y.A., & DeJaeghere, J. (2003) Assessing intercultural sensitivity: An empirical analysis of the Hammer and Bennett Intercultural Development Inventory. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 27(4), 467-486. doi: 10.1016/S0147-1767(03)00034-8
- Paulston, C. B., Kiesling, S. F., & Rangel, E. S. (2012). *The handbook of intercultural discourse and communication*, 29, John Wiley & Sons.
- Polanyi, (1995). Language Learning and Living Abroad. In B. Freed (Ed.), *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context* (pp. 271-291). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Raupach, M. (1984). Formulae in second language speech production. In H. W. Dechert, D. Mohle & M. Raupach (Ed.), *Second language productions* (pp. 114-137). Tubingen, Germany: Gunter Narr Verlag.
- Raupach, M. (1987). *Procedural learning in advanced learners of a foreign language*. Duisburg; Universitat Gesamthochschule Duisburg, Germany. (L.A.U.D. Papers B 167).
- Ratner, C. (2002). *Cultural psychology: Theory and method*. NY: Plenum.
- Saldaña, J. (2012). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researcher*. (2nd. Ed.) London: Sage Publications.
- Secretaría de Educación Pública. *Programa de Movilidad Internacional Estudiantil MEXPROTEC 2015-2016*. Mexico: Coordinación Nacional de Becas de Educación Superior. Retrieved from: http://www.cnbes.sep.gob.mx/files/convocatorias/Mexprotec_2015.pdf
- Schmidt-Rinehart, Barbara C., and Susan M. Knight. (2004). The Homestay Component of Study Abroad: Three Perspectives. *Foreign Language Annals*, 37, 254-62. doi: 10.1111/j.1944-9720.2004.tb02198.x

- Siegel, M. (1995). Individual Differences and Study Abroad: Women Learning Japanese in Japan. In B. Freed (Ed.), *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context* (pp. 225-243). Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (2008). *Culturally Speaking Second Edition; Culture, Communication and Politeness Theory*. London, U.K. / New York, NY, U.S.A.: Continuum International Publishing Group, pp. 11-47. ISBN 9780826493101
- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. Retrieved from <http://legacy.oise.utoronto.ca/research/field-centres/ross/ctl1014/Stake1995.pdf>
- Steinberg, M. (2002). Involve me and I will understand: Academic quality in experiential programs abroad. *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, 8, 207-227.
- Stroebe, W., Lenkert, A., & Jonas, K. (1988). Familiarity may breed contempt: The impact of student exchange on national stereotypes and attitudes, In W. Stroebe, A. Kruglanski, D. Bar-Tal, & M. Hewstone (Eds.). *The social psychology of intergroup conflict: Theory, research and applications* (pp. 167-187). New York, USA: Springer.
- Sussman, N. M. (2002). Testing the cultural identity model of the cultural transition cycle: Sojourners return home. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 26(4), 391-408. Retrieved from https://csivc.csi.cuny.edu/Nan.Sussman/files/publications/IJIR_Testing_the_CIM_2002.pdf
- Taylor, S., & Brown, J. (1994). Positive illusions and well-being revisited: Separating fact from fiction. *Psychological Bulletin*, 116(1), 21-27. Retrieved from <http://www.psych.utoronto.ca/users/peterson/psy430s2001/Taylor%20SE%20Positive%20illusions%20and%20well-being%20Psych%20Bull%201994.pdf>
- Wilkinson, S. (2002). The omnipresent classroom during summer study abroad: American students in conversation with their French hosts. *The Modern Language Journal*. 86 (2), 157-173.

Willis, F., G. Doble, U. Sankarayya. & A. Smithers. (1977). *Residence abroad and the student of modern languages. A preliminary survey*. Bradford, U.K.: University of Bradford Modern Language Centre. and Postgraduate School of Studies in Research in Education.

Wiseman, R. L., Hammer, M. R., & Nishida, H. (1989). Predictors of intercultural communication competence. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 13, 349-370.

Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods (3rd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

APPENDIXES

Appendix A: Consent Form

Maestría en Educación con Didáctica en Inglés impartida por la Universidad de Quintana Roo a través de la División de Ciencias Políticas y Humanidades.
Propósito: "Intercultural Identity shifts in a college student who has participated in a study abroad: Two Case Studies."

Elaborado por: Rita González Carballo

Fecha de elaboración: Octubre, 2015

ST-IN_04_Carta Compromiso_RGC

Gracias por participar en este proyecto!

Estamos muy contentos debido a su participación en este proyecto de investigación cualitativo que tiene como fin obtener evidencias para llevar a cabo una investigación sociocultural. No hay respuestas correctas o incorrectas ya que lo que pretendemos es analizar e interpretar sus experiencias enfocadas al proceso vivido en cuanto a identidad cultural. Cabe mencionar que nuestra intención al realizar este trabajo de investigación es meramente académica por lo que sus datos personales se manejarán con completa confidencialidad, sus nombres permanecerán en el anonimato, asignándoles un pseudónimo al integrar la información obtenida, analizada e interpretada a mi tesis. La entrevista cuenta con tres momentos: antes, durante y después de su experiencia en el extranjero por lo que se ha dividido en cuatro entrevistas que se realizarán en forma independiente a cada uno de ustedes.

Con la firma de este documento me comprometo a asistir al investigador en las entrevistas y comunicados que se requieran para llevar a buen término esta investigación. Dando igualmente mi consentimiento para que la información brindada pueda ser analizada e interpretada en un documento escrito (tesis).

Nombre del participante: _____ *Firma* _____

Entrevistador (a): _____ *Firma* _____

Número y nombre de la entrevista	Fecha	Hora de inicio	Lugar de la entrevista	Firma del participante
Entrevista No. 1 De la familia y la Educación				
Entrevista No. 2 De su formación profesional.				
Entrevista No. 3 De su estancia en Francia.				
Entrevista No. 4 De su regreso a México				

Appendix B: Semi-structured Interview

Maestría en Educación con Didáctica en Inglés impartida por la Universidad de Quintana Roo a través de la División de Ciencias Políticas y Humanidades.
Proyecto: "Intercultural identity shifts in a college student who has participated in a study abroad: Two Case Studies."

Entrevista No. 1. De la familia y la educación formal: el objetivo de esta primera entrevista es conocer los antecedentes del sujeto con respecto a la familia y a sus estudios antes de llegar a la universidad hasta saber si ellos influyeron en la elección de los estudios de licenciatura. Explorar los imaginarios respecto de lo que la educación y el aprendizaje de otra lengua pudiera ofrecer a una persona. Se pretende conocer cómo era la persona antes de ingresar a la Universidad y qué concepto tenía con respecto a la educación formal recibida previa a la Universidad.

ENTREVISTA No. 1 Preguntas	Notas del entrevistador
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ¿Platicame de ti y de tu familia? ¿Cuántos son? ¿De dónde son? 2. ¿Tus papás también son de _____? ¿En dónde más han vivido? 3. ¿Cómo era tu ciudad cuando vivías allá y cómo es ahora? 4. ¿Cómo te sentiste cuando te mudaste a Playa del Carmen? 5. Cuando regresas a tu ciudad ¿qué te dicen tus amigos? 6. Volviendo a tu familia, pláticanos ¿qué estudios tienen? ¿han viajado? ¿A dónde? ¿hablan otras lenguas? 7. ¿Cuál fue tu relación con las lenguas y el aprendizaje de éstas antes de llegar a la universidad? 8. ¿Tuviste alguna vez amigos o familiares que vivieran en el extranjero o que sigan viviendo fuera del país? 9. ¿Recuerdas alguna situación en la que haya tenido alguna experiencia/convivencia directa o indirecta con algún extranjero y cómo fue ésta? 10. ¿Tuvo alguna relación tu familia con el hecho de que estudiaras la secundaria, la preparatoria y la universidad? 11. ¿Cómo describirías tu formación (educación formal) recibida antes de llegar a la universidad? 	

Proyecto: "Intercultural identity shifts in a college student who has participated in a study abroad: Two Case Studies."

Entrevista No. 2. De su formación profesional: el objetivo de esta segunda entrevista es conocer los antecedentes del sujeto con respecto a sus estudios universitarios hasta saber si su experiencia educativa influyó en su decisión de hacer una estancia en el extranjero. Explorar los imaginarios respecto de lo que la educación y el aprendizaje de otra lengua pudieran ofrecer a una persona. Se pretende conocer cómo la persona percibía su vida universitaria antes de irse a la experiencia en el extranjero, qué concepto tenía de él mismo, que expectativas tenía sobre la estancia y si había alguna idea clara o vaga respecto de otras culturas, y en específico de la francesa.

ENTREVISTA No. 2 Preguntas	Notas del entrevistador
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ¿Cómo elegiste los estudios universitarios que cursaste? y ¿por qué? 2. ¿Tenías alguna meta u objetivo específico? ¿Qué esperabas de estos estudios? 3. ¿Estudiaste algún idioma adicional cuando llegaste a la universidad y por qué? 4. ¿Pláticanos de tu vida en la universidad? ¿qué (no) te gustaba hacer y por qué? 5. ¿Cómo sucedió lo de la estancia en Francia? ¿qué pasó? 6. ¿Cómo te sentiste cuando te dieron la notificación de que habías sido aceptado para hacer la estancia? ¿a quién le hablaste primero para platicarle? ¿a quién más le platicaste? 7. ¿Qué te comentaron tus amigos y familiares respecto de tu estancia? ¿Qué comentarios de tu viaje, de los franceses, de la cultura o la comida? 8. ¿Tenías alguna idea de cómo sería tu estancia en Francia? ¿cómo iba a ser la ciudad, la universidad? ¿la casa en la que vivirías? 9. ¿De qué se trató la estancia? ¿Cuánto tiempo duró? (MEXPROTEC) 10. ¿Cómo te sentías con respecto al nivel de francés que tenías antes de irte? 11. ¿Pensaste que tendrías alguna dificultad? 12. ¿Qué pensabas de la cultura francesa y de los franceses? 13. ¿Qué esperas encontrar en Francia? ¿tenías expectativas? ¿de qué tipo? 	

Entrevista No. 3. De su estancia en Francia: el objetivo de esta tercera entrevista es conocer la experiencia del sujeto con respecto a su estancia en el extranjero. Explorar los procesos que vivió el sujeto durante su estancia y que le ayudaron o perjudicaron en su desarrollo personal y sociocultural. Se pretende conocer la percepción de la persona con respecto a su vida en el ámbito sociocultural durante la experiencia en el extranjero.

ENTREVISTA No. 3 Preguntas	Notas del entrevistador
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ¿Cuéntenos cómo fue su llegada a Francia? Cuéntame todo lo que pasó desde que saliste de tu casa? ¿Cómo fue tu viaje? ¿te llevaste cosas de aquí? 2. ¿Cómo te recibieron en la casa de la familia? 3. ¿Qué dificultades (en casa, en la calle, en la Universidad, en un autobús) enfrentaste allá y cómo las resolviste? 4. A tu llegada al país, ¿qué fue lo que más le sorprendió y por qué? Me refiero a los primeros días. 5. A tu llegada, ¿qué fue lo que más le desagradó/gustó y por qué? 6. Cuéntanos la experiencia más absurda/interesante/difícil/impressionante que hayas vivido. 7. ¿Cómo piensas que la gente te veía cuando llegaste a Francia? ¿y cómo te trataron? 8. ¿Cómo te comunicabas? ¿en francés, en inglés, en español? ¿Constituyó el uso de la lengua francesa una barrera para comunicarse? Explicar... 9. ¿Hubo cambios en forma de comportarte o en tus gustos y apreciaciones después de un tiempo de haber estado en Francia? (Adaptación) si hubo cambios, preguntas cuánto tiempo después de su llegada sucedió. 10. ¿Cómo hiciste amigos? ¿fue fácil o difícil? 11. ¿Cómo se trabaja en la universidad? Es decir, ¿cómo son los maestros y los compañeros de clase? 12. Tú estabas estudiando tecnologías de la información en México, cuéntanos si lo que aprendiste allá era lo que esperabas o no. ¿cuál fue tu experiencia con relación al tema de las TIC en la universidad en la que estudiaste? 13. ¿Te gustaban las costumbres/actividades de las personas y de tus amigos (es)? 14. Por favor cuéntanos acerca de las fotos u objetos que has traído. (tomar en cuenta su actitud, tono de voz y expresiones a la hora de hablar de todo eso). 	

Entrevista No. 4. De su regreso a México: el objetivo de esta cuarta entrevista es que el sujeto autoevalúe la experiencia con respecto a su estancia en el extranjero. Reconocer si los procesos que vivió el sujeto durante su estancia le ayudaron o perjudicaron en su desarrollo personal y sociocultural. Se pretende conocer la percepción de la persona con respecto a su vida en el ámbito sociocultural después de la experiencia en el extranjero.

ENTREVISTA No. 4 Preguntas	Notas del entrevistador
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ya ha pasado un tiempo considerable desde que regresaste (un año?) y tratando de ver las cosas en retrospectiva y hacer un análisis de lo sucedido: ¿Podrías por favor evaluar un poco la experiencia y decirnos qué piensas ahora de todo lo que sucedió durante tu estancia y como consecuencia de ésta? 2. ¿Consideras que se cumplieron tus expectativas? 3. Cuando regresaste a México, ¿qué pasó? ¿Cómo te sentías? 4. ¿Hay actividades, costumbres, ideas, que extrañes de Francia? ¿o actividades que hayas cambiado debido a tu estancia? 5. ¿Podrías decirme si existe algún cambio en tus percepciones hacia ti y hacia los demás, después de tu experiencia? Si existe, ¿A qué lo atribuyes? 6. ¿Hubo algún cambio en tu percepción de los franceses y de otros aspectos debido a tu estancia? 	

CIERRE DE LA ENTREVISTA

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. ¿Considera que la UT lo preparó para irse a la estancia? 2. ¿Considera que debe hacer algo antes de irse a una estancia de este tipo? ¿qué sugiere y por qué? En la parte académica, personal, de salud, de la lengua, etc. 3. ¿Qué recomendaría la UT que hiciera en torno a la realización de estancias? 4. ¿Qué recomendaría a los estudiantes interesados en hacer una estancia en el extranjero y por qué? 5. ¿Qué aspectos de la estancia no le gustaron y por qué? 6. ¿Cuál es su opinión general de la experiencia? <p>Preguntar al participante si desea agregar algo más.</p>	
---	--

Gracias por tu amable participación en este proyecto ya que al comentar sus experiencias me permitirá llevar a buen para llevar a buen término mi investigación.