

**Effect of Cultural Influences in Intercultural Competence:
Phenomenological Study on Additional-Language Learners**

by

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Abstract

The problem addressed in this qualitative phenomenological study was the unknown effect of cultural influences in the development of intercultural competence for adult learners of an additional language in a region with foreign direct investment in the Southeastern United States. The purpose of the research was to explore participants' lived experiences through cultural influences. The theoretical framework included constructivism and social learning theory as a conceptual background and transformational leadership theory as the antecedent to cultural value leadership. Under an ontological approach, the data analysis yielded answers to the three research questions addressing how cultural influences affect the development of intercultural competence, how additional-language learners value culture, and the distance-learning methods respondents assessed as effective. From a purposely selected student population at a private language institute, 21 volunteers took the online questionnaire, and five respondents from the total sample completed a focus group. Triangulation strengthened reliability and validity, and data analysis served to generate themes for interpreting the results. Findings yielded six key definitions of measurable factors affecting the development of intercultural competence. Key results confirmed cultural influences—face-to-face and online—have a motivating effect on learners' intercultural self-efficacy and the desire to project culture philanthropy. The conclusion framed intercultural competence as a nonlinear, non-ethnocentric, and reciprocal process. Recommendations included for educational, business, and public service leaders to provide opportunities in cultural value leadership, sponsor face-to-face and online intercultural experiences, and document intentional cultural influences to credit efforts. A key recommendation was to conduct further research in culture philanthropy.

Keywords: constructivism, cultural influences, cultural value leadership, culture philanthropy, intercultural competence, self-efficacy, foreign direct investment, social learning theory

Dedication

To my daughters who support me in all life changes and who value our culture.

Acknowledgments

Active listening is the most important learning skill. The wisdom and practical solutions from professors, the support from subject-matter experts, and the faces of humanity are the inspiration forming a vision about methods to quantify the value of culture. Here is to the beginning of a long journey!

Thanks to everyone who shares culture to advance economic development, for constantly crafting solutions rooted in traditions, and for never giving up on innovation.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Intercultural competence is the ability to interact in situational contexts combining more than one culture (Hu et al., 2016; Korkut et al., 2018; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017). Based on a projected increase in multicultural diversity in the United States in the next two decades, and on a global history of intercultural misunderstanding, an acquisition of intercultural competence continues to gain relevance in academic, government, and business research (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Hu et al., 2016; Hussar & Bailey, 2016; Kirkwood-Tucker et al., 2017; Korkut et al., 2018). By the year 2044, ethnic minorities are expected to account for more than 50% of the general U.S. population, a trend already a reality in a majority of the national student population (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Hussar & Bailey, 2016). Additional-language learners (in a community with foreign direct investment) experience cultural influences, which play a role in developing intercultural competence (Hammer, 2015). Changes in social interactions are reshaping the way people experience cultural influences (Henebry, 2020). The study gave participants the opportunity to share lived experiences in the development of intercultural competence through community interactions and online learning tools (Berhane & Mason, 2019). The study results are a source to inform strategic planning for investment, intercultural relations, and policies when evaluating foreign direct investment in a community (Anderson, 2017; Lee, 2018; Walcott, 2014). Chapter 1 is an alignment of the problem statement, the purpose, the research questions, and a literature review about learning and leadership theories with the qualitative design and phenomenological methodology to achieve the goals of the study.

Background of the Study

Communities across the free world experience similar challenges in decision-making when designing policies, experiences, and services, which offer safe and prosperous living opportunities (Berhane & Mason, 2019; Fuentes, 2016; Ozfidan et al., 2014). Due to the

increasing crossing of cultures globally, understanding the way humans acquire intercultural competence and the particular learning modalities proving effective in the process is a growing need to advance society (Berhane & Mason, 2019; Binder et al., 2018; Cierpisz, 2019; Cui, 2016). To evaluate the level of individuals' intercultural competence, Bennett (1986) designed the developmental model of intercultural sensitivity and Byram (1997) created the model for intercultural communicative competence. Both authors mapped out models of intercultural-competence levels and recommended ranking individuals at specific points along a linear spectrum (Bennett, 1986; Byram, 1997, 2014; Garrett-Rucks, 2014). Such a rigid view and linear progression place the individual as a consumer of cultural input instead of an equal contributor or cultural agent in the learning process of interacting alongside people with the same needs and desires to grow interculturally competent (Hammer, 2015; Uzo & Adigwe, 2016; Vaccaro & Camba, 2018). The literature review's conceptual framework includes a combination of constructivism, social learning theory, and transformational leadership theory under the theme of intercultural competence as a skill acquired over time in a nonlinear manner (Hu et al., 2016; Korkut et al., 2018; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Prochazka et al., 2017; Yilmaz et al., 2019).

Three theories frame the theoretical foundation for the study to assist in understanding processes affecting intercultural-competence skill development: (a) constructivism serves to support the value of lived experiences, (b) social learning theory includes interpersonal interactions and resilience generated through self-efficacy to develop abilities in communicating across cultures, and (c) transformational leadership serves as a leadership theory to analyze how individuals can become culture philanthropists. Whereas the research literature is broad on topics about assessing levels of intercultural competence and types of educational programs, the literature lacks studies investigating the effect of cultural influences in intercultural-competence

acquisition for people living in regions with foreign direct investment (Anderson, 2017; Lee, 2018; Melles & Frey, 2017; Odag et al., 2016; Suchankova, 2014; Walcott, 2014; Wolff & Borzikowsky, 2018,).

Statement of the Problem

The problem is the unknown effects of cultural influences on the development of intercultural competence for learners of additional languages in areas of the United States with foreign direct investment. The problem's background comprises how a community has cultural influences due to foreign direct investment, but data are absent for evaluating the effect of such interactions over time in intercultural-competence development (Kirkwood-Tucker et al., 2017; Vaccaro & Camba, 2018). The extent of the problem relates to the unclear evidence for understanding how individuals develop intercultural competence. The unclear evidence results from a lack of data on the effect of cultural influences on additional-language learners in communities with foreign direct investment. Experience and data indicate intercultural-competence skills are necessary to interact and solve issues concerning global relations and safety (Ahmed et al., 2018; Berhane & Mason, 2019; Kirkwood-Tucker et al., 2017). If the research study did not take place, the assessment of time, methods, and finances invested in cultural influences to advance the community members' readiness to interact in diverse settings and develop cultural leadership would remain vague. Business, educational, and public service leaders need data about the effect of cultural influences to assess needs and support programs targeting intercultural-competence acquisition (Ahmed et al., 2018; Berhane & Mason, 2019; Fuentes, 2016). In addition to the assessment of cultural influences in the community, the study explored participants' thoughts on distance-learning effectiveness for learning about a culture.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to explore the effects of cultural influences on the development of intercultural competence for students at a private language institute in a region with foreign direct investment in the Southeastern United States. The focus of the research was on the effect of cultural influences on the development of intercultural competence. The objective was to understand how (a) cultural influences in communities with foreign direct investment drive self-efficacy for effectively communicating across cultures, (b) how participants value culture, and (c) participants' perceptions about distance learning as a modality for learning about a culture. The research method included an online questionnaire and a voice-call focus group dynamic. The rationale of the study was to capture the essence of cultural influences as a lived phenomenon while the community, due to foreign direct investment, transitioned into a more diverse region (Anderson, 2017; Kirkwood-Tucker et al., 2017; Walcott, 2014).

Significance of the Study

The study was necessary to identify the effect of cultural influences in communities with foreign direct investment and to advance methods, in the community and at a distance, for the teaching of intercultural competence skills (Anderson, 2017; Baltes et al., 2015; Hajisoteriou et al., 2019; Kirkwood-Tucker et al., 2017; Walcott, 2014). Decision-makers in regions with foreign direct investment can use the results of the study when planning future programs to increase cultural interactions in the community, design distance-learning strategies, and leadership opportunities in intercultural settings (Chiodini, 2020; Vaccaro & Camba, 2018). The American Economic Association, the Journal of Cultural Economy, the National Association of Independent Schools, and the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages are possible outlets for the research.

Research Questions

Three research questions guided the phenomenological exploration of the intercultural competence and cultural perceptions of students learning an additional language face-to-face and with online technologies. The context is a region culturally influenced by foreign direct investment. The research questions framed the study's foundation of all questionnaire and focus group questions.

Research Question 1: How do cultural influences affect the intercultural competence of students learning an additional language?

Research Question 2: How do students learning an additional language perceive the value of culture?

Research Question 3: What do students of an additional language with lived experiences learning through distance-learning assess as effective methods to acquire intercultural competence?

Conceptual Framework

The concepts covered in the study delimited the scope of the research. The notion humans learn from exposure to input over time was the main pillar in the study's conceptual blueprint (Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Yilmaz et al., 2019). The choice of a qualitative study with empirical phenomenology as the method is a reflection of the need to explore participants' lived experiences and thoughts on how cultural influences in a region with foreign direct investment has an effect on the way the community handles communications across cultures (Creswell, 2018; Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza, 2018). The questionnaire and the focus group projected the core concepts in the research questions and gave participants the opportunity to express thoughts and experiences through open-ended questions (Creswell, 2018).

The conceptual framework relates to research questions through the concepts of changes due to community cultural influences, the value of culture, and effective distance-learning methods to develop intercultural-competence skills (Chiodini, 2020; Vaccaro & Camba, 2018). The conceptual background of the study is a combination of constructivism, Bandura's social learning theory, and transformational leadership theory (Bandura, 1977a, 1977b, 2001; Karadağ et al., 2015; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Vygotsky, 1929; Yilmaz et al., 2019). The literature review is in-depth research related to intercultural competence, implications of self-efficacy in the interaction with other cultures, and the language transformation of students into culture philanthropists by modes of human agency (Bandura, 2001).

Definition of Terms

To provide a clear overview of the purpose and scope of the research study, the methodology and the literature review include central terms aligned with the concepts in the research questions. The objective is to provide a clear definition of terms to facilitate comprehension to apply the results in real scenarios or as a reference in future research studies. Eight central terms focusing on the aforementioned theories serve as initial terminology to research the effect of cultural influences in the development of intercultural competence.

Additional language. The additional language is the target language in an educational setting with the objective of developing multilingualism (Maja, 2019).

Constructivist learning theory. In constructivist learning, the combination of thinking and action interacts in subtle and intense ways, giving learners the opportunity to build beliefs and knowledge based on socio-cultural situations (Lauring et al., 2018; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Zhang & Lin, 2018).

Cultural influences. Cultural influences are diversity factors in a community's demographics and interactions over time between people from two or more cultures (Cui, 2016).

Culture philanthropist. A culture philanthropist is an individual applying positive cultural conduct to promote culture as an asset in economic development and social innovation (Fiallos, 2018; Gould & Ardoin, 2018; Lucaci & Nastase, 2019; Lvina et al., 2019; Noriero et al., 2017; Sinoi, 2019; Tian et al., 2018; Uzo & Adigwe, 2016).

Intercultural competence. Intercultural competence comprises the ability to interact in situational contexts combining more than one culture (Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017).

Self-efficacy. The self-efficacy element under Bandura's social learning theory describes the believed capacity to deal with a challenge or master a skill (Akca et al., 2018; Bernstein & Lysniak, 2017; Cramer & Bennett, 2015; Maja, 2019; Mullins, 2019; Yilmaz et al., 2019).

Social learning theory. Bandura's social learning theory asserts knowledge acquisition occurs through interactions (Akca et al., 2018; Bernstein & Lysniak, 2017; Cramer & Bennett, 2015; Mullins, 2019; Yilmaz et al., 2019).

Transformational leadership theory. A leadership style recommending strategies where leaders can change learners' lives by influencing performance, teaching independence, and training followers to become leaders (Burns, 1978; Jiang & Chen, 2018; Karadağ et al., 2015).

Assumptions

According to Creswell (2018), philosophical assumptions are frameworks to express the research focus from the researcher's selected perspective. In the study's particular case, the main assumption adopted a social constructivist approach stemming from the notion humans learn by building skills from lived experiences and social interactions (Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Yilmaz et al., 2019). The use of a qualitative method with open-ended questions allowed respondents to express unique perspectives to generate themes based on shared viewpoints and affirmed the researcher's ontological philosophical approach (Creswell, 2018). Asking broad questions guided the focus of the questionnaire toward answers related to the processes involved

in gaining intercultural competence, rather than ranking the cultural experience (Alase, 2017; Carroll et al., 2016; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Because the language institute is a paid program, the research study included the assumption of participants enrolled in courses to learn an additional language based on personal interest, the desire to interact in intercultural settings, and self-efficacy in situations where cultures intersect.

Additionally, because participants could freely self-express when responding, the research design reflected the assumption of strong fidelity in the answers (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The unavoidable assumptions include the researcher's points of view in the study's design and the participants' perspectives as paradigms for answering about the research phenomenon (Creswell, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). Evaluating participants in advance to uncover tendencies or worldviews was not an intention or planned step for the study. The objective was to allow respondents to express personal perspectives for the researcher to gather enough data and affirm the samples' reflection of common trends in the overall population (Creswell, 2018; Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza, 2018). The need to gather the participants' experiences as a reflection of the population's characteristics determined the selection of empirical phenomenology as an effective research method to study the effects of cultural influences in intercultural-competence development for adults interested in learning an additional language (Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019).

Scope and Delimitations

Boundaries within the design should be clear and defined to conduct an assertive study (Creswell, 2018). Defining the research scope allowed the researcher and participants freedom to develop a clear view of the definitions and elements covered by the reach of the study. As Theofanidis and Fountouki (2018) asserted, delimiting research is a way to set boundaries for

selecting the sample from the population, establish a clear timeline, and identify a location to make the study's purpose an attainable goal.

Participants in the conducted phenomenological research study were adults older than 18 years of age who, in the last five years, voluntarily took or were taking a course in an additional language at a private institute. Respondents were required to live in a community in the Southeastern region of the United States with cultural influences from the influx of foreign direct investment. The research took place in a span of 10–12 months, and instruments included an online questionnaire and participation in a focus group using voice-only over the Zoom videoconferencing platform. Participation in the study was voluntary.

The focus of the study was to (a) uncover the effect of cultural influences in the intercultural-competence development of adults learning an additional language, (b) identify how people in a community who have experienced changes due to foreign direct investment assimilate intercultural influences, and (c) research teaching modalities for adults to acquire intercultural-competence skills. The results of the study are a transferable source to explore how cultural influences affect different populations. The possibilities include how immigrants, educators, online learners, individuals working for highly diverse multinational companies, and study abroad participants acquire intercultural-competence skills (Anderson et al., 2015; Demircioğlu & Çakır, 2015; Engelking, 2018; Hendrickson, 2018; Wolff & Borzikowsky, 2018).

Limitations

The first limitations identified in the study related to credibility and transferability. According to Hernández-Samperi and Mendoza (2018), a study's design limitations include factors with the potential of affecting the results or the interpreting of the data. In the proposed research study, one limitation threatening credibility was the participants' willingness to answer with honesty; making participation voluntary diminished such a threat because the researcher

assumed respondents had positive intentions to contribute to the research's success. Regarding transferability, because participants were all current or former students at the same private language institute, a challenge emerged in transferring results for other populations. Due to such a challenge, the study focused on lived experiences by adults who recognized learning an additional language is relevant to intercultural-competence acquisition. Using open-ended questions for both instruments allowed respondents ample room to volunteer as much information as necessary to express personal opinions and describe lived situations—diminishing the qualitative method's credibility and transferability limitations. Selecting students from the same region was considered a bias. The chosen population included adults with diverse backgrounds living in a region including more than one city to resolve such a limitation in transferability (Creswell, 2018; Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza, 2018).

The second set of limitations included dependability and confirmability. In Theofanidis and Fountouki's (2018) study, the authors defined limitations as non-researcher-generated constraints, stemming from the way in which the methodology and design served the study. Google Forms served to collect participants' signatures and answers to the questionnaire to ensure persons outside the research can follow the process and replicate the model during analysis or audit. Zoom, the videoconferencing tool, recorded audio during the focus group dynamics. Employing online applications where participants directly entered responses eliminated the need for transcriptions and strengthened the dependability of the research process and the integrity of the data. Additionally, questionnaire results and data coding were electronically recorded using the qualitative analysis software Transana. The approach provided consistency in tabulation and the opportunity to reuse the questionnaire results to ask focus group participants to expand on answers needing additional explanation or to expand themes.

Chapter Summary

Reviewing broad aspects about the history of evaluating intercultural-competence skills served as a foundation to refine the proposed research study's introduction focus. Referring to Garrett-Rucks's (2014) literature allowed for analyzing the work of authors like Byram (1997, 2014) and Bennett (1986)—each considered for decades as experts in designing processes to assess individuals' abilities to communicate across cultures. Such previous literature presents limitations by ethnocentric perspectives assuming the individual's linear progression through a spectrum of options while learning about one culture (Garrett-Rucks, 2014). Based on the notion of participants having different realities and aiming to add to the previous research efforts, the rationale intended to capture the essence of cultural influences as a phenomenon in intercultural-competence development throughout the years as the region grew economically due to foreign direct investment (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Siani et al., 2016).

Limitations include the sample size, but the need to learn about the diverse influences justified the decision to gather data from a limited sample (Creswell, 2018). The theoretical background—unifying aspects of constructivism, social learning theory, and transformational leadership theory—acknowledged the nonlinear and multicultural nature of community cultural influences (Fiallos, 2018; Lucaci & Nastase, 2019; Lvina et al., 2019; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Prochazka et al., 2017; Yilmaz et al., 2019). Key terms served to clarify the proposed study's scope, and the research questions described the research focus. Chapter 2 consists of theories of learning and leadership, which interconnect to build a theoretical framework about past studies and counterarguments highlighting the need for continuous research about best practices in intercultural-competence development.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Cultural influences are diversity factors in a community's demographics and interactions between people from two or more cultures over time (Cui, 2016). Due to the growing demographic diversity in the United States and social distancing, community and online strategies are needed to promote intercultural competence in the 21st century (Ahmed et al., 2018; Anderson et al., 2015; Baltes et al., 2015; Colby & Ortman, 2015; Cui, 2016; Fuentes, 2016; Henebry, 2020; Hussar & Bailey, 2016; Musu-Gillette et al., 2017; Sinoi, 2019). Researchers, education and private industry leaders, and community decision-makers value intercultural competence as a set of skills useful in achieving positive exchanges in the presence of language barriers or awareness of cultural differences (Binder et al., 2018; Griffith et al., 2016; Hammer, 2015; Ngai et al., 2020; Sandu, 2015; Velasco & Sansone, 2019). The problem is the unknown effect of cultural influences on developing intercultural competence for additional-language students. Exploring the lived experiences of adult additional-language learning students in the Southeastern region of the United States experiencing demographic changes due to foreign direct investment was the purpose of the conducted qualitative phenomenological study. Additionally, the study explored the effect of cultural influences on the development of intercultural competence. The study included a combination of constructivism, Bandura's social learning theory, and the transformational leadership theory to support how experiences lead to gains in intercultural communication skills and identify training needs (Karadağ et al., 2015; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Prochazka et al., 2017; Yilmaz et al., 2019).

The literature review, through a conceptual framework, connected the problem statement and purpose of the study to the theories of learning and leadership. The theoretical analysis connected the definition of the individual's role as a cultural agent, the value of culture in economic growth and innovation, and strategies to develop positive cultural conduct (Sandu,

2015; Soboleva & Obdalova, 2014; Spitzman & Waugh, 2018; Tian et al., 2018; Uzo & Adigwe, 2016). Each theory covered in the literature review includes subtopics expanding on the application of the specific theory when used for developing effective strategies for two or more cultures to interact when intersecting. The theoretical analysis connects the definition of the individual's role as a culture philanthropist, strategies to develop positive cultural conduct, and the value of culture in economic development and social innovation (Fiallos, 2018; Gould & Ardoin, 2018; Lucaci & Nastase, 2019; Lvina et al., 2019; Noriero et al., 2017; Sinoi, 2019; Tian et al., 2018; Uzo & Adigwe, 2016). Chapter 2 includes four main sections: (a) literature search strategy, (b) theoretical framework, (c) gap in the literature, and (d) chapter summary.

Literature Search Strategy

To locate academic journals and peer-reviewed articles, the scholarly database provider EBSCO Host was the primary search engine. A second search through Google Scholar served to verify the actual location of documents online or the respective DOI addresses (Houshyar & Sotudeh, 2018; Marques et al., 2018). The nouns in the research questions were the initial keywords used in the database searches; the particular terms led to other words relevant to the research. The most common words related to culture were “intercultural competence development,” “intercultural competence online,” “Third Culture Kids,” “pluricultural,” “diversity,” “multicultural,” and “culture programs.” For searches related to language acquisition, the pivotal terms were “language student,” “second language acquisition,” “language barriers,” and “accents.” All other searches included terms related to the research methods, the learning theories in the chapter, and economic growth: “demographics,” “psychological safety,” “qualitative research,” “phenomenology,” “demographic changes,” “seminal research,” “foreign direct investment,” “transformational leadership,” “constructivism,” “social learning theory,”

“self-efficacy,” “innovation,” “online learning,” and “philanthropy.”

Planning the online search in advance, using a combination of natural-language and controlled-language fields, and selecting key terms led to locating titles, authors, and books dealing with the development of intercultural competence in the 21st century (Salvador-Oliván et al., 2019; Schoones, 2020). Combining the most common terms with words like “adult education” and “andragogy” expanded the breadth of titles generated by the databases and avoided search errors (Salvador-Oliván et al., 2019). At times, terms in one article provided synonyms. For example, language acquisition and additional-language learning provided different options in the same research category. Likewise, the research cited by other authors led to external readings about the theories covered in the proposed research study (Schoones, 2020).

Subject-matter experts in the area of phenomenological research design suggested textbooks on empirical phenomenology and qualitative research methodology (Creswell, 2018; Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2019). The structure provided by qualitative research methodology was fundamental to the selection of peer-reviewed articles in academic journals. In empirical phenomenology research, theories about the development of human learning through experiences are pivotal, as phenomenological research focuses on the lived experiences of participants through a specific change or phenomena (Alase, 2017; Aspers, 2015; Leavy, 2017; Morrow et al., 2015; Siani et al., 2016). Studies related to travel abroad, academic courses including cultural immersion, and influences in globalization were some choices in the selection of major themes to connect previous studies with the research questions (Lantz-Deaton, 2017; Odag et al., 2016; Wolff & Borzikowsky, 2018).

Although the focus of the research study was on adults, the learners' lived experiences (at all levels) served to inform the research study (Gould & Ardoin, 2018; Kirkwood-Tucker et al., 2017; Pálmadóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2016; Shih-Yin & Beasley, 2019). The focus of the literature

review was teaching and learning adults to ensure the narrowing down of concepts, the explanation of propositions, and the connection of theories and research questions concentrated in the demographics selected for the study (Lauring et al., 2019; Ozfidan et al., 2014).

Maturation of the research searches was a key element in developing a thorough literature review. Over time, the global research site Elsevier recorded search habits and automatically identified research terms, leading to expanded topics for the literature review (Kwon & Adler, 2014; Spears et al., 2019).

Reviewing sources referenced in the selected articles provided the opportunity to find other studies related to the intercultural competence of educators and graduate students in the United States and abroad (Ozfidan et al., 2014; Sandu, 2015; Suchankova, 2014). The extension of the literature to experiences abroad strengthened the research by providing other nations' focuses of training programs and inclusion efforts (Baz & İşısağ, 2018; Chau & Truong, 2019; Engelking, 2018; Geerlings et al., 2018). The reading of similar studies from a global perspective allowed for the narrowing down of theories and selecting sources about learning as a continuum of experiences to build knowledge and intercultural competence (Malik & Ballesteros, 2015; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Rivas, 2015; Yilmaz et al., 2019).

Theoretical Framework

A theoretical framework interconnects constructivism, the social learning theory, and the transformational leadership theory by overlapping the common elements for training and applying the learning of intercultural-competence skills and culture philanthropy (Karadağ et al., 2015; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Prochazka et al., 2017; Yilmaz et al., 2019; Zhang & Lin, 2018). Lived experiences, a pivotal aspect in phenomenological research, provide a common theme among the three theories. Constructivism, social learning, and the transformational leadership theories require learners to advance over time and through interactions (Bernstein &

Lysniak, 2017; Bunch et al., 2018; Cramer & Bennett, 2015; Jiang & Chen, 2018; Karadağ et al., 2015; Pálmadóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2016; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Vaccaro & Camba, 2018). Cultural elements, as part of learning experiences, improve individual capabilities for success in multicultural contexts and enhance motivation and self-efficacy (Akca et al., 2018; Francis, 2018; Fuentes, 2016).

According to Liu et al. (2018), intercultural-competence skills are necessary for the global economy workplace of the 21st century. Training and adapting interventions at all levels of education and accounting for progress are critical to education in the United States (Belfield et al., 2015; Henebry, 2020). To prepare for future demographic changes across the nation, business, educational, and public service leaders have a responsibility to plan for training (including flexible methods) a workforce to develop competent interaction for intercultural exchanges (Aristizábal & McDermott, 2017; Chiodini, 2020; Colby & Ortman, 2015; Engelking, 2018; Heaster-Ekholm, 2020; Henebry, 2020; Sevilla-Pavón, 2019; Shih-Yin & Beasley, 2019; Utunen et al., 2020). In a detailed meta-analysis about efforts to develop learners' intercultural competence, Zhang and Zhou (2019) identified two categories in the program application. The authors collected data from interventions documented between 2000 and 2018. Teaching intercultural competence in academic programs and immersion abroad were the main categories identified through the 31 studies included in the report. Results indicated no accounting of intercultural-competence development through demographic changes in the communities represented in the studies (Zhang & Zhou, 2019).

Other studies pointed out experiences in diverse environments and influences of individual role models in helping build intercultural competence and training learners to project cultural leadership behaviors (Akca et al., 2018; Baltes et al., 2015; Bohinski & Leventhal, 2015). In a historical account of the proposed models and strategies for intercultural-

communicative competence in language acquisition, Byram (2014) included language learning as a way to develop cultural leaders. Because of online technologies, diverse environments extend beyond community interactions; educators in the 21st century are experimenting with live, online cultural lessons to expose language learners to intercultural communications. The platforms provide the opportunity to exchange cultural knowledge while still based in the home country (Aristizábal & McDermott, 2017; Heaster-Ekholm, 2020; Sevilla-Pavón, 2019; Shih-Yin & Beasley, 2019).

Ozfidan et al. (2014) emphasized how adults, through additional-language acquisition, recognized the importance of interactions with speakers of the other language to advance fluency. In a biometric study of intercultural-competence research, Peng et al. (2020) documented language acquisition as the research area with the most peer-reviewed publications and the United States as the nation with the most research studies in the field. Experts in additional-language acquisition support the notion of additional-language study extending beyond communicative skills relating to grammar (Byram & Wagner, 2018; Li & Liu, 2017; Ponce de Leão, 2018; Porto et al., 2018; Suchankova, 2014; Vo, 2017; Yue, 2019). The authors' assertions included intercultural competence as one of the necessary skills to interact effectively in the other language, expanding the vision of the learner through a cultural-perspective exchange and opening new cultural boundaries for the individual (Byram & Wagner, 2018; Cui, 2016; Demircioğlu & Çakır, 2015; Engelking, 2018; Hirotani & Fujii, 2019). Learning through interactions with others, in the community and online, is an overarching theme connecting all sections in the literature review with the research questions and serving as the study's main aligning element.

According to Nordgren and Johansson (2015), the term "intercultural" is more appropriate than "multicultural" when referring to the interactions between two or more cultures,

as the former indicates relationships and the latter only describes the presence of diverse cultures in a locality. Gathering the voices of people in communities experiencing rapid demographic changes due to foreign direct investment is an effective way to enter the experience of such a phenomenon and analyze the effect of cultural influences (Anderson, 2017; Lee, 2018; Walcott, 2014). Francis (2018) recommended teaching conflict–resolution skills using a culture-based strategy, emphasizing emotional needs and approaching culture as a complex concept.

To thrive in a global market, communities and individuals face the responsibility of developing robust skills in intercultural competence (Lvina et al., 2019). Some communities experience changes in demographics due to immigrants moving to work in already existing markets; other reasons are due to the direct investment from an international firm (Dusi et al., 2014; Fuentes, 2016). Foreign direct investment promotes educational initiatives, programs in the community, and connections with local officials who can propose and approve further economic development (Fuentes, 2016; Walcott, 2014). Geerlings et al. (2018) asserted efforts individuals place in community relations and in intercultural training significantly influence the development of intercultural competence more than businesses or the government can guarantee for the community.

Constructivist Learning Theory

Since the time of Socrates, educators have emphasized the importance of designing learning around experiences and inquiries for building meaning and developing problem-solving strategies (Carroll et al., 2016; Liu & Zhang, 2014). In constructivist learning, the combination of thinking and action interacts in subtle and intense ways, giving learners the opportunity to build beliefs and knowledge (Lauring et al., 2018; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Zhang & Lin, 2018). According to Vygotsky's (1929) study, children learn through exposure to outer influences and physical maturity. Such assertions give value to the socio-cultural realm,

considering cultural products from the child's traditional environment to profoundly influence the internalization of experiences and learning (Vygotsky, 1929). Additionally, Vygotsky (1929) asserted an assistant with greater knowledge could encourage a child's achievement in the zone of proximal development, which is the space between the child's capacity and potential for learning. Such an approach to the constructivist nature of human learning suggests a linear model with a limited focus on social contexts and a prescribed method for skill development (Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017).

Piątkowska and Strugielska (2017) emphasized the constructivist nature of intercultural-competence development by asserting learners need to construct meaning around observations, interactions, and self-efficacy in a nonlinear manner. The authors highlighted a counterargument supported by Byram's (1997) work, recommending linear stages in the acquisition of intercultural competence (Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017). Models of intercultural competence implemented by experts in the field, like Byram and Bennett, allow the evaluation of a person's competencies in intercultural exchanges. The evaluation advances in a linear manner, from a self-centered view and stages, toward a global understanding of cultural influences (Garrett-Rucks, 2014).

In the last two decades, additional authors have developed nonlinear inventories for evaluating intercultural competence based on cultural factors and environmental influences (Cierpisz, 2019; Lantz-Deaton, 2017). In both views (linear and nonlinear), the need to expose learners to other cultures and languages prevails as a way to build intercultural competence (Ghanem, 2017). Learning a language does not guarantee the acquisition of such skills, and the process is one where the individual needs to piece together all experiences, metacognition, and interactions with others to make sense of the world outside the home culture (Shih-Yin & Beasley, 2019; Suchankova, 2014). In the conducted research study, the focus was to explore the

effect of experiences in multicultural settings rather than evaluate participants' levels of intercultural competence. The goal was to explore a less ethnocentric approach (Fuentes, 2016).

Understanding the effects of cultural influences was the strategy to evaluate the effects of diversity growth on the study's participants' intercultural-competence building. The approach did not require evaluating cultural differences but instead recognized if the community's cultural influences have produced changes in the level of mindfulness about living in a community with growing diversity (Kudesia, 2019; Luring et al., 2018; Zhang & Lin, 2018). According to Geerlings et al. (2018), to apply effective practices when working in diverse communities, professionals need to assess strengths and weaknesses and identify areas for future training.

Formulating robust questions is a fundamental skill in developing critical thinking skills for constructing relevant learning activities and interacting across cultures (Francis, 2018; Nordgren & Johansson, 2015). Li and Liu (2017) emphasized the importance of developing a broader perspective to build opportunities for positive interactions between cultures. The authors asserted cultural projects are a way to achieve intercultural pedagogical goals because learners can develop a deeper understanding of the other culture through a process of research and inquiry. According to Odag et al. (2016), when a locality experiences demographic changes, the host culture grows aware of the need for interaction, and individuals tend to welcome opportunities to participate in intercultural growth.

Constructivism in Intercultural Competence

Since Piaget's cognitive development theory in the 1920s and those of contemporaries, such as Vygotsky and Bruner, constructivism theories have offered a way to study human learning from the learner's point of view: a child-centered and assisted setting for constructing meaning (Castrillón, 2017; Liu & Zhang, 2014; Vygotsky, 1929). Cultural influences in the 21st century are more diverse than ever in the history of humankind, and the development of

intercultural competence expands beyond aspects of child development toward a lifelong skill-building process (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Hussar & Bailey, 2016; Liu & Zhang, 2014; Vygotsky, 1929). Intercultural competence requires interactions and communication in multilingual settings (Anderson et al., 2015; Baltes et al., 2015; Belfield et al., 2015; Engelking, 2018). In addition to traveling and studying cultures at school, meeting people in the community, and using online technologies, opportunities to interact outside an individual's native culture emerge in an interconnected global society (Aristizábal & McDermott, 2017; Engelking, 2018; Hirotsu & Fujii, 2019; Sevilla-Pavón, 2019; Shih-Yin & Beasley, 2019; Wolff & Borzikowsky, 2018). Liu and Zhang (2014) suggested autonomous learning as ideal for students to explore social interactions and construct meaning from exposure to different socio-cultural backgrounds.

In a literature review about the effects of culture in innovative thinking, Tian et al. (2018) explained how the review's empirical studies showed multicultural teams affecting the shared culture in the workplace by either facilitating or hindering the project's advancement. The authors emphasized a need for continuous interactions and the evaluation of cultural experiences to understand the ways to advance intercultural competence (Tian et al., 2018). Such a need to assess the individual's role in multicultural environments shows how a linear approach to learning does not account for the variables included in the exploratory nature of constructivism (Yilmaz et al., 2019). Engelking (2018) explained the valuable contributions of unexpected situations in the individual's growth to understand the context while living in another culture. The author highlighted critical incidents as opportunities to learn about the realities of the target culture. In the article, the study abroad student's learning opportunity comprised the realization of the host family not owning a dryer and the family's inability to provide clean laundry at the pace the learner was accustomed to back home. Engelking (2018) aligned intercultural incidents with language acquisition and explained how, when there is the chance to debrief the incident,

casual experiences serve to build resilience in intercultural competence, and learners can develop further cultural awareness.

When two or more cultures intersect, social interactions and the freedom to explore different cultural paradigms are necessary to understand environments, behaviors, and reasoning in problem-solving (Hendrickson, 2018; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Sandell & Tupy, 2015). Learning about other cultures offers the opportunity to further knowledge about the world and the individual as part of the global community (Malik & Ballesteros, 2015). Over time, learners develop routines for introspection and analyze the roles of individuals in contexts with diverse cultures (Jin, 2014).

Additional-Language Acquisition as Intercultural Constructivist Learning

In additional-language acquisition, evidence has shown experiences serve as the foundation for learners to construct meaning and develop the next linguistic skill (Güneş & Mede, 2019; Jin, 2014; Ozfidan et al., 2014). Suchankova (2014) found language courses can serve as an opportunity for intercultural-competence development. Badrkoohi (2018) asserted adult learners of English as an additional language reported motivation to increase interaction in the target language if presented opportunities to communicate with native speakers. Lived experiences in language acquisition are similar to the experiences in intercultural-competence development because the setting is an environment with new communications: The need to understand the culture of the other emerges (Byram & Wagner, 2018; Cui, 2016; Griffith et al., 2016; Porto et al., 2018). The more students are exposed to the target language's culture, the stronger the students' motivation to advance in fluency programs to develop skills in an additional language (Anderson et al., 2015; Basol & Inozu, 2019; Bouslama & Bouhass Benaissi, 2018; Demircioğlu & Çakır, 2015; Güneş & Mede, 2019).

Jin (2014), Larsen-Freeman (1997), and a decade later, Kramsch (2008), affirmed additional-language learning is a nonlinear learning experience in intercultural development. The process requires interactions with speakers of the target language and a deep understanding of the culture. Ozfidan et al. (2014) emphasized the atmosphere around the learning experience—whether positive or negative—affects self-efficacy in learning aspects about the target language and culture for individual learners. Learners progress through the development of fluency skills and cultural integration concurrently but not necessarily at the same pace (Engelking, 2018). Speaking two languages allows the learner to interact in the target culture with higher self-efficacy due to higher confidence levels of the skills needed to achieve the task (Chau & Truong, 2019; Cierpisz, 2019; Ghanem, 2017; Hirotani & Fujii, 2019; Jin, 2014; Li & Liu, 2017; Ponce de Leão, 2018).

Social Learning Theory in Intercultural Competence

Bandura's social learning theory supports knowledge acquisition through interpersonal interactions and defines self-efficacy as the believed capacity to deal with a challenge or master a skill (Bandura, 1977a, 1977b, 2001). The three areas of emphasis for Bandura's studies include the environment, behavior, and individual thinking (Bandura, 2001; Yilmaz et al., 2019). Learning, according to the social learning theory, happens as observational learning, images, and memories construct a database for recollection in solving future challenges (Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Yilmaz et al., 2019).

To develop intercultural competence, learners need to observe, assess, and show a willingness to learn about the social and emotional elements comprised in the intercultural context (Belfield et al., 2015). To further understand the intersection of cultures, individuals can rely on experiencing the traditions and heritage of others: The methods are not limited to face-to-face interactions (Aristizábal & McDermott, 2017; Binder et al., 2018; Sevilla-Pavón, 2019;

Shih-Yin & Beasley, 2019). Changing the individual's own culture is not the goal; instead, the aim is to allow successful interaction across cultures (Lantz-Deaton, 2017). To Bandura (2001), such learning exchanges through social interactions fall under the concept of reciprocal determinism.

Offering cultural programs through academic institutions, at home, online, and abroad, have yielded positive results in understanding how learners benefit from observations and discovery (Aristizábal & McDermott, 2017; Baltes et al., 2015; Binder et al., 2018; Buchtel, 2014; Hendrickson, 2018; Sevilla-Pavón, 2019; Shih-Yin & Beasley, 2019; Spitzman & Waugh, 2018). Gould and Ardoin (2018) explored how self-efficacy in behaviors related to nature conservancy and culture, and the study's results identified cultural leadership as a tool to transform young learners' behavior. Self-efficacy awareness works well in transforming the ways learners act within a culture. Confidence grows with diverse experiences, providing the motivation to use culture as an advantage when designing a learning strategy (Li & Zheng, 2018).

In the context of a community with demographic changes due to immigration or foreign direct investment, services and programs for non-college students can provide opportunities to learn from social interactions involving more than one culture (Page et al., 2019; Tam et al., 2014). Before learners gain skills to become competent in intercultural interactions, awareness about the individual's personal role in society is necessary (Geerlings et al., 2018). Such awareness includes an understanding of self-behavior, how the environment provides or hinders possibilities, the use of online tools, and knowledge about thinking strategies to assess and evaluate the intercultural exchange (Henebry, 2020; Rivas, 2015).

Lantz-Deaton (2017) asserted Bennett's (1986) work is evidence of the social learning theory's application to intercultural competence. Bennett's developmental model of intercultural

sensitivity is a set of different stages advancing the individual toward a higher skill level and moving away from non-inclusive perspectives. In the social learning theory, experiences outside the individual's scope are paramount to discovering elements about the self as part of a larger community and avoiding ethnocentric points of view (Buchtel, 2014; Zhang & Zhou, 2019). Socialization permits lived experiences to shape thinking into a continuous process of self-improvement (Engelking, 2018).

Cultural Influences and Self-Efficacy in Adults Learning About Cultures

Cultural influences provide opportunities in daily interactions for the individual to assess the effect of environmental, behavioral, and cognitive factors to make decisions about personal development and learning (Cui, 2016; Engelking, 2018). Being around other cultures and thinking about more than one culture adds to learning dimensions and strengthens self-efficacy (Hammer, 2015; Li & Zheng, 2018). Interacting with representatives of the target culture (in the community or online) increases the learners' level of independence to project activities, interactions, and communicate interculturally (Aristizábal & McDermott, 2017; Engelking, 2018; Fuentes, 2016; Sevilla-Pavón, 2019; Shih-Yin & Beasley, 2019). The data in Badrkoohi's (2018) study of 60 Iranian students learning English as a second language corroborated an increase in self-efficacy and discipline when learning an additional language. The author recommended finding ways to integrate with other cultures to motivate learning. Opportunities to interact with members of the target culture are likely to have a positive effect in the development of intercultural competence (Aristizábal & McDermott, 2017; Badrkoohi, 2018; Engelking, 2018; Fuentes, 2016; Sevilla-Pavón, 2019; Shih-Yin & Beasley, 2019).

Different cultural influences raise learners' awareness and desire to interact with other cultures (Cui, 2016; Wolff & Borzikowsky, 2018). Self-efficacy is the driving force in decision-making because believing in the personal ability to achieve a task is a determining factor in how

much effort a person exerts in completing a goal (Shi, 2018). To benefit from cultural influences, learners should envision personal growth, place confidence in cultural programs, and believe the provided content is relevant to advancing intercultural competence (Baltes et al., 2015; Hendrickson, 2018; Li & Zheng, 2018; Yue, 2019).

A study by Akca et al. (2018) on educators' self-efficacy allowed the researchers to identify a strong correlation from the data results between the behaviors of teachers who grew up in communities with high levels of immigration and intercultural sensitivity. The findings indicated cultural influences affect self-efficacy in teaching in diverse settings (Akca et al., 2018). In Li and Zheng's (2018) study, the results indicated self-efficacy led to resilience and self-regulation when students valued the task as relevant. The authors demonstrated how trust in one's ability to solve a challenging situation could motivate continuous learning and discipline. Another example is Ozfidan et al.'s (2014) case study, where 12 adults from different nationalities identified socio-cultural influences as having the most significant effect on additional-language acquisition. The participants reported high self-efficacy and peer interactions as having a significant effect on the learning process. Cultural influences are cultural experiences in the practice of a person's daily routine (Cui, 2016; Kumi-Yeboah, 2018; Rivas, 2015).

In adult learning (andragogy), especially with the use of online technologies, learners are equipped with a great deal of independence (Shih-Yin & Beasley, 2019). The process of learning about other cultures requires an open mind about intercultural otherness, awareness of the context and one's own cultural role in society, and resilience at adapting to the constant variations emerging within individual cultures (Ozfidan et al., 2014). Francis (2018) emphasized, as conflict mediators, learners need to know themselves and develop sensitive cultural conduct.

Binder et al. (2018) found the applied approach for interaction to be contextual with potential cultural differences. The authors explained the way individuals react to the intersection

of cultures depends on whether the person is in a home country or living abroad. Additionally, the authors explained how the level of urgency differs according to the learner's needs and the socio-cultural context (Binder et al., 2018). In the study, adults in the home culture considered intercultural competence as skills the target culture's members had to learn from others.

Conversely, international students perceived intercultural competence as a personal responsibility (Binder et al., 2018). Engelking (2018) reported similar results in the data from a case study about a student adapting to the cultural influences in a host family's home. Learning about visitors from other cultures who were adapting to one's home country was an act of community engagement, whereas learning about another country while living abroad was more like an act of survival (Binder et al., 2018; Engelking, 2018; Ozfidan et al., 2014).

Lauring et al. (2019) asserted adult Third Culture Kids (individuals who, as children, spent more than one year learning abroad in a culture other than the home family's culture) tend to have more self-efficacy in learning about other cultures and languages. Such resilience to adapt is the result of lived experiences and exposure to international relations. Adults who experienced cultural influences in the community and incidents in everyday life developed a desire to communicate effectively with people from other cultures. Additionally, the individuals showed strong self-efficacy to want to continue learning about other cultures beyond the conclusion of study abroad programs (Cui, 2016; Engelking, 2018; Lauring et al., 2019; Ozfidan et al., 2014).

Community Cultural Factors in Growing Intercultural Competence

Culture's ever-changing nature makes the advancement of intercultural competence a challenge (Francis, 2018). Learning from cultural factors in the community and resolving challenges in society creates an atmosphere of continuous transformation (Francis, 2018). For some learners, intercultural competence means communicating in the target culture's language.

For other learners, gaining trust from members of the other culture is enough to interact, even without a common linguistic code (Jin, 2014; Li et al., 2015; Li & Zheng, 2018; Liu et al., 2018).

In learning communities, whether face-to-face or online, interactions are the most valued tool to raise awareness and understanding of the target culture (Bohinski & Leventhal, 2015; Chau & Truong, 2019; Cierpisz, 2019; Sandu, 2015). The research literature pointed to the experiential nature of cultural influences in training programs and casual experiences to promote interest in advancing intercultural competence (Anderson et al., 2015; Baltes et al., 2015; Belfield et al., 2015; Bohinski & Leventhal, 2015; Geerlings et al., 2018; Griffith et al., 2016; Hendrickson, 2018; Jackson, 2015; Li et al., 2015; Shih-Yin & Beasley, 2019).

Organizations with growing diversity programs focus on exposing learners to unique experiences based on the intersection of cultures (Akca et al., 2018; Baz & İşısağ, 2018; Beltrán & Vela, 2017; Bouslama & Bouhass Benaissi, 2018; Velasco & Sansone, 2019). Learning in social contexts is paramount to expanding the individual's perception of self-efficacy as an intercultural member of the community (Akca et al., 2018; Anderson et al., 2015; Cui, 2016; Shi, 2018). Social contexts with cultural influences due to immigration present a plethora of options in combining customs and traditions to enhance societal interactions in a natural way and as a part of everyday life (Dusi et al., 2014; Engelking, 2018; Lucaci & Nastase, 2019; Noriero et al., 2017; Sinoi, 2019).

Transformational Leadership in Intercultural Competence

Transformational leaders aim to change learners' lives by influencing performance and training followers to become leading participants in the organization's culture (Burns, 1978; Karadağ et al., 2015). Transformational leaders teach independence versus dependence (Jiang & Chen, 2018). Burns (1978) asserted the leader and the learner function as motivating agents for each other; such agency and reciprocity connect with Bandura's (2001) aspect of reciprocal

determinism. The tendency in academic research indicates scholars continue to explore the application of transformational leadership. For example, in an analysis of 696 journal articles and 63,407 citations between 2008 and 2017, transformational leadership scored as the most influential theory in academic research on leadership (Lee et al., 2020).

When an individual's sense of identity is formed only by the home culture's references, interacting in a diverse community becomes a challenge and a limitation (Buchtel, 2014; Lucaci & Nastase, 2019). To foster intercultural competence, business, educational, and public service leaders need to provide opportunities to transform the perceptions of future cultural learners about the self and the world (Li et al., 2015; Tam et al., 2014; Velarde et al., 2015; Zartner et al., 2018). In academic contexts, transformational leadership affects the behaviors of learners, as Karadağ et al. (2015) found in a research study about the influence of school administrators as transformational leaders. Karadağ and colleagues found evidence of improvement in academics and the development of a more positive school culture.

Yilmaz et al. (2019) asserted a constructivist transformation requires a learner, who is developing intercultural-competence skills, to receive a combination of educational efforts and cultural experiences. A curriculum without authentic cultural experiences would utilize a linear and ethnocentric approach to learning about other cultures (Henao et al., 2019; Yilmaz et al., 2019). A setting where educators present culture in units promotes a mindset of learning in blocks and categories, which serve as artificial settings where experiences are pre-programmed and the teaching promotes stereotypes (Asakereh et al., 2019; Henao et al., 2019; Rashidi et al., 2016; Setyono, 2018).

Transformational leadership is a process to guide others to become leaders by equipping learners with leadership skills to benefit the community (Jiang & Chen, 2018; Karadağ et al., 2015; Vaccaro & Camba, 2018). The key to transformational leadership is to lead with

confidence and flexibility when faced with assessing how to approach a situation where two or more cultures intersect (Pradhan & Jena, 2019). In the context of research in transformational leadership, the authors Pradhan and Jena (2019) and Bass and Avolio (1990) published a model with four specific dimensions: idealized influence, individualized consideration, inspirational motivation, and intellectual stimulation. The research summarized the history of transformational leadership as a theory with more positive intentions: a school of thought branching away from transactional leadership (Pradhan & Jena, 2019).

Educators as Transformational Leaders

The transformational leadership theory initially served to identify ways to manage organizational teams with the goal of empowering participants as leaders (Pradhan & Jena, 2019; Prochazka et al., 2017). Because transformational leadership strategies have the particular desired outcome of educating others, educators serve as agents in the development of learners' intercultural competence (Karadağ et al., 2015). Although educators play a key role in future generations' intercultural-competence development, teachers still convey vague knowledge regarding the skill's definition and effective strategies to train students (Basol & Inozu, 2019; Baz & İşısağ, 2018; Beltrán & Vela, 2017; Bouslama & Bouhass Benaissi, 2018; Chau & Truong, 2019; Demircioğlu & Çakır, 2015; Ghanem, 2017).

A learning environment with educators trained in intercultural competence and group interactions has the potential to promote intercultural growth through integration and collective innovation (Hendrickson, 2018; Jiang & Chen, 2018; Li et al., 2015; Yilmaz et al., 2019). Vaccaro and Camba (2018) asserted educators as leaders in multicultural settings are responsible for empowering students through inclusion and developing the leadership skills of students labeled as minorities. Developing additional-language fluency equips learners with tools to develop skills in more than one cultural setting with unique cultural influences (Bohinski &

Leventhal, 2015; Byram & Wagner, 2018; Engelking, 2018; Li & Liu, 2017; Liu et al., 2018; Ozfidan et al., 2014).

Through the role modeling of transformational leaders, learners develop skills in intercultural competence by interconnecting lived experiences and self-efficacy (Akca et al., 2018; Hammer, 2015; Kirkwood-Tucker et al., 2017; Shi, 2018). The particular combination leads to gains in new perspectives about the cultures of others (Buchtel, 2014; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017). Fuentes (2016) asserted education is an important tool to equip society members with the necessary skills to assess roles and interact effectively when two or more cultures come together. By focusing on unique cultural aspects and localizing the online content of interest across cultures, educators promote understanding of the issues affecting a particular group or common struggles when solving intercultural challenges (Baz & İşısağ, 2018; Bohinski & Leventhal, 2015; Phelps-Ward & Laura, 2016; Utunen et al., 2020; Yue, 2019).

Phelps-Ward and Laura (2016) analyzed cultural aspects in a study of online video logs where two teachers used the narrative of 13 teens who are Black in 95 videos about hair care for young women with curly hair. The experience served to expand the views of other educators about the unique culture of haircare for females who are Black: the amount of time, the creativity, and the resources invested (Phelps-Ward & Laura, 2016). In the first quarter of 2020, the World Health Organization provided localized online training in 13 languages on health literacy related to the COVID-19 disease, enabling more than 15,000 enrollees across affected professional fields and the education sector to complete the course (Utunen et al., 2020). The training allowed for disseminating information about the disease's characteristics and possible global reach, taking into account the intercultural nature of the program's student population (Utunen et al., 2020). Practicing self-reflection, continuously learning about cultural influences, and implementing lessons with learning objectives around transforming the perception of culture

as an asset to society, are processes educators implement to promote learner's effective cultural integration and understanding (Baltes et al., 2015; Gierke et al., 2018; Güneş & Mede, 2019; Heaster-Ekholm, 2020; Odag et al., 2016; Soboleva & Obdalova, 2014).

Psychological Safety in Transformational Leadership

To empower learners with the experience of exploring (without fear) interactions with people from different cultures, transformational leaders need to develop an environment of inclusion (Li et al., 2015). According to Carmeli et al. (2014), psychological safety provides participants a free range to express creatively and take the necessary risks to lead in intercultural settings with inclusion in mind. Transformational leaders recognize the learners' needs and provide long-term opportunities to become intercultural agents who lead in situations where two or more cultural backgrounds compose a shared work culture (Page et al., 2019).

An important aspect of promoting psychological safety in intercultural situations is to avoid decisions based on assumptions rooted in an individual culture and promote problem-solving innovation (Agarwal & Farndale, 2017; Brimhall & Mor Barak, 2018; Carmeli et al., 2014; Li et al., 2015). For instance, language barriers and accents in certain cases cause people participating in a new culture to shy away and socially isolate (Tam et al., 2014). Setting up face-to-face or online communication channels and encounters helps to overcome social anxiety when adapting to a new cultural setting (Aristizábal & McDermott, 2017; Bohinski & Leventhal, 2015; Sevilla-Pavón, 2019; Shih-Yin & Beasley, 2019). The practices promote an environment of trust and strong psychological safety (Bohinski & Leventhal, 2015; Shih-Yin & Beasley, 2019).

To build an atmosphere of cultural inclusion, transformational leaders should project adaptability and willingness to shift thinking as teams interact (Velasco & Sansone, 2019). Innovation in intercultural competence requires acceptance; where more than two cultures come together, adaptation is a constant need (Jiang & Chen, 2018; Tian et al., 2018; Utunen et al.,

2020). The growth of diversity in first-world economies calls for shifting thinking to implement technology in community-building strategies, advancing beyond tolerance, and working toward intercultural competence for common community goals (Fuentes, 2016; Gibson & Capdeville, 2019; Utunen et al., 2020). Allowing comfortable spaces (face-to-face and online) for sharing perspectives about diversity and learning by projecting individual strengths fosters psychological safety for coaching and mentoring future cultural leaders (Aristizábal & McDermott, 2017; Carmeli et al., 2014; Gibson & Capdeville, 2019; Shih-Yin & Beasley, 2019; Soboleva & Obdalova, 2014; Vaccaro & Camba, 2018). Transformational leaders in intercultural competence have to manage human development and reconcile the individual's needs with the changes generated in the work environment (Agarwal & Farndale, 2017; Belfield et al., 2015; Carmeli et al., 2014; Francis, 2018; Geerlings et al., 2018; Li et al., 2015; Utunen et al., 2020).

Foreign Direct Investment and Culture in Transformational Leadership

Multinational companies opening operations in the United States are required to comply with legal regulations and reinvest in the community by supporting local programs to benefit from investment incentives with fewer taxes (Siegfried & Kess, 2018). When transnational companies agree to invest in a community, the sentiment from the general population in the locality can reflect either positive aspects because of benefits to the community (like increased employment) or negative aspects because locals see immigrants' arrival as a threat (Binder et al., 2018; Lucaci & Nastase, 2019). In a study about factors affecting public opinion in the United States about foreign direct investment, the findings confirmed a positive reception about immigration if the investment was not a purchase of U.S. assets but instead the establishment of a company in the United States using foreign capital (Lee, 2018).

Besides the economic benefits of obtaining access to natural resources and improved distribution channels, the investment of a transnational corporation in a community includes an

interest in learning managerial strategies and positioning products in the target culture (Walcott, 2014). Management teams and investors from abroad bring cultural knowledge, share with host decision-makers and advocates, and expand the perception of locals about the value of cultural influences in promoting economic growth and social innovation (Jonsen, 2018; Lvina et al., 2019; Sandu, 2015; Tian et al., 2018). The combination of a business culture, shared international cultures through foreign direct investment, and the commitment to improve the host community opens up opportunities for business leaders to transform the locality's individuals into positive-culture influencers (Lucaci & Nastase, 2019; Sinoi, 2019; Tian et al., 2018).

When operations around the investment's inception result in direct contact with leaders from other cultures through negotiations, foreign direct investment in the state becomes an employment and capital source (Lee, 2018; Siegfried & Kess, 2018; Walcott, 2014). The opportunity to use culture as a way to transform the community is an added value (Bohinski & Leventhal, 2015; Sinoi, 2019). When companies invest in local educational and nonprofit initiatives, changes in the community go beyond the visual aspects of culture, like food festivals and folkloric representations; the results display characteristics of cultural influences with a positive result when promoting community prosperity and innovation (Lucaci & Nastase, 2019; Sinoi, 2019; Tam et al., 2014; Tian et al., 2018). The community's transformation through foreign direct investment includes culture as an asset in economic development and social innovation; the growth transcends beyond the walls of a particular organization (Sinoi, 2019; Tian et al., 2018).

Intercultural Competence as Cultural Empathy and Job Competency

In the body of research about intercultural competence, scholars in the field have proposed promoting skill development toward gaining empathy for other cultures and away from just sympathy (Nordgren & Johansson, 2015). Fuentes (2016) identified how removing

expectations of acculturation for immigrants serves to build trust and psychological safety for communities with diverse populations. The expectation for professional leaders and decision-makers is to lead toward a society with opportunities where members of different communities can participate and cultures intersect in an atmosphere of empathy (Hajisoteriou et al., 2019; Malau-Aduli et al., 2019). The conceptual framework applied to the context of a community with foreign direct investment allows for the fusion of cultural empathy and job competency (Lucaci & Nastase, 2019; Noriero et al., 2017; Sinoi, 2019; Tian et al., 2018).

To prepare for jobs in societies with rapidly growing diversity, employees are challenged to develop flexibility in understanding the points of view and needs of others; the main objective in intercultural-competence training is to build a prosperous workplace (Lundgren et al., 2017; Malau-Aduli et al., 2019; Page et al., 2019). Job competency goes beyond the general view of developing tolerance to share a workspace with members of other cultures; instead, continuous human development with adaptations to the collective and individual needs in the workplace should emerge (Agarwal & Farndale, 2017; Fuentes, 2016; Lvina et al., 2019). Companies evolve in the same manner as individuals; the market's needs drive innovation to advance in business and contribute to the community's prosperity (Belfield et al., 2015). Leaders with strong intercultural competence affect the professional development of others by promoting habits of mind and strategies for empowering new cultural leaders (Vaccaro & Camba, 2018).

Culture Philanthropy as Transformational Leadership

The sharing of cultural knowledge and resources to enhance a community's prosperity is a form of philanthropy (Peña, 2017). Even cultural barriers have the potential to become assets in economic growth and social innovation (Lvina et al., 2019). *Philo* (meaning love) and *anthro* (meaning human) come from the Greek language (Yurtbasi, 2015); the word "philanthropy" etymologically means love for humankind (Daly, 2012; Yurtbasi, 2015). In the context of

charitable giving, philanthropy is the act of donating funds, but the literature does not include exclusive research studies about philanthropy as a form of nonmonetary giving (Kubíčková, 2018).

In the expansion of knowledge through lived experiences, society's cultural influences become an asset to those expanding skills in intercultural competence (Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Sandu, 2015; Tian et al., 2018). A tentative theory in the proposed research is considering how cultural influences need to be present to cultivate intercultural competence and how the individual requires maturity in intercultural competence to realize cultural contributions are indeed culture philanthropy. The learning path is a nonlinear experience, and the transformational aspect is an ongoing process (Burns, 1978; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017). Culture philanthropy is using general cultural knowledge as an asset to solve specific needs, incorporating ideas from one culture into another (Daniel & Mishra, 2017; Jiang & Chen, 2018; Pradhan & Jena, 2019; Tian et al., 2018). Applying culture as a body of knowledge, the individual carries a sharable legacy, which enhances the skills to grow critical thinking (Francis, 2018; Fuentes, 2016; Griffith et al., 2016). The individual has the opportunity to contribute beyond time and money and develops the skills to practice positive cultural behavior: strategic cultural conduct (Rivas, 2015).

Cultural Conduct in Transformational Leadership

With a community's combination of cultures, an adaptation process is necessary to understand the intentions and roles of the representatives from each cultural tendency (Uzo & Adigwe, 2016). A person is not limited to having just one culture—individuals exposed to cultural influences develop a deeper understanding of values and traditions (Cui, 2016; Fuentes, 2016; Luring et al., 2018; Melles & Frey, 2017). Cultural conduct is strategic behavior

transformational leaders consciously use to execute culture philanthropy and apply self-regulation (Bandura, 2001; Velasco & Sansone, 2019).

In an attempt to define volunteerism and altruism, Peña (2017) asserted philanthropy is a form of giving not limited to charitable donations; instead, philanthropy embodies the goal of transforming the individual. In the context of intercultural-competence development, sharing cultural expertise is the most valuable asset in transforming the mindset and growth of the individuals influenced by the intersection of different backgrounds (Shih-Yin & Beasley, 2019). When business, educational, or community members serve as cultural leaders, learners are directly influenced and others, who benefit from the community's transformation, benefit in the long term (Engelking, 2018; Malau-Aduli et al., 2019; Spitzman & Waugh, 2018). For culture philanthropy to continue to affect prosperity, cultural agents have to develop trust through the application of cultural conduct to dissipate what seems unfamiliar and form positive relationships for society's long-term benefits (Fuentes, 2016).

Themes in Intercultural Competence Research

According to the Research Institute for Studies in Education (2017), relevant research in the intercultural-competence field includes thoughts, emotions, and the ways humans relate to each other. Intercultural competence comprises three main domains, which interconnect themes from constructivism, social learning, and transformational leadership theories (Belfield et al., 2015; Jiang & Chen, 2018; Luring et al., 2018; Malik & Ballesteros, 2015; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Research Institute for Studies in Education, 2017; Wolff & Borzikowsky, 2018; Yilmaz et al., 2019). Thinking, forming emotional connections, and interacting with others all include cultural values and motivation, which align with the research questions.

Eight different theories surround intercultural competence, including explanations of cultural understanding based on consciousness, maturity, communication skills, personal

development, spiritual development, transformational leadership, holistic awareness, and relational leadership (Research Institute for Studies in Education, 2017). Experts in all eight theories agree on including the three domains: (a) thinking is cognition, and according to constructivism, humans learn from lived experiences and build a foundation (Carroll et al., 2016; Fleet et al., 2016); (b) emotions guide self-efficacy and are linked with self-perception (Bernstein & Lysniak, 2017; Cramer & Bennett, 2015; Yilmaz et al., 2019); (c) interpersonal skills are effective in training to transform learners into cultural leaders with strong intercultural competence (Vaccaro & Camba, 2018).

Themes about culture and prosperity indicate how understanding aspects influencing the development of intercultural competence is turning into a priority for educational institutions, businesses, and organizations in the community (Cui, 2016; Francis, 2018; Fuentes, 2016; Garrido et al., 2019; Sinoi, 2019; Uzo & Adigwe, 2016; Velasco & Sansone, 2019; Yilmaz et al., 2019). Heritage serves the purpose of preserving the values and sustainability of communities (Cui, 2016). Thinking of culture as a robust element in the individual's development and the community's prosperity is a focus in current scholarly literature related to the future of global education and shifts in a population (Dalib et al., 2014; Dusi et al., 2014). Byram and Wagner (2018) asserted there is a social responsibility to infuse intercultural competence skills in all disciplines to equip learners as effective communicators in international dialogue at home and abroad.

Gap in the Literature

Geerlings et al. (2018) identified a need for the identification of intercultural-competence training strategies. The conducted research study addressed the literature gap regarding the evaluation of the effect of cultural influences in a community with demographic changes due to foreign direct investment. Specifically, the intercultural training needs of adults learning an

additional language were investigated (Lucaci & Nastase, 2019; Roberson et al., 2017; Walcott, 2014). Providing themes and data to plan effective programs to train learners in intercultural competence is relevant to the field's advancement to inform business, educational, and public service leaders (Baltes et al., 2015; Cramer & Bennett, 2015; Hajisoteriou et al., 2019; Hendrickson, 2018). Exploring cultural influences, as well as community and online experiences, allows for a study of nonlinear approaches to training adult additional-language learners in intercultural competence and developing culture philanthropists (Aristizábal & McDermott, 2017; Cierpisz, 2019; Gibson & Capdeville, 2019; Lantz-Deaton, 2017; Lvina et al., 2019; Peña, 2017; Sandu, 2015; Uzo & Adigwe, 2016; Yilmaz et al., 2019).

Chapter Summary

The literature review provided an overview of the problem, the study's purpose, and a conceptual framework to set up a theoretical foundation to understand the research's application. Constructivism and the social learning theory reinforced the perspective of experiences as being fundamental in developing dynamic skills in intercultural competence (Cui, 2016; Dalib et al., 2014; Engelking, 2018). Such phenomena included the intersection of cultures, a need to communicate, and intellectual maturity to infuse learning with reflective thinking to build new knowledge (Anderson et al., 2015; Dusi et al., 2014; Kudesia, 2019). The literature review's introduction covered the definition of cultural influences and cultural factors as part of a diverse society's dynamics (Cui, 2016).

In the first section, the review included the importance of intercultural competence as a skill in the 21st century and the intention of transforming learners into culture philanthropists (Anderson, 2017; Baltes et al., 2015; Colby & Ortman, 2015; Cui, 2016; Fuentes, 2016; Sinoi, 2019). An overview of U.S. demographic changes moving toward a society with a large number of ethnic minorities served to develop a historical framework for the urgency of evaluating the

effect of cultural influences in developing the intercultural competence of adults studying an additional language (Colby & Ortman, 2015). Such a focus emphasized the need to explore how humans develop skills in situations where, due to demographic changes in the community because of foreign direct investment, cultural diversity continues to increase (Anderson, 2017; Byram & Wagner, 2018; Cui, 2016; Demircioğlu & Çakır, 2015; Lee, 2018; Velasco & Sansone, 2019; Walcott, 2014). In the context of learning over time, the sharing of culture as a key element in prosperity and online cultural exchanges were pivotal themes in the literature review (Aristizábal & McDermott, 2017; Karadağ et al., 2015; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Prochazka et al., 2017; Sevilla-Pavón, 2019; Shih-Yin & Beasley, 2019; Yilmaz et al., 2019; Zhang & Lin, 2018).

Each theme in the chapter served to crosscheck alignment with the research, questions, and key terms' purposes (Salvador-Oliván et al., 2019; Schoones, 2020). The method included formulating robust questions matching the chapter's checklist. The conceptual framework's theories included seminal research and a historical background covering constructivism, social learning, and transformational leadership in the teaching of intercultural-competence skills in an environment of changes in demographics due to foreign direct investment (Carroll et al., 2016; Karadağ et al., 2015; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Yilmaz et al., 2019). The literature review highlighted how a combination of building knowledge from nonlinear experiences and applying strategic planning of cultural conduct tend to lead to an effective application of culture philanthropy (Peña, 2017; Uzo & Adigwe, 2016; Yilmaz et al., 2019). Difficulties defining intercultural competence, diverse perspectives in evaluating skills, and the notion of learning in the community or online is a nonlinear continuum providing references about the challenges in the field of research (Cierpisz, 2019; Gibson & Capdeville, 2019; Lantz-Deaton, 2017; Roberson et al., 2017; Shih-Yin & Beasley, 2019; Yilmaz et al., 2019). The major sections in the literature

review chapter aligned with the research questions, covered relevant literature, and provided data from studies about intercultural competence.

A theoretical framework served as the conceptual foundation and backed up the need to interconnect themes in intercultural-competence development and theories of learning and leadership (Belfield et al., 2015; Jiang & Chen, 2018; Luring et al., 2018; Malik & Ballesteros, 2015; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Wolff & Borzikowsky, 2018; Yilmaz et al., 2019). The vast body of research related to gaining intercultural competence supports the significance of diverse environments and programs as an ideal setting for learners (Baltes et al., 2015; Hendrickson, 2018). Chapter 3 discusses the selected methodology, the population, population sample, and details on the design of the research instruments and the treatment of the data.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to explore the effects of cultural influences on the development of intercultural competence for students at a private language institute in a region with foreign direct investment in the Southeastern United States. The focus of the research was the effect of cultural influences on the development of intercultural competence. The research examined how participants assessed the effect of cultural influences on intercultural-competence development in the 21st century. The following three questions framed the study's investigation:

Research Question 1: How do cultural influences affect the intercultural competence of students learning an additional language?

Research Question 2: How do students learning an additional language perceive the value of culture?

Research Question 3: What do students of an additional language with lived experiences learning through distance-learning assess as effective methods to acquire intercultural competence?

The organization of the methodology included 12 sequential sections explaining the steps. The study begins with a description of the rationale and the researcher's role. Additional sections described the (a) research procedures, (b) population identification, (c) the sample selection from the population, (d) modes of instrumentation, (e) data collection, (f) preparation procedures, (g) plans for result analysis, (h) strategies to ensure sound validity and reliability, (i) ethical considerations, and (j) a chapter summary. Each step accounted for careful adherence to Institutional Review Board (IRB) stipulations, which emphasize the importance of documenting the participants' responses objectively (Fleet et al., 2016; Pálmadóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2016).

Research Design and Rationale

The qualitative methodology adopted an empirical phenomenological design. The rationale for selecting empirical phenomenology was the opportunity to capture the essence of participants' cultural influences and how international competence is developed in an additional-language learning program in the Southeastern United States (Aspers, 2015; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Siani et al., 2016). The advantage of the design choice was the generation of themes around the phenomenon's effect and the collection of data for the design of further strategic initiatives (Creswell, 2018; Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza, 2018).

Because the research questions focused on participants' retrospective thoughts and perceptions, a questionnaire was an appropriate instrument. An online focus group served as a support to triangulate and ensure internal validity (Creswell, 2018; Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza, 2018). All queries were open-ended. According to Christensen et al. (2020), allowing participants to express thoughts through open-ended questions provides deeper responses and enables the possible expansion of ideas for the research. A team of five subject-matter experts with more than 20 years of experience in the fields of diversity, human resources, and academic research reviewed and validated the questions for the questionnaire. The research instrument only included questions written for the purpose of the study.

The research design was suitable for answering the research questions and fit into the foreign direct investment context, where diversity and inclusion are part of the strategic plan to enter the community as new investors (Walcott, 2014). A primary advantage of the qualitative research process was gathering details in the participants' unique words and expressions. As Yin (2016) asserted, participants could reflect contrasting points of view, and phenomenology would allow for personal accounts of a given phenomenon. Contrary to a quantitative study, where results from the data are numerical only, an empirical phenomenological study opens

opportunities to explore descriptions of independent experiences (Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza, 2018). The lived experiences of participants conveyed the essence of the cultural influences under common themes. Additionally, because participants were required to recall personal experiences when responding to the questionnaire, the appropriate type of data to collect was qualitative.

Empirical phenomenology fit the study's purpose because little evidence was available on the effect of cultural influences on students' readiness to function in intercultural contexts. Christensen et al. (2020) asserted, when participants are able to reflect and produce statements based on an individual reality, researchers have the opportunity to enter each person's phenomenal space. Business, educational, and public service leaders can benefit from the data results to channel efforts on promoting cultural experiences and investing in private and public resources.

Role of the Researcher

The study's researcher is a language immersion educator and a recognized cultural leader in the region where the study took place. Participants in the study were adults learning an additional language at a private language institute in the Southeastern region of the United States. The relationship between research-participant was one of former instructor at the institute. Participants in the study were all adults older than 18 years of age who previously took classes or who were taking classes at the school at the time of the study. No ethical issues were identified concerning the study's implementation, as the students were all adults involved at the language institute by choice. The researcher eliminated any biases by concentrating on the voices of the participants rather than on the researcher's personal views (Fleet et al., 2016; Pálmadóttir & Einarsdóttir, 2016). Completion of IRB training and signed documentation attesting to the professional commitment of adhering to ethical standards for academic research certified the

researcher's competence to conduct formal research. All participants had online access to the support documentation to verify the researcher's IRB training and commitment to professional research practices.

Research Procedures

The study research procedures covered identifying the population, obtaining email addresses and permission to contact possible participants, selecting the sample, developing the questionnaire and focus group documentation, and ensuring safety and confidentiality procedures for the participants, data, data collection, and data preparation. The steps in the research procedure section took approximately 10–12 months to complete. Technology served as a vehicle to invite prospective participants, distribute the research instrument and letters to actual participants, gather responses, analyze the data, and generate themes and categories from the investigation.

Population and Sample Selection

Purposive sampling served as the sample selection approach for the proposed qualitative research. The population comprised current and former students on the language institute's list of contacts (Leavy, 2017; Siani et al., 2016). Participants were volunteers from the population who agreed to answer an online questionnaire about cultural influences in a region with foreign direct investment. The targeted population included approximately 100 students from the specific language institute, located in the Southeastern region of the United States. The population was calculated from the average number of students in courses each semester over the last 5 years (the number of years since the language institute's inception).

The initial step to begin data collection was a request for permission from the institute's owner to send current and former students emails asking for voluntary participation in the study. The owner of the school granted written consent via email to allow the research to take place

(see Appendix A). Although the number of potential participants was unavailable, the aim was to include 15–20 questionnaire respondents to achieve enough diversity in the data and simultaneously ensure an opportunity for interaction. For the online focus group, the ideal number was fewer than 15 participants to allow for enough interaction among respondents (Christensen et al., 2020).

Invitations were sent by email, and participation was voluntary with the option of withdrawing at any point during the study (see Appendix B). Participants were free to request via email for the individual questionnaire responses to be omitted or to cease participation by quitting the questionnaire or not signing up for the online focus group. All data documentation was virtual to make data gathering, administration, and destruction practical. As Creswell (2018) asserted, the use of online data-collection instruments is acceptable but needs to be justified; the study's additional justifications included the fact participants were not at one given location and the destruction of electronic data three years after the research's end would be more cost-effective (Alase, 2017). Christensen et al. (2020) pointed out how a questionnaire's 24-hour availability and the completion of consent forms online are advantages of an electronic system for research implementation. Before taking the questionnaire, participants read statements concerning confidentiality, exclusive use of data for research, and the option to send an email to request the withdrawal of data (see Appendix C). Each participant signed electronically as proof of approval. At the end of the questionnaire, a question asking for willingness to participate in a focus group using audio over the online meeting tool Zoom was available.

The objective of the focus group was to extend an opportunity to expand on themes and responses to the point where themes began to repeat and saturate topics. Triangulation is the recommended method for multiple ways of checking the data (Creswell, 2018). The selected triangulation technique allowed for grouping notes from the data, converging categories, and

making the study more reliable by assuring internal consistency (Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza, 2018). Gathering comments about the present and past perceptions on the value of culture, the effect of cultural influences, and self-efficacy in intercultural communication enriched the depth of the data and justified the choice of themes and categories.

Instrumentation

Through both research data-collection methods (questionnaire and focus group), participants had the opportunity to share specific anecdotes and the effects of such experiences in the development of intercultural competence. Authoring of all research instruments was exclusive to the study; instruments from other research studies did not align with the research requirements. Subject-matter experts in education and diversity examined the questionnaire questions for applicability and helped to increase content validity and reliability (Creswell, 2018; Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza, 2018). Appendix D includes the letter the subject-matter experts received as an invitation to contribute knowledge and evaluate the research design elements. In the questionnaire assessment, the subject-matter experts (see Appendix E) provided suggestions to improve the compressibility of the language, verification of the relationship and relevance to the research questions, and the inclusion of the differences of face-to-face vs. online intercultural communications to display authenticity. The experts highlighted the social learning aspects in the questionnaire's language and considered the effects of the curriculum. The aspects contributed by the subject-matter experts were valuable content to include in the questionnaire's questions and useful to improve the research design. All questions, questionnaires, and focus groups were open-ended to promote sharing points of view, feeling independent as an owner of the process, and preventing guessing (Creswell, 2018; Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza, 2018).

The questionnaire included nine open-ended questions (see Appendix F) and aligned with the categories of cultural influence's effects on intercultural-competence development. The

questionnaire investigated the value participants place on culture, lived cultural influences, thoughts about the intersection of cultures, and the applicability of distance-learning methods to develop intercultural competence. Respondents were not given a time limit to complete the questionnaire session, but a window of 2 weeks was the turnaround goal for submission. The questionnaire's questions were applicable to other research studies about cultural influences.

The focus group interactions consisted of open-ended questions generated from answers from the questionnaire and comments from participants in the focus group. Asking questions of volunteer participants served as a method to expand on responses to the questionnaire and to verify whether the answer interpretation was accurate. Focus group conversations expanded participants' common ground, extended to the point of answers beginning to repeat, and stopped when topics were saturated. According to Yin (2016), focus group exchanges provide more details than open-ended questions in a questionnaire. Allowing participants to expand on answers while interacting with each other during the focus group was an adequate method to ensure the answering of the research questions. As Christensen et al. (2020) asserted, focus groups are not individual interviews but, instead, the opportunity for participants to expand by exchanging perspectives through in-depth discussions.

Data Collection

Due to the importance of keeping data confidential and secured, as well as protecting human subjects and identities, an exclusive Google Drive and email account for the study served as a repository. Responses for the online questionnaire automatically populated a spreadsheet through Google Forms (Alase, 2017). The spreadsheet resided in a private Google Drive folder designated for the research.

Participants who agreed to participate in the focus group received an email to schedule the Zoom voice meeting. Participants in the focus group met via a voice-only call to protect

participants' confidentiality. The Zoom online meeting tool is capable of encrypting media end-to-end, recording meetings, and storing the recording on a local computer. A synchronous mode was used to conduct the focus group interview. Given the study included people located across the Southeastern region of the United States, using electronic tools to connect with participants was an appropriate means to connect with the participants (Christensen et al., 2020).

Analyzing the results from the data in different ways was necessary to ensure the instruments captured participants' thoughts and intentions. Data were the audio-recorded conversations of the focus group dynamics, using the online meeting tool Zoom. The files were transferred to an electronic folder in the designated Google Drive space. All elements to the research instruments and data-collection tools reside under private password protection and are only accessible through a personal computer to avoid privacy or security breaches (Alase, 2017). The deletion of the data's computer file and the investigation's Google account is to take place three years after the generation of the research reports. The destruction of files serves as a method to ensure no records are available after the study is completed. Upon the study's culmination, participants received a thank-you letter for participating in the research and to inform those participating of the timeline and method for the data destruction, as well as to indicate a prospective date for the dissertation's publication.

Data Preparation

A Google Sheets file in the Google Drive set up for the study and accessed through a personal computer served as the storage for all codes generated from the focus group interviews and questionnaire data. Different topics were identified using the filter tool on the spreadsheet. Transferring files for coding and word analysis was completed with the qualitative research software Transana. The Transana software allowed for the transcription of the focus group conversation notes from recordings and the organization of data based on relevant themes.

Coding responses for common categories and themes were the summary method to draw conclusions. The study's results provided professional recommendations for extrapolating the research findings to apply solutions in similar educational settings.

Data Analysis

Transana was the qualitative analysis software utilized to code the research data. The tool allowed for audio transcription and text and media integration for the identification of themes. Text reports, graphics, and word clouds are output formats available in Transana. Computer-generated categorization, together with careful analysis, were the two methods to identify the overarching topics and categories best representing the participants' lived experiences.

Ensuring the identification of themes was consistent and evaluating the accuracy of the Transana tool for the study's purpose was a priority. Reading transcripts from the data (questionnaires and the focus group conversations) in at least three different sessions ensured a careful data analysis. Spacing out the reading of transcripts by at least 24 hours allowed for a fresh mind when revisiting the data. The objective of the repeated reviews was to identify and compare themes and categories significant to the experience with the view of the results generated in the Transana software (Alase, 2017; Creswell, 2018). The organization of the findings in a written report containing data tables and figures, an executive summary, and infographics was the method option to organize the data results for the research analysis.

Reliability and Validity

The methods to ensure credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability comprised validating the research instruments and verifying the collected data, which covered the essence of the participants' lived experiences. Maintaining high integrity by separating biases was the initial step to ensuring a robust design (Creswell, 2018). Strengthening the research structure's design included carefully planning the research steps, conducting focus group

conversations without a pre-written script, and collaborating with experts to verify the appropriate instruments and procedures. Taking measurable steps to design and conduct the investigation was the strategy to ensure internal validity (Christensen et al., 2020; Yin, 2016).

Because foreign direct investment is a phenomenon across the United States and abroad, studying intercultural competence in the Southeastern region can serve as a reference for business, education, and public service leaders. Ensuring the study's transferability to similar settings was the method to ensure the design's reliability (Christensen et al., 2020; Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza, 2018; Yin, 2016). To achieve transferability, experts in the fields of diversity, human resources, and education rated the applicability of the research design according to other contexts. The experts' suggestions led to a modification of the investigation's design to achieve the research study's transferability.

The use of an empirical phenomenological design allowed for the exploration of individual and group opinions. To ensure the study's dependability, participants had the option of serving as members in focus group conversations and helping check the resulting themes. The approach followed Colaizzi's method for validation, which recommends comparing personal perspectives with the overall descriptions recorded from the data (Morrow et al., 2015). Focus group members could agree or disagree with the themes generated from the data and expand on the topics. Additionally, experts who served in the evaluation of the questionnaire's questions had the option to serve as inter-raters, looking for consistency across the themes and categories. The experts' participation confirmed whether the questionnaire and the focus group conversations measured the effects of the phenomenon of cultural influences in intercultural-competence development. The objective was to recognize patterns, identify errors, and suggest areas for improvement within the variability of characterizing phenomenology as a research design (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Yin, 2016).

Honest intentions and clear steps in writing were necessary to ensure confirmability. A private Google Doc with a systematic description of the research, reasoning, and milestones was available for participants to review and experts to assist. The Google Doc was designed to gather experts' comments, share, and help corroborate the results. Explaining the structured procedure of the theme and category generation is a robust method to indicate careful attention to detail, ensuring the data analysis reflects the essence transmitted in the participants' answers (Yin, 2016).

Ethical Procedures

To ensure the IRB requirements to protect human subjects were met, participants received an electronic informed consent form (see Appendix G) before the questionnaire and another before the focus group conversations (see Appendix H; Alase, 2017). Appendix C includes the documentation content, such as statements for granting permission to use the data and explaining the researcher's intentions to protect participants; Christensen et al. (2020) recommended for the researcher to obtain active consent and to be assertive about the promises made to participants in the confidentiality process. After the questionnaire results were transferred to a spreadsheet, an email invitation with instructions was sent to volunteers who agreed to participate in the focus group. Transferring the questionnaire results into Transana for coding allowed for the assignment of a random number to each participant for identity protection during the data analysis; the numbers enabled the confidentiality of the participants' names. Numerically organizing data results and collecting ages for the demographic information served as the strategy for protecting the participants' identities. Another protective measure was storing all data from the questionnaires and the focus group conversations in a password-protected computer. Only persons who submitted a consent form could participate in the study (Alase, 2017; Creswell, 2018).

Chapter Summary

The phenomenon of experiencing cultural influences due to a region's foreign direct investment provides an opportunity to explore the effect of the intersection of cultures on the intercultural competence of the members of the host culture. The research explored if those actions had an effect on the development of the intercultural competence of additional-language learning adults. The rationale for using phenomenology as a research methodology was the central concept in the chapter. Additionally, the chapter included the population and sample selection, the researcher's role, the research instruments' design and application, and the data preparation and analysis. Finally, details about addressing the study's credibility and trustworthiness served to confirm phenomenology as an effective method to investigate the essence of cultural influences as an educational element for language learners' intercultural-competence development. Chapter 4 details data-collection procedures, data analysis, results, and themes generated from the data.

Chapter 4: Research Findings and Data Analysis Results

The growing cultural diversity in the United States and organizations' efforts to contribute to a more equitable society indicate cultural influences can potentially affect an individual's development of intercultural competence. The problem is the lack of data in the research literature about the effect of cultural influences on the development of intercultural competence for decision-making by academic, business, and public service leaders (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Cui, 2016; Hussar & Bailey, 2016; Jin et al., 2019). In addition, cultural influences are neither clearly defined nor tracked, and the effect on the development of intercultural competence is unknown (Cui, 2016; Jin et al., 2019). The purpose of the research study was to explore the effect of cultural influences on the intercultural-competence development of adult additional-language learners in a region of foreign direct investment in the Southeastern United States (Lucaci & Nastase, 2019; Roberson et al., 2017; Velasco & Sansone, 2019). The three research questions for the study included inquiries about (a) how cultural influences affect intercultural competence, (b) how participants perceive the value of culture, and (c) what online learning methods are most effective in the development of intercultural competence.

The five sections in the sequence for treatment of the data include the (a) data-collection instruments, (b) number of participants, (c) actions in the methodology, (d) location of the research, and (e) timeline and process for the data collection. Meeting the methodology's steps (as detailed in the initial proposal) ensured reliability and validity and served to avoid biases (Christensen et al., 2020; Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2016). Qualitative raw data from participants' responses and from the data analysis allowed the building of a framework for reporting the findings. A step-by-step overview summarizes the actions taken, trends from the data, and the

last section is a chapter summary consolidating the results (Creswell, 2018; Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza, 2018).

Data Collection

The data were collected from a sample set of 21 participants from the student population at a private language program in a Southeastern U.S. region with foreign direct investment. Initially, between 15-20 participants were expected to respond to the questionnaire. After the email invitation, 21 volunteers answered the instrument. Having the extra respondent did not pose any threat to the research, and there was no need to eliminate any of the participants' answers. To ensure informed consent, before beginning the questionnaire, participants signed a Google Form verifying agreement with the items covered in Appendix C for the use of data for the research and with the items in Appendix G as the informed consent for the questionnaire. From the sample population, five volunteers completed the focus group questions. The same process took place with the focus group: Participants signed an agreement with the items covered in Appendix H as the informed consent. The dissertation chair verified the informed consent documentation and certified the step by signing off on the dissertation's requirement.

Twenty-one additional-language students from the total population volunteered to respond to the online questionnaire. To assist in reinforcing the validity of the answers, five students participated in all the focus group conversations. The questionnaire's open-ended questions came from a detailed analysis of the original research questions with the aim of capturing the participants' lived experiences through cultural influences in a region with foreign direct investment (Christensen et al., 2020; Creswell, 2018; Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza, 2018; Jin et al., 2019). The data-collection questionnaire portion of the study took 15 days to complete.

Each respondent was assigned a random four-digit number, and names were covered by shrinking the name column on the spreadsheet to eliminate biases and avoid distractions in the data-analysis process. After a 2-week review of the questionnaire's questions, the two focus groups were held over 2 subsequent weekends. All participants who volunteered for the study fully completed the questionnaire, and none of the participants withdrew from the questionnaire. From the 21 questionnaire responses, 18 participants volunteered to be part of the focus group. Six participants showed up for the focus group process. One focus group participant arrived late and had to leave early. Due to a lack of participation throughout the entire process, the participant's data were eliminated from the results; only five attendees were counted in the final participant rate. Three volunteers completed the first focus group discussion, and the other two volunteers completed the second focus group discussion.

The questionnaire included nine short questions and took less than 1 hour to respond. The focus group interviews ranged from 30 minutes to 1 hour. The first deviation from the original use of instruments for the data-collection plan was the extension of one proposed focus group meeting to two meetings to provide more scheduling options for volunteers. A second deviation was the inclusion of one extra respondent from the number originally estimated. The third deviation was the use of a Google Form, instead of a shared Google Doc, for subject-matter experts to evaluate if the themes and categories reflected the definitions in the study, and for focus group participants to verify alignment with personal lived experiences. No major circumstances interfered with the data collection process because, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, respondents in the study had already been using some type of online tool for interactions with the language school; no one expressed the need for help with Google Forms or Zoom. Because the research study did not include treatment or intervention, the research was feasible to conduct at a distance. All data were collected online.

Data Analysis

The data were secured in an exclusive Google Drive and computer designated for the storage of records. After participants responded to the questionnaire, the answers were combined to generate a word-frequency report using the data-analysis software Transana. The Transana report's keywords and phrases served to create clusters of terms to identify key codes and trends related to the research questions. Further analysis of the data took place by reading the answers to each questionnaire question per spreadsheet cell and then as a combined narrative. The process took over a week, and the data served to create codes about cultural influences and categories from the clusters. Two weeks after preparing, sorting, and categorizing the data from the questionnaire, the first focus group met to answer similar questions to the ones in the questionnaire. The questions were open-ended and emphasized the categories generated from the data analysis (Christensen et al., 2020; Creswell, 2018; Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza, 2018).

A week later, the second focus group met, implementing the same dynamic as the first one. Transana served as the repository for the audio recordings' transcription and to generate word-frequency reports for the code clusters. Reading the raw data and the reports several times and spacing reading sessions by at least a day in between achieved consistency and objectivity in the data-analysis process and allowed a thorough review of each category. A Google Doc contained a list of steps in the research process but was not a document for participants' and subject-matter experts' collaboration. Such a deviation from the original proposal avoided compromising details about the data and participants' identities because an open collaboration posed a threat to the study's confidentiality. The evaluation of themes and categories by volunteer participants and subject-matter experts using an anonymous review was a better solution to achieve the same effect of checking if the themes reflected the assigned categories and confirming honest responses.

Once the data were sorted by categories, six broader themes emerged from the respondents' types of cultural influences and lived experiences. Using the six initial themes as a reference, subject-matter experts and participants in the focus groups received an invitation to review the categories via a Google Form. The goal was to confirm if the categories fit appropriately under each theme. Six of the 10 people who received the Google Form responded to the anonymous review. The suggestions included combining Theme 1 and Theme 2 into one theme and reviewing the terminology of one of Theme 6's categories. The anonymous review reinforced the research's validity strength by allowing the subject-matter experts and study participants to evaluate themes, categories, and terminology to meet the purpose of the research. Narrowing down the themes improved the framework for the results (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Yin, 2016).

Results

Recommendations from the anonymous review led to summarizing the data into five themes instead of six and including the casual audiovisual input under casual cultural influences. Two themes define cultural influences: one theme describes aspects of intercultural self-efficacy, and the other theme combines participants' values of culture and projection of intercultural competence. The last theme provides methods for a distance-learning culture. In Tables 1 through Table 5, each theme includes the specific categories and selected sample statements from the data. All themes reflect a constructivist learning approach and corroborate aspects of social learning theory as dynamics requiring cumulative experiences and social interactions for learning to take place (Bandura, 1977a, 1977b, 2001; Luring et al., 2018; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Zhang & Lin, 2018).

Cultural Influences in the Development of Intercultural Competence

Research Question 1 asked the following: How do cultural influences affect the intercultural competence of students learning an additional language? The objective of the inquiry was to uncover the effect of cultural influences on additional-language students in the development of intercultural competence. From the data, two themes emerged on the effect of cultural influences in intercultural competence in a region with foreign direct investment. The first theme was a set of casual cultural influences when participants were carrying out normal activities in the community based on needs or personal interests. Under the second theme, the experiences were intentional actions to learn about the other culture, even when the experience included an expense, investment of time, or stepping out of the comfort zone. Having subcategories under the concept of cultural influences expanded the definition initially identified for the literature review and the design of the research study (Cui, 2016; Jin et al., 2019).

Theme 1: Casual Cultural Influences

Participants shared lived experiences in casual life in a diverse region with foreign direct investment. One example was how a large population of Spanish-speaking members in the community motivated participants to learn the Spanish language. For one participant, learning about the Spanish-speaking culture took priority over sharing the individual's own cultural values. The mention of having noticed cultural influences in community meetings and at work is evidence the participants in the study noticed how casual cultural influences are a part of daily life. Some respondents included family heritage as casual cultural influences.

Participants shared experiences about active involvement in community activities and how such experiences in the region included casual contact with diverse populations. The interactions under Theme 1 were casual and did not include any academic setting or language training for the purpose of experiencing diversity. Table 1 includes statements about how

participants experienced casual cultural influences in lived experiences involving sensory input (Chang, 2017). Casual cultural influences, according to the responses from participants, are present in the region and serve to expand learning in the mode asserted by Bandura's (1977b, 2001) social learning theory.

Table 1

Theme 1: Casual Cultural Influences

Categories	Sample Statements
Casual Cultural Settings and Activities	<p>"Just look around at the people walking around you, sitting next to you, driving by, kneeling to pray, etc. No workshops needed to see that your community is full of diversity."</p> <p>"Dance events and dance classes."</p> <p>"Work at food bank, study at university."</p> <p>"Sports, eating at different restaurants, watching movies from other countries."</p> <p>"Enjoyment of food, art, music, etc."</p>

Theme 2: Intentional Cultural Influences

The investment of time, talent, and treasures in cultural influences is reflected under Theme 2. Identifying the lived experiences where the participants contributed as culture philanthropists falls under the category of intentional cultural influences (Aristizábal & McDermott, 2017; Cierpisz, 2019; Gibson & Capdeville, 2019; Lantz-Deaton, 2017; Lvina et al., 2019; Peña, 2017; Sandu, 2015; Uzo & Adigwe, 2016; Yilmaz et al., 2019). The data indicted participants were aware the effort was worth applying to get closer to the expected results of advancing intercultural competence. Such a finding indicated a need from respondents to develop intercultural-competence skills as a form of self-defined personal development: a

constructivist approach to build meaning (Lauring et al., 2018; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Vygotsky, 1929; Zhang & Lin, 2018). The intentionality of the activities serves as evidence of the participants' desire to expand beyond casual cultural influences. Intentional cultural influences, whether in-person or online, lead to additional cultural connections and knowledge.

Aside from experiences lived through college and language courses, participants described intentional actions, including volunteering as cultural philanthropists. Some examples included leading experiences at local festivals as hosts, engaging in honest conversations with people from other cultures, and long-term cultural exchanges. Participants included responses about how casual cultural influences have an effect in increasing intentional cultural experiences to keep heritage alive, help immigrants, and share personal traditions with others. In Table 2, sample statements show how participants used verbs in the present participle, denoting a sense of continuity in the practice of intentional cultural influences.

Table 2*Theme 2: Intentional Cultural Influences*

Categories	Sample Statements
Intentional Cultural Experiences	<p>“Going to Catholic Mass in Spanish, being the only native English speaker in the church, and immersing myself in the way in which our Latino congregation worships.”</p> <p>“Spending time with people from different cultures...”</p> <p>“Walking in the Pyrenees and speaking with farmers in Spanish.”</p> <p>“Hosting international guests in my home, Spanish language book clubs, podcasts in other languages, international markets, my own personal friendships, membership in associations and related international groups (storytelling, permaculture, birding, outdoor activism, women-centered groups).”</p> <p>“French classes, working with diverse populations, art classes, cultural events.”</p> <p>“I guess, invest more in that culture to learn more about that culture, because, I think, I’ve accepted that it’s not going to change. There’s not going to be as much interest in my culture.”</p>

The data analysis relating to the first research question revealed the participants’ awareness about the presence of ongoing cultural influences in the region. Details from the responses yielded two levels of cultural influences: casual and intentional. Casual cultural influences were experiences already present in the region, which participants noticed through observation while carrying out daily activities. Participants shared how the presence of casual cultural influences encouraged a desire to seek experiences to advance in intercultural competence. The effort was desired to develop effective skills to interrelate with people from other cultural backgrounds and to participate in the phenomenon of increased diversity. Intentional cultural influences were actions participants took to seek interaction in cultural

experiences with the objective to advance intercultural competence. The activities were planned ahead of time, and participants shared a motivation to invest time and effort into exploring how others live. The two-fold definition of cultural influences derived from the research reinforced the notion of intercultural-competence development being rooted in the social learning theory and how the individual benefits from designing a constructivist approach to advance such skills (Bandura, 1977a, 1977b, 2001; Luring et al., 2018; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Vygotsky, 1929; Zhang & Lin, 2018).

Perceptions About the Value of Culture

The second research question asked the following: How do students learning an additional language perceive the value of culture? The question served as a value assessment of the participants' views on culture in general. How participants evaluated the relevance of culture for personal development revealed aspects of self-efficacy in learning about other cultures and a desire to project human values as global citizens. The two themes, representing cultural value, include internal beliefs about how likely the individual is to improve at intercultural competence and to identify the desired outcomes from casual and intentional cultural influences in the development of intercultural competence.

Theme 3: Intercultural Self-Efficacy

Self-efficacy is the internal belief the individual can achieve or master the task at hand (Akca et al., 2018; Bandura, 1977a). Participants in the study elaborated in the answers about a continuous growth process. Exposure to multicultural settings included feelings of isolation and perceptions of not fitting in, recognizing improvement takes time and effort, and how advanced planning provides the individual with the necessary confidence about learning from challenging cultural situations. Involving the family appeared as a strategy to make the process more sustainable.

Additionally, 20 participants' responses indicated a high motivation level to continue advancing in intercultural communication; only one participant reported having a medium level of motivation for linguistic exchanges with people who speak a different language. Feeling capable of learning new skills from exposure to cultural influences can be classified as the individual's intercultural self-efficacy, expanding the term self-efficacy to fit 21st-century global education practices. Devoting time and effort to intentional cultural influences with the expectation of expanding intercultural networks indicated the participants placed a high value on culture and reinforced the social learning theory as the theoretical foundation (Bandura, 1977b, 2001).

The participants' responses about an emphasis on language and culture blending together in the learning of one or the other indicated the understanding of intercultural self-efficacy as a long-term personal development process (Anderson et al., 2015; Basol & Inozu, 2019; Bouslama & Bouhass Benaissi, 2018; Demircioğlu & Çakır, 2015; Güneş & Mede, 2019; Toyoda, 2016). Continuous interactions and, according to participants, assigned cultural leaders served to increase the chances for the person to advance in intercultural competence. Different perspectives from the participants' own cultural conduct indicated how being the first to respond in a group is not a way to lead or build confidence in multicultural settings. One respondent even included how waiting to respond helped reinforce self-efficacy and reduced the fear of making a mistake. Listening was a strategy for some participants to allow for learning to take place.

For other cultures, high participation to fulfill the meeting's objective reflected a desire to be an asset in intercultural communication and raised the confidence of the individual. The results revealed intergroup diversity as an element to consider when designing experiences to explore cultural influences. Recognizing the individual's cultural background and area of comfort in communication can be a strategy to lead groups where the culture can serve as an

asset to promote belonging and achievement in multicultural settings. Table 3's sample statements demonstrate the internal processes participants experienced and observed to succeed in developing intercultural competence.

Table 3

Theme 3: Intercultural Self-Efficacy

Categories	Sample Statements
Understanding the Intricacies of Cultural Influences	<p>"So, I think those kinds of connections are really powerful and transformative because you don't have to be with the school ...You are an individual connecting with another individual online to improve your culture and language skills."</p> <p>"Because I'm assuming that we're all very busy, that it would be hard for us to take on an additional role of spearheading something like that, it would better if spearheaded by someone else whose primary focus is culture."</p> <p>"Remove communication barriers by understanding other culture and people's behavior, also ability to speak a foreign language helps to build a trust with international customers."</p> <p>"It takes a great deal of discipline to learn multiple languages simultaneously or to learn even a single language."</p> <p>"Festivals, videos, presentations (one specific example is that I participated in a Poverty Simulation)."</p> <p>"So then when I think of growing up, I do feel like that's how we were raised, that you don't just jump into things you lit. It's almost like you let somebody else speak, and then you speak. You listen, and then, you respond... It doesn't have any emotional effect on my capability."</p>

Theme 4: Value of Culture and Projection of Intercultural Competence

According to participants' responses, the value of culture is a driving motivation to develop intercultural self-efficacy. The participants expressed a desire to broaden personal

perspectives of the world, develop cross-cultural emotional intelligence and intercultural thinking, and expand international networks. From the pool of 21 participants, 14 reported having studied more than one language, an indication the majority of the participants see value in investing in intentional cultural influences. Advancing skills in at least one additional language was a goal of all participants and, because culture was identified as fundamental to improving language proficiency, cultural influences ranked as a priority experience to achieve communication goals for intercultural situations (Anderson et al., 2015; Basol & Inozu, 2019; Bouslama & Bouhass Benaissi, 2018; Demircioğlu & Çakır, 2015; Güneş & Mede, 2019; Toyoda, 2016).

The value participants attributed to culture reflected a desire to develop intercultural competence and a drive to improve oneself as a member of a diverse society. Participants shared a common preference to serve as a connecting cultural agent—not necessarily as a dominating leader but instead as a person who uses culture to help bridge gaps. The lack of desire to rise as the sole cultural leader for the community indicated participants were motivated to lead independently using culture as an asset, reinforcing the acknowledgment of culture as valuable, and revealing the type of leadership skills the individual sought to gain when developing intercultural competence (Burns, 1978; Jiang & Chen, 2018; Karadağ et al., 2015). Sample statements include wanting to project empathy, understanding, compassion, and culture philanthropy (Fiallos, 2018; Gould & Ardoin, 2018; Lucaci & Nastase, 2019; Lvina et al., 2019; Noriero et al., 2017; Sinoi, 2019; Tian et al., 2018; Uzo & Adigwe, 2016).

Respondents favored exposure to cultural influences as a method to activate ethical and moral behaviors applicable to interactions in a global society. All responses about the value of culture displayed acknowledgment of a required effort from the part of the individual to develop empathy and to keep an open mind as a way to value humans through culture. The responses

indicated an awareness of desired outcomes from cultural influences. Participants included a need for reciprocity, where feelings about one's own culture and the enjoyment of intersecting cultures are valued in the attainment of higher-order thinking and in broadening perspectives (Toyoda, 2016, 2018). Such data indicated a deep level of understanding about the effect of cultural influences in achieving intercultural competence and the importance of psychological safety for the individual (Page et al., 2019). Participants indicated how interacting with other cultures and studying languages affects in a positive way the development of skills to function in multicultural settings and the individuals' self-efficacy as an effective global citizen. Table 4 represents how respondents ranked culture's high value as a tool to improve and lead, including behaviors participants hoped to attain from exposure to cultural influences.

Table 4*Theme 4: Value of Culture and Projection of Intercultural Competence*

Categories	Sample Statements
Desired Outcomes from Cultural Influences	<p>"Better understanding/connection and ability to blend or assimilate in with those around me."</p> <p>"Open-mindedness, empathy, compassion, global understanding, cross-cultural emotional intelligence."</p> <p>"The goal of increasing empathy. When I interact with immigrants from Central America who are poor and not living in their native land—and develop a personal relationship with them—my thinking and feeling changes."</p> <p>"A lesson involving different ways of thinking."</p>

Assigning a high value to culture in personal development and in the desire to become a better global citizen provided data evidence from the responses to address the second research question. Participants' answers included how the individual needs to understand developing

intercultural competence and placing oneself in challenging situations is a life-long process. The high value placed on culture as an asset to personal development and the amount of effort participants devoted to live such experiences indicated respondents felt a strong intercultural self-efficacy: an internal belief the individual can thrive in intercultural settings and use cultural influences to grow intercultural competence. Becoming a recognized leader in the region was not a goal for the participants; instead, the focus was on projecting the value of culture to others. The goal was to transform the current situation by using culture as an asset to prosper humankind (Fuentes, 2016).

Effective Distance-Learning Methods to Acquire Intercultural Competence

The third research question asked the following: What do students of an additional language assess as effective distance-learning methods to acquire intercultural competence? The inquiry explored the use of distance-learning methods to advance intercultural competence. The COVID-19 pandemic brought online learning to the forefront, and the participants had a first-hand experience with distance learning. Participants provided elaborate answers about practices in learning culture through videoconferences (Chiodini, 2020; Utunen et al., 2020). In the responses to the questionnaire and the focus group dynamics, participants shared lived experiences through studying languages and culture online, indicating deep knowledge of available videoconferencing technologies and methodologies. Only one questionnaire participant responded as being unfamiliar with technology and avoiding online learning for such a reason.

Theme 5: Learning Culture Online

Participants shared responses reflecting lived experiences about intentional cultural influences in online learning environments. Suggestions included setting up small groups, clearly delimiting learning objectives, giving a choice to explore real-time culture, and moving away from asynchronous courses. The main focus of online learning experiences, as reflected in the

responses, was to increase intercultural competence. For language courses, respondents preferred conversations and interactions promoting the expansion of vocabulary. Focus group participants suggested foreign direct investment companies could help the community grow intercultural networks by sponsoring online programs.

The answers rated online learning environments as effective to share cultural influences from the comfort of one's home. Some respondents reported leading language exchange groups to keep communities connected during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results mentioned online learning technologies have the potential to open up cultural exchanges, defeating common challenges generated due to logistics and cost. The responses indicated the visual aspect of online technologies made learning cultures engaging and meaningful. Participants did not recommend any specific curriculum; instead, the process reflected an exploratory nature in the selection of instructional approaches.

The data corroborated how online learning spaces can promote cultural values as the basis for the instructional design (Chang, 2017; Heaster-Ekholm, 2020; Toole, 2018). Online classrooms have the potential of surpassing projections made from the U.S. 2010 Census and data from the U.S. Department of Education about school diversity (Colby & Ortman, 2015; Hussar & Bailey, 2016). For adult populations, the popularization of online learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic broke paradigms about traditional models of instruction and instructional design, opening options for constructivist cultural experiences where the learner leads in selecting or designing the objective and types of interactions (Heaster-Ekholm, 2020; Korkut et al., 2018; Luring et al., 2018; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Zhang & Lin, 2018). The participants preferred synchronous distance-learning methods. The statements in Table 5 confirm the ability to interact in real-time with other members of the learning community helped respondents experience culture interactively.

Table 5*Theme 5: Learning Culture Online*

Categories	Sample Statements
Learning Language and Culture Online	“Learning about food traditions and cultures is always fun and informative. Conversation exchanges (half an hour chatting in one language and then switching to the other—I did that when living in Italy, it worked well for learning and forged friendships).”
	“Online live meetings make communication easier when you can see a person. Body language is a part of communication with foreign people, and it is a key part of successful communication.”
	“Online meetings make it accessible to meet with people whom we might not otherwise have the opportunity to engage.”
	“Online live meetings for me are more passive interactions and allow me to not engage as much as I would have to in an in-person class. If it were a demonstration class, like cooking or music or dance, online/live meetings would be fine, but language classes are only ok.”

The data results served to answer Research Question 3. Considering learners' autonomy is recommended in the selection of distance-learning methods; the responses support a constructivist approach to the selection of effective methods to acquire intercultural competence online (Lauring et al., 2018; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Vygotsky, 1929; Zhang & Lin, 2018). Other salient results from the data indicated visual input and the ability to see body language were paramount for effective online cultural experiences. Because the respondents' experiences were limited to videoconferencing technologies, none of the participants mentioned other methods for cultural influences at a distance (Barlott et al., 2015; Motteram et al., 2020; Shadiev et al., 2020).

Reliability and Validity

The focus of the methodology included a method to eliminate potential threats to the reliability and validity of the research. The initial step was to separate any researcher biases by focusing on the participants' lived experiences and not considering demographic characteristics as labels in the data. Establishing the study's goal to understand cultural influences' effects on intercultural competence in a region with foreign direct investment allowed the researcher to ignore gender, age, socio-economical level, immigrant status, race, or any other personal characteristics about the participants. After the questionnaire, each participant received a random number, and data were transferred into the Transana tool without names, eliminating any possible biases. The strategy (in the proposal) of collecting age as demographic data was a deviation from the initial methodology because participants in the population were already verified as adults over 18 years of age, making demographic data unnecessary for the purpose of the study.

The revision of the questionnaire questions by a team of five independent subject-matter experts in diversity, intercultural communication, education, research, and neurolinguistics, ensured strong validity and reliability to the questionnaire questions. All five reviews of the questions yielded effective suggestions and adaptations to make the questions bias-free and achievable by literate adults from any educational background. The transferability and confirmability of the study increased by ensuring the questions could be understood by adults with basic knowledge of language and culture. Additionally, the assistance from the five subject-matter experts strengthened the credibility of the study. A carefully crafted research plan in the research methodology chapter allowed for the steps in the research process to remain as a blueprint for the execution of the actions during the data collection, data analysis, and evaluation of the results (Creswell, 2018).

Because the study used empirical phenomenology as the design and the focus was a region (not a city or locality), the model is transferable to other settings for further studies (Leedy & Ormrod, 2019; Yin, 2016). The study design's model can serve other research studies with a need to operationalize the value of cultural influences in intercultural-competence development (Chang, 2017). The design allows flexibility to analyze the lived experiences of persons who have seen changes in society due to foreign direct investment. Additionally, the research offers a background for other studies evaluating culture as an asset in economic development and social innovation and studying the effectiveness of cultural values as a tool to enhance online learning approaches (Chang, 2017; Christensen et al., 2020; Heaster-Ekholm, 2020; Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza, 2018; Toole, 2018; Yin, 2016). The voluntarism of participants in accepting to serve in focus groups enforced dependability of the questionnaire instrument because the answers to the interview questions corroborated and expanded the data from the questionnaire (Morrow et al., 2015).

Chapter Summary

The research questions served as a blueprint to organize the results of the study. The only factors influencing the research study were the participants' lived cultural influences in a region with foreign direct investment. Demographic data related to age, gender, income, marital status, employment, or education level were not collected intentionally to avoid detracting from the three research questions and to eliminate biases. The five themes revealed by the conceptualization of the data from the questionnaire and the focus group interviews served to build a framework for data analysis. The framework was the template to guide the addressing of the three research questions, displaying the interplay between cultural influences, individual efforts, psychological processes, and learning methods (Yin, 2016).

Answering the three research questions served to organize the findings. Evidence from the participants' responses led to arriving at the answer to the first research question: Respondents recognized casual cultural influences in a region with foreign direct investment, and intentional cultural influences can contribute to the effective development of intercultural competence. For the second research question, the data revealed how participants placed a high value on culture and recognized the effect culture plays in nurturing intercultural self-efficacy, as well as a desire to project cultural value leadership. For the third research question, participants' responses provided data indicating methods for distance-learning methods for intercultural competence can be a combination of learner-selected activities to construct knowledge over time: Smaller groups and visual input were popular response choices. The results from the data analysis provided detailed terms for cultural influences: (a) a focus on self-efficacy when developing intercultural competence, (b) the concept of cultural value leadership in using culture as an asset in the prosperity of humankind, and (c) the notion of distance intercultural-competence education being complemented by other technologies to provide a broader range of experiences and track participants' progress. The answers to the three research questions provide data for decision-making by academic, business, and public service leaders. Additionally, the results added new categories to the definition of cultural influences as elements in the development of intercultural competence.

Fidelity to the research method, the results from the data, and the results were the themes generated from the coding. Generating themes and categorizing participants' responses were the key elements included to address the three research questions. Organizing the results in the order of the research questions was fundamental to giving the report of results a logical sequence reflecting the study's purpose. The use of triangulation techniques and open communication with participants and subject-matter experts assured internal consistency and increased validity in the

process of collecting and analyzing the data (Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza, 2018). The five themes generated as a result of the data analysis (a) allowed a clear definition of cultural influences, (b) connected the concept of self-efficacy to practices related to the development of intercultural competence, (c) identified cultural values learners of an additional language sought to project culture philanthropy, and (d) suggested methods for learning culture online. Chapter 5 includes the summary of the results and recommendations for applying the results to decision-making regarding intercultural-competence development.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of the phenomenological study was to explore the effects of cultural influences on the development of intercultural competence for students at a private language institute in a region with foreign direct investment in the Southeastern United States. The goal of the study was to fill a gap in the research literature. Intercultural competence allows the individual to assess how the person is going to interrelate with people from different backgrounds, how to regulate intercultural self-efficacy, and how to project culture philanthropy. Responses to each one of the three research questions were the foundation to generating the themes. The five themes from the data analysis served to expand concepts, terms, and strategies for the development of intercultural concepts for adult additional-language learners exposed to cultural influences in a region with foreign direct investment.

The first research question inquired how cultural influences affect the intercultural competence of students learning an additional language. The results from the data analysis yielded two themes related to the inquiry. Casual cultural influences and intentional cultural influences were the terms generated from the interpretation of the intersection of the participants' responses.

Likewise, the second research question's results yielded two themes. The specific interrogation was how students learning an additional language perceive the value of culture. Intercultural self-efficacy, as well as the value and projection of positive cultural conduct, expanded understanding about participants' motivations and desired outcomes from intentional cultural influences.

From the third research question, one theme covered aspects related to developing intercultural competence at a distance. The inquiry was the foundation for the questionnaire and focus group questions to elicit information about participants' lived experiences with distance-

learning methods by exploring what additional-language students assess as effective for distance-learning to acquire intercultural competence. The results indicated online videoconferences as the primary distance-learning method respondents recognized as effective for gaining knowledge about a culture.

In summary, the results highlighted how, in a region with foreign direct investment, additional-language learners seek effective intentional cultural influences (face-to-face or online) to project positive cultural conduct in culture philanthropy. Additionally, intercultural self-efficacy emerged as the term to identify the common intention participants displayed in the construction of an individual learning path to address the need of developing intercultural competence. Finally, cultural value leadership, as a measurable and actionable model to project culture philanthropy, was the proposed leadership strategy for regions with cultural influences due to foreign direct investment.

Findings, Interpretations, and Conclusions

The data analysis results revealed casual cultural influences affected adult second-language learners' intercultural-competence development in a region of foreign direct investment in the Southeastern United States. Participants in the study expressed culture as an important element when growing skills as global citizens. The investment of time, talent, and treasure to experience intentional cultural influences with the goal of developing intercultural competence was evidence of the respondents' commitment. In the process of planning and experiencing cultural influences (casual and intentional), the participants reported high intercultural self-efficacy. When using videoconferencing technologies, the freedom to select intentional cultural influences and work in small groups were the two primary recommendations the participants shared. The two most important conclusions from the results were the motivating effect casual cultural influences have on the individual's intercultural self-efficacy and how participants

considered the development of intercultural competence as a continuous, nonlinear, nonethnocentric, and reciprocal process to project culture philanthropy.

The findings confirmed developing intercultural competence is a constructivist process where the learner builds a foundation based on intercultural higher-order thinking. Additionally, the findings affirmed the social learning theory as a key conceptual background when participants described the process as a gradual transition beginning with casual cultural influences in the society and continuing with intentional cultural influences in experiences motivated by intercultural self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977a, 1977b, 2001; Luring et al., 2018; Piątkowska & Strugielska, 2017; Toyoda, 2016, 2018; Zhang & Lin, 2018). Another area where participants reported high intercultural self-efficacy was in the implementation of cultural influences to lead through cultural value leadership.

According to the respondents, transformational leadership was not a motivating factor in the development of intercultural competence. Instead, the results revealed adult learners preferred to learn about the culture of others and lead by implementing cultural value leadership strategies. Such analyses disprove transformational leadership as the key theory for the development of intercultural competence and expand knowledge about leadership strategies away from a hierarchical model where leaders transform followers into new leaders (Andersen, 2015; Fiallos, 2018; Gould & Ardoin, 2018; Lucaci & Nastase, 2019; Lvina et al., 2019; Noriero et al., 2017; Sinoi, 2019; Tian et al., 2018; Uzo & Adigwe, 2016). Furthermore, the findings indicated the development of intercultural competence is neither linear nor ethnocentric but, instead, a reciprocal and constructivist process to project culture philanthropy.

The study served to add and clarify terms related to the development of intercultural competence, adding six measurable definitions to the field of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and the field of educational leadership. First, from the literature analysis, the terms culture

philanthropy and positive cultural conduct emerged: (a) culture philanthropy as the notion of culture holding high value in the nonlinear, nonethnocentric, and reciprocal promotion of human prosperity in economic development and social innovation and (b) positive cultural conduct as the favorable behavior of an individual when applying culture philanthropy to promote culture as an asset, focusing on the same economic development and social innovation areas (Fiallos, 2018; Gould & Ardoin, 2018; Lucaci & Nastase, 2019; Lvina et al., 2019; Noriero et al., 2017; Sinoi, 2019; Tian et al., 2018; Uzo & Adigwe, 2016). Second, expanding Bandura's definition of self-efficacy (as described in the social learning theory) to intercultural self-efficacy considers the individual's internal belief regarding a personal capacity to succeed at developing intercultural competence (Bandura, 1977a, 1977b, 2001). Third, as a result of the data analysis and in response to the literature gap, the definition of cultural influences was expanded into two categories. The first category is casual cultural influences: the elements in society manifested as diverse experiences in the individual's daily life. The second category is intentional cultural influences: the learner-designed experiences, which apply intercultural self-efficacy to make gains in the intercultural-competence development. The last term is cultural value leadership. Cultural value leadership is a form of leadership where the leader implements culture philanthropy to instill an equal sense of belonging with the goal of each person prospering (Fiallos, 2018; Gould & Ardoin, 2018; Lucaci & Nastase, 2019; Lvina et al., 2019; Noriero et al., 2017; Sinoi, 2019; Tian et al., 2018; Uzo & Adigwe, 2016). Additionally, the recommendations include seven interconnected characteristics of culture under the concept of cultural value leadership to use in the application of leadership strategies.

Delimiting the study's scope to the three research questions allowed the exploration of the adult additional-language learners lived experiences in a region with foreign direct investment in the Southeastern United States (Creswell, 2018; Hernández-Samperi & Mendoza,

2018). The data interpretation was limited to inferences and conclusions within the boundaries of the research, providing a focus on the data's depth instead of expanding to aspects related to demographics or input from outside the raw data. Using the research questions as the blueprint for the framework of the research and adding sections for the framework based on the five themes generated from the data analysis enabled the interpreting of the results in a logical sequence. Such a model allowed for the results to serve in resolving the problem statement and meeting the purpose of the study. The conclusions herein bind the proposed study with the recommendations, using a continuous conceptual line based on the theories and definitions presented in the literature review.

In conclusion, the data analysis indicated the development of intercultural competence is effective when cultural influences are intentional, continue over time, and small-group interactions (face-to-face or online) are available. As indicated by the additional-language learners in the conducted research study, culture is valued as high when developing intercultural competence, practicing positive cultural conduct, and leading through culture philanthropy. The findings indicated how a nonlinear and nonethnocentric process allowed learners to adapt intentional cultural influences to the individual's intercultural-competence learning needs. Simultaneously, the process enriched the cultural experiences of the people sharing a culture on the other end. The growth of diversity in society is living proof of the unfeasibility of relying on a single intercultural development model for providing multicultural populations equal opportunities to achieve intercultural competence. Leaders in educational, business, and public services can invest time, talent, and treasure in the implementation of cultural value leadership strategies with the goal of all population sectors receiving opportunities to share the culture's value in an atmosphere of psychological safety (Agarwal & Farndale, 2017; Brimhall & Mor Barak, 2018; Carmeli et al., 2014; Li et al., 2015).

Limitations

One research limitation was the sample included only a group of individuals with prior experience in the development of intercultural competence, which could risk bias in favor of additional resources because of a personal interest in the field of cultural studies. Other limitations identified in the study's proposal were credibility and transferability. Participants' willingness to answer the questions with honesty threatened credibility, but the open-ended questions diminished such a threat. Additionally, choosing participants from the same language school was a threat in transferability and diminished the possibility of generating themes applicable to other social contexts. The data represented the participants' lived experiences and, as Creswell (2018) asserted about phenomenological research, the results are limited to the combination of the participants' personal perspectives.

Six measurable factors added to the literature. Additionally, the seven interconnected characteristics to consider when applying cultural value leadership strategies increased the study's strength by demonstrating the results' applicability at a global level. Another study including participants who have never studied an additional language or traveled abroad can allow for the exploration of lived experiences through casual cultural influences and assess intercultural self-efficacy within a larger context. The study can be replicated to explore the lived experiences of students at other types of educational institutions, businesses wanting to assess the effect of cultural influence in DEI programs, and the community for learning how the growth in diversity influences the development of intercultural competence for the individual to project a conduct of culture philanthropy.

Recommendations

The main recommendations from the study's findings are as follows: First, developing actionable strategies is vital in cultural value leadership to promote an intercultural atmosphere

of belonging through face-to-face and online experiences. Second, offering intentional cultural influences is significant for developing intercultural competence and projecting culture philanthropy. Acknowledging the seven characteristics identified as part of culture is necessary for applying cultural value leadership strategies. The characteristics comprise the following: (a) personal and family lifestyle, (b) traditions and values, (c) linguistic diversity, (d) intellectual and creative expression, (e) belief systems, (f) the use of technology, and (g) socio-historical background. Leaders are recommended to interact in diverse groups, keeping in mind the seven characteristics' interconnectedness. Further research is recommended to study the effect of culture philanthropy on the advancement of individuals as global citizens in social learning settings where the person approaches learning from a constructivist point of view, builds knowledge by designing intercultural experiences, and applies intercultural self-efficacy.

For learners involved in distance education cultural experiences, a key recommendation is to look beyond the effect cultural influences can have on the learner seeking the experience. Because the study revealed casual cultural influences motivated intercultural self-efficacy, the experience could have a reciprocal effect where the person sharing the culture on the other end of the cultural experience and the instructor can be motivated to explore intentional cultural influences. Learners can design reciprocal intercultural experiences applying cultural value leadership and have confidence in the online exchange projecting culture philanthropy.

Another recommendation is for professionals in the area of intercultural studies to gear practices toward designing opportunities for nonlinear and nonethnocentric methods for intercultural-competence development and allow learner-selected intentional cultural influences to enhance the course's experiential learning aspects. The findings reflected intentional cultural influences increasing interaction between people from different cultures beyond the casual interactions related to daily life in a region with foreign direct investment. The results serve to

encourage educators and employers to document intentional cultural influences under the student or employee file and value such experiences as professional development, acknowledging individual efforts toward growth in intercultural competence as initiatives enhancing the culture of the organization.

Implications for Leadership

The potential positive effect from the concept of cultural value leadership generated from the study's findings provides individual guidance on developing into independent intercultural leaders. Cultural value leadership offers a type of leadership where the individual's value to the group is based on cultural influences. The objective is to promote a change in society, beginning with the individual and reaching a global level, by eliminating the need for a hierarchical leadership system where one person leads, and others follow (Andersen, 2015). Leading through cultural value is projecting culture philanthropy, a process where culture is a valuable asset in the community's prosperity.

Cultural value leadership is based on the unique intercultural growth diversity offers. Even without a formal academic background, a person can contribute through cultural value leadership because the individual's own culture comprises the value in the process. Strategies in cultural value leadership include awareness about a positive cultural conduct, a genuine appreciation for intercultural human values, and the projection of culture philanthropy. Academic, business, and public service leaders can offer opportunities and programs (in-person and online) for stakeholders to practice cultural value leadership.

Conclusion

The study indicated how casual cultural influences positively affect the curiosity of additional-language learners to explore other cultures. Learners rely on intercultural self-efficacy to select intentional cultural influences (face-to-face and online) as effective experiences in the

development of intercultural competence. The outcome, as identified through the study, indicated what the individual desires from the development of intercultural competence is to project culture philanthropy and not to act as a sole cultural leader. As revealed through the data analysis, an effective methodology for living intentional cultural influences needs to be nonlinear and nonethnocentric, and the most favorable context would be a small-group setting with an atmosphere of reciprocity.

A major implication from the research findings was the identification of cultural value leadership strategies, instead of transactional leadership, as useful for the individual to project culture philanthropy. In a region with foreign direct investment, the possibility for educational, business, and public service leaders to advance individuals through cultural value leadership depends on the intentional cultural influences such organizations and programs can provide for individuals to develop intercultural competence. The study provided six measurable definitions as factors for further studies in the fields of DEI and educational leadership. Measuring casual and intentional cultural influences, intercultural self-efficacy, positive cultural conduct, culture philanthropy, and cultural value leadership as key factors in the operationalization of intercultural competence is essential for providing the tools for educational, business, and public service leaders to contribute resources to stakeholders and the community.

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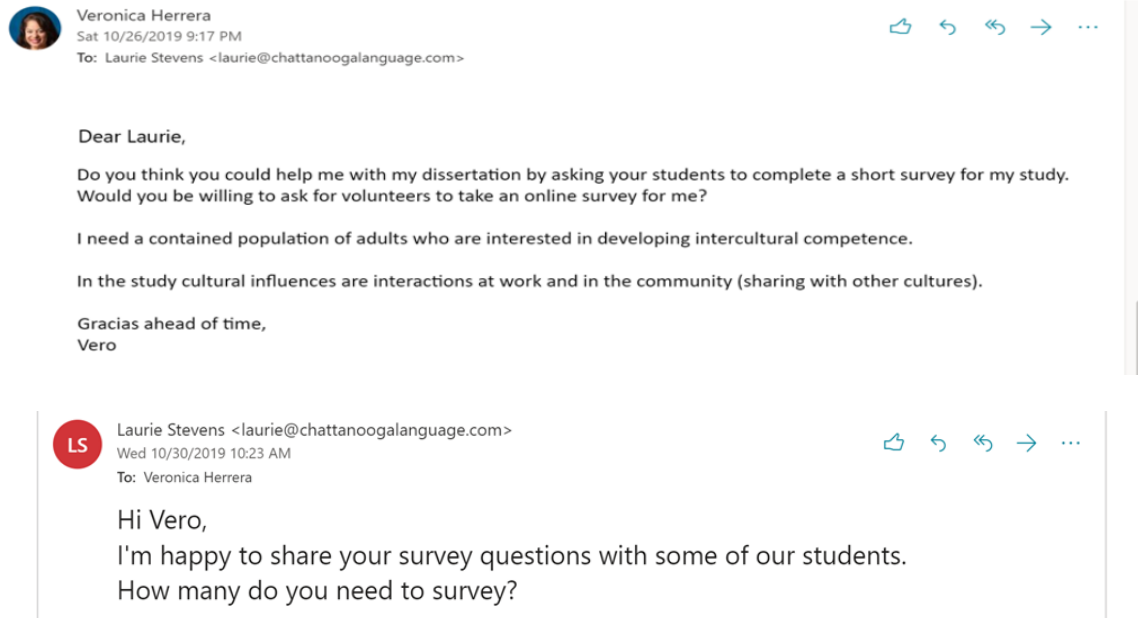
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Appendix A

Correspondence with Site Founder Director for Permission to Conduct Rese



Chattanooga School of Language

Laurie Stevens

Founder/Director
Spanish Language Coach

p. 423.802.2040 (school)

e. laurie@chattanoogaogalanguage.com

4122 North Access Road

Chattanooga, Tennessee 37415





Veronica Herrera

Wed 10/30/2019 10:42 AM

To: Laurie Stevens <laurie@chattanoogaogalanguage.com>



Dear Laurie,

Thanks for allowing me to use CLS as the population for my study.

The number of participants comes from those who agree to respond to the survey.

We can send the survey to current students and if they agree to participate, then they respond. Ideally the number should be about 10 to 15, but it should come from their willingness to participate.

We can do students who have finished a certain level, whether they are still enrolled or not.

We can talk about it.

Gracias,

Vero

Appendix B**Invitation to Participate in the Research Study**

Greetings,

My name is Veronica Herrera, and I am a doctoral candidate at the American College of Education. I obtained your email from the owner of the academy where you have studied languages. The focus of the study is the impact of cultural influences in the development of intercultural competence for adults learning an additional language in a region with foreign direct investment. It is an honor to invite you to contribute your answers in a short survey, which will inform educators, business, and public service leaders about best practices in intercultural relations.

Click on the following link [link to be inserted] to begin the process. You can participate in the study July 20 – August 2, 2020. Thanks ahead of time for accepting to share your experience in learning about different cultures.

Kindest regards,

Veronica Herrera

(423) 902-6928

vherrera@culturephilanthropy.org

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Jeff Roach

E-mail: Jeff.Roach@ace.edu

Appendix C**Verification Statement for the Use of Data for the Research**

Date:

Title of the Research: Effect of Cultural Influences in Intercultural Competence:

Phenomenological Study on Additional-Language Learners

Participant's Full Name: _____

The following statement is to verify _____ grants permission for the use of the data collected in the survey and the focus group interview for the above-mentioned dissertation research about the effect of cultural influences in the development of intercultural competence.

Participant's Signature of Approval: _____

Date Signed: _____

Kindest regards,

Veronica Herrera

(423) 902-6928

vherrera@culturephilanthropy.org

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Jeff Roach

E-mail: Jeff.Roach@ace.edu

Appendix D**Subject-Matter Expert Request to Review Research Items**

Re: Effect of cultural influences in intercultural competence of additional-language learners

To: [Name of Subject Matter Expert]

Re: Subject-Matter Expert Request to Review Research Items

Greetings _____,

As part of the research design for my doctoral dissertation, I am required to invite a panel of experts to assist as subject-matter experts (SMEs). Your professional expertise and involvement in work settings with diverse populations make you a perfect fit to support the study. The topic is the effect of cultural influences in the development of intercultural competence.

In the initial phase, the items to review are the survey questions. All you need to do is evaluate the survey as the instrument to explore the three research questions targeted in the study. I am including my dissertation proposal and the questions for your review. You have the option to send your recommendations as an email response or amend the attached document.

It would be an honor to have you as part of a selective panel of SMEs. Should you agree to contribute your expertise for the research, just respond to the email with a short statement of acceptance and your review of the survey items. Feel free to email me or call me at (423) 902-6928 if you need any clarification.

Kindest regards,

Veronica Herrera

(423) 902-6928

vherrera@culturephilanthropy.org

Appendix E

Subject-Matter Experts' Responses about Evaluation of Survey Questions

BURNETTE REBECCA <BURNETTE_REBECCA@HCDE.ORG>
 Sun 6/7/2020 8:03 PM
 To: Veronica Herrera

Greetings to you, Ms. Herrera,

I would be honored to serve as a Subject Matter Expert for your dissertation. It has been my pleasure for many years to follow you on this journey to explore and promote Culture Philanthropy.

Upon examining the Research Questions and Survey Questions, I found them to be solid and timely. Considering the unexpectedly sudden revolution of the delivery of education content due to the Covid-19 outbreak, I am particularly excited to see you are pursuing ideas about distance learning in your study.

The only improvement I can see involves the second survey question, which says, "What elements of the language programs you have attended do you remember as experiences teaching you how to interact with people from other cultural backgrounds?" It is an appropriate question for the survey, but it is worded in an overly complex manner which might make it difficult for some participants to understand. Something like this may be clearer: "In language programs in which you have participated, what experiences do you remember that involved learning how to interact with people from other cultures?"

I'm so proud of you for this work, and I can't wait to call you Dr. Herrera!

Please let me know if there is more I need to do.

Rebecca Burnette

...

Veronica Herrera
 To: Rebecca Burnette Re: Subject Matter Expert Request to Review Research Items Greetings Mrs. Burnette, As par...
 Thu 6/4/2020 3:58 PM

In the text

Gustavo Alberto Manzo Ugas <gmanzo@unimet.edu.ve>
 Tue 6/9/2020 7:41 PM
 To: Veronica Herrera

Esteemed Professor
 Verónica Herrera
 I am Grateful and honored for your invitation to join the panel of experts I accept and look forward to assist as a subject matter expert (SMEs).

In Other view about de ansewrs you need:

I did Review the text of the questions all seemed appropriate to the research. I have no observations of any kind regarding these. Additionally, I answered the questions to make sure that in order to establish their relationship and relevance what I could establish in that way

Research Questions

There are three questions guiding the phenomenological exploration of the intercultural competence and perceptions about culture of students learning an additional language face-to-face and using online technologies. The context is a region culturally influenced by foreign direct investment. The research questions are the foundation of all survey and focus group interview questions in the proposed study.

Research Question One: How do cultural influences affect the intercultural competence of students learning an additional language?

The effect of the influence of culture on the skills of students learning a new language is multiple. This question is entirely

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www.culturephilanthropy.org

...

RT

Ricky Thomas <rthomas@mccallie.org>

Tue 6/9/2020 8:32 PM

To: Veronica Herrera

Hi Veronica,

I would like to participate in this important work that supports your academic pursuit. I reviewed the survey questions. I think the questions will guide you to the information you want to learn related to intercultural competence. The only other factor I thought about is related to students not communicating authentically with others over virtual platforms or having courage to demonstrate behaviors that may not support other cultures because there is no in-person contact. I am not sure how you capture that in the survey or if this connects with the question about distance learning.

I wish you the best with this process. I look forward to hearing what you learn.

Take care,
Ricky

...



Veronica Herrera

To: Mr. Ricky Thomas Re: Subject Matter Expert Request to Review Research Items Greetings Mr. Thomas, As part ...

Thu 6/4/2020 4:00 PM

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OB

Orangel Balza <obalza@gmail.com>

Tue 6/9/2020 9:21 PM

To: Veronica Herrera

Dear Ms. Herrera

I hereby confirm my total disposition to participate as a Subject Matter Expert for your dissertation. For many years, I have witnessed your dedication and effort to research and advocate on behalf of Culture Philanthropy.

According to research questions I would like to consider adding the word **sociocultural**: How do cultural as a socio-cultural influences affect the intercultural competence of students learning an additional language?

I found a sentence in context example: "*The degree of difficulty of bilingual language development depends on a complex array of **sociocultural** and individual factors*"

According to the survey questions, I would like to suggest a question which includes the word: context.

- 1.- How do language skills help to understand or decote the context within other cultures?
- 2.- How do you think the correct - appropriate use of language will impact into different cultural contexts?



I'm so honored to have the opportunity to attend you in this superlative academy effort.

Let me know if I can do something else to support you

Orangel Balza

...

Invitation to Serve as Subject Matter Expert in Doctoral Research by V. Herrera

1  **Nathalia Sanchez Pisani** <nattyven@hotmail.com>

Wed 6/10/2020 12:39 PM

To: Veronica Herrera



Dear Veronica,

Thanks for considering me for such important matter and I will do my best for nourish your research.

About the questions:

1. I understand the impact of the culture in the learning process from the Teacher point of view but how the learner identify the gaps related to his/her own culture To decide face to face or online learning?

2. It is solid question when the learning process is a personal Decision but what about is a pensum/ Job requirement ?

3. I think for the moment, distance learning is the Option when you can not/ difficult take the face to face class. It will be interesting to see how coronavirus can change my thoughtS about it and the online learning take the top of options.

Do no hesitate to contact me if you hace any question.

Nathalia Sánchez Pisani

El 04-06-2020, a la(s) 16:06, Veronica Herrera <vherrera@culturephilanthropy.org> escribió:

Appendix F**Survey Questions**

1. What languages have you studied? Please, include your native language.
2. In language programs in which you have participated, what experiences do you remember involved learning how to interact with people from other cultures?
3. What situations or activities in society are culturally enriching to you?
4. What goals do you feel interacting with people from other cultures will help you achieve in your career or personal life?
5. What workshops or community activities helped you realize there is a diverse community around you?
6. What distance learning activities do you think would be beneficial to learn about other cultures?
7. How do you perceive online live meetings help in carrying out authentic communications with people from different cultural background? Why?
8. How motivated are you today to engage in conversations with people with a native language different from yours?
9. Will you be willing to participate in an online focus group interview to assist in expanding the validity of the study? If so, please click the following link [insert link] to enter your email information.

Please type your initials in the box.

I hereby authorized the researchers in the study to use the answers provided for the purpose of the study. Your initials here ()

Appendix G

Informed Consent for Survey

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Greetings Participants,

Thanks for your willingness to contribute your answers to a research study related to intercultural competence. Your answers are valuable to developing themes in second language acquisition, leadership in intercultural settings, and the perspectives in the area culture as an asset in economic growth and social innovation. The following sections explain terms of confidentiality and the details of your options as participant.

Data Confidentiality and Protection: All data will remain confidential, and information will reside in a password-protected computer and a Google account used only for the study. All reports generated from the research will identify participants by numbers and not names.

Destruction of Data: Deletion of data from the survey and cancelation of the Google account for the research will take place three years after the culmination of the study.

Discontinuation of Participation: At any point during the study, you are free to discontinue participation. You have the option to email or write a note to me as one of the responses in the survey. Feel free to contact me with any question you might have.

Your initials and acceptance of the terms for participation in the survey indicate you have read and understood the information in the section above. Initials: Date:

Veronica Herrera

(423) 902-6928

vherrera@culturephilanthropy.org

Appendix H

Informed Consent for Focus Group

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT FOR FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Greetings Participants,

Thanks once more for your willingness to contribute your answers to a research study related to intercultural competence. Your participation in the focus group will help expand the depth of the themes generated from the questionnaire. The goal is to understand the impact cultural influences have in preparing you for interaction in intercultural settings. The following sections explain terms of confidentiality and the details of your options as participant.

Data Confidentiality and Protection: All data will remain confidential, and information will reside in a password-protected computer and in a Google account created for the study. All reports generated from the research will identify participants by numbers and not names.

Destruction of Data: Deletion of data from the focus group, both video and audio recordings, will take place three years after the culmination of the study.

Discontinuation of Participation: At any point in during the study, you are free to discontinue participation. You have the option to withdraw from the focus group while in session, or you can email or call me at any time.

Your initials and acceptance of the terms indicate you have read and understood the information in the section above.

Initials: Date:

Veronica Herrera

(423) 902-6928

vherrera@culturephilanthropy.org