PROMOTING ATTITUDES OF OPENNESS: Intercultural Communicative Competence in a Brazilian-American University Exchange

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Abstract: This study analyzes the intercultural communication of 19 Brazilian students with 18 American students during face-to-face and Facebook interactions over a six-week cultural exchange. Following primarily Byram's (1997) model of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), the study seeks to understand the attitudes of openness in each group by analyzing the students' reactions and by interviewing ten participants: five American and five Brazilian students. Results point to the importance of providing a combination of in-class and outside class opportunities for cultural exchanges and also to an agreement among most participants that a deep intercultural understanding is a slow and complex process.
Key words: intercultural communicative competence, culture, attitudes of openness

Resumo: Este estudo analisa a comunicação intercultural entre 18 estudantes americanos e 19 estudantes brasileiros em interações em pessoa e por meio do Facebook durante um intercâmbio cultural de seis semanas. Seguindo o modelo de Competência Comunicativa Intercultural de Byram (1997), o presente estudo almeja compreender as atitudes de aceitação de cada grupo através de uma análise das reações dos estudantes e de uma entrevista com dez participantes: cinco estudantes americanos e cinco estudantes brasileiros. Os resultados apontam para a importância de se oferecer uma combinação de oportunidades de intercâmbio cultural em sala de aula e também fora do ambiente escolar. Os participantes desse estudo demonstram que um entendimento cultural mais aprofundado é um processo lento e complexo.
Palavras-chaves: competência comunicativa intercultural, cultura, atitudes de abertura

1. Introduction

As globalization, migration and multi-citizenship flourish in the 21st century, the discussion of how to prepare students for cross-cultural and intercultural competences, not only in the workplace, but also in their homes and schools,

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is at the forefront of educational research (Kramsch, 2011). Disciplines including counseling psychology, the pedagogy of literature and ethnography have all enriched the discussion of interculturality. The concept of interculturality, however, was developed mainly from the tradition of world language education (Alfred, Byram, & Fleming, 2006). The use of the term intercultural reflects the view that students need to gain insight both into their own and the target culture and be aware of the meeting of cultures that often takes place in communications in the additional language (Byram & Morgan, 1994; Kramsch, 1993). Ideally, language learners should become intercultural speakers or mediators who are able to engage with complex and multiple identities (Byram, Gribkova, & Starkey, 2002).

The assumption that contact between cultures automatically leads to intercultural competence and to the development of positive attitudes towards the target culture has already been rejected by many authors (Allport, 1979; Coleman, 1998; Fischer, 1998). While several studies have shown that language use in intercultural communicative settings becomes collaborative and interactive (Cassel & Tversky, 2005), other studies have found that discussions do not become collective or compatible simply because participants were put in touch in the classroom or in an online environment (Pawan, Paulus, Yalcin, & Chang, 2003). Many contextual factors, such as attitudes in social exchanges and interaction patterns play important roles in the process and remain to be examined to give insight into the complexity involved.

This paper reports on an intercultural exchange which took part between 19 Brazilian students enrolled in an American Cultural class and 18 American students enrolled in a beginning Portuguese class for Spanish speakers. The exchange took place over the course of a six-week summer session at the University of California, Santa Barbara in 2015. Since this was a summer course, both classes met for an extensive amount of time: 2 hours and 50 minutes per day from Monday to Friday. These types of courses are intensive and have a packed curriculum. In particular, this research proposes to gain insight into how a short-term face-to-face exchange can affect learners' attitudes towards both the home and target cultures.

2. Review of Literature
Intercultural Communicative Competence – ICC
At the heart of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) is the preparation of individuals to interact appropriately with those from other cultural backgrounds (Sinicrope, Norris, & Watanabe, 2007). Consequently, understanding culture becomes an integral component of intercultural competence. Agar (2006) compares culture to "a rich point" that is "not just characteristic of those particular persons in that situation" but "patterns across certain kinds of persons and/or certain kinds of situations" (p. 6). In

this sense, culture is relational in that there is no culture of X, only a culture of X for Y (Agar, 2006). Agar states that how much and what needs to go into that cultural description depends on which X and which Y defines the boundary. Kramsch (1993) calls this a third space "a place which grows in the interstices between the cultures the learner grew up with and the new cultures he or she is being introduced to" (p. 236). This description highlights two important aspects of intercultural learning: it underlines the learner's newly achieved distance from both the home and target cultures, as well as the multiplicity of cultural identities, which belong to all of us.

An additional complicated dimension of intercultural competence relates to the goal of educators preparing individuals for communicating in intercultural relationships. One goal of education is that students develop cultural awareness, which involves uncovering and understanding one's own culturally conditioned behavior and thinking, as well as the patterns of others. Thus, the process comprises of not only perceiving the similarities and differences in other cultures but also recognizing the givens of the native culture or our own hidden culture (Hall, 1959). It includes the rejection of the fallacy of "one nation = one culture" (O'Dowd, 2003, p. 120).

Byram (1997) describes someone who gains these skills of intercultural communicative competence (ICC) as an individual who is successful in: building relationships while speaking the language of the other participant; negotiating how to effectively communicate so that both individuals' communicative needs are addressed; mediating conversations between those of diverse cultural backgrounds; and continuing to acquire communicative skills in languages not yet studied. Thus, gaining intercultural communicative competence is about more than simple exchanges, but rather in building relationships and engaging in communication even when the participants involved do not share the same worldview (Byram, 1997). In order to do this, teachers must lead students through activities that allow learners to acquire competencies in attitudes, knowledge, critical awareness, and skills related to ICC.

Byram's ICC model has been put into use extensively in the world language classroom (Byram, 1999; Duffy & Mayes, 2001; Müller-Hartmann, 1999; O'Dowd, 2003; Chun & Wade, 2004) as it facilitates the teacher and researcher's task of operationalizing ICC (Wallace, 1998). For instance, in the language classroom instructors might use the ICC model to help students to become more aware of national symbols and how their significance varies within the nation and among different people and/or parts of the country, and also in comparison to other countries.

Byram's model (1997) contains the following elements:

- "Attitudes: Curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own" (p. 50). [SFP]

- "Knowledge: of social groups and their products and practices in one's own and in one's interlocutor's country, and of the general processes of societal and individual interaction" (p. 58).
- "Skills of interpreting and relating: ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents from one's own" (p. 61). ⌞SEP⌝
- "Skills of discovery and interaction: ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real-time communication and interaction" (p. 61). ⌞SEP⌝
- "Critical cultural awareness/political education: an ability to evaluate, critically and on the basis of explicit criteria, perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and countries" (p. 63).

The process of becoming interculturally competent varies in types of self-awareness and can be described as a person's worldview shifting from avoiding cultural difference to seeking cultural difference (Bennett, 2004). Anxiety about interacting in intercultural situations must be managed to effectively communicate with those from other cultures (Gudykunst, 1998). Byram's (1997) Intercultural Communicative Competence model finds the first factor an individual must address is attitude. Byram uses such words as openness and curiosity to explain his conviction that an individual must remain open to learning about new beliefs, values, and worldviews in order to participate in relationships of equality. In this way, following Byram's ICC model, this study analyzed the attitudes of openness in a cultural exchange. Specifically, the research addressed the following questions:

1. What characteristics of the exchange led to self-reflection, attitudes of openness and curiosity about the other culture?
2. Did the students express a separation of individuals from the masses in constructing cultural knowledge, avoiding generalizations and stereotypes?

The questions above also reflect the hypothesis from the authors of this study that since the cohorts of students were submitted to the ICC model, self-reflection and the separation of individuals from masses would be present in the results to some extent.

Furthermore, the understanding of the term 'attitudes of openness' for the scope of this study refers to the degree of which attitudes held by people may lead them to certain behaviors. Research in phycology has shown a connection between attitudes and the prediction of behavior. There are also several elements that influence one's attitude in relation to behavior, such as motivation, direct behavioral experiences, access to information (one sided

and/or new two-sided information), and the amount of thought dedicated to an issue (Glasman & Albarracín, 2006).

Finally, the constraint of 'stereotypes' is seen in this study under the definitions from social science, in which stereotypes are made based on social groups (ethnic minorities, for example) or can result from internal motivations. In other words, stereotypes are an oversimplification of a particular person based on her/his race, gender orientation, gender identification, demographic groups, and situations (Bordalo, Coffman, Gennaioli, and Shleifer, 2016). It is also the case that stereotypes may underline prejudices about a certain group of people based on flawed generalizations.

3. Methods
Research Site and Participants
The exchange took place over the course of a six-week summer session at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). Students met face-to-face inside and outside of class time; they also posted comments on a private Facebook group for the class. The students' level of proficiency in their respective additional languages varied greatly.

The participants were 19 Brazilian university students learning English as a second language enrolled in an exchange program in the U.S. and 18 American university students learning Portuguese as an additional language in the U.S. All participants were attending the University of California, Santa Barbara. The Brazilian students were completing a pre-university TOEFL course aiming to obtain the required level of English proficiency before the beginning of the academic year. They came from multiple areas of Brazil and received a government scholarship to study a year abroad. Most of them had been studying English for several years and were intermediate and advanced level students who had arrived in the U.S a few days before the course started.

The American students were enrolled in an elementary Portuguese course for Spanish speakers; 14 were heritage Spanish speakers and four spoke Spanish as an additional language (two of them were raised in monolingual English-speaking households and the other two were of Asian descent). All American students were pursuing a Bachelor of Arts degree in which Portuguese fulfilled the language prerequisites. They had no previous knowledge of Portuguese.

The researchers were the classroom instructor of Brazilian Portuguese native to Brazil and a doctoral candidate native to the United States with an extensive experience in Spanish-speaking cultures and Latin America. The doctoral candidate was introduced towards the beginning of the class as a fellow teacher who would be learning Portuguese along with the other American students and facilitating social activities with the Brazilian students. Both cohorts of students were aware that a research about their cultural

exchange was being conducted. In addition, this research received Human Subjects approval from the University of California, Santa Barbara.

Project Tasks

Taking into account Byram's (1997) model of intercultural communicative competence, the researchers established a series of tasks intended to foster community and interaction between the students. In-class interactions were adapted from the M.I.T. intercultural project *Cultura* (Furstenberg, Levet, English, & Maillet, 2001), while out of class assignments were arranged around free social activities and establishing informal relationships. Facebook was used as a medium to recap and revisit what was discussed during the in-class interactions.

Table 1
Overview of Tasks

Task	Title	Description	Aim
1	Google Forms	Students post to Google Forms their initial cultural knowledge of the U.S. or Brazil, following the M.I.T. *Cultura* project	Students become aware of their preconceived stereotypes.
2	In-class introduction	Students meet face-to-face and practice their Portuguese and English	Students get to know their partners and become comfortable speaking the target language.
3	Face-to-face meetings	Students compare ideas, complete word associations and discuss cultural differences.	Students self-reflect on aspects of their own culture and language, and explain them to their partners.
4	Out of class social activities	Students arrange to meet out of class time to socialize in an informal environment.	Students create community and bonds of trust.
5	Facebook posts	Students compare and reflect on in-class and out of class discussions. Students organize out of class meetups and share pictures.	Allow for a place of reflection, community building and share ideas. Give students the opportunity to become Facebook friends.

The different tasks, as outlined above, reflected aspects of Byram's (1997) model. The tasks involved interacting with members of the target culture to acquire language and to become aware of the different interpretations of their own cultural practices, while explaining them to students from another culture. In task 3, students worked in groups of 3 or 4 and explained their cultural views to the other students regarding current issues, such as the environment and immigration. In task 4, American students introduced Brazilian students to different cultural aspects in the community and informally talked about personal matters and the Brazilian students' adjustment to the U.S. In task 5, students reflected on these exchanges and shared them among themselves as a private group in an online platform, Facebook.

Research Design

To assess the exchange, this study identifies the learning outcomes of attitudes and openness (Byram 1997), while also taking into account the learning process and progress. A variety of ethnographic techniques were used in this research (Agar, 1980; Nunan, 1992; Spradley, 1979; Walford, 2008) aiming to identify the learners' personal process to obtain and express attitudes of openness, rather than considering the exchange's level of success from the teacher and researchers' view point (Erickson, 1986).

Participants Observation

The teacher created activities and led the class while the doctoral student was able to observe and facilitate organically the building of trust and community. In this way, some of the traditional biased interpretations of the data, which come from a solitary teacher/researcher (Davis, 1995), were minimized and results were triangulated, facilitated by the cooperation of the researchers originating from the two cultures. In addition to this, member checks (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), a reflexive journal, and conversation between the researchers were employed.

Facebook Data

The Brazilian and American students were asked to participate weekly in a private Facebook (FB) group in which they reflected upon what they had learned in-class. This FB group was created and mediated by the class instructor. Postings consisted of a question to contemplate from the previous in-class discussions and voluntary posts from students. Participants also used the site to share music, organize social events and post pictures.

Questionnaires

All students were asked to fill out a Google survey and questionnaire at the beginning of the exchange. This questionnaire established preconceived

notions of the cultures following the M.I.T. *Cultura* model of word-association, sentence completion, and reaction to a situation. This model was created in 1997 as an intercultural project and it provides a framework to operationalize the cultural exchange between two groups of students from different cultures and languages. The model was originally created for online interactions, synchronous and/or asynchronous (https://cultura.mit.edu/).

Interviews

Since the doctoral student had already established peer rapport with the participants, she conducted interviews about the students' experiences at the end of the exchange (Murphy, 1980). The interviews were semi-structured and with open-ended questions. The questions were descriptive in nature, to help discover information about the participant's domain and what that information means to the interviewee (Spradley, 1979). These interviews were recorded and later transcribed for content. All interviews were reviewed by the course teacher as well and used multiple informants, five Brazilian students and five American students, in order to overcome potential reliability and validity issues (Creswell, 1998). The interviewees were selected based on their availability.

Throughout the exchange, the researchers let themes and social contact emerge organically from the material, meetups and discussions. The data was triangulated with the Facebook reflections, recording of discussion groups and participant observation, as it provides a deeper understanding of the subjects in question (Müller-Hartmann, 2001).

4. Results

Students Self-Reflection and Attitudes of Openness
Research Question 1: What characteristics of the exchange led to self-reflection, attitudes of openness and curiosity about the other cultures?

The combination of in-class and outside-class activities was an important factor in the exchange. During the in-class interactions in Portuguese, students followed semi-controlled activities with a question-guide based on the textbook content for both classes (Beginning Portuguese and American Culture class). Since the content of the Portuguese activities focused on topics of daily routine, food, and family, students talked in some length about their life styles. These topics, common in language textbooks, helped students to know each other and to create a curiosity about their cultural practices. Nonetheless, given the limited Portuguese fluency of the American students and the nature of some of the in-class activities (focusing on language production), students did not seem to engage in self-reflection or in a deep cultural understanding when speaking in Portuguese. In the recordings of some of the in-class interactions, there is not much material for reflection since a good part of the communication focused on the topics at hand only

(e.g. *Como é a sua casa?* [What is your house like?]/ *Onde você mora?* [Where do you live?]) and in linguistic aspects, such as vocabulary and verbs conjugation. While the in-class activities did not take a step further in exploring in depth the students' cultural richness and diversity, the activities did have a positive impact in terms of laying a foundation of trust and approachability due to the perceived friendliness and body language of the students. The in-class interactions also reflected the positive attitude from students towards each other.

The Brazilians were so friendly. I remember the first day of class Marcus just got up and talked to me. I'm not used to that. In Latin culture it is more like that, but not in U.S. culture. It is more independent and I don't know, you don't talk to people that much. (Pedro, American student, interview)

I think we are a little more close now. If I call up Mira or Vania we will hang out… we have to show them that we are receptive people. Because some people think that we don't want to be friends. We have to show this to them. (Sérgio, Brazilian student, interview)

If the in-class interactions were less effective in evoking self-reflection and a deeper cultural exchange as registered in the voice recordings of students talking to each other, the outside class interactions were more effective in that regard. Students repeatedly mentioned that during the outside interactions they felt free to expand their conversations, without the restrictions of a questionnaire. In fact, most of the self-reflection comments came from these outside-class interactions, which allowed for informal communication and an unlayering of culture. An American student, Carmina, articulated how her interaction with the Brazilian students had an impact on their views of Americans: "maybe they were surprised by my Latin side. When I said goodbye, I gave them a hug and they were shocked like oh we are not used to Americans being so open with this kind of stuff. That's my Hispanic side. They [Brazilians in the U.S.] are used to firm handshakes instead of hugs" (American Student, interview). Students spent a considerable amount of time together outside class, on an average of meetings that lasted a couple of hours each time. During these meetings, comparisons between the U.S. and Brazil were part of the conversation. This experience highlights the importance of providing students with opportunities for interactions with speakers of other cultures on their own leisure time. It was also during their outside class activities that students had an opportunity to contrast and compare each other's behavior in public spaces, in an attempt to understand points of commonality and differences in their cultural practices. The comment below from an American student reflects this attempt:

We are from different cultures. So everything that I find strange is normal to them. I found it interesting when Felipe was grabbing stuff at Starbucks. Usually when you grab stuff you are going to buy it. He was grabbing it like he was intrigued. You know, what is it? He kept grabbing it like there is no tomorrow. And the bartender was looking at him like, are you going to buy that? It is not something you see every day. In Brazil maybe after you touch everything you buy it. (Pedro, American student, interview)

The American student in the comment above tries to understand what he considers a "strange" behavior as a common cultural practice of the Brazilian student. Although there is arguably not a definite answer in this particular case, the American student displays an attitude of openness and a genuine effort in understanding his colleague from Brazil. His self-reflection is also an indication that he recognizes his limited understanding of Brazilian culture while trying to draw his conclusions.

Attitudes of Openness and Students Constructing Cultural Knowledge
Research Question 2: Did the students express a separation of individuals from the masses in constructing cultural knowledge, avoiding generalizations and stereotypes?
During the out of class activities, students broke some stereotypes about each other's cultures and seemed to make a separation of individual identities and generalizations to some extent. The perceptions of 'the other' shaped by the mass media is put into check during the interpersonal interactions. For instance, American students realized that being "Brazilian" comes with a variety of meanings. Many American students mentioned during the interviews that their limited understanding of Brazil was opening up because of this exchange, something they would not experience if relying only on the textbook material and its cultural notes. An example was given by the Brazilian student Sérgio, in his description of the difference in tuition between Brazil and the U.S. He explained that he is in favor of "Bolsa Família," a Brazilian welfare program, while some of his other Brazilian classmates are not: "among the Brazilians, with Danilo and Jussara, they have different points of views; they are not all the same" (Brazilian student, interview).

In addition, some Brazilian students had a preconceived idea of Americans, based on the media, films, and their limited understanding of the United States while living in Brazil. When Sérgio was asked, at the end of the exchange, if his preconceived notions or stereotypes about Americans had changed, he said "I don't find California very different from Brazil. I thought Americans were more cold. I had a stereotype, but not in California" (interview). Another Brazilian student, Bruno, stated, "California is like Brazil speaking English" (interview). Most of the Brazilians in this group have never left Brazil before and the majority did not have an American

friend/colleague. The stereotype that Brazilian students had of a "cold American" was dissembled by the receptiveness of the American students. California and Santa Barbara were described by many of the Brazilian students as a resembled piece of Brazil, where people spoke English instead of Portuguese and the urban space was more organized.

During the interviews, it was particularly difficult to get a sense of what an "American is." Students on both sides were reluctant in describing a "typical" American. The same was true when asking for a description of a "typical Brazilian." In questions as "Do you believe you are a standard Brazilian?/ American?," students would in general refute the idea of a "standard" national or describe that there is not such a person as a "normal" Brazilian/ and or American.

I wouldn't say yes, that I consider myself a standard American because there are so many different kinds of cultures here. There is no real one standard to live by. There is not a norm. The Brazilians seemed to understand that I came from a different background." (Carmina, American student, interview)

They would also refer to the diversity of peoples in their countries and to their own heritages: "I wouldn't be your typical American. Like I said, I am both Latin and American. I have both personalities" (Pedro, American student, interview). In most cases, the American students were first-generation of Spanish speaking immigrants from various parts of South and Central America. In the other group, the Brazilian students came from several parts of Brazil and their heritage constituted, in general, the third and fourth generation of European immigrants mixed with native and Afro-Brazilians. The American students in particular, did not represent a "traditional university class" since all of them spoke Spanish, which was a requirement to take the Portuguese class (Portuguese for Spanish Speakers) and many grew up in a Spanish-speaking household. The Hispanic heritage background of students added to the interactions, as they also identified themselves as Latinx and saw in the Brazilians, at times, a reflection of their own heritage.

When I was in my hometown I didn't really think about it as there were so many Mexican-Americans around me. But when I came here, I really felt the difference. That's why I was so interested in the Brazilians. I saw some similarities and it made me want to learn more. (Pedro, American student, interview)

Given the family background of the students described above, it was not a surprise to learn during the interviews that most of them had attitudes of openness towards each other's cultures. The students were not judgmental and were open to hear each other's points of view, even when not agreeing with everything. "I think Brazil is different from the U.S. In Brazil people are

more helpful. Sérgio thought it is kind of rude when people don't take the time to help. I understand as the Brazilians here have been so friendly" (Mira, American student, interview). In fact, many of the disagreements happened among students from the same country. For instance, when talking about political views on the role of welfare, Brazilian students had different opinions, depending on their social-economical background.

The interviews also showed a lack of insight from students on key aspects of each other's countries. After all, students had been interacting for less than two months and lacked a deep understanding of the other students' countries, being it the history, politics, or socioeconomics. Throughout the interactions, students would ask basic questions about how the Brazilian Government was organized, for example, and vice-versa. In other instances, some of the U.S. students were surprised by the diversity of accents from Brazil too. Brazilian students often mentioned that they needed to travel more, visit other parts of the United States and interact with Americans in other social realities. "I just know this state, probably if I go to another state it will be different" (Sérgio, Brazilian student, interview). They recognized that the university and area where they were living was not representative of the United States as a whole. Similarly, the American students mentioned that having never travelled to Brazil limited their cultural understanding of the country: "I probably have a more accurate understanding now [of Brazilians], but probably not the best" (Mira, American student, interview). It was during the moments of silence in the interviews or in the "I don't know" statements that it was made clear that more time and exposure to the each other's culture was required in order to provide thoughtful responses to some of the questions.

It became clear from the in-class interactions and the Facebook posts that students were obtaining information, constructing cultural assumptions and having those assumptions confirmed or denied. In this way, the students constructed a new perspective towards the other culture. When asked in a Facebook post to reflect on the in-class cultural discussions of that week, one of the American students posted:

Brazilians don't pay for University and have a good public health care system. You know, basic things a developed country should have (Robert, American student, July 20 FB posting)

The public health care is not too good Robert, some people die waiting for surgeries and other treatments. But it works in the most of the simples cases. But still better for the population than pay for everything. (Sara, Brazilian student, July 20 FB posting)

Robert, the most of Brazilian pay for study in a University, is really difficult you be a student in a public university, you need study a lot to apply for the test. (Samir, Brazilian student, July 21 FB posting)

Good clarifications! Yes I know the public health system is not that great and that public university is competitive, but it is at least something. That's why I do find those things impressive about Brazil. Although they might not be ideal, at least they exist. (Robert, American student, July 21 FB posting)

During the course of six weeks, both groups came to the conclusion that they had more similarities than differences. Nonetheless, students recognized that a six-week program is not nearly enough time to have a deep understanding of each other's cultures. They described cultural understanding as a complex and slow acquiring process. Most of the American students expressed the desire to visit Brazil and their perception that although their experience with the Brazilian students was rewarding, a deep cultural understanding would only happen after spending some time in Brazil. Similarly, the Brazilian students, who had been in the U.S. for only two months, also believed that more time in the United States would be necessary in order for them to start drawing deeper conclusions. The interviews showed that students were careful when formulating statements about each other's countries. For instance, when asked about U.S. students, some of the Brazilian students would mention that there is more diversity in the U.S. than they expected and that they were surprised by how many of the students taking Portuguese in the U.S. were heritage speakers of Spanish, so it was difficult for them to point out how a U.S. person would look like or which heritage languages they might know. In fact, students avoided making generalizations, and most of them recognized that becoming acquainted to other culture(s) is a long process and they just knew pieces of it, but not the whole picture.

5. Conclusion

Both groups in this research, Brazilians enrolled in an American culture class and Americans enrolled in a Portuguese class for Spanish speakers, showed attitudes of openness towards each other. Throughout the research interviews and pedagogical activities, the qualitative data shows that most students engaged in self-reflection and cultivated an attitude of openness and curiosity about the target cultures. Some of the self-reflections indicate that the initial in-class interactions were important to connect students; however, it was during the extra-curricular activities, outside class, that students learned more about several aspects of the target cultures, as they spoke more freely about their life experiences, without following the prompts from their language textbooks. It was also through observation of body language and interactions in public spaces, that students started analyzing each other's behavior and tried to draw conclusions about their colleagues.

The interviews with students highlighted moments in which the participants negotiated their pre-conceived notions of the target culture, thus breaking down stereotypes. Some of the Brazilian students were pleased and surprised with the friendliness of the American students. The Brazilian students also compared California and the city of Santa Barbara with a more organized version of Brazil, but they recognized their shortcomings as they have not visited other parts of the United States and have only spent 2 months in the U.S. by the time this research was concluded. On the other side, American students recognized that their experience with Brazilians was limited to their class interactions with the instructor and the cultural exchange at University of California, Santa Barbara. They agreed that travelling and visiting Brazil in person would be an important step in having a better understanding of Brazilian culture(s). In addition, the fact that most U.S. students in this study come from families of immigrants, specifically Latinx families, has also contributed to the bonding with Brazilian students, as most of them identified with the Latinx community as well.

In spite of the positive results of this study, it was clear to students and researchers that the six-week cultural exchange was not enough time to develop a deep cultural understanding of the target cultures. This was evident in the lack of elaborated reflections during some of the questions in the interviews and was recognized by most students, who repeatedly pointed out the need of more exposure to each other's cultures. A longitudinal study would be needed in order to demonstrate the impact of cultural exchange programs when dealing with pre-conceived notions of the target cultures and also with the perceptions and attitudes of participants toward those cultures.

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Appendix 1

Google Form

INTERCULTURAL EXCHANGE – USA-BRAZIL - Intercâmbio Cultural- EUA-BRASIL
FEEL FREE TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IN ENGLISH OR PORTUGUESE! You can switch languages if you prefer.
WORD ASSOCIATION - Please write three or four words (or phrases) that you associate with the following words:

Sinta-se à vontade em responder ao questionário em inglês ou português! Você pode utilizar as duas línguas se preferir.
ASSOCIAÇÃO DE PALAVRAS - Escreva três ou quatro palavras (ou frases) que você associa com as seguintes palavras:

First write your Last and First Name for Participation Points.

Escreva o seu Nome e Sobrenome para Pontos de Participação.

Brazil:
United States:
Rio de Janeiro:
Los Angeles:
Volunteer work:
Spending time in public places:

Please finish the following sentences.
Brazilian culture is very diverse because...
American culture is very diverse because...
One aspect of Brazilian culture that I like is...
One aspect of American culture that I like is...

My favorite leisure activity is ...
The most important thing in my life is...
If I had to do four hours of volunteer work once a week, I would...
If I could be born again in any country, I would choose...
If I am in a park and someone throws a plastic bottle on the ground, I ...
If someone cuts in line in front of me, I would...
If a homeless person asks me for money on the street, I would...

Appendix 2

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS:

1. Did you meet up with students outside class? Where and how many times? What was it like? Was it difficult to arrange a meeting time? Who contacted who? Did you feel uncomfortable asking the Brazilians/Americans to do something outside of class? Did you have any time constraints? Did you become Facebook friends or other social media friends with the person?

2. Did you attend all the Wednesday classes with the other class? What was your experience like speaking in Portuguese with the Brazilians? In English? Were the topics interesting? Did you have any differences in opinion or difficulties communicating?

3. Did you participate actively on the Facebook group? What did you do? Did you ever post anything? Why or why not?

4. From the interactions before mentioned, in which one did you feel more comfortable and why? In the outside class interactions, class interactions, or Facebook entries?

5. Did you tend to interact with the same people or different people?

6. Is there a reason you participated more in some activities than in others?

7. If you compare your cultural awareness about Brazil/US before this 6 week-interaction period to now, how would you grade your progress? (example, significant, reasonable, not very significant). And why? How comfortable do you feel when interacting with Brazilians/Americans from this group, compared to week 1? Any point at which you became more interested or comfortable with your peers?

8. Were you able to negotiate meaning (example clarify words, slangs, etc.) in your interactions in either Portuguese or English? Can you think of one example?

9. What was the most challenging linguistic aspect of your interactions in the second language?

10. Did you have moments when you were surprised about some cultural aspect of Brazil or the US? Can you think of an example?

11. After these 6 weeks of interactions, were you left with questions about cultural aspects of Brazil/US?

12. In your interactions, did you feel the need to think about aspects of your own culture? Can you think of an example?

13. Do you believe that you have an accurate understanding Brazilian/American culture? Why? Is there anything that you think is just a stereotype? Were there any notable differences between the Brazilians you talked to? Do you think Brazil is a lot different than the U.S.? Why?

14. Were there any times that you found the Brazilians to be acting very different or strange to you? Can you think of an example? Did it bother you?

15. How do you compare learning about culture from the cultural notes in the textbook with the cultural comments from the native speakers?

16. If you had to describe culture, how would you describe it? How would you describe your own culture? Do you consider it standard American/Brazilian culture? Why or why not? Did this exchange cause you to think more about your own culture and identity?

17. Do you feel that you are shaping a new identity when speaking in English/Portuguese? How does it differ from your identity in English/Spanish/Portuguese?

18. Do you have any suggestions about how to improve this intercultural exchange? What else would you have liked to learn?