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Plurilingual-pluricultural competence and study abroad program features: History and evaluation of two programs

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Abstract

Scholarship remains divided about which study abroad (SA) program features provide optimal affordances for linguistic and intercultural learning outcomes. This article presents a multiple case study of two, 10 week-long Spanish language-focused SA programs based on inductive, qualitative analysis of interviews with program leaders and students (N=14), field notes, and secondary sources about the programs. In line with previous research, one of the strongest affordances of these programs for plurilingual-pluricultural competence (PPC) development related to the opportunities they created for students to participate in extended engagement and socialization with the local community–through homestays and language exchanges. Coursework that stakeholders described as fostering language skills, encouraging critical reflection on intercultural experiences, and foregrounding experiential learning also served as program strengths. Program leaders' discourse about the future of these programs demonstrated a disconnect between institutional movements toward shorter "island" programs, deriving from neoliberal and monolingual ideologies, and researcher-practitioner knowledge about practices that support PPC growth.

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1. Introduction

Study abroad (SA), defined as "a temporary sojourn of pre-defined duration, undertaken for educational purposes" (Kinginger, 2008, p. 11) is often described as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. Many students, higher education administrators, and other stakeholders depict SA as an unparalleled occasion for travel, personal growth, and language learning (Mas-Alcolea & Torres-Purroy, 2022; Taguchi, 2015). Popular culture romanticizes the intercultural exchanges and novel experiences that students may access through SA (Coleman, 2013). Despite the pervasiveness of discourse extolling the benefits of SA, the degree to which it actually makes a difference in students' language and intercultural learning has been contested (Borràs & Llanes, 2021; Merino & Avello, 2014).

SA has also changed considerably in recent history. The beginnings of SA lay in the seventeenth century British concept of the "Grand Tour," in which privileged, white young adults voyaged throughout Europe as part of their coming-of-age cultural education (Dietrich, 2018). The Grand Tour evolved into the "Junior Year Abroad" in U.S. higher education, which largely focused on language and culture-focused coursework. From approximately the 1990s to the present, SA programs have become increasingly shorter in duration and less focused on language and culture (Kinginger, 2019); instead, SA programs are more likely to target outcomes such as community engagement, structured reflection, and mentoring, for example. The recent COVID-19 pandemic produced a profound impact, canceling many programs, moving much of SA instruction online, and causing financial crises for many SA offices (Blake & Morris, 2023). Occurring around the same time, the Black Lives Matter movement led stakeholders to strive towards increasing justice and inclusion in SA (Quan et al., 2023). In 2024, at the time of writing, SA programs are typically shorter, more likely to be online or have hybrid components, more catered toward professionalization (e.g., internships), and serve a wider range of students than a decade ago (Zhuang & Kinginger, 2024). Given these recent

changes, more research is needed to shed light on whether the features of current programs are supporting language and intercultural learning outcomes for the students they serve. Considering the evolution of long-standing programs can offer a useful approach to understand how changes to program features have impacted program outcomes.

Contributing to this research gap, the present study investigates two SA programs from the same home university that each lasted approximately 20 years. Given the programs' focus on language and cultural learning, this article considers student learning in terms of plurilingual-pluricultural competence (PPC) development (Galante, 2022). PPC emphasizes the interrelated nature of language and cultural knowledge as well as the multiplicity of students' language and cultural repertoires. In this way, PPC aligns with scholarship on Heritage Language (HL) SA, which has indicated the importance of framing students' home language and cultural repertoires as assets for their learning abroad (Pozzi et al., 2021). Building on this scholarship, the present study documents stakeholders' views about the affordances of two SA programs for PPC development in order to inform future program design and policy.

1.1. Immersive SA program features

A large body of scholarship has examined how SA features might cause differences in student outcomes. Here I focus on findings related to language and intercultural learning goals, while acknowledging that these do not constitute the primary objectives of all SA programs. Students' housing arrangements have been investigated widely, with some studies reporting that students who live in host families show greater language and intercultural gains (Tseng et al., 2021), while others point to no such host family difference (Magnan & Back, 2007; Rivers, 1998) and others to advantages of living in dorms with locals (Kinginger & Wu, 2018). Similarly, researchers have reported mixed findings related to the effect of program length. Meta-analyses differ in whether longer (Borràs & Llanes, 2021; Tseng et al., 2021) or shorter programs (Yang, 2016) better facilitate language and intercultural learning, although scholars largely indicate advantages of longer programs (e.g., Engle & Engle, 2004; Medina-López-Portillo, 2004; Vande Berg et al., 2009).

Regarding the effect of program site or context, scholars have demonstrated that program sites that facilitate engagement with the local

community, such as direct enrollment programs and service-learning programs, typically result in stronger language and intercultural learning (Engle & Engle, 2004). For instance, Strawbridge (2023) found that the students with the greatest Spanish language gains while studying in Spain were those who completed direct enrollment coursework at local universities, which facilitated their access to social networks composed of local community members. In contrast, students who completed "island" programs–in which students take classes at an independent study center with other international students or other students from their program–tended to not experience as much language growth (see also Ogden, 2007). As SA programs are shortened, the island model is becoming more common; hence, more research is needed on how features of island programs can constrain or promote learning (Ogden & Streitwieser, 2016).

Programming that enhances student connections with local community members has also been found to promote language and intercultural learning. Examples of this kind of programming include language exchanges (Bryfonski & Sanz, 2018; Fernández, 2016), internships and volunteer opportunities (Kinginger, 2008; Zhuang & Kinginger, 2024), and extracurricular activities like sports leagues (Goldoni, 2013). While scholars have studied the impact of language exchanges or language partner programs on specific aspects of language learning like pragmatics (Fernández, 2016) and oral corrective feedback (Bryfonski & Sanz, 2018), few studies have gauged students' and other program stakeholders' views about the affordances of language exchanges for language and intercultural learning.

Finally, scholars have demonstrated the value of coursework and curricular features that scaffold student learning and critical self-reflection about language and culture (e.g., Quan & Menard-Warwick, 2021). In addition to language instruction, studies have pointed to affordances of intercultural competence coursework taking place through classes, workshops, and/or pre-departure training (e.g., Elola & Oskoz, 2008; Nolan & Hickman, 2024). While SA research has underscored that the effect of program features is mediated by the dynamic and idiosyncratic interplay between contextual and individual-participant factors (Coleman, 2013; Kubota, 2016), further investigation of program features, as situated in particular program contexts with unique individual stakeholders involved, can offer important insights to SA program design and administration.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this section, I ground the study in the following frameworks: plurilingual-pluricultural competence (PPC), language socialization, and neoliberal and monolingual ideologies. These concepts contribute to explaining how language and intercultural learning can occur during SA, while acknowledging the existing funds of knowledge that students bring to programs. These frameworks also approach SA design and outcomes through a critical lens, recognizing the power dynamics that can exist between members of the host community and students, as well as the discourses that influence administrative decisions about SA program features. In this manner, this study's theoretical framing aligns with calls for greater asset-based, plurilingual/multilingual, and critical approaches to SA research (Anya, 2017; Diao & Trentman, 2021; Quan et al., 2024).

2.1. Plurilingual-pluricultural competence

PPC is "the ability to use languages for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural interaction, where a person, viewed as a social actor has proficiency, of varying degrees, in several languages and experience of several cultures" (Coste et al., 2009, p. 11). The plurilingualism-pluriculturalism theoretical position underlying PPC highlights the importance of individuals' repertoires, which are dynamic collections of interrelated linguistic, social, and semiotic resources for interaction and meaning-making (Lüdi & Py, 2009, as cited in Galante, 2020). Hence, students bring to the SA experience their existing, plural knowledge of languages and varieties, as well as of cultures and intercultural interaction (Doerr, 2020). Students utilize and expand these interrelated language and cultural repertoires while engaging in language and intercultural learning abroad. In its emphasis on SA as an opportunity for students to broaden their existing competencies in multiple languages and varieties, the PPC framework aligns with the 'multilingual turn' in SA research (Tullock & Ortega, 2017) and with asset-oriented approaches to SA (Holguín Mendoza & Taylor, 2021).

The concept of PPC can serve to honor the strengths of Heritage Language learners (HLLs): those who begin learning a language in their home and/or community in a context where it is a minority language (Valdés, 2001). HLLs bring to SA existing knowledge of how to leverage multiple languages and

cultural frames of reference to interact strategically with a variety of interlocutors (Pozzi et al., 2021). Hence, when Mexican-American HLLs study in Spain, for example, PPC helps to frame the goal of a "language and cultural learning" program not as replacing HLLs' existing repertoires, but rather as harnessing those repertoires in order for students to learn more about local language and cultural practices, engage with the local community, and develop more explicit awareness of their own plurilingual-pluricultural competencies. Given their existing repertoires, HLLs will likely show different PPC developmental trajectories during Spanish immersive SA than second language (L2) learners of Spanish who have competence in multiple languages as well as L2 learners who are monolingual at the beginning of SA. Thus, SA participant variables such as language background, language learning investment, and previous related course experience may impact PPC development; indeed, these variables have been shown to impact language learning abroad (e.g., Davidson & Lekic, 2013).

Scholars have used the PPC framework to capture the impact of language instruction and international experiences (Galante, 2022; Galante & dela Cruz, 2021; Tang & Calafato, 2024), but PPC has been underexplored in immersive SA contexts. Galante (2022), for example, found that students in English for Academic Purposes classes in Canada increased in PPC over their 4 month-long class, and that students in a plurilingualism-oriented class showed greater gains in PPC than students in a comparable monolingualism-oriented class. Similarly, Galante et al. (2023) demonstrated how digital plurilingual pedagogies facilitated migrant language learners' development of speaking skills and plurilingual and pluricultural awareness in second language (L2) classes in Brazil and Canada. Given the insights that PPC has offered to studies of instructed language learning and longer-term international, transnational experiences, PPC offers a useful framework for considering the learning outcomes of short-term educational sojourns like SA.

2.2. Language Socialization

Language socialization theory (Duff, 2019; Kinginger, 2017; Schieffelin & Ochs, 1986) explains how students acquire linguistic and cultural practices through socialization and enculturation from more "expert" members of their communities of practice (CoPs; Lave & Wenger, 1991). CoPs refer to groups that engage in activities together and consist of members with different levels of

knowledge relevant to that activity. An example of a CoP in SA is a host family; the more senior members of the family (e.g., grandparents, parents) socialize the more "novice" members (e.g., children, SA student) into their language and cultural practices through actions such as modeling the practices and providing feedback. Cook (2008), for example, illustrated how host families in Japan socialized SA students into norms for using honorifics through modeling and explicit instruction at the dinner table. Likewise, Castañeda and Zirger (2011) showed how students' interactions with the members of their service-learning CoP, at their worksite and during outings to soccer matches, helped the students to learn informal vocabulary and cultural norms related to hobbies and education. However, student willingness to engage as a peripheral member of CoPs, and the openness of CoPs to welcome and respect emerging members, can impact the extent to which socialization occurs in CoPs (Kinginger, 2017). Students' agentive decisions about engaging with CoPs, and CoPs' receptiveness to these students, may also vary based on (perceptions of) students' linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For example, SA research indicates that while HLLs may gain access to local CoPs more easily because they leverage their plurilingual-pluricultural repertoires to adapt to local practices, HLLs may also be excluded from CoPs by community members who stigmatize students' home language and cultural practices, and HLLs may take offense when community members try to socialize them into linguistic and cultural norms that conflict with HLLs' existing practices (Pozzi & Reznicek-Parrado, 2021). More research is needed to understand how SA programs can be designed to foster effective student engagement in CoPs in order to encourage PPC growth.

2.3. Ideologies of Neoliberal Higher Education

SA programs are dictated by educational policies, which are shaped by the ideologies of the society that creates and manages the programs. Neoliberal ideologies have notably impacted recent changes in Western SA programs (Goldoni, 2023; Kubota, 2016; Moreno, 2021). In the context of SA, neoliberalism proposes that language, culture, and education are commodities that students should pay to consume in order to develop their human, social, and cultural capital (Goldoni, 2023). According to neoliberalism, by developing these aspects of capital, students become more competitive in global markets and enhance their well-being. However, these purported benefits often do not manifest, especially for marginalized students (Bernstein et al., 2015; Kubota, 2016).

U.S. neoliberal higher education is also influenced by monolingual ideologies, which contend that universities, societies, and nations should only communicate in one, monolithic language variety. Due to monolingual ideologies, many U.S. SA stakeholders believe that students should complete all SA coursework in English, as English possesses great capital in the neoliberal workforce and is a "lingua franca" (Kubota, 2016). This has resulted in the embrace of English-Medium Instruction by SA programs in the U.S. and Europe (Nyitray, 2023). Viewing English as a neutral lingua franca, however, fails to account for its history as a colonial and imperial language (Heller & McElhinny, 2017).

Given that students in neoliberal higher education are expected to pay for international education, often with limited financial aid, the SA industry is now worth billions of dollars (Dietrich, 2018). This commodification and the neoliberalizing of SA have resulted in shifts in program design toward (1) shorter programs focused more on tourism than sustained engagement with local communities, (2) English-Medium Instruction, (3) internship programs geared toward preparing students for the workplace and (4) programs in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) and business to train students for high-paying jobs in their home country (Dietrich, 2018; Quan et al., 2023; Zhuang & Kinginger, 2024). These changes reflect a commitment to supporting the economic success of the SA industry and, in many cases, contradict SA scholarship's findings about best practices for fostering language and intercultural learning.

3. The Present Study

To increase knowledge of how SA program features and their changes over time contribute to plurilingual-pluricultural competence (PPC) development, according to stakeholders in those programs, this article offers insight from two language- and culture-focused programs that operated from the early 2000s until 2023. The study highlights how SA program features, as contextualized within these two programs, fostered student learning in terms of the asset-oriented notion of PPC, which has yet to be applied in SA research. Utilizing language socialization theory, the article furthers knowledge of how program features can create opportunities for PPC growth through engagement with host community members. Additionally, the analysis of the evolution of

two programs over time, an approach that has been underapplied in SA research, provides a current understanding of how recent events have intersected with neoliberal and monolingual ideologies to engender shifts in SA program features. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. To what extent were these two programs *designed* to support PPC development, according to program leaders?
2. How did the *changes* in the programs' features over time support or hinder students' PPC development, according to program leaders?
3. How did the *contemporary* features of these two programs support or hinder students' PPC development, according to program leaders and students?
4. To what extent did program leaders' visions of the programs for the post-pandemic *future* align with efforts to support PPC development?

4. Methods

4.1. Research Sites and Participants

The data stem from two SA programs (see Table 1) run by the same large, public university in California. One program took place in Mendoza, Argentina and the second in Madrid, Spain. Both lasted approximately 10 weeks and were coordinated by the same SA staff member, Melissa (all names are pseudonyms). The programs were led by two senior faculty members from the home university's Spanish department. Daniela led the program in Mendoza, and Roya led the program in Madrid. Both faculty leaders were Spanish-English bilinguals and spoke Spanish with dialectal features characteristic of their respective program locations.

The programs were focused on language and culture learning. Each provided a full load of classes that transferred for credit in the home university's Spanish department. The Mendoza program was housed in an intensive Spanish program at a local university, while the Madrid program took place in an international study center run by a U.S.-based organization.

TABLE (1)
PROGRAM INFORMATION

Location	Leader	Housing Policy	Language Exchanges	Spanish Proficiency Levels Targeted
Mendoza, Argentina	Daniela	Homestay only; one SA student per homestay	Established language partner program	Intermediate, Advanced
Madrid, Spain	Roya	Homestay or dorm, with or without SA student	Inconsistent language exchanges	Beginner, Advanced

I collected data from the 2022 and 2023 iterations of the Mendoza program and the 2023 iteration of the Madrid program. Although I desired to collect additional data from the Madrid program, I was not able to because it did not take place in 2024. I recruited participants at the programs' pre-departure orientations and thanked them for participation with gift cards. The students who volunteered to participate in interviews included four undergraduates from the Mendoza program and seven from the Madrid program. The project was approved by the studied university's Institutional Review Board (1930742-3).

Among the 14 total participants (which included the students, faculty leads, and the program coordinator), 86% identified as female. The students ranged in age from 19 to 22 years old, and the faculty and coordinator were middle-aged or older. All of the students were majoring in social sciences or humanities fields, such as Spanish and Chicanx Studies. Among the 11 students, one spoke Spanish as a first language (L1), six spoke Spanish as an L2, and four spoke Spanish as a heritage language (HL), meaning that they had begun learning Spanish in their home communities (Valdés, 2001). For more detailed participant information, see Table 2.

TABLE (2)
PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS

Name	Program	Role	Status of Spanish	Course level	Housing type
Melissa	Both	SA program coordinator	L2	N/A	N/A
Daniela	Mendoza	Faculty lead	L1	N/A	N/A
Roya	Madrid	Faculty lead	L1	N/A	N/A
Anita	Mendoza '22	Student	L2	Advanced	Homestay (only SA student)
Emily	Mendoza '22	Student	L2	Advanced	Homestay (only SA student)
Zandia	Mendoza '22	Student	L2	Intermediate	Homestay (only SA student)
Brad	Mendoza '23	Student	L2	Advanced	Homestay (only SA student)
Clara	Madrid '23	Student	L2	Advanced	Homestay (only SA student)
Yakira	Madrid '23	Student	HL	Advanced	Homestay (with another U.S. student)
Juana	Madrid '23	Student	HL	Advanced	Dorm with another U.S. student
Sara	Madrid '23	Student	L1	Advanced	Dorm with another U.S. student
Alejandro	Madrid '23	Student	HL	Advanced	Homestay (only SA student)
Carolina	Madrid '23	Student	HL	Beginner	Homestay (with another U.S. student)

Zahra	Madrid '23	Student	L2	Beginner	Dorm with another U.S. student

4.2. Data Collection

I collected data through audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews with all participants (approximately 14 total hours of interviews). I interviewed the faculty leaders and coordinator after their respective programs had ended to elicit their reflections on the entire program (Post-program Interview). To capture students' experiences throughout their program, I interviewed them within the first two weeks (Beginning-of-program Interview) and the last two weeks (End-of-program Interview) of the program. In the Mendoza 2022 program, I also interviewed students halfway through their programs, which is included in this analysis (Mid-program Interview). All of the interviews, except Roya's interview, took place on Zoom; Roya's interview took place in person. Because of an issue with the recording device, Roya's interview was not captured in a transcript. I wrote detailed notes based on the interview, and Roya added details to the notes that I had missed. These notes, approved by Roya, are taken as a replacement for the missing interview transcription. The interviews were recorded and anonymized following local Institutional Review Board guidelines.

I also attended the pre-departure orientations for all three iterations of the programs and took detailed field notes about student enrollment, orientation information, and the roles of the program stakeholders.

As researchers have published about these programs, I also incorporated secondary sources about the programs as a means of gauging changes in the programs over time. Specifically, I encountered reports on the 2014-2015 iterations of the Madrid program in Morris (2017) and descriptions of a mid-2010s iteration of the Mendoza program in Pozzi and Reznicek-Parrado (2021) and Pozzi et al. (2021).

4.3. Analysis

I analyzed the data following inductive, qualitative multiple case study methodology (Duff, 2014; Saldaña, 2021). I present case studies of the two SA programs because this methodological approach allows for in-depth and

historical examination of how program features were designed, altered, and carried out in these example programs. Case study methodology is well-established in SA research (e.g., Kinginger, 2008; Quan & Menard-Warwick, 2021) and has contributed unique insights to the field via its thorough attention to contextual details that influence SA programs and student trajectories (Duff, 2014). Multiple case studies, like the one presented in this study, allow researchers to account for more of the variance that exists between exemplars of a phenomenon by analyzing more than one case. Given the comparable beginnings and objectives of these programs, a multiple case study of the programs offered a useful site for examining the similarities and divergences of two SA programs over time.

The study's primary data source consisted of the interviews with program leaders and students, which I transcribed verbatim. As the RQs largely focus on the program leaders' perspectives, the student interview data served to answer RQ3 and was triangulated with the leaders' interviews. The pre-departure orientation notes and secondary sources offered an additional perspective to answer RQ2.

Based on an initial round of open coding, I developed a codebook oriented around three temporal axes: past, present, and future. Within these categories, I constructed codes that described intentional elements of design or changes to support PPC development, stakeholder evaluations of how current features were supporting or hindering PPC development, and reflections about the futures of these programs. After completing axial coding, I refined the codebook in order to resolve discrepancies I noticed in my work, ensuring intra-rater reliability. Finally, I carried out selective coding with the finalized codebook.

It is important to acknowledge that while this paper classified certain phenomena as PPC, the participants rarely used the term 'PPC.' PPC is a theoretical construct utilized in the analysis, but it does not necessarily represent how participants themselves framed the objectives and outcomes of their programs. Additionally, I recognize that my researcher positionality shaped the way in which I collected and interpreted the data. I am a white, U.S.-born, L2 Spanish speaker who was a graduate student at the studied university during the data collection period. My perspective played a role in how I framed the results, as presented in the following section.

5. Results

The programs both started in the early 2000s, when the university's SA office was relatively small and a "grassroots kind of operation" (Melissa, Post-program Interview). At this time, Daniela served on a committee charged with enlarging the university's SA offerings. Launched in 2001, Daniela's program was one of the first "quarter abroad" programs from this university, and Roya's program began a few years after.

The quarter abroad programs were led by university faculty members, involved in-person travel to a site abroad where students completed a full load of coursework, and lasted one academic term (10-11 weeks). As the program courses aligned with the university's curricula, students could directly receive credit towards degree completion from participating in the programs. Most of the early programs focused on language and cultural learning, in part because the first few faculty leaders were scholars of Italian and Spanish. Hence, the origins of the programs facilitated prioritizing PPC development as a learning outcome.

In the next subsections, I present case studies of each program. First, I describe their PPC-related design features and changes over time in those features. Then, I discuss how the features of each program, as enacted in 2022-2023, facilitated PPC development, according to students and program leaders. I analyze each program with a focus on the following features: (1) housing, (2) site and logistics, (3) programming, and (4) coursework. Finally, I conclude with the program leaders' visions for the future of their programs.

5.1. Mendoza

5.1.1. Design

Daniela designed the Mendoza program based on her training in Linguistics and prior experiences in SA design. Her academic background made her particularly aware of how SA might foster PPC: "from my linguistic perspective, I always recognize that language cannot be separated from culture, and they both work together, they go hand-in-hand" (Daniela, Post-program Interview). Daniela viewed PPC development as an essential learning outcome of her program. During her previous experiences planning programs at other U.S. universities, she had found that living with a host family–and particularly

having only one student per host family–best supported students' PPC growth. Thus, she ensured that all Mendoza students stayed in individual home stays.

The program location, and Daniela's connections there, also played a central role in the program's design. Daniela had grown up in Mendoza and studied at the host university. Given her ongoing relationships with partners at that university, Daniela was able to establish programming conducive to PPC development, including a language partner program (LPP) that counted for course credit. Daniela and her colleague from the local university's English department decided to connect their students so they could practice speaking Spanish and English, participate in intercultural exchange, and socialize. The student-student pairing was intended to ensure that participants did not experience a power dynamic and that the LPP benefitted all participants. While the LPP featured some organized meetings, Daniela built in enough flexibility for students to have autonomy over the experience. According to Daniela, the LPP and individual home stays guaranteed that students would have opportunities for PPC growth through engagement with locals.

Daniela also viewed the LPP as a means of overcoming limitations in the program structure. While the program took place at a local university, students only took classes with their U.S. peers, as the coursework was delivered through an intensive Spanish program. Therefore, the LPP allowed students to connect with Mendocinan peers, fostering PPC development in a manner approaching that of a direct enrollment program.

Daniela further promoted PPC through coursework. Students completed an intercultural competence (IC) course in which they reflected on their intercultural interactions and discussed "similarities and differences [across cultures] and different ways of approach, perhaps a situation, an argument" (Daniela, Post-program Interview). The program also offered classes on Spanish language, linguistics, and culture, which were taught by local instructors, Daniela, and, when student enrollment was high, a teaching assistant (TA) from the home university. Only students at the intermediate and advanced proficiency levels in Spanish were permitted to enroll in the program.

5.1.2. Changes

While Daniela did not mention that any program features changed over time, the number of students participating did fluctuate during its decades-long

tenure. The Mendoza program started in 2001 with an enrollment of "about 32 students" (Daniela, Post-program Interview), exceeding the program's 2023 maximum enrollment level of 30 students. In the mid-2010s, when Rebecca Pozzi was a TA for the program, 20 students were enrolled (Pozzi et al., 2021). In 2022, 13 students participated in the program, and in 2023, a historical low of only 7 students participated. Due to low enrollment, these programs did not feature a TA. The TA had historically helped teach classes and supported students' language and cultural learning while abroad (Pozzi & Reznicek-Parrado, 2021).

Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the program's cancellation in 2020 and 2021. Daniela underscored that the pandemic did not significantly impact the features of the Mendoza program. However, she did mention that the pandemic had caused considerable changes in SA administration at the U.S. university, which Melissa confirmed. Melissa highlighted how the pandemic led several SA coordinators to change careers, resulting in the office not "hav[ing] the capacity…to run all of [their] programs" (Post-program Interview).

5.1.3. Present Features

Housing. Daniela, the Mendoza students, and Melissa emphasized the value of the program's homestay feature for PPC development. Melissa highlighted how Daniela's homestay design promoted plurilingual development in synchrony with coursework:

> Excerpt 1. Melissa, SA Coordinator, Post-program Interview.
>
> Students are placed in one student per home stay. So that really facilitates the language learning, I think, for them, and the opportunity to practice and use the language that they're learning…every day in their classes.

Reinforcing Melissa's point, Zandia added that she appreciated learning different aspects of language in each context, such as essential grammatical forms in classes and informal vocabulary with her host brother. All of the students mentioned conversing with their hosts regularly in Spanish, contributing to their language development.

Engaging with their hosts led students to practice pluricultural competence as well. Daniela emphasized the benefits of these interactions for

pluricultural growth: "living with the family is more than just learning the language, it's learning the cultural perspective of that family, it's learning how they interact every day" (Daniela, Post-program Interview). Brad, for instance, mentioned that he gained insight into local social norms by noticing how his host mother and brother routinely ate lunch together and engaged in long conversations over a shared meal. Furthermore, he shared that he gleaned greater understanding about the economic and political status of Argentina through listening to his family members' worries about the 2023 presidential election. Zandia also learned about asado "barbecue" culture through participating in an event with her host family. Many hosts created opportunities for PPC growth by inviting students to participate in their daily activities.

However, not all home stays equally fostered PPC. Anita's family kept to themselves, only interacting briefly with her on a daily basis. She also lived in a gated community on the outskirts of the city, a living situation that she disliked because of how it alienated her from the rest of the local community.

On the other hand, some students turned away opportunities to develop PPC through interaction with their hosts. While Emily engaged in many activities with her host sister at the beginning of the program, she began to prioritize spending her evenings with program peers instead of at home as the program continued on. Thus, the one student-per-homestay policy was not equally effective in creating affordances for PPC development among all students.

Site & Logistics. The students and Daniela found the local university to offer benefits for PPC growth, largely through how it facilitated interactions with local students and staff. Anita and Zandia appreciated the university, especially its cafeteria, as a site for spontaneous opportunities to socialize with local students. The university's events, such as showings of World Cup games in 2022, provided contexts in which students could discuss cultural themes.

The two on-site staff members who coordinated the Mendoza program played a role in affording opportunities for language and cultural learning. These staff members were plurilingual and utilized their full repertoires to negotiate meaning with students. They also explicitly explained tacit cultural knowledge to students, such as norms related to appropriate behavior in homes, handling of money, and safety.

Students also commented that Mendoza's relatively small size and non-touristic character facilitated their opportunities for PPC development. Many students engaged in activities with locals that required them to navigate new linguistic and cultural norms, such as performing with musical groups, attending soccer matches, participating in dance classes, and camping. Brad felt that studying abroad in Mendoza, a smaller city, allowed him to feel more like a local than what might have been possible in Rome or Paris.

Programming. In alignment with Daniela's intentions for the language partner program (LPP), students described the LPP as helpful for PPC growth. All four student participants interacted with their language partners outside of the structured, program-oriented meetings. Many of these interactions happened thanks to a group chat that the students created to make plans with each other. Anita described the positive effect that the LPP had for facilitating interactions with locals in Mendoza:

> Excerpt 2. Anita, Student, Mendoza, Mid-program Interview.
>
> There [have] been multiple times that I've gone out to the club, not expecting to see any of them [language partners], and then running into them and staying with them for a good amount of the night, so definitely those students have been super welcoming and have given me also a sense of community among the locals here.

The students' interactions with their language partners were typically plurilingual, given the local students' desires to learn English, and related to pluricultural themes. Anita stressed that conversing with people, including her language partner friends, was the most impactful aspect of the program for her plurilingual development.

Coursework. While Zandia, an intermediate-level student, greatly appreciated the courses for language learning, the advanced students did not view the classes as quite as important or efficacious for their PPC development. Zandia mentioned the key role that her Spanish-language coursework played in developing linguistic skills exactly when she realized she needed them. She also appreciated the small size of her classes for its ability to afford her individualized attention. Emily claimed that she encountered challenges in advanced-level coursework because the expected language level was higher than her level given the large number of heritage and L1 Spanish speakers in

the class. However, she framed this challenge as pushing her out of her comfort zone and motivating her to learn more Spanish. The other students described exerting less effort toward their classes than they would back home, largely because they wanted to focus on life in Mendoza more than on coursework. Daniela also mentioned that coursework was not the most important aspect of her program, as it could be replicated at the home university.

5.2. Madrid

5.2.1. Design

Roya designed her program with the goal of students "see[ing] *otro mundo* 'another worldview,' to get outside of their comfort zone and experience another culture" (Roya, Post-program Interview notes). She emphasized the value of students spending time in another country for their maturation: "tres meses al extranjero es como tres años en EE.UU. para su desarrollo personal" ["three months abroad is like three years in the U.S. for their personal growth"] (Roya, Post-program Interview notes). As her training was in cinema, culture, and art history, Roya greatly valued the affordances of SA for students to learn about these topics *in situ*. When asked about her ideal SA program, she described a program in which students would learn about art history by traveling around the Arabic world to view art in local monuments and museums. Hence, learning outside of the classroom and leveraging the local context to support student learning were foundational to Roya's conceptualization of her program.

Before it moved to Madrid, Roya's program started in Santander, a smaller city in north-central Spain. Roya partnered with a local university known for its prestige in teaching Spanish language to host the program's classes. Similarly to Daniela's program, the Santander program took place in a special unit of the university with classes taught by local teachers. The SA students were not directly enrolled with local students but instead completed coursework deemed equivalent to classes offered at the home university. Roya's program design showed support for plurilingual development through the choice of a local partner that was committed to language education and that offered students contact with the local community.

Unlike Daniela's program, in Roya's Santander program, students stayed in university residences. She did not offer an explanation for this decision, and

the housing features of her program shifted considerably over time. Also, in contrast with Daniela's program, Roya's program was catered to students at the beginner and advanced, but not intermediate, proficiency levels.

5.2.2. Changes

The first major change in Roya's program was its move from Santander to Madrid. Roya explained that students did not like certain aspects of Santander, including its colder temperatures and limited cultural activities. Also, Roya noticed that students had become more interested in studying abroad in big cities, partially because of the glorified image of metropolises on social media platforms like Instagram. Thus, Roya relocated the program to the country's capital.

Once in Madrid, the program shifted from a local university to an independent study center. For this reason, the program adopted more features of an "island" program in that the students had few opportunities to interact with local peers through their studies.

Additionally, while in Madrid, Roya changed the housing offerings such that all students were required to stay with host families. She described living with a host family as "the most enriching experience" (Roya, Post-program Interview notes). After receiving complaints from students about the amenities in their host families' homes and about discomfort with living with strangers, Roya felt obligated to offer them two options: staying with a host family or living in a residence with other students. When Kimberly Morris worked as a TA for the Madrid program in 2015, she described students living either in home stays, normally with at least one other student, or in student residences. Morris (2017, p. 55) explained their reasoning for staying in a student residence, "this option was both less expensive and 'risky' for beginning-level students of Spanish." While the change to giving students the choice between a host family and student residence accommodated students' personal concerns, it did not necessarily align with Roya's understanding of which housing situation would best support student enrichment.

Around 2015, Roya started offering an intercultural competence (IC) seminar. The class was intended to foster students' well-being and IC development, which Roya found to be increasingly important for students given the globalized nature of the workplace. The IC seminar accomplished these

learning outcomes by offering students a guided opportunity to dialogue about their experiences abroad. She described the IC seminar as successful, so much so that it served as a model for other SA programs. In this way, Roya privileged the pluricultural aspect of PPC.

Around 2017, the Madrid program reduced the amount of Spanish language coursework that the beginner level students were required to complete. Previously, students were expected to learn an entire year's worth of language content (3 terms) in 10 weeks. Based on concerns from students and teachers that the expectations were not feasible, Roya and Melissa decided to reduce the coursework to cover two terms of Spanish instead. Melissa described this change as eliminating a major draw of the programs, which was that students could expedite their required language coursework. However, Melissa stressed that it did make coursework more manageable.

In 2019, Roya switched her focus from the Madrid program to coordinating a system of direct enrollment programs throughout Spain. Thus, when the pandemic occurred, it led Roya to focus more on rethinking SA programming for the direct enrollment programs. The changes that she proposed, based on her understanding of what students desire in a SA program, entailed allowing students to take (1) English-Medium Instruction classes, (2) classes in a variety of disciplines (i.e., not just in language), and (3) classes that do not put their GPA at risk. She did not implement these changes in the Madrid program, but these considerations were on her mind as she considered the future of SA.

Before the pandemic, the students in the Madrid program engaged in language exchanges, also known as intercambios. One change that Roya reported taking place after the pandemic was a decline in language exchange programming. Roya claimed that locals were less interested in attending events in person after the pandemic; hence, students were less able to connect with language partners than before. Morris (2017, p. 54) described the state of the language exchanges in 2015 as also being relatively limited:

The Madrid Institute offered the option of pairing students with a native-speaking conversation partner from Madrid, though it was the responsibility of the students and partners to arrange meetings independently. While several

students in this study did demonstrate interest in this opportunity, only one student actually met up with the partner with whom she was matched.

The study center staff, beginner language instructor, and TAs typically organized the language exchanges. When the Madrid program's enrollment started decreasing, meaning that it could not feature a TA, some of the support for language exchanges was lost.

The Madrid program's post-pandemic decline in enrollment mirrored that of Mendoza, although Madrid had typically sustained higher enrollment than Mendoza. After the pandemic pause, the Madrid program restarted in 2022 under the leadership of a professor from the same university with a background in STEM. In 2023, Roya directed the program again with 13 students.

5.2.3. Present Features

Housing. While the students and Roya described the homestays as more useful for PPC development than living in the dorms, students experienced considerable variation in the extent to which their homestay or dorm created affordances for PPC growth. Among the four participants who completed homestays, only Clara and Carolina regularly interacted with their host families. Yakira and Alejandro, on the other hand, mentioned not spending much time with their hosts due to both parties' busy schedules. Yakira's host mother also primarily spoke in English with her and the other student from the SA program who lived there.

Conversely, Clara conversed primarily in Spanish with her host family and dedicated considerable time to socializing with her host family's social network. She mentioned gaining new insights into local cultural norms through experiences such as interacting with her host grandmother during celebrations for the Holy Week holiday. Likewise, Carolina only spoke Spanish with her host mother, which she identified as the most beneficial aspect of the program for her language development. Carolina shared the home stay with an advanced Spanish student, who helped Carolina negotiate meaning with their host mother. Over the course of her stay, Carolina became more and more capable of communicating independently with her host mother:

Excerpt 3. Carolina, Student, Madrid, End-of-program Interview.

> I asked [my host mother], do you think my Spanish is better? And she was like, oh yeah, in the first two weeks it was impossible to talk to you, but now I can actually explain what my job is, I can explain the politics a little bit in Spain. She explained to me about how the concept of racism works here, which is really interesting to me.

Hence, the homestay served as a site conducive to plurilingual-pluricultural learning for those who were able to engage in meaningful interactions with their hosts.

The other three Madrid participants stayed in dorms with another student from their program. While the students appreciated the independence that living in a dorm afforded them, they expressed frustration with how the dorm perpetuated their program bubble. Zahra mentioned, “It would have been more interesting if I did a host family, or if I maybe the whole area wasn't just study abroad students, or mainly like international students, because I felt like it was this area where the cafeteria people speak English, the door man speaks English, everybody speaking English, everything's in English” (Beginning-of-program Interview). Sara echoed this sentiment in the end-of-program interview, wishing that she could have lived with more local students. One student in the program did end up staying with a local student, which Roya described as a more favorable option than staying with other U.S. students. For those who lived with their compatriots in the English-dominant dorm, they did not find that this housing arrangement offered ample opportunities for PPC development.

Site & Logistics. While the Madrid international study center gave necessary support to students with lower PPC levels, more advanced students found the site’s sheltered, isolated nature to limit the extent to which they could further their PPC development. As only SA students from the U.S. took courses at the study center, the participants felt like their site created a U.S. bubble abroad. The program staff, a handful of plurilingual-pluricultural professionals whom Roya lauded for their commitment to students, assisted the participants with important logistical tasks like setting up a SIM card and obtaining a metro pass. This attention to student well-being and growth stood out as an advantage of this program for beginner Spanish learners; Clara commented, “if you don't know Spanish, and it's your first time, this is a great setting, because the group

is small, and you'll have more attention on your language ability" (End-of-program Interview).

In the case of more advanced students, Clara recommended that they "pick a different program that requires interacting with people from this culture" (End-of-program Interview). The solution that Clara, Juana, and Sara offered was for these students to study at local universities, "because that forces you to speak to other students for assignments, and you know, form group chats…[and] study groups" (Sara, End-of-program Interview). Similarly, Roya recommended that students who wanted greater independence and variety of course offerings take advantage of the system of direct enrollment programs that she had coordinated during the pandemic. This option might also resolve Sara's complaint about having to retake courses she had completed at the home university, and Juana's regret that she could not enroll in advanced grammar classes because of the limited offerings in the SA program. The students and faculty leader concurred that the study center was more effective at serving beginner students' PPC growth than that of more advanced students, who would benefit from a program site that offered greater interaction with local peers and broader options for coursework.

Programming. In comparison with the Mendoza program's thriving language partner program, the Madrid program's language exchanges occurred less often. The program staff only organized one language exchange, which did not count for course credit. Carolina was the only participant to attend. She found it helpful, especially because the language exchange was structured with reminders for her to speak Spanish and included language partners from a variety of Spanish-speaking origins. However, she would have liked to have met with the conversation partners in smaller groups to facilitate greater interaction (End-of-program Interview).

The beginner language instructor also organized a few language exchanges in her class. Students found that these interactions boosted their linguistic and cultural awareness. For example, Zahra laughed about the "awkward collision of cultures" that occurred when a Spanish conversation partner tried to greet the students with a kiss, but they met him with a handshake (Beginning-of-program Interview). As none of the advanced course instructors organized language exchanges, the advanced participants did not have additional opportunities to engage in these formalized exchanges

throughout the program. Resonating with Roya's concern about lack of interest from the local community in language exchanges, and Morris's (2017) report of declining programming, the results indicate that this program feature could have been redesigned to more effectively promote PPC development.

Coursework. One feature of the program that leaders and students found effective for fostering PPC was the focus on learning outside of the classroom. Melissa described the following as a highlight of the program:

> Excerpt 4. Melissa, SA Coordinator, Post-program Interview.
>
> Using the city of Madrid as the classroom and getting students out to go into different situations like day-to-day living…situations around the city, kind of making them be in situations where they then have to use language that they're learning and knowledge that they're gaining in the classes.

Roya ensured that all of the instructors engaged their students in linguistic and cultural learning through course assignments that took place throughout Madrid. For example, the beginner language teacher led students on a tour of a neighborhood and then required students to interview a resident about their experiences living there. The interactions that the activities engendered led students to learn more about cultural practices and communicative norms in the local community. Students' linguistic and cultural knowledge took on new meaning as they utilized their repertoires in higher-stakes contexts of communication (see also Minnillo, 2026).

Roya's IC seminar offered students a context to learn from these contextualized intercultural experiences. She organized the classes based on course learning objectives but ultimately allowed students to guide discussion around the intercultural topics that were most pertinent to their recent experiences. Students greatly appreciated how the class helped resolve their confusions and worries about intercultural interactions: "I think [Roya is] really more helping us understand the cultural differences and helping us understand that feelings of homesickness or feelings of loneliness, it's normal to feel that way when you're coming to a new country" (Zahra, Beginning-of-program Interview). The results thus offer evidence that the IC class accomplished Roya's goals of supporting pluricultural competence and student well-being.

As in the Mendoza program, the Madrid students and leaders praised the program's small class sizes. Yakira described how this design translated into effective pedagogy: "The professors here definitely seem more enthusiastic and passionate for whatever they're teaching and since it's only like eight of us…in one class…it's a lot more personal" (Beginning-of-program Interview). Both Juana and Carolina also mentioned their appreciation of how the smaller class size allowed them to receive more feedback on their language production and assignments.

Despite the benefits of the class sizes, the upper-level students reported facing difficulties because some of their instructors did not adapt their pedagogy to serve their students. Yakira, Juana, and Sara lamented that the art history instructor did not tailor the class to their level and engaged in unfair assessment practices. Furthermore, some of the instructors adopted a deficit-oriented approach toward their students' language varieties. For example, Sara reported being corrected by the film instructor for using a lexical item commonplace in Latin American but not in peninsular Spanish. These practices may have limited the extent to which students were motivated to engage in course-related activities that would further their PPC development.

5.3. Future

Both programs were canceled in 2024. Melissa attributed the end of the programs to a lack of student interest in participating in (1) programs focused on language learning and (2) relatively long programs. The SA leaders conveyed that these concerns arose from students' financial preoccupations. According to Melissa and Roya, students were less likely to pursue language-related programs because they viewed them as less economically promising than STEM programs or internships. Likewise, students would opt for shorter programs because they needed to work to provide for themselves and their families. While the three program leaders agreed that economic issues were impacting student participation in SA, they each offered distinct solutions to potentially restore the Madrid and Mendoza programs.

Melissa's solution entailed shortening the programs, perhaps by offering them over the summer, while maintaining the language-learning focus. Roya, on the other hand, suggested that programs should eliminate their language requirement if that action incentivized more students to participate. She

recommended that students take advantage of the system of direct enrollment programs that she had redesigned to give students greater autonomy over their language of instruction: they could choose to enroll in monolingual, or plurilingual, coursework.

Daniela staunchly argued for keeping both the program length and language requirement, stating:

> Excerpt 5. Daniela, Faculty Leader, Mendoza, Post-program Interview.
>
> I don't believe that this kind of a tendency nowadays, providing more people with shorter term [SA] is helping anyone. Because, as I said, to be able to learn the language, it takes a lot of time, and the culture even more time…We need to learn the culture by using the language and by staying there...And so if you don't provide [students] a context and the possibility of being able to do that, I mean it's not really a study [abroad] program.

To address students' financial concerns, she suggested that the university offer more assistance to students, through means such as financial aid. She emphasized that the value of her program was so great for students' learning that the university should find innovative solutions to maintain it.

6. Discussion

This study's program-historical, multiple case study approach offers novel insights into the role of program features and ideology-influenced administrative decisions on students' opportunities to develop PPC while abroad, through the lens of students and program leaders. Section 6.1 responds to RQs 1-3 by considering the program features that fostered PPC, and section 6.2 answers RQ 4 through discussion of how ideologies influenced the futures of these programs.

6.1. Program Features that Supported PPC

Throughout the decades-long tenure of these programs, the features that stakeholders claimed most clearly supported PPC growth were those that fostered (1) plurilingual-pluricultural socialization through interaction with local community members and (2) critical self-reflection on these interactions. The homestays in which students participated in regular meals, activities, and social events with receptive host family members offered extensive

opportunities for socialization, in line with findings from previous studies (Castañeda & Zirger, 2011; Cook, 2008; Shiri, 2015). These interactions were often plurilingual, as students made meaning with their hosts and roommates by drawing on each member's repertoires, in varieties of Spanish and English. The interactions also typically treated–implicitly or explicitly–cultural themes such as politics, work, and norms for meals. In other cases, host family members created few opportunities for plurilingual-pluricultural socialization–in some cases due to a busy schedule–and/or students elected to not leverage these opportunities. Thus, the findings indicate the importance of stakeholder agency in creating and capitalizing on affordances for plurilingual-pluricultural socialization abroad.

Studying at a local university also supported plurilingual-pluricultural socialization. In addition to socialization through interactions with teachers in the classroom, students valued the exchanges they had with local students and staff while purchasing lunch and watching soccer matches, for instance. This result echoes previous findings that taking classes at local universities can greatly enhance student language learning by fostering target-language social networks (Strawbridge, 2023). Further opportunities to interact with the local community, through language exchanges and experiential learning activities outside of the classroom, heightened students' involvement in socialization. Certainly, not all students exerted agency to participate in these opportunities that foster socialization; for example, Carolina was the only participant who sought out the optional language exchange in Madrid. Raising student awareness of opportunities to participate in extracurricular organizations, such as sports leagues or volunteer programs, and the potential benefits of this participation might increase student engagement in plurilingual-pluricultural socialization, as demonstrated in prior literature (Goldoni, 2013).

However, socialization is not a neutral process. The difference in hierarchy between expert and limited peripheral participants in communities of practice (CoPs) creates a power dynamic between the socializers (i.e., host community members) and the socialized (i.e., students; Vickers, 2007). Power hierarchies can be seen in the film instructor marking Sara's use of a word common in Latin America as incorrect, positioning Sara in the periphery of legitimate Spanish expertise in their classroom CoP. Students, as "social actors" in the PPC framework, can exert their agency over the process of socialization,

deciding to reject, accept, or negotiate the behavioral changes that host community members direct them to make. By explicitly acknowledging how socialization is taking place and the possible benefits and consequences of responding in various, potentially dialogical ways with socializers, students heighten their PPC and ability to accomplish their goals abroad. The Madrid intercultural competence seminar gave students the opportunity to engage in this process through the guidance of a plurilingual-pluricultural instructor who treated students as knowledge-possessors and knowledge-creators in their class CoP. This study's findings thus present some evidence in support of the value of coursework that obliges students to participate in guided, critical self-reflection on their socialization process abroad (Elola & Oskoz, 2008; Nolan & Hickman, 2024; Quan & Menard-Warwick, 2021).

6.2. Influence of Neoliberal Ideologies on Program Futures

The agreement among the three program leaders that financial reasons contributed to the end of the SA programs exemplifies the impact of neoliberal ideologies on these programs' futures. Melissa and Roya conveyed discourses similar to those identified by Goldoni (2023) that international education is a commodity which students must pay to consume. These ideologies frame SA as a business; hence, SA administrators like Melissa must make program design and maintenance decisions that prioritize cost-effectiveness at the expense of the learning outcomes that guided the programs' inception: namely, to promote language and cultural learning through relatively long-term stays abroad.

Daniela was the only leader still focused on those outcomes in 2023. Drawing from her disciplinary expertise, she pointed to evidence that the recent push towards shorter programs leads to limited PPC development. Her response to students' financial concerns conveyed ideologies that position education as a public good. Daniela suggested that the university, as an extension of the state, should intervene to assist students with accessing this educational experience. Students' financial concerns correspond with the decreasing affordability of higher education (Quan et al., 2023), which Daniela indicated could be remediated by the government instead of placing the burden on individual students.

Roya and Melissa also reflected the neoliberal notion of English as a Lingua Franca and monolingual ideologies through their positions on the future

of the programs. Roya suggested that students should be able to complete all of their coursework in English abroad, reinforcing the global 'dominance' of English, a legacy of colonization and imperialism (Heller & McElhinny, 2017). Current trends toward English-only coursework abroad further bolster monolingual ideologies. Without the connections that students can build with local community members through plurilingual-pluricultural dialogue, students may be restricted to only engaging in educational tourism while abroad (Moreno, 2021; Quan et al., 2023). Critical examination of the ideologies guiding the studied university's decision to terminate the two focal SA programs illustrates both the reasons for and consequences of the current movement toward shortening programs and eliminating a focus on language and culture.

6.3. Limitations

These results must be interpreted considering the study's limitations. First, the small sample size and specificity of the two programs limit the study's generalizability. However, the richness of detail provided about the programs may reveal information about the affordances of particular program features and the mechanisms through which stakeholders create and experience those affordances that cannot be attained from aggregated analyses of several SA programs. Additionally, the findings from comparing the Mendoza and Madrid programs are limited by the two programs' differences as ecological sites and the differences in which iterations of the programs were observed. As data from the Madrid program was only collected in 2023, the historical reporting about the Madrid program relies more on secondary sources than that of the Mendoza program.

Furthermore, the study did not report on students' growth in language proficiency as support for its claims about PPC development; future studies would do well to complement qualitative analysis of program artifacts and interviews with quantitative analysis of students' pre- and post-sojourn proficiency scores on tests like the ACTFL OPI. Additionally, this study's qualitative analysis derived from a single author coding the data; future work would benefit from the author establishing interrater reliability with a second coder before engaging in selective coding in order to strengthen the trustworthiness of qualitative findings. Finally, interactional dynamics in SA programs might be captured through social network measures (see Strawbridge, 2023) in addition to student self-reports during interviews.

7. Conclusion

This multiple-case study of two SA programs contributes to the sparse literature on changes to SA program features over time, especially before and after the COVID-19 pandemic, which left an indelible impact on SA as a field. The study is the first to frame the impact of program features in terms of stakeholders' views about program features' support for plurilingual-pluricultural competence (PPC) development, a construct that aligns with multilingual and asset-oriented approaches to SA. Stakeholders in the focal programs indicated that the features that best facilitated PPC, both pre- and post-pandemic, were those that encouraged plurilingual-pluricultural socialization through engagement with the local community and critical self-reflection on the socialization process. Stakeholders' explanations for the end of these programs in 2024 highlight the role of neoliberal and monolingual ideologies in de-prioritizing relatively long language- and culture-focused programs. These findings reinforce Quan et al.'s (2023, p. 156) call for "a reckoning with ideologies" in the SA field, especially to underscore how the disparities between research findings and administrative decisions may limit student learning abroad. Future research would benefit from further investigating the extent to which post-pandemic program features are adequately facilitating student learning outcomes. Increasing the dialogue between researchers, practitioners, and administrators is crucial to re-imagining the future of SA.

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Ethical approval

The project was approved by the studied university's Institutional Review Board (1930742-3).

Declaration of competing Interest

No competing interests to declare.

Data availability statement

The data is not available, per IRB guidelines.

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Sophia Minnillo: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Validation, Formal analysis, Investigation, Resources, Data Curation, Writing - Original Draft, Writing - Review & Editing, Project administration

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