

## **Impact of short-term study abroad program: Inservice teachers' development of intercultural competence and pedagogical beliefs**

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### **Abstract:**

A comprehensive study abroad program is one of the most effective ways to prepare multicultural and global teachers. However, in teacher education, most of the study abroad programs are designed for preservice teachers. In this study, we detailed the design of a short-term study abroad program for inservice teachers and reported on the impact of the program not only on teachers' intercultural competence development, but also their teaching beliefs and practices. Discussions and implications were provided for educators designing study abroad programs for teachers.

**Keywords:** Teacher education | Inservice teachers | Study abroad | Intercultural competence | Personal practical theory

### **Article:**

#### **1. Introduction**

There is a growing culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) student population in U.S. K-12 settings. More than ever, teachers are challenged to create culturally responsive learning environments to meet the needs of CLD learners, and leverage their funds of knowledge in classroom instruction (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992; Nieto, 2010). In addition, teachers are challenged to prepare all students with inter-cultural competence so that they can effectively communicate and collaborate with those from various cultural backgrounds (Boix-Mansilla & Jackson, 2011; Longview Foundation, 2008).

International cultural immersion experiences are considered one of the most effective means to prepare multicultural and global teachers (Cushner, 2007; Hadis, 2005; Stachowski & Sparks, 2007). While more and more teacher education programs integrate overseas field experience opportunities, most are designed for preservice teachers (e.g., Cushner & Chang, 2015; Cushner, 2007; Mahon & Cushner, 2002; Mahon, 2007; Zhao, Meyers, & Meyers, 2009). Studies regarding programs designed specifically for practicing teachers are very limited (Biraimah & Jotia, 2013; Gleeson & Tait, 2012). Thus, understanding meaningful and effective design of study abroad programs for inservice teachers and ways to assess the impact of such

programs can provide insights as teacher educators expand intercultural exchange opportunities to include practicing teachers.

In this study, we reviewed relevant literature regarding the design and assessment of study abroad programs and detailed the design of a short-term study abroad program sponsored by the Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad (GPA) Program involving K-12 teachers from various disciplinary areas. Based on both quantitative and qualitative data, findings regarding the impact of the program on teachers' growth were discussed. Discussions and implications were offered for educators interested in exploring the design and assessment of study abroad programs for teachers.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1. Design of study abroad programs for teachers**

The international experience for teachers may take on many different formats. Depending on the length of the program, it may be short-term (2-8 weeks) or long-term (semester or year long). Due to the licensure requirements of preservice teacher education and the lack of flexibility in inservice teachers' working schedules, short-term programs are far more common for teachers (Batey & Lupi, 2012; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004). Based on the review of recent empirical studies examining the quality and impact of short-term study abroad programs for teachers, it was noted that researchers highlighted five core elements to consider. These elements include: 1) cultural immersion experiences; 2) teaching opportunities; 3) language learning; 4) reflection; and 5) collaboration.

The first two elements are identified as the core elements of study abroad programs for teachers. Cultural immersion experiences may include cultural site visits, homestay, interaction with people in host countries, and some selected visits in educational settings. Researchers reported that these experiences enhanced teachers' appreciation for diversity (Pence & Macgillivray, 2008), supported development of global mindset (Cushner, 2007), and prepared teachers to become more resourceful and innovative in their instruction (Fitzsimmons & Mackenzie, 2006; Hill, Thomas, & Cote, 1997; Zhao et al., 2009). Teaching opportunities are more challenging to arrange due to differences in curriculum and language. The teaching practicum is typically arranged in settings where the teacher and students can use a common language (in most cases, in English). For example, American preservice teachers may participate in short-term study abroad programs with teaching opportunities in England (Batey & Lupi, 2012; Brindley, Quinn, & Morton, 2009). It is very rare for content area teachers to have the opportunity to teach content in a K-12 classroom setting where the instructional language is a foreign language for the local students.

Language learning is not an essential element for all teacher study abroad programs. It is emphasized more in programs involving foreign language teachers (e.g., Wernicke, 2010) or English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers (e.g., Trent, 2011). In these programs, teacher candidates have foreign language training in their home country and are expected to enhance their language proficiency through overseas immersion. In programs not specifically designed for foreign language development, teachers experience language differences through cultural immersion. Zhao et al. (2009), for example, described a four-week study abroad program involving American teachers teaching English to Chinese students. Even though English was used as the instructional language and there were no specific Chinese language learning

requirements for teacher participants, participants developed empathy toward second-language learners through being immersed in a foreign language environment.

Reflection is a key component in the design of study abroad programs. As Merryfield (2000) pointed out “[international] experiences alone do not make a person a multicultural or global educator” (p.440). Most of the study abroad programs for teachers include reflective journals as a requirement. In these reflections, teachers record their cross-cultural encounters and reflect on their understanding of both their home culture and the culture in the host country (Tang & Choi, 2004; Willard-Holt, 2001). Many teachers document the “disorientation, confusion, and discomfort” they experience (Merryfield, 2000, p. 439). Trilokekar and Kukar (2011) focused on teacher participants' reflections on disorientation experiences and highlighted teachers' experiences with racial dynamics, perceptions of “outsider” status, engagement in risk-taking, and recognition of privilege and global power relations. The authors called for educators “to recognize the pedagogical value of each individual's experience as the basis for learning” when designing study abroad programs for teachers (p.1149).

Finally, collaboration is an implicit element in all study abroad programs. Collaborations between the teacher education program in the home institution and the overseas school are essential when designing teacher study abroad program. Teacher participants benefit from direct interactions and collaborations with teachers in the host countries through school visits or teaching opportunities. In addition, teacher participants were also found to have more opportunities to collaborate within the group through study abroad programs (Tomaš, Farrelly, & Haslam, 2008).

In our study, we integrated all 5 elements in the design of the study abroad program for inservice teachers teaching different grade levels and content areas. While the design of cultural immersion activities is similar to other programs, we integrated unique features into the other four elements. Specifically, we engaged teacher participants in co-planning and co-teaching in the content area; learning the Chinese language through a pre-departure course and in-country seminars; reflecting on both their intercultural competency development and their teaching beliefs in a pre and post manner; and collaborating with their peers from the U.S. and in China.

## 2.2. Assessment of study abroad programs for teachers

Regardless of the design of the study abroad programs for teachers, the assessment of almost all programs focuses on participants' growth in two areas: intercultural competence and academic competence (Anderson & Lawton, 2011; Hammer, Bennett, & Wiseman, 2003). While intercultural competence applies across disciplinary areas, academic competence is specific to the discipline of study. For teachers, this competence involves their dispositions, knowledge, and skills regarding teaching. For both preservice and inservice teachers, academic competence is typically assessed in an ongoing manner through activities and measures such as course-work or professional development, lesson planning and teaching performance, teacher reflections, and student outcomes.

### 2.2.1. Assessment of intercultural competence

In a recent article regarding the evolution of the intercultural competence research field, Mitchell Hammer (2015) contrasted the traditional Cognitive/Affective/Behavioral (CAB) paradigm with the developmental paradigm. According to Hammer (2015), while research

studies within the CAB paradigm focus on exploring various personal characteristic factors that comprise cultural competence, studies within the developmental paradigm emphasize how individuals experience cultural differences. Intercultural competence is viewed “as a function of the extent and quality of the individual's engagement with cultural difference” under the developmental paradigm (p.13). To explore teachers' negotiations of cultural differences through their intercultural experiences in China, we adopted the developmental paradigm in selecting and designing assessment for the program measuring participants' development beyond the CAB growth.

Specifically, Bennett's (1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) was employed to measure the inter-cultural competence development of participating teachers. DMIS articulates a continuum with a monocultural mindset on one end and an intercultural mindset on the other. The developmental stages include: Denial, Defense, Minimization, Acceptance, Adaptation, and Integration. Based on this model, the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) was developed to measure the developmental level of individuals and groups along the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC) (Hammer et al., 2003).

The IDI instrument was selected to be used in this study for several reasons. First, the developmental paradigm focus allowed the researchers and participants to explore their individualized engagement with cultural experiences through individual IDI re-ports. Second, the individual debriefing given to participants after taking the IDI instrument provided researchers opportunities to clarify participants' experiences and their perception of their own intercultural development patterns. Finally, the individualized IDI plan of action for intercultural competence development offered participants guidelines as they established goals for their cultural observations and interactions.

The IDI instrument has been used in various settings internationally and the instrument has been modified based on validity studies (Hammer, 2011, 2012). The current IDI v3 contains 50 items and can be delivered online. In addition to the 50 items, the instrument also includes selected demographic items and five open-ended questions regarding individual background and context. As a group of individuals complete the IDI instrument, a group profile and individual profiles are generated. Individuals can identify their status along the IDC: Denial, Polarization (Defense or Reversal), Minimization, Acceptance, and Adaptation. Denial describes the orientation that individuals may recognize toward surface cultural differences (e.g., food), but may neglect or avoid the recognition of deeper cultural differences (e.g., cultural values). Polarization depicts those who may view cultural differences as “us” versus “them”. Those in the Polarization stage typically have an overly critical view toward either other cultures (Defense) or their own cultural backgrounds (Reversal). Minimization identifies individuals who emphasize cultural commonality and universal values to the extent that cultural differences may be minimized. Both Acceptance and Adaptation are higher levels along the continuum. Acceptance is the orientation when individuals recognize and appreciate cultural differences, and Adaptation is when they are comfortable shifting cultural perspectives and behaviors in culturally appreciative and authentic ways.

The IDI instrument has been widely used to assess individuals' intercultural competence development through study abroad pro-grams and has been used in teacher study abroad programs as well. For example, Colville-Hall, Adamowicz-Hariasz, Sidorova, and Engelking (2011) used the IDI to examine the impact of a 3-weekshort-term abroad program in France for preservice teachers. They found positive gains for the group overall; comparing IDI pre and post responses and 11 out of 14 participants demonstrated gains in their individual IDI scores.

Similarly, Cushner and Chang (2015) used the IDI for preservice teachers attending an 8e15week study abroad program through the Consortium for Overseas Student Teaching (COST) and found slight increases in participants' perceived orientation scores and developmental orientation scores. In addition to US teacher candidates, the instrument has also been used in cross-cultural comparative studies with teacher candidates from other countries (Westrick & Yuen, 2007; Yuen&Grossman,2009; Yuen, 2010). Since most of the study abroad programs in the teacher education field are designed for preservice teachers, few studies have reported the use of the IDI with inservice teachers. It is also not clear how teachers' intercultural competence development may be impacted by their negotiation of cultural differences through study abroad programs and how it may impact their teaching beliefs. In this study, the IDI instrument was used as one of the measures to monitor teachers' intercultural competence development.

### 2.2.2. Assessment of teacher beliefs

Researchers studying teacher development have argued that teacher educators need to cultivate teacher competence beyond knowledge to prepare thoughtfully adaptive teachers (Fairbanks et al., 2010). One of the key elements of teacher competence is their pedagogical beliefs. As Pajares (1992) pointed out:

Few would argue that the beliefs teachers hold influence their perceptions and judgments, which in turn, affect their behavior in the classroom, or that understanding the belief structures of teachers and teacher candidates is essential to improving professional preparation and teaching practices (p.307).

Teachers' reflections on their pedagogical beliefs is a critical aspect in the assessment of teacher study abroad experiences not only because of the essential role of reflection in study abroad program design (Merryfield, 2000), but also due to the personalized process of teacher pedagogical belief development (He&Levin,2008; Levin & He, 2008). While teachers' personalized beliefs reflect their knowledge of the subject matter content, pedagogical content, and curricular focus (Shulman, 1986; 1987), teachers' beliefs are more personal (Richardson, 2003), more flexible and dynamic (Verloop, Van Driel,& Meijer, 2001), more practical (Clandinin, 1986), and include more affective components (Nespor,1987). Teacher beliefs serve as filters through which teachers sift knowledge gained through readings, teacher education programs, and teaching experiences; at the same time, beliefs reflect their goals to improve pedagogical practices (Richardson, 1996; 2003).

Eliciting teachers' personal practical theories (PPTs) through teacher reflection is a commonly used method to elicit teachers' pedagogical beliefs and to track changes and development of their beliefs (Chant, 2002; Chant, Heafner,&Bennett, 2004;Cornett,Yeotis,&Terwilliger, 1990; Connelly & Clandinin, 1985; He & Levin, 2008; Levin & He, 2008). PPTs are defined as “teachers’ espoused beliefs that guide their classroom practices (theories)based on their prior life experiences, including non-teaching activities (personal), and their experiences that occur as a result of designing and teaching the curriculum (practical)” (Levin, He, & Allen, 2013, pp. 202e203). Engaging teachers in reflection on their PPTs allows teacher educators to explore how teachers make meaning of their experiences to inform their classroom practices.

Research on teachers' PPTs indicate that teachers' PPTs are influenced by their prior beliefs and values and the contexts in which teachers find themselves, suggesting that PPTs both guide teachers' pedagogical choices and are influenced by the interaction of the teaching and learning context, by cues received from their students, by their visions or goals for teaching, and by various principles of practice that they have in their knowledge base for teaching (He & Levin, 2008; Levin & He, 2008; Levin et al., 2013; Chant, 2002; Chant et al., 2004). In a study exploring 427 self-reported PPTs from 94 teachers, for example, the authors noted that one-third of these PPTs came from teachers' personal backgrounds and experiences, while two-thirds of the PPTs were attributed to field experiences and coursework they received in the teacher education programs through which their PPTs may be confirmed or challenged (He & Levin, 2008; Levin & He, 2008). A follow-up study comparing the PPTs of teacher candidates, cooperating teachers, and teacher educators illustrated how teachers' PPTs may develop and shift with the increasing experiences and interactions with students, other teachers, and families (He & Levin, 2008; Levin & He, 2008).

Cultural contexts play a critical role in the development of teachers' pedagogical beliefs (Andrews, 2007; Correa, Perry, Sims, Miller, & Fang, 2008; Ho & Hau, 2004; McMullen et al., 2005). Comparing American and Chinese teachers' PPTs, He, Levin, and Li (2011) noted the differences in teachers' pedagogical beliefs, reflecting the expectations and routines of the different educational systems situated in separate cultural contexts. In addition to teachers' intercultural competence, therefore, the exploration of the development of their PPTs when challenged by the differences in cultural contexts can provide further insights into teachers' professional development as a result of the study abroad experiences.

In this study, teachers' PPTs were collected in a pre- and post-manner to capture teachers' beliefs that guide their classroom instruction prior to participating in this program and to identify any potential changes to their beliefs throughout the program.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Program context and participants**

The program, Experiencing China, was designed for experienced teachers interested in interactions with Chinese students and teachers and developing curriculum activity materials integrating Chinese language and culture in their K-12 area studies. The program was carried out in three phases: 1) pre-departure course; 2) 4-week short-term program in China; and 3) follow-up curriculum design and delivery activities (He & Lundgren, 2017). Participants registered for 6 credit-hours of graduate coursework for this study abroad experience. The program was set up in collaboration with a partnering university and school district in Shanghai, China. Participants resided on the university campus and traveled to the schools in the partnering school district. Coordinators from the partnering university and school district in China helped identify the school sites and Chinese teachers who participated in this program. All partnering schools and Chinese teachers involved in this program are recognized on the program website (<https://sites.google.com/a/uncg.edu/experiencing-china-2015-16/partnering-schools>)

During the pre-departure course, participants took an online course focusing on topics that included intercultural competency, intercultural communication strategies, Chinese and American cultural comparisons, and an overview of the Chinese education system. In addition, participants studied online Chinese language modules to become familiar with the Pinyin system

and learn conversational Chinese sentences. After the completion of the pre-departure course, the participant group spent 4 weeks in China. During that time, participants attended Chinese cultural seminars as well as Chinese language classes, and completed field experiences in local elementary, middle, and high schools. They also visited a special education school and an alternative learning agency in China. While in China, participants were paired with local Chinese teachers based on grade level and subject area expertise. Discussions focused on the American and Chinese educational systems, curriculum and instructional technology resources, and assessments. In addition to observing Chinese teachers' classroom instruction, the group of American teachers also had the opportunity to plan and teach one science lesson to a group of Chinese students. Upon returning from the study abroad experience, participants worked on curriculum activity design in small groups, carried out lesson plans in their classes, and shared revised lesson plans and curriculum materials through websites, conference presentations, and local sharing.

Twelve inservice teachers participated in this program. Participants were recruited from among full-time teachers and specialists in K-12 schools in North Carolina. Applicants were required to submit an online application, a letter of recommendation from the school administrator, an updated resume, and a 500-600 personal statement describing their readiness, dispositions, personal goals for the program, and the ways they plan to integrate their learning into their own teaching and their work with other teachers. Based on the Fulbright-Hays GPA program criteria, eligible applicants must also be citizens, nationals, or permanent residents of the United States. Four faculty members, two from the United States and two from China, reviewed all applications and finalized the teacher participants for the program.

The majority of the teacher participants were female (N=10) and half of them worked in elementary school settings (N=6). Three teachers worked in middle schools and 3 worked in high schools. In addition to content area teachers, we also intentionally selected a special education teacher, an ESL teacher, and 3 speech language pathologists (SLPs) to participate in this program. Participants had a wide range of teaching experiences, ranging from one first-year SLP to a teacher with 38 years of teaching experience. The majority of the teacher participants reported having experiences traveling abroad, with two teachers who were born abroad and spent extensive time in their home countries. Teacher participants are recognized on the program website (<https://sites.google.com/a/uncg.edu/experiencing-china-2015-16/project-participants>).

### 3.2. Data collection and analysis

Prior to the implementation of this program, an Institutional Review Board (IRB) application was submitted detailing the study design, data collection, analysis, and reporting procedures. Upon approval of the university IRB board, an electronic consent form was distributed to all program participants. Participants were informed of the study and provided contact information should they have questions, concerns or want to withdraw from the study at a later time. All participants signed an electronic consent form to indicate their willingness to participate in this study.

Two research questions guided the data collection and analysis in this study: 1) How does the program impact teachers' intercultural competence? 2) How does the program impact teachers' beliefs? A convergent parallel mixed methods design was employed and both quantitative and qualitative data were collected (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). The pragmatism paradigm undergirds the selection of the research design, where multiple data collection methods

allowed researchers to use findings from one method (e.g. qualitative data) to corroborate and elaborate on findings using another method (e.g. quantitative data) (Arnault & Fetters, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Using the convergent parallel mixed methods design, both quantitative and qualitative data can be collected during the same phase of the research study in a concurrent manner. The interpretation of the findings is based on summaries and comparisons from both types of data.

Quantitative data were collected through a pre/post program survey and pre/post IDI instrument. While the program survey focused on program-specific learning opportunities, the IDI instrument was used to capture participants' intercultural competency growth from a developmental paradigm. The pre-program survey contains three major sections: a) demographics and back-ground (e.g. Please briefly describe your teaching context.); b) intercultural knowledge, attitudes and skills (e.g. How would you describe your knowledge about China?); and c) goals and expectations (e.g. What are your personal and professional goals through participating in this program?). The post-survey contained sections b and c from the pre-survey and included another section asking participants about their satisfaction of the program. The pre-survey was distributed at the beginning of the pre-departure course and the post-survey was collected immediately after participants returned from China. Instead of using the pre/post program survey as the major tool to assess participants' intercultural development, in this study, we adopted the developmental paradigm and used the IDI to describe participants' growth profile. The data collected from the program survey was used to substantiate the IDI results and situate the interpretation of the IDI results in specific program context.

The IDI instrument was used in a pre/post manner to measure participants' intercultural competency along the DMIS continuum. The instrument has three versions. IDI v1 includes 60 items, and IDI v2 and IDI v3 contains 50 items. The current version of IDI v3 was used in this study. This instrument was validated using a sample of 4763 individuals from 11 distinct, cross-cultural samples (Hammer, 2011). Confirmatory factor analysis established the seven-dimensional model as the model that best fits the data, and cross validation analysis further confirmed the solution. The reliability coefficients for the seven scales were reported  $\alpha=0.66$  (Denial);  $\alpha=0.72$  (Defense);  $\alpha=0.78$  (Reversal);  $\alpha=0.74$  (Minimization);  $\alpha=0.69$  (Acceptance); and  $\alpha=0.71$  for adaptation. The overall Developmental Orientation scale resulted in reliability of  $\alpha=0.83$  and the overall Perceived Orientation scale  $\alpha=0.82$ .

The IDI pre-survey was also distributed at the beginning of the pre-departure course. A group debriefing was scheduled to share the IDI background information and group profile. All teacher participants also received one-on-one individual debriefings. The post-IDI was collected four months after the teacher candidates returned to the United States. Similarly, a group debriefing was conducted and follow-up individual debriefings were completed. In addition, for both pre- and post-IDI, participants completed a short reflection exploring their individual debriefing experiences.

Qualitative data were collected from participants' pre and post PPTs, ongoing reflections, and their curriculum design projects. As part of the pre-departure course, participants were introduced to the concept of PPT and reflected on their teaching beliefs that guide their instruction. They completed a reflection articulating their PPTs and described how their PPTs guide their instructional practices. After their experiences in China, they revised their initial reflection on PPTs and detailed how their PPTs may have changed or developed. While in China, all participants kept ongoing re-reflections and had the opportunity to share their reflections with peers in small group or large group debriefing meetings. Finally, participants were grouped

together by grade level to work on curriculum activity design and shared their curriculum activities, lesson plans, and resources online.

Due to the small number of participants, nostatistical analysis was conducted to compare pre and post quantitative data. Instead, quantitative data were used to create participant profiles and imported to Atlas.ti ([www.atlasti.com/](http://www.atlasti.com/)), a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software, to be analyzed along with qualitative data in response to the research questions. Atlas.ti served as a data management and analysis tool to not only keep all data organized by case, but also made secondary data analysis and report writing more efficient. Data were first analyzed by individual participant vertically to examine individual developmental patterns. Then, horizontal analysis was conducted across individuals to summarize themes and patterns in response to the research questions (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) was used to identify, analyze and report themes and patterns that emerged from the qualitative data. Inductive coding was conducted to establish initial coding categories. Themes and patterns were established based on the exploration of the qualitative data in this study.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. Teachers' intercultural competence development

Both the pre/post program survey and IDI instrument were used to track teacher participants' intercultural competence development. The IDI instrument revealed the group and individual developmental patterns. The program survey identified areas of development specifically related to program activities.

Based on the IDI results, a majority of the teacher participants fall into the Minimization orientation in terms of their developmental orientation. One teacher participant scored at Acceptance level and four teacher participants scored at Polarization level prior to the program. Comparing teachers' pre and post IDI results, the group as a whole experienced growth in both the developmental orientation score (Pre=96.27; Post=104.89) and the perceived orientation score (Pre=122.03; Post=125.91). At the individual level, it was observed that while seven out of 12 teachers experienced gains (difference>5.0), two teachers experienced a minor decrease on their post-IDI score (difference<1.0) and three teachers experienced relatively large decreases on their post-IDI scores (difference>5.0). Those who experienced decreases on their post-IDI scores were placed at both ends of the continuum, either in Polarization or high Minimization and Acceptance (see Fig. 1).

In their pre and post IDI reflections, participants commented on their developmental stage and set goals for their own intercultural competence development. While those who experienced gains in IDI scores certainly attributed their growth to the experiences they had overseas, those who had decreases on their post-IDI scores also identified the impact the program. As one of the participants commented:

After spending a month in China, I feel as though I could live ANYWHERE in the world. You do not get more foreign from XXX County, NC than Shanghai, China. I was forced into situations I would never encounter at home, and came out of them relatively unscathed. I was able to communicate what I needed to, either independently, using verbalizations, gestures, pictures and other modalities, or with the use of a peer translator. (post IDI reflection).

Even though the majority of the participants still fall within the Minimization stage based on the post-IDI results, two teachers developed from Polarization to Minimization and one

teacher from Minimization to Acceptance. In their reflections, most teachers commented on their growth in intercultural communication in both English-speaking and Chinese-speaking contexts.

In addition to measuring general intercultural competence development, the pre/post program survey was administered to capture teachers' development of culture-specific knowledge, intercultural attitude, and intercultural skills. As demonstrated in Fig. 2, not surprisingly, prior to the program, participants rated themselves the highest in terms of their own intercultural attitude. This is also consistent with the IDI findings in terms of participants' perceived orientation in intercultural competence. Their self-report on their intercultural skills, especially in terms of awareness of verbal and non-verbal differences across cultural groups (M=2.50) and ability to negotiate cultural differences regardless of cultural differences (M=3.0) were relatively low. The lowest self-rated scale is their knowledge of Chinese history (M=1.75), culture (M=2.0), customs (M=1.67), language (M=1.08), and educational system (M=1.83).

One science teacher, for example, commented on her communication with a Chinese-speaking science teacher through the use of non-verbal means and with an interpreter:

My peer teacher and I had to communicate with an interpreter but we were actually able to carry on meaningful conversations using drawings and hand gestures in addition to turning to the interpreter. I noticed that some of the other conversations about education that were conducted completely in English did not touch on topics as deeply as we attempted to discuss even though we did not speak the same language. (reflection)

The post-survey reflected participants' learning through the Chinese language class, cultural seminars, school visits, discussion with Chinese students and teachers, and various formal and informal field experiences. The largest growth was observed in terms of their knowledge of Chinese culture, customs, and language. Participants also reported some growth in terms of their intercultural attitudes and intercultural skills. It was interesting to note that participants actually rated themselves lower on their ability to reflect based on different cultural perspectives in the post-survey.

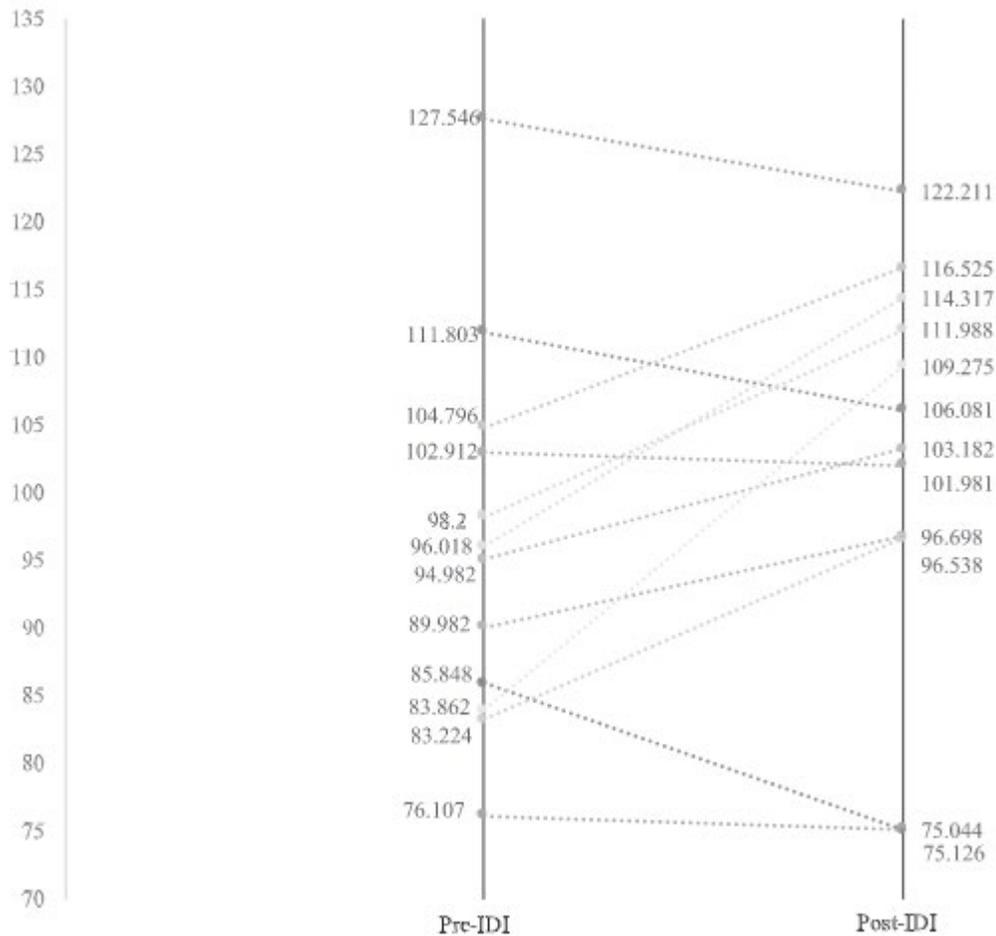


Fig. 1. Pre/post IDI results

#### 4.2. Program impact on teachers' beliefs

Participants' pre/post PPTs, their ongoing reflections, and the curriculum design activities they created revealed the impact of the study abroad experiences on their teaching beliefs and instructional practices. While none of the participants changed their beliefs and practices dramatically after their experiences in China, they highlighted affirmed beliefs, renewed insights, and implications to their teaching practices. Four major themes emerged including 1) working with English learners; 2) linguistically and culturally responsive practices; 3) teacher collaboration; and 4) global connections in curriculum activity design.

##### 4.2.1. Working with English learners

One of the most challenging experiences for teacher participants in this program was the learning of the Chinese language. None of the participants had a Chinese language background prior to joining the program. They took an online Chinese class immediately before the study abroad experience and had Chinese language classes and cultural seminars throughout the time while they were in China. This language learning experience further developed teacher empathy with language learners in their classrooms. One teacher, for example, reflected on the frustration

she experienced learning the Chinese language and connected that to English learners in her class:

After being a second language student myself for the past month, I have really seen how difficult it is to try and learn a new language and apply it to be successful. There were many times that I shut down during our Chinese language class because I was so frustrated with how I was performing and the pace of the class. My heart aches for my ESL learners in my classroom--are they going to speak up and let me know if I'm going too fast or if they don't understand because of the language barrier? Probably not. (post-PPT)

Similarly, another teacher shared her frustration with one particular Chinese language class session and how this negative experience impacted her attitude toward Chinese language learning in general at first: "After this experience [the negative experience with the Chinese class], I had a negative association with Chinese language class and that particular teacher. I didn't have a desire to go back to Chinese class." (reflection) The group debriefing and reflections assisted her in communicating such frustrations. She was able to "put my [her] feelings aside" and use various strategies to enhance her Chinese language learning experiences. In her post-PPT statement, she emphasized the importance of building rapport with language learners: "I can understand how my students may feel when they have to learn from a teacher they don't have a rapport with."

#### 4.2.2. Linguistically and culturally responsive practices

The development of empathy led teachers to comment on specific instructional strategies they appreciated and ideas they can use to create linguistically and culturally responsive classrooms in their schools. Several participants commented on the importance of differentiated instruction for learners learning at a different pace and with different goals. Specific instructional strategies such as the use of supplementary materials were highlighted as ways to support language learners. One teacher, for example, elaborated on the use of multi-sensory learning: Multi-sensory learning proved VERY important in our acquisition of Chinese. The Professors who taught using Pinyin, Chinese Characters, auditory models and conversational scripts kept their audience interested, awake, engaged, and we learned that content best. ... In working with ELLs [English language learners] I will remember how important many input methods are in helping students to acquire a second language. (post-PPT)

In addition, teachers recognized that "students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds bring funds of knowledge" to classrooms and it is important for teachers to integrate this knowledge when planning instruction (post-PPT). One science teacher commented on how she can integrate students' home language and cultural knowledge into science instruction:

Students of different cultural backgrounds should be given opportunities to share what they know about a given concept and add terms that are used in their home language to enrich the whole class' study of the subject. For example, there are beliefs about not drinking cold beverages and not allowing a pregnant person to get cold that would be interesting to incorporate into a unit about cell functions and body systems and assign groups of students to investigate the rationale for these assertions. How can temperature affect cellular processes? Word study is

always interesting and vocabulary building of science terms in different languages with an emphasis on discovering similarities in root words will most certainly deepen all students' thinking about the precise meaning of science terms and help with conceptual understanding. (reflection)

		Pre	Post
<b>Culture Knowledge</b>	Chinese History	1.75	2.75
	Chinese Culture	2.00	3.17
	Chinese Customs	1.67	3.00
	Chinese Language	1.08	2.50
	Chinese Education System	1.83	3.33
<b>Intercultural Attitude</b>	Curiosity of languages and cultures	4.67	4.67
	Reflection on cultural perspectives	4.67	4.27
	Benefit of intercultural interactions	4.92	4.92
	Preparedness to learn	4.67	4.58
	Willingness to take risks	4.08	4.33
	Importance of intercultural competence development	4.92	4.92
	Benefits of learning about other languages and cultures	4.75	4.58
<b>Intercultural Skills</b>	Awareness of one's own verbal and non-verbal behavior	3.73	4.17
	Awareness of verbal and non-verbal differences	2.50	3.83
	Adjusting verbal and non-verbal behaviors	3.83	4.17
	Confidence to interpret messages	3.00	3.83
	Comfortable negotiating ambiguity	3.42	3.92
	Comfortable working with interpreters	4.50	4.75
	Comfortable interacting with English-speaking people	4.92	5.00
	Comfortable interacting with people regardless of their English language skills	3.75	4.25
	Negotiate cultural differences-English	4.00	3.67
	Negotiate cultural differences-regardless of language differences	3.00	3.91

Fig. 2. Pre/post program survey results.

Teachers also commented on their increased awareness of cultural differences and the importance of understanding students' home cultural norms to better work with students and families from different cultural backgrounds. One teacher commented:

I am now more sensitive to the differences in cultures in ways that I was not aware. For example, I was unaware of the culture around students (not) asking questions in class. If I were to have an Asian student who is new to the US, I would speak to him or her privately about how our class is run each day and what the expectations are. I would also

communicate with the parents to help them understand how my classroom might be different from an Asian class. (reflection)

Even though teachers' comments tend to focus more on language learners and students from Asian, especially Chinese, backgrounds they acknowledged that these beliefs would guide their practice with diverse learners in general.

#### 4.2.3. Teacher collaboration

Teacher collaboration was the third major theme that emerged from teachers' reflections and their artifacts. This study abroad program was designed to highlight two levels of collaboration: within the U.S. teacher participant group and between U.S. teachers and Chinese teachers. The experience of co-planning and co-teaching a science lesson was highlighted as one of the most meaningful and impactful experiences for all teacher participants in this program. Regardless of their years of experience, elementary classroom teachers and content area teachers in middle and high schools all admitted that they seldom work in collaboration with specialists in their classes. As a classroom teacher commented: "From this experience I now more fully see the value of cooperating and planning with the different specialists in my school." (Participant 5, reflection). A science teacher participant admitted her lack of collaboration with her peers in the U.S. and commented on the impact of the co-teaching experience in China:

Upon completion of our demonstration lesson in Shanghai, I realized that I have fallen prey to the dictator principle in my classroom. For the past four years, I have decided exactly what happens in my class; I have created all of my students' notes, activities, labs, projects, and other assessments myself with little input from anyone other than my biology PLC [Professional Learning Communities]. This coming school year, I will strive to collaborate with teachers across other disciplines to design lessons that embed language, math, and computer skills into each unit. (reflection)

In addition to within group collaboration, teacher participants worked one-on-one with Chinese teachers in their respective grade level and content area to share instructional resources and curriculum materials. Participating teachers shared their perspectives on routines and schedules, differentiated instructional strategies, instructional technology resources, and assessments and testing. Due to the dissimilarities in the two educational systems, program participants noted many structural differences. For elementary school teachers, American teachers were responsible for the instruction of all content areas, while Chinese elementary school teachers were responsible for subject-area specific instruction. At the middle grades and high school level, the sequence of subject area instruction was slightly different. Through dialogues and exchanges, teacher participants identified topics of common interest and explored future collaboration opportunities. The elementary school teacher groups explored the use of appropriate instructional materials to teach cultural elements in both countries; the middle school science teachers discussed ways to engage students in the investigation of environmental issues such as pollution; and the high school teachers shared resources for career exploration in global settings. Because Chinese specialized education teachers were still exploring ways to implement inclusion models for students with special needs, the SLPs and special education teachers

participated in small group workshops with teachers from the special education school and explored future collaborative opportunities.

#### 4.2.4. Global connections in curriculum activity design

In addition to the within-group collaboration, participants were also paired with their Chinese teacher partners. This collaboration led to their expansion of global connections in curriculum design. Based on participants' curriculum design artifacts and reflections, it appeared that the integration of Chinese language and culture is much more plausible in elementary or middle school settings and with specialists compared to content area instruction in high schools. One ESL teacher, for example, viewed the integration of Chinese language as "rather seamless":

I already began teaching my students the basics of Chinese language before I left to go on this trip, and I will continue to make this more focused. I also plan to teach different aspects of the language and culture in units that I plan to create with my group members (and also mini-lessons that I wish to create myself). I hope to focus on comparing and contrasting different aspects of American and Chinese cultures and collaborate with my new Chinese colleagues about different holidays as well! (reflection)

Similarly, a middle school English teacher commented:

As a seventh grade teacher, my students should already have a grasp on Chinese ancient history from the sixth grade Social Studies curriculum. I plan on building off that prior knowledge by selecting texts that focus on Chinese ancient history and folktales. This will encompass geography, history, religion, and language. The beauty of Language Arts is Chinese culture can be implemented through informational texts, fiction, and poetry. In the third nine weeks, during our poetry unit, we will focus on the Chinese haiku form of poetry. (reflection)

However, for high school teachers in this study, the integration seems to be more challenging. The high school English teacher admitted that the Chinese language "would play no role in the curriculum for my courses", even though she would incorporate her experiences through class discussions with students (reflection).

## 5. Discussion and implications

The findings of this study offer insights for educators in terms of both the design and assessment of comprehensive study abroad programs for teachers. In this section, we highlight the key design and assessment considerations, especially in relationship to programs designated for inservice teachers.

First, regardless of language proficiency learning outcomes, integrating language learning experiences in the study abroad program provides practicing teachers a unique opportunity to develop empathy and instructional strategies for second language learners. In our program, even though we did not specify language proficiency as a goal, participants were required to take Chinese language classes. It is through this language learning experience that participants had the opportunity to reflect on their different learning preferences, pace, and reactions to various

teaching strategies. In addition to developing empathy for English learners, much like participants in Zhao et al. 's (2009) study, teacher participants were able to reflect on specific instructional strategies they can use in their work with English learners in U.S. classrooms. Teacher educators may want to consider integrating the language learning element in the design of the study abroad program even if the targeted participants are not foreign language teachers or ESL teachers (Trent, 2011, Wernicke, 2010, Zhao et al., 2009).

Second, intentional teacher collaboration both within the participant group and between participants and host country teachers was critical. Even though teacher collaboration is emphasized by most teacher education programs and in schools, the reality of teaching makes it challenging especially for classroom teachers to collaborate with specialists and for high school content area teachers to collaborate with one another across content areas. In this program, the intentional selection of teacher participants from different grade levels and content areas provided participants with the opportunity to co-plan, co-teach, and share their expertise within the group. In addition, teachers had the chance to collaborate with teachers in the host country. Different from preservice teachers who may have limited classroom experiences, inservice teachers bring a wide range of teaching experiences and expertise into study abroad programs. Working as a group in a foreign setting also offers inservice teachers great collaborative opportunities. When designing inservice teacher study abroad programs, teacher educators may want to design activities and tasks that promote meaningful collaborations both within the study abroad participant group and with host country teachers (Tomaš et al., 2008).

Third, international experience alone does not lead to multicultural and global readiness for teachers. As other researchers have emphasized, reflection is a critical component in study abroad programs (Merryfield, 2000, Stachowski and Sparks, 2007, Trilokekar and Kukar, 2011). Reflection is also an essential process as teachers process their experiences and develop their personalized pedagogical beliefs to guide their classroom practices (He and Levin, 2008, Levin and He, 2008, He et al., 2011, Levin et al., 2013, Richardson, 2003). In addition to more open-ended reflective journals, teacher participants may need to be guided in more intentional reflection on their teaching beliefs and intercultural experiences through pre-departure programs to set individual goals as they prepare for the intercultural experience and reflect on their experiences in different educational contexts (He et al., 2011). The use of pre and post PPTs allowed us to explore the change in teacher beliefs as a result of the program and to assist teachers to connect their experiences with their teaching practices in the home country. Intentional reflections serve as important program assessment tools as educators document the impact of student abroad programs on teachers' academic competence development (Anderson & Lawton, 2011).

Fourth, multiple measures are critical in assessing teacher development through study abroad (Anderson and Lawton, 2011, Hammer et al., 2003). To assess teachers' multicultural and global readiness, relying on one measure is not enough. Even though the IDI instrument used in this study is a well-established assessment tool (Hammer, 2011), the instrument focuses on intercultural competency development in general and does not measure teacher professional growth specifically. Similarly, qualitative measures such as pre and post PPTs and ongoing teacher reflections focus more on implications in teaching practices (He and Levin, 2008, Levin and He, 2008, He et al., 2011, Levin et al., 2013) and do not offer an overall view of participants' intercultural competency development. The use of mixed methods design and intentional selection of both quantitative and qualitative measures can enrich the assessment of such study abroad programs and provide a more comprehensive view of the impact of these programs.

Finally, educators need to explore ways to further internationalize K-12 curriculum activities. As a result of study abroad, teachers develop new ideas and innovative collaborations to internationalize the existing curriculum. Even though most teachers in this study integrated Chinese language and cultural elements into their instruction, it was noted that this integration is much more challenging in content areas, especially for high school teachers. Given the existing standards and pacing guide requirements, there is little room for most teachers to be innovative as they make global connections as a result of their study abroad experiences. While it is important to standardize the quality of curriculum activities students experience in K-12 settings, we believe it is equally important to create space where teacher innovations are encouraged.

## **6. Limitations and future research**

While this study offered insights for both teachers and teacher educators, there are several major limitations. First, the study only involved a small number of participants in one study-abroad program. The limited sample size and the explorative nature of the program restricted the generalizability of the findings reported in this study. Second, even though the exploration of teachers' development of PPTs and their curriculum design activities provided researchers with an opportunity to explore the impact of study abroad experience on teachers' development, classroom observation data on how this experience impacted teachers' classroom instructional practices and how their PPTs were enacted were not collected. Longitudinal study following these teachers, focusing not only on their articulations of their PPTs, but also the enactment of their PPTs would offer further insights on the impact of study abroad experiences on teachers' classroom instruction. Third, based on the current findings, we noted the impact of the study abroad experiences on teachers' development. However, the quantitative findings did not suggest significant growth of teachers' intercultural competence. Designing quasi-experimental studies in a longitudinal fashion would allow researchers to further articulate the impact of such experiences on teachers' intercultural competency growth and the effectiveness of such programs on classroom instruction. Future studies may also need to systematically consider the cost of such programs to explore the long-term cost-effectiveness of integrating such experiences in teacher education programs. Finally, findings from this study were only based on American teachers' short-term experiences in China. It would be interesting to conduct future studies to compare findings from study abroad programs in Western countries to explore the impact of cultural contexts and language differences may have on teachers' intercultural development and pedagogical beliefs.

## **7. Conclusion**

Preparing multicultural and global teachers who are ready to engage with students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds and to educate all their students to become globally competent is an important and challenging task. Study abroad programs offer a unique opportunity for teachers to develop intercultural competency and teaching beliefs through intercultural immersion experiences. However, the overseas experience itself is not sufficient in preparing teachers to take advantage of the cross-cultural learning opportunity.

Teacher educators interested in integrating study abroad programs in inservice teacher education or professional development programs need to design intentional and meaningful integration of cultural experiences, teaching opportunities, language learning, reflection, and

collaboration, study abroad programs to leverage inservice teachers' various backgrounds and experiences and promote innovative curriculum design to be implemented in K-12 settings. Accompanying the intentional design of the study abroad program, teacher educators also need to consider the assessment of both academic competency (i.e. teachers' pedagogical beliefs and practices) and cultural competency (i.e. teachers' intercultural competency development) to monitor the personal and professional growth as a result of such programs.

Further collaboration between university teacher education program and school districts on the design and assessment of such programs targeting inservice teachers would expand these opportunities for teachers from different disciplines and open up new space for the discussion toward a globally competent pedagogy (West, 2012).

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