



**BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA**  
**FACULTAD DE LENGUAS**  
**LICENCIATURA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL**  
**INGLÉS**

:

**The usefulness of summer camp programs for LEI  
students to develop intercultural competence for effective  
communication**

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of Languages for the Degree of

LICENCIATURA EN LA ENSEÑANZA DEL INGLÉS

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**BENEMÉRITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTÓNOMA DE PUEBLA**

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The usefulness of summer camp programs for LEI students to develop intercultural competence  
for effective communication

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## **Abstract**

In recent years, there has been a significant change in the perspective of learning and teaching English as a foreign language through the recognition of intercultural competence as a key component so that the language learner can communicate effectively in a real context. This research work aims to analyze the experiences of students who participate in summer camps in order to identify the cultural factors that influence students to improve their communication skills during such camp programs. Therefore, it is possible to describe the usefulness of developing intercultural competence along with their linguistic and communicative skills according to Dearsorff (2009) who defines intercultural competence as the ability to develop specific knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to behavior and visible communication that are both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions..

The purpose of the study is to analyze whether students who participate in summer camps increase the awareness of their intercultural competence, which allows them to understand different ways of seeing the world. Results suggest that students are indeed aware that being in a real context and interacting directly with culturally different people not only improves the literal understanding of what they say in the language, but also the understanding of behaviors, therefore they are able to communicate and act correctly in any type of situation. The analysis of these experiences is a source of information for future research related to the topic of intercultural competence because they give an example of its usefulness by raising awareness that by understanding different perspectives we are able to adapt and interact more comfortably and resolve problematic situations.

**Keywords:** Communicative competence, Culture, Intercultural competence, Intercultural communicative competence, Intercultural speaker.

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## **CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Introduction**

In recent years, there has been a significant change in the perspective of learning and teaching English as a foreign language and in the recognition of the intercultural aspect as a key component. The goal of language learning is no longer defined solely in terms of acquiring communicative competence in a foreign language. According to Tarvin (2015), communicative competence can be defined as the ability to interact in a foreign language in a linguistically and culturally appropriate way. Now, in terms of intercultural competence it is more than interacting effectively between cultures; it is thinking and acting appropriately and communicating with people of different cultural backgrounds at home and abroad. It involves the need to develop students' intercultural competence in language teaching that allows them to acquire a level of cultural competence by helping them understand different ways of seeing the world through the study of the culture of the countries that speak the language they learn and to improve their communication skills. This change has greatly transformed the experience of teaching and learning languages.

Intercultural competence involves different factors according to Byram's model (1997): knowledge, attitudes and interaction skills. This seeks a change in the expectations of future English teachers. Students are now expected not only to learn the rules and signs of the foreign linguistic code, but also to develop the acquisition of intercultural competence. With what was briefly mentioned, a



competent intercultural speaker is able to turn intercultural encounters into an opportunity to build intercultural relationships, a student determined to understand, to communicate with the language to understand the culture of another person and contribute to the understanding of others. In other words, "the intercultural speaker is seen as a specialist in thinking and communicating appropriately and effectively in different contexts, in addition to being a transmitter of one's own culture and symbolic values" (Byram 2002, page 11). Braslauskas's (2021) research maintains that the lack of intercultural competence causes problems such as inability of conflict resolution and difficulties during intercultural interaction since although different cultures are recognized, there is opposition or lack of interest in going deeper. In particular, when it comes to developing the intercultural skills of students who are in contact with high-status groups and languages such as English at the national level, foreign language classes tend to ignore the benefits of expanding their knowledge of the culture. It is necessary to explain to students determined to participate and communicate to collaborate in a global society such as camp programs how cultural interaction influences a better understanding of a foreign language to expand their knowledge and change their perspective of the world.

## 1.2 Rationale

According to the difficulties language learners face in their learning and understanding, an important mention must be made of learning about the culture of the language they are learning because, although the language reflects the culture, it sometimes becomes imperceptible due to the rejection of the idea that it is unnecessary to delve deeper into the knowledge of a country's culture in order to understand a language like English. It is of special interest to know how culture influences interaction with linguistically different people and, from there, prepare students to face future unknown cultural situations since they can make it difficult to adapt to new environments and solve communication problems. This research arises from the need to study the recognition of culture as a key component of linguistic understanding in the language learning of students who participate in camp programs with the aim of analyzing the influence of cultural factors on the interest in understanding English as well as identifying the benefits of developing cultural understanding of English-speaking countries.

The research seeks to explain how cultural interaction influences the understanding of the English language in LEI students who participate in camp programs. Due to the lack of national studies on the usefulness of developing intercultural competence for the understanding of languages such as English, the present work is convenient to support greater knowledge, specifically at the immediate context at LEI, about the cultural influence and the benefits of

developing intercultural competence during interaction with people from different cultures.

### **1.3 Objectives:**

The purpose of this study is to determine how intercultural competence influences the learning of English in students during their participation in camps programs. Thus, the study has the following general objective and specific objectives:

- To determine how the experience of working in summer camps and cultural interaction influences the intercultural communication effectiveness of LEI students.

In this context, the general objective of this study is to identify the cultural factors that are components of Intercultural competence that are distinguished in this context in students of English as a foreign language.

Likewise, they are proposed for two main purposes:

1. To determine how useful it was participating in a summer camp to develop intercultural competence.
2. To identify what factors influenced/ played a role to improve intercultural communication skills upon participating in a summer camp program for the first time.

#### **1.4 Research questions:**

Once the problem that focuses on this research has been established, as well as the objectives, this work aims to answer the following questions:

1. How useful was participating in a summer camp to develop intercultural competence?
2. What factors influenced students to improve intercultural communication skills upon participating in a summer camp program for the first time?

#### **1.5 Positioning**

LEI students who participate in camp programs show little interest in learning the culture of English-speaking countries because they have the idea that this is unnecessary to improve their communication skills at LEI, BUAP.

#### **1.6 Methodology**

This is a case study that follows a qualitative approach with the purpose of explaining the usefulness of cultural learning in exchange students. Structured interviews were used as a research tool for data collection as they allow a deeper understanding of the opinions and personal experiences of the respondents. The structure of the interview fulfilled the objective of capturing useful information from the context or experience of the population. The sample for this study was

summer camp students from LEI, BUAP. Likewise, the design is a cross-trend of approximately 19 weeks. The participants were initially 5 students who were filtered through a survey in order to identify characteristics that would be useful for this study. Therefore, the selected participants were 3 who had more than one experience in participating in summer camp programs. This characteristic was mainly chosen so that a comparison of the students' previous and subsequent experiences could be analyzed. The collection and analysis of the data obtained after carrying out the structured interview is guided to obtain the factors that interfere with intercultural communication, advantages and disadvantages of their experiences as they influence the development of intercultural competence. The methods followed to analyze the data were pattern matching, which sought matches in the responses and interpreted them by organizing them into categories. Pattern matching was also used in each question of the instrument, an analysis was carried out following the procedure proposed by George (2022), trying to bring the main ideas of the collected responses and convert them into keywords that can answer the research questions.

### **1.7 Significance**

Learning a new language such as English is an opportunity to expand our vision of the world and understand different styles of thinking since language is key to communication on an international trip, but it is essential to

communicate in the right way. This study aims to explain the influence of cultural interaction on English language comprehension and the usefulness of learning the culture of English-speaking countries to improve communication skills in exchange students of LEI, BUAP. There are exchange students who have learned a second language in a process of total immersion since they have lived in the context of the target language 2. In this sense, the results of the present study can make future exchange students aware of how this competence can be useful in a context of interaction with people of English culture and speech.

### **1.8 Limitations**

The main factors that limited the study was the lack of interest in conducting the interview. Students become curt with their answers because of their shyness. On the other hand, the variables of direct contact, verbal interaction (spoken or written) and indirect interaction with LEI, BUAP exchange students through various means of communication (email, social media) may have availability problems to conduct the interviews. Another limitation of the study is that teachers are not included due to the focus of the results, which will be based only on the experiences of LEI exchange students. In the conclusions of the study based on the results of the students interviewed about their experiences in camp programs, there may be variation in the responses because there are many cultures involved, which makes analysis very difficult. The results are varied by the personality and background of the participants since this study is

based on students with more than one experience in camp programs. It is expected, however, that the research will be useful for the majority of students at the Faculty of Languages.

### **1.9 Thesis organization**

The first chapter of this research serves as an introduction to the topic and provides a brief explanation of the problem. In addition, the justification of the research work explains the idea of why the problem arises and explains in detail the approach, method and instrument to be used to collect the necessary information. The second chapter is the theoretical framework that provides all the relevant and theoretical information that helps support this research. The third chapter provides specific information about the participants and the research instrument. The fourth chapter is an analysis of the results. Finally, the final conclusions of the study. In particular, this last section of chapter 5 seeks to explain the positive points of the methodological proposal and how this study could reveal the benefits of the development of intercultural competence.

### **1.10 Key terms**

In this research, the following terms were used.

- **Competence-** Mulder (2011), defines competence as “capability to perform

effectively”.

- **Communicative competence-** Nordquist (2019, May26), the term communicative competence refers to both the tacit knowledge of a language and the ability to use it effectively.
- **Intercultural competence-** Deardorff (2006), "Intercultural competencies the ability to develop specific knowledge, skills, and attitudes that lead to visible behavior and communication that are effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions."
- **Intercultural speaker** – Porto et al., (2017), the intercultural speaker is inter alia someone who can ‘read’ texts of all kinds – linguistic and non-linguistic, spoken, written, visual, digital, and multimodal for instance – in a critical and comparative mode, analyzing their meaning in their context but also knows how they can be interpreted from another context, sometimes resolving conflicting misunderstandings in the process. The intercultural speaker or mediator is translingual, cosmopolitan, consensus-oriented, supportive and open to negotiation, i.e. they negotiate meanings with others on equal terms departing from their own positional ties.



## **CHAPTER II: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide support and discuss theories and research on intercultural competence and how it is useful for better understanding of the language being learned. It has three main sections. The first is related to the role of culture in the area of languages; the second one relates to essential information on intercultural competence and its importance in second language learning and language comprehension; and the last one describes information about the difficulties and benefits of learning a language in a real-life context.

### **2.1 Culture**

Culture is difficult to define due to the variety of focuses and perceptions under which it is studied. From a general perspective, it can be said that culture allows the adaptation of a person to his environment. According to the anthropologist Tylor (1871) culture is a complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, art, law, morals, customs and any other capacity and habit acquired by men as members of a given society. In addition, culture is also identified as a guide that teaches new members of a group the correct way to perceive, think and feel in relation to external and internal problems. Authors of the Cambridge Handbook of Culture, Organizations, and Work (2009) express their point of view, commenting that culture is a concept that has been used in several social science disciplines to explain variations in human thought

processes in different parts of the world. In sum, culture is the integration of patterns of human behavior that includes thoughts, communication, languages, practices, beliefs, values, customs and ways of relating and behaviors of a social group. The authors explain that knowledge of a given culture allows a person to understand how people who use different languages to communicate perceive the world and their reality. It is not creating the sentences in the native language and translating them into the language that is being learned, it is sharing and learning. Understanding the culture allows a person to give the correct meaning to each word, in a broad context because it is thinking in the foreign language, in part of the culture of a country that speaks the target language. Placing all this new information in a cultural context can help a person engage on a different level with the foreign language. Learning about how native speakers of a given language live and speak introduces a human side to the language, keeping the person engaged in the learning process and being part of a culture influences our learning, understanding, remembering, speaking and behaving. Therefore, culture largely determines learning and teaching styles as well.

## **2.2 Cultural identity**

Identity is a broad and complicated concept which has played an important role in discussions in the cultural and societal fields. Norton (2013) defines identity as how a person understands their relationship to the world, how that relationship is structured across time and space, and how the person

understands the possibilities for the future. In addition, in the field of languages, Khatib (2011) refers to identity as a potential capacity that individuals possess. This potential ability is determined by the social context in which language learners find themselves; therefore, it is the opportunity for students to improve their potential in relating abroad. To conclude, it can be said that identity is a subjective phenomenon, which is constructed from interaction with others. We think, speak and write in different languages. We express, create and feed our ideas through languages. The mother tongue is the key to individual identity: it sparks imagination, creativity and innovation. In this study, identity is a key concept because culture subsists by having its own identity; students, when interacting in cultures different from their own, recognize and accept different cultural identities, which is why they have an openness of realities different from their own, so students begin to develop skills and attitudes to begin to interact competently. Students also become aware of their identities, which is also connected to the following concept: cultural diversity.

### **2.3 Cultural diversity**

The world as a whole is becoming more diverse, cultures change and cultural diversity is created. The relationship between communication and culture is very complex. Cultures are created through communication. In other words, communication is the means of human interaction through which cultural characteristics are created and shared. Language is essential for the expression of

any culture. It helps to communicate values, beliefs and customs and fosters feelings of group identity and solidarity. Language is an inseparable part of culture and its evolution. Cultural diversity in the opinion of Lin (2019) refers to "a reality of coexistence of diverse knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, laws, customs, religions, languages, abilities and disabilities, genders, ethnicities, races, nationalities, sexual orientations, etc., of human beings" (p.1). People use language for purposes such as communicating and learning new languages, which involves learning to use words, rules and knowledge about language and its use to communicate with the speakers of the language. The culture in which we are raised influences everything. It shapes our thoughts, our perceptions and our behavior on a personal and professional level. It can affect everything from how we treat others to how we relate to them. Also, cultural diversity lets us appreciate our differences. Language encrypts the values and norms of a society. Man (2021) holds the view that cultural diversity is a system that recognizes and respects the existence and presence of diverse groups of people within a society. In sum, different cultural groups have varying beliefs, customs, values, and a wide variety of characteristics that make them special. Although they are two different concepts, cultural diversity and communication are directly linked. Communication is the ability to share the ideas and feelings of others; it is the basis of all human contact, while culture is learned, acted upon, transmitted and preserved through communication. It also involves the essential way of living in society and maintaining one's own culture is to communicate. Cultural influences make people see the world differently and cultural diversity should be

appreciated. It can also provide a deeper connection to the people and places that make up that culture. Students who participate in summer camp programs should become aware of cultural diversity because having knowledge of it enables them to express to others about their own culture and question and interpret what is learned through communication with others.

## **2.4 Linguistic diversity**

Linguistic diversity is understood as the proportion of different languages spoken within a given territory, which can be a country or a geographical region. According to UNESCO (2001), languages define personal identities, but they are also part of a shared heritage. They can serve as a bridge to other peoples and cultures by promoting mutual understanding and a shared sense of identity. In the field of language learning, this facilitates the process of understanding and improving communicative skills, as they in turn inform their histories, their similarities and differences with our mother tongue and the language we are learning. Also, UNESCO believes everyone has the right to learn in their own language and that it is an important means of improving learning, learning outcomes and socio-emotional development. In conclusion, language diversity and language learning contribute to cross-cultural understanding and intercultural and communicative competence in the international context. In this study, this topic is useful to explain how through interaction students who participate in camp programs become aware that each language has its own

structures, vocabulary and ways of expressing themselves and how that influences their way of thinking, perception and sharing their culture.

## **2.5 Interculturality**

Interculturality is an important part of language learning. Intercultural language learning involves the fusion of language, culture, and learning in a single communicative educational approach. Thus, interculturality implies several skills. To understand this concept, Medina & Sinnigen (2009) define interculturality as "the dynamic articulation between ethnic groups (internally) and with the hegemonic society in search of a permanent harmonic space of social interrelation that promotes future important processes of decentralization and social participation in more equitable conditions." To practice a new language, people need to know more about the cultural aspects of understanding it. That is why the student must develop intercultural communicative competence. In summary, interculturality deals with people's perception of any subject before knowing the background. It works that way to see the differences through other eyes. In addition, it is about interculturality and the opportunity to develop intercultural and communicative competence. In this sense, intercultural competence is understood by the learner of a second language, and this study focuses on students with the experience of interacting with culturally different people in a real context as an ability to function adequately and satisfactorily in intercultural communication situations. In the following section, a better

explanation of the relationship to the main topic of this study will be given.

## **2.6 Intercultural communication**

There are many terms that define culture and communication, such as multicultural, intercultural, or cross-cultural, just to name a few. However, sometimes they are misunderstood. What makes them different is the number of cultures involved and the type of interaction. To understand these topics, it is important to understand what culture is. Herskovits (1955), for example, claims that culture is everything that is human-made. In retrospect, culture is all that is part of a specific community: customs, traditions, rules, ways of living and thinking, and of course, communication, which implies the language. It is learned from the moment of birth, and it is transmitted from generation to generation. It goes without saying that communication and culture are closely related. Learning to communicate in an additional language involves developing an awareness of how culture intersects with language each time it is used (Köhler, 2003). People use language to communicate for a purpose, and learning a new language involves learning to use words, rules, and knowledge about the language and its use to communicate with the speakers of the language. Gudykunst (2004) points out that communication is unique within each culture, and at the same time, there are systematic similarities and differences across cultures. In brief, learning to be intercultural involves much more than knowing about another culture: it consists of learning to understand how one's culture shapes perceptions of oneself, the

world, and our relationship with others. Culture is an important fact that will influence the development of those who are on exchange or immersed in a foreign culture, and it does not affect their learning. On the contrary, it is part of the foreign language and gives many opportunities to facilitate communication with people, and to get to know the new country better. It is relevant to this study because it is a type of competence that students ideally develop while interacting with people from different cultures. In addition, it differs from intercultural competence since the latter is being aware of our culture and others, curiosity, attitude, and knowledge. In contrast, intercultural communicative competence is the means to respond to those thoughts and vice versa, understand behaviors, and go beyond the literal meaning of what is heard. Intercultural competence is defined in detail in the following section.

## **2.7 Intercultural competence**

Different perspectives have appeared in teaching languages, and one of them seems to be interculturality as a competence. Intercultural competence is something that students should develop in order to have a better communication and understanding of the culture of the language they are learning. To understand what this concept involves, Deardooof (2006) explains that “Intercultural competence is the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behavior and communication that is both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions” (p. 245). To mention some examples of the

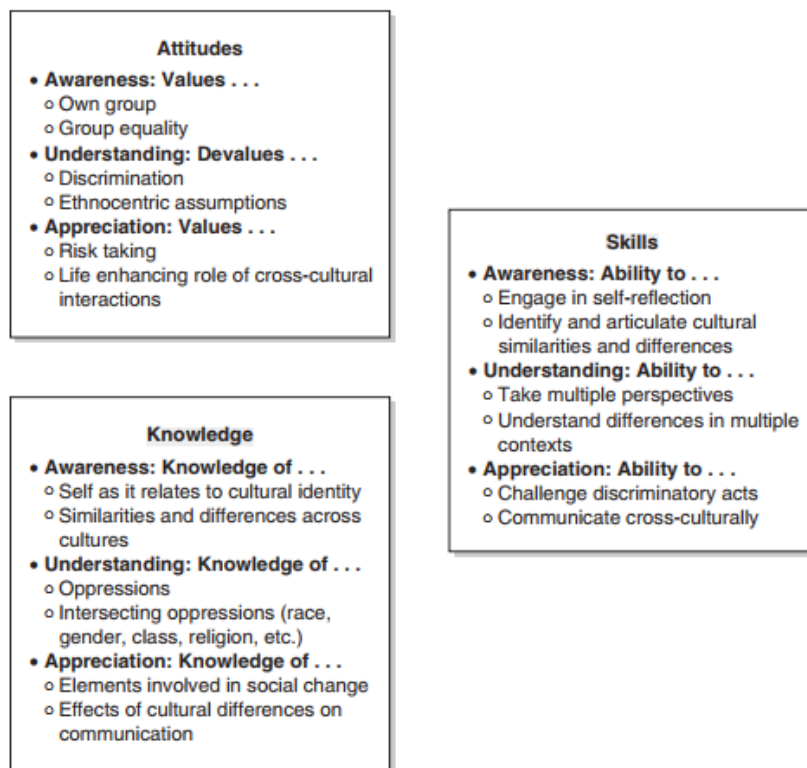


importance and usefulness of developing intercultural competence, a student who speaks Spanish knows that when someone sneezes, he/she should say “salud”, but when you speak English differently, the person who sneezes would say “sorry” instead. Another example is when hearing some idiomatic phrases like “let the cat out of the bag”, the language learner may hear and translate literally but not really know the meaning of the phrase. The speaker can achieve that change because of two reasons. First, he/she has the targeted knowledge and vocabulary needed for the situation. Second, he/she changes his/her speech according to the language spoken at that moment, and it must be appropriate to the cultural changes between languages. Then, it is what intercultural competence involves; those aspects for shifting and adapting. Furthermore, Harmer (2012) states a similar idea related to the first example as the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural difference and commonalities. It can be concluded that intercultural competence is an excellent way to understand and communicate effectively. It allows you to pass as a native speaker and enjoy getting closer to and learning about the lifestyles of English speakers.

The diagram below shows the model of the components that make up intercultural competence. Byram's (1997) Intercultural Communicative Competence emerged in the field of language education, and has its origins in Hymes's work on communication. The model is theorized in terms of personal cognitive and motivational aspects in relation to knowledge, skills and attitudes. The model consists of attitudes showing curiosity and openness, willingness to

suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own. Another component, knowledge, refers to the knowledge of social groups and their products and practices in one's own country and in that of the interlocutor. Finally, skills are based on listening, observing, interpreting, analyzing, evaluating and relating.

**Figure 1: Intercultural Competence Components Model**



Adapted from Howard Hamilton et al. (1998).

To better understand this model adapted by Hamilton et al (1998), and mentioned along with other similar models by Deardorff (2009) and other authors. The following is stated:

“Attitudes include: respect for other cultures; curiosity about

other cultures; openness to people from other cultures; openness to intercultural learning; willingness to suspend judgment; willingness to tolerate ambiguity; and valuing cultural diversity. Intercultural skills include: skills of listening to people from other cultures; skills of interacting with people from other cultures; linguistic, sociolinguistic and discourse skills, including skills in managing breakdowns in communication; skills in discovering information about other cultures; skills of interpreting cultures and relating cultures to one another. Knowledge which contributes to intercultural competence includes: cultural self-awareness; communicative awareness, especially of the different linguistic and communicative conventions within different cultures; culture-specific knowledge, especially knowledge of the perspectives, practices and products of different cultural groups; and general cultural knowledge, especially knowledge of processes of cultural, societal and individual interaction. Behaviors also form a further important component of intercultural competence". (Pages 10-11)

In sum, intercultural competence is the ability to function effectively across cultures, to think and act appropriately, and to communicate and work with people from different cultural backgrounds at home or abroad. Due to the above, the concept of intercultural competence is considered appropriate for this study as a valuable asset in an increasingly globalized world in which we are more likely to interact with people from different cultures and countries who have

been shaped by different values, beliefs and experiences and through experiences such as participation in summer camps.

## **2.8 Intercultural communicative competence**

Intercultural competence is something that students need to develop in order to have better communication and understanding of the language they are learning. To understand what this concept involves, Deardoo (2006) explains that “Intercultural competence is the ability to develop targeted knowledge, skills and attitudes that lead to visible behavior and communication that is both effective and appropriate in intercultural interactions” (p.245). Furthermore, Hammer (2012) states a similar idea related to the previous example “the capability to shift cultural perspective and appropriately adapt behavior to cultural difference and commonalities” (p.3). Both authors agreed that intercultural competence involves respecting the behavior in a different context with different communities since shift and adaptation let understand the importance of respecting cultural differences. However, being an intercultural speaker needs not only communicative skills but also social skills. Having the approach to the culture in a real context allows the learner to better understand the language, an example being listening to popular English idioms. Idioms are sayings and expressions with meanings that transcend their literal translation. Your ability to understand idioms can make a difference. Listening to proverbs, idioms and idioms makes the speaker fluent in communication. Although this

concept of intercultural communicative competence mentions verbal skills, interaction, linguistic understanding, empathy and knowledge of cultural differences, for this study the concept of Intercultural Competence was considered more appropriate because much more of these communication experience factors are exposed to intercultural communicative competence. In other words, beyond skills for adequate verbal interaction, emphasis is placed on interpretation skills, cultural awareness, attitudes, and knowledge of the diversity of social and cultural groups for effective intercultural interaction.

## **2.9 Interculturality in learning process**

Knowing how the learning process works is fundamental, but so is recognizing the role of interculturality. There are several perspectives on how it works and its benefits. Interculturality within the teaching of foreign languages makes it possible to form critical speakers capable of developing in different contexts and accepting opinions and points of view different from their own, it implies a change of mentality. Bryam (2002) defines the intercultural speaker as a specialist in cultural interaction. In addition, Byram, M., & Fleming, M. F. (1998) propose a framework for language learning and teaching. It includes the following aspects:

- The integration of linguistic and cultural learning to facilitate communication and interaction;

- The comparison of others with oneself to stimulate retraining and (critical) questioning of the culture. (critical) questioning of the core culture in which learners are socialized;
- A change of perspective employing psychological procedures of socialization:
- The potential of language teaching to prepare learners to effect encounters and communicate in cultures and societies different from those normally associated with the language they are studying and also the ones they do study.. It cannot be that language learners are regarded as good only if they approach the oral competence in grammar and vocabulary of a native speaker of the target language and are accepted as native speakers because they can communicate from a position of equality with them.

Therefore, intercultural competence is the key for students to have an open door to a new society in order to build self-understanding. It is a process that begins when the person who has decided to learn a language makes comparisons between his or her own culture and that of others. In this way, the learner learns more and more about the language. The objective is not only to talk about knowledge, it is to help learners understand and respect the way people see the world while at the same time improving their communication skills. In comprehension skills, listening is essential in any kind of interpersonal interaction, but when faced with linguistic and cultural challenges, the need to pay full attention to what is actually being said becomes paramount. Students may have to work harder to understand different accents, speech patterns and

language use and to dispel our habitual interpretations of silence, interruptions or body language. Tareva (2020) highlights one of the most significant difficulties in understanding the speech of a foreign language, which is characterized by objective difficulties caused by the accelerated pace of speech, the individual characteristics of the speaker, and other parameters of the communication process. Because of this, learners make assumptions about the meaning of certain words and phrases and do not always realize that they may have slightly different meanings or connotations. For example, British English speakers tend to use fewer absolute adjectives than their American counterparts, so an American listening to his British colleague may mistakenly infer that the latter is not enthusiastic about the project because it has not sounded as positive as expected. In conclusion, interculturality is an essential part of the learning process for language learners to better understand when interacting in a real context. In the case of this study, students who participate in camp programs are aware that developing intercultural competence is useful to function in the work context in which they find themselves due to the coexistence of present cultures.

### **2.10 Intercultural competence in the English learning process**

Intercultural communicative competence attempts to increase learners' awareness of their own culture and, in doing so, help them interpret and understand other cultures. Not only knowledge, but also a set of practices that require skills and attitudes. There is the model developed by Byram (1997) that

focuses on teaching language and interculturality. This model is based on applied culture and language, seeking to raise the level of language. Not only learning the grammatical rules, but also the cultural changes that a language has in itself. In addition, intercultural competence involves six main dimensions, which are the following: Linguistic, sociolinguistic, discursive, strategic, sociocultural and social competences Coperías-Aguilar, M. J. (2010). Although this model points out the need to teach under the intercultural competence model, there are two types of student profiles, one of which does not see its importance. Sometimes learning all the grammar and vocabulary, polishing pronunciation and honing communication skills isn't really all there is to the larger goal of being able to genuinely communicate with and understand the real world. Intercultural learning can be said to be the process of becoming more aware of and better understanding of one's own culture and other cultures around the world in order to understand it and communicate more appropriately with people.

### **2.11 Students comprehension difficulties**

During intercultural exchange in a real context such as summer camps. Students may face difficulties during comprehension. This part provides an overview of the main difficulties students face during listening comprehension training. Tareva (2020) highlights the problem, whose relevance is due to the objective difficulties of training listening comprehension of texts in a foreign language. For a participant in intercultural communication, one of the most



significant difficulties in understanding the speech of a foreign language, which is characterized by objective difficulties caused by the accelerated pace of speech, the individual characteristics of the speaker and other parameters of the communication process. Among these difficulties that are significant for the effectiveness of intercultural communication, the following are mentioned: difficulties associated with the content of the discourse, the nature of the linguistic material, with the form of presentation, with the conditions of perception; non-specific difficulties (the peculiarity of semantic operations, linguistic difficulties), specific difficulties (the uniqueness of reception, the lack of visual support, the individual characteristics of the speaker, etc.); lack or loss of control over the rhythm of speech, the inability to reproduce it, the listener's limited vocabulary, understanding of the "superficial" meaning of the word due to ignorance or misunderstanding of the context, the inability to grasp the speaker's transitions from one thought to another, lack of concentration of the listener's attention; presence of segments of an incomplete type of pronunciation, individual features of speaking of the "author" of the text, rhythm of speech, presence of noise interference. The key to being a good listener is not only listening to what is said, but also what is not said. The students who participate in summer camps programs mention in this study the difficulties they go through during their stay in that context that reduces their development of being an intercultural speaker, who has the ability to read between the lines and tune in to non-verbal signals, such as facial expressions and body language, being able to interact effectively and function in any situation with culturally different people

in a real context. That is why comprehension difficulties are mentioned in this section as they are an obstacle that causes the disadvantages of misunderstandings, stress from not being able to understand or express oneself adequately, among others. It can finally be said that the difficulty of comprehension for students affects expanding their cultural horizon.

## **2.12 The benefits of learning a language in the real context**

It is true that the experience participating in summer camps brings many benefits in terms of social and academic development; however, this development is even more notable in terms of second language learning. It is true that the most effective way to learn a language is by being in the real context. Without a doubt, perfecting a certain language to perfect it in the real context is a reason to participate in camp programs, not only for academic or social purposes, but because it will be the new reality of the students where they find new ways of communicating and even to survive. They experience new contexts, and ways to manage to learn the culture according to Vinagre (2014). In this study, students participate in camp programs in which the environment makes them interact and relate to culturally diverse people, which leads them to develop knowledge, attitudes and skills that allow people to appreciate, respect and adapt to differences in cultural norms, values and behaviors, thus preparing them for future interactions in similar contexts.

Even if the student is already fluent in a second language, studying in another country increases the language practice in everyday life by being surrounded by native speakers not only from the host country but also from other countries with the same language. This environment helps to increase vocabulary in everyday life, that is to say informal, colloquial or even vulgar language. When the learner develops a social network in the host community, practicing the target language can still be difficult in some learning environments, and only the most tenacious and persistent language learners can succeed in obtaining opportunities for practice Köhler (2003). Interacting with people from all these areas guarantees the establishment of local, national and international relationships which allows the students to gain respect for and from other cultures. Advanced learners seem to improve more in pragmatic and sociolinguistic aspects of language during study abroad than they do in structural aspects (DuFon & Churchill, 2006, p.32). In short, language learning is necessary for students to interact effectively in the global world.

## **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

This chapter provides a description of the participants, the methodology and information about the research instrument. A step-by-step description for data collection and analysis regarding this research is also provided to gain insight into the usefulness of developing intercultural competence. This study was carried out through qualitative research and a case study. This involved creating a structured interview to collect the information. In other words, this thesis seeks to explain the usefulness of learning the culture of exchange students.

### **3.1 Research design**

This research is part of a qualitative case study, the researchers describe how case studies examine complex phenomena in the natural environment to increase their understanding. The use of the case study research method was considered because the purpose of this research is to explain the usefulness of developing intercultural competence and this research approach is used according to Gomm, Hammersley, and Foster (2000). It is used to generate a deep understanding of a subject in its real life context, and it is used to explain, describe or explore events or phenomena in the everyday context in which they occur. The case study approach lends itself well to capturing information on more explanatory “how, what, and why” questions. In other words, a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-

life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident (Yin, 2009). Therefore, it should be considered that an experimental design is inappropriate or difficult to perform to answer the research questions posed. In summary, the qualitative research method allows us to obtain information about opinions, beliefs and understand this phenomenon. Through qualitative instruments, data is gathered, categorized and analyzed.

### **3.2 Setting**

This section aims to describe the environment in which the research is carried out. As mentioned, the study takes place in the Faculty of Languages. The Faculty of Languages of the Benemérita Universidad Autónoma de Puebla is characterized by the certification of its educational programs and the internationalization of its teachers and students, with the aim of consolidating its educational quality and positioning it in the international ranking. The students participating in the study are those who have participated in camp programs. The participants are from the Enseñanza del Inglés program, whose mission is the comprehensive training of professionals in teaching English with theoretical-practical knowledge in the area of pedagogy and communicative skills in English and Spanish. In addition, they must be professionals with teaching skills capable of adapting to various educational contexts, promoters of intercultural communication, with initial training in research and with a spirit of service and social commitment. The years of study are 4 years plus a semester of internship,

depending on the study plan and the specific academic load. The minimum number of study hours that students spend is 3404 and the maximum is 3692. The curriculum has different areas, which are: linguistic content area, technology area, general university training area, teaching area and research area. In their curriculum map, students take the target language subject up to level C1. For their completion and graduation in the bachelor's degree, students reach level B2 according to the Common European Framework (CEFR). For this study, it is clarified that students have certain knowledge of cultural and intercultural terms learned from subjects called Cultural Studies, Cultural Manifestations and Historical Evolution of Language.

Students who have participated in camp programs have been free to research and choose the program of their choice, with most participants choosing based on recommendations from other experienced students through a Facebook group called "Facultad de lenguas." The camp programs that the participants have mentioned are American summers, the participants have requested recruitment for support staff. The activities within the programs vary according to the students, such as being kitchen support at Americans camps. The majority of students who participate choose the experience of recruiting camps in the months of June to August. Participants choose summer camps mainly to practice the English language in a real context and to get to know the American country in a work context.

### **3.3 Participants**

This section provides a description of the participants and the factors taken into account that make them suitable for the purposes of this research. The students were randomly selected from different genders and regardless of their age and year of generation. However, they all have had similar exposure to intercultural interactions. The purpose of the study is to know the usefulness of developing intercultural competence through the experience of students who participated more than once in camp programs in another country whose language is different from Spanish. In addition, the participants have similar characteristics regarding their relationship with the English language and their approach to culture through reading magazines and books; listening to music and watching programs or videos. The following table describes in detail the characteristics of each participant represented by a pseudonym as a name. The table shows that the students have had previous contact with a different culture, thus being able to be aware of some accents, expressions and thoughts of a society culturally different from their own.

**Table 1: Participants with experience in summer camps.**

Participant	Age	Times in participation in summer camps	Length of the summer camps	Years studying English formally	Place	Percentage speaking English	Time reading newspapers, magazines or books in English	Time listening to music	Time watching movies, shows or videos
<b>Marta</b>	24	2	Between 3-4 months	4-5 years	Laurel South Casco Maine, USA	50%	1 hour/1 day	2-3 hours per day	2-3 hours/4-5 days
<b>Montse</b>	23	2	3 months each time	8 years	New Hampshire, USA	30%	5 or more hours per day	5 hours per day	1-2 hours/4 days
<b>Ara</b>	24	3	3 months each time	7 years	Pennsylvania, USA	50%	2 hours/4 days	5 hours per day	3 hours/4 days

### 3.4 Instrument

Because the present study is a qualitative case study, a structured interview instrument that involves asking participants a set of open-ended questions to further analyze their response and the topic of interest was chosen. In addition, the structured interview was chosen because it allows one to focus on the topic of interest and at the same time provides autonomy to explore relevant ideas that may arise during the interview by collecting data and exploring the thoughts and beliefs of the participants on the topic. When developing the questions that were asked in the interview, content validity and



reliability were considered. Regarding content validity, the questionnaire was reviewed by the thesis director. The revisions served to measure time, highlight the importance of the organization of the questions, and eliminate or correct questions. After reviewing the questions, there were a total of 11 questions (see Appendix A). Once the instrument was made, it was applied to the participants contacted. The structured interview allowed data collection and analysis. All the ideas and thoughts of the participants were recorded and transcribed. In each section of the interview, an analysis was carried out following the analysis procedure of a structured interview by George (2022).

### **3.5 Data collection**

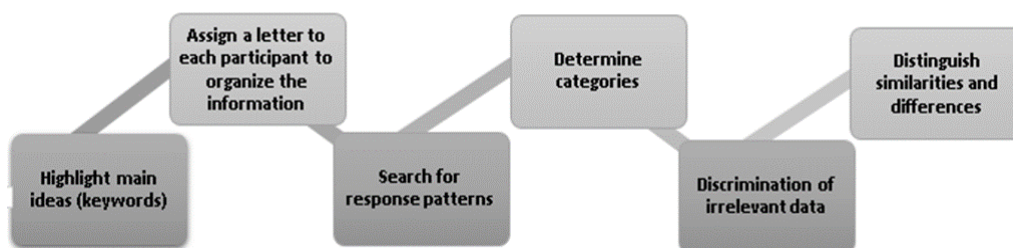
This section describes the information collection process. Once the participants who have participated in the camp programs were selected, the first step was to contact them. After receiving a response from the participants, a prior questionnaire was administered to determine if their characteristics were appropriate for the study. Subsequently, the reason for the contact was explained to them which would be to agree to a structured interview to obtain extensive information about their experiences and opinions on participating in summer camps, anticipating that their privacy would be maintained to participate in the research. The next step was to arrange a meeting. The interviews were carried out by call through Teams. The interview was recorded solely in voice so that the participant felt more secure, as well as for its subsequent transcription and it

was considered to conduct these in Spanish for better expression and development of the students during the interview. The instrument was applied satisfactorily. Participants provided the corresponding answers in a friendly and respectful manner.

### 3.6 Data analysis

The instrument was applied after carrying out a previous questionnaire in order to select the participants who had appropriate characteristics for the study. Once the participants were selected, the structured interview was carried out online and recorded. As mentioned previously, the interview consisted of 11 questions, which were developed with the purpose of finding factors, attitudes and skills regarding intercultural competence.

**Figure 2: Instrument analysis process by George (2022)**



In each question of the instrument, an analysis was carried out following

the procedure proposed by George (2022), trying to bring the main ideas of the collected responses and convert them into keywords that can answer the research questions. First, each participant is assigned a letter for organizational purposes. The next step, by transcribing the audio recordings, is to look for response patterns to perform a thematic analysis and determine the categories.

Thematic analysis, as mentioned in this procedure proposed by George, involves separating recurring words, patterns or responses, separating them into categories to draw preliminary conclusions about the opinions, knowledge or experiences of its participants. After reading the responses several times, the data were collected and proceeded to identify and highlight those that have some connection, mainly taking into account the objective of the research to explain the usefulness of intercultural competence through identifying and analyzing the factors that influence the skills and attitudes of the participants to develop this competence. Subsequently, subject discrimination is made in the collected data, that is, those topics that only appear in the interviews and that seem irrelevant are eliminated. In addition, an identification of repeated, similar and related elements is carried out to finally categorize them and keep the most useful for the study and answer the research questions.

By having all the answers together, one next to the other, it was easier to make a comparison and find patterns, so after analyzing each answer given by the participants, it was necessary to distinguish similarities between them to find a common denominator or a pattern. After following these steps, it was possible to identify how the participants' responses were related to the research and

categorize them, to determine what factors influenced during their exchange to have successful intercultural communication.

### **3.7 Conclusion**

To conclude with this chapter of this research work, when collecting the information from the responses obtained by the participants when responding to the research instrument, it can be mentioned that the interaction in a real context with culturally different people, having intercultural communication allows as Language learners have the opportunity to improve not only their linguistic skills, but also have the ability to interact and communicate correctly as an intercultural speaker. After following these steps, in the next chapter a more detailed description of the results and how they help to answer the research questions is given.

## **CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS OF THE STUDY**

This chapter provides a description of the results collected through the structured interview applied to the participants. The results are presented in categories for a better organization of the results, each answer of the students was analyzed and finally extracted in a conclusion.

### **4.1 Findings**

This section contains a detailed description of the results found after applying the instrument and carrying out this research. The analysis of the data shows that there are certain cultural factors that influence the development of learning a language such as English to increase its linguistic level, interaction and have good intercultural communication. In addition, there are certain results that show advantages and disadvantages of interaction in a real context. The contexts where the participants' summer camps programs in the United States were developed had certain similar experiences, but also different difficulties due to the different environments and people with whom they interacted. The results described in the following sections suggest that the factors that influence intercultural communication and the development of intercultural competence during a camp program are related to interaction factors during their experiences, analysis and comparison skills, and attitudes. In the next chapter a more detailed description will be given after following these steps how it was possible to

distinguish in the responses the results and the relationship with this study, subsequently the advantages and disadvantages during intercultural interaction in summer camp programs.

#### **4.1.1 Interaction factors**

During the participants' experience, they faced situations in which the interaction was complicated or challenging due to different factors, whether linguistic, attitude, or lack of knowledge of the culture with which they had contact. Participant Ara mentions when asked about some difficulty during his experiences in camp programs:

*“There are cultural differences because there are always many people in the camps, not only Mexicans and Americans, there are also Europeans, Asians, and so everyone has a different culture and sometimes we don't all make a “match.” But in the end we all try to get along with each other to create a good atmosphere.”*

This response shows that the students were able to have direct contact with what cultural and linguistic diversity is in a real context with people from different countries. As mentioned in the theory, having awareness and knowledge about cultural and linguistic diversity in the world provides us with the ability to understand and act appropriately. Diversity makes students aware that there are

differences not only in language, but also in thought, behavior, values, etc. In addition to being able to learn and teach our own culture, making the interaction a deeper connection.

#### **4.1.2 Cultural factors**

Other factors found in the interview results are cultural factors during the interaction, such as behaviors, habits and people in general from a culturally different society, influence the participants in the camps. The participants had the opportunity to go to another country, with different people, some of different origins and languages, such as Europeans and Asians, so it turned out that they dealt with new cultures, relationships and cultural diversity. And these mentioned elements eventually lead to the development of intercultural competence during the exchange process.

According to the results, the first aspect found was, above all, cultural differences:

Participant Aranza: *“The expressions are different, as well as their ways of being colder, I think the English especially, it is when you realize that we are different cultures and we must learn to interact to be able to coexist without problems.”*

Participant Montse: *“Then you see a difference in their way of speaking, their way of expressing various things, then you somehow gain knowledge of how*

*they speak, speed and pronunciation," she agreed.*

The participants at some point experienced a change in their previous perception of being in interaction with natives and people of other nationalities and cultures, for different aspects. However, they all had some impact on intercultural communication, as it was already shown that at a certain point during the exchange period it was negative and affected the development of intercultural competence. As mentioned in the section on theory, comprehension difficulties are mainly associated with the content of the speech, the nature of the linguistic material and listening not only to what is said, but also to what is not said. In summary, it can be said that what has been mentioned in the theory is supported by the experience of the participants who express the importance of developing intercultural competence to avoid inconveniences and misunderstandings that can cause stress.

#### **4.1.3 Factors that improve Intercultural Communication in camp programs (Skills)**

During the participants' experiences interacting with culturally different people, intercultural communication could be a challenge at the beginning. The participants who interacted with could be friendly but cold people. This discouraged the participant from wanting to continue interacting or relating to the environment. On the other hand, some foreigners had a certain difference with the participants and their culture gives rise to a certain desperation to be able



to express themselves and resolve the problem or misunderstanding.

*“It was a problem of discrimination... they mentioned that we did not know English... And also, there was mockery of the Spanish language”* participant Marta mentioned.

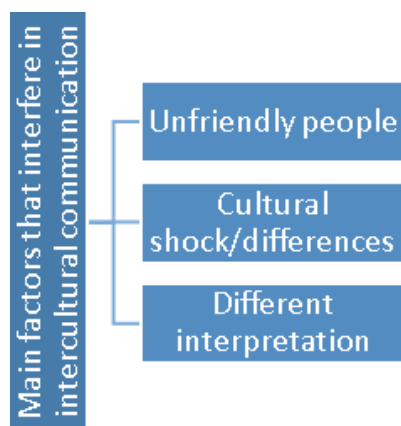
The interaction was a challenge for the participants and required an effort to solve, however, in the end it brought a benefit and helped them develop intercultural communication. As stated in the theory, developing intercultural competence is “changing the cultural perspective and appropriately adapting the behavior to the cultural differences and commonalities”, according to Hammer (2012). For example, lack of knowledge of certain linguistic aspects prevented them from understanding and expressing themselves fluently, which made them strive and motivate themselves to eventually improve and be able to provide solutions to the problematic situations they faced.

*“I improve in confidence... being in a real context allows you to know the fluidity and to a certain extent the expressions that they use which are not so formal and we are not used to them,”* Marta mentioned.

Montse agreed with the experience of having participated 3 times in camps: *“When you are in a real context you acquire a certain way in which they speak, speed, pronunciation... Now that I am doing my practices I can notice the*

*difference in speaking. Fast, fluid... express myself better”.*

**Figure 3: Main factors that interfere in the intercultural communication**



The diagram shows the main factors that interfere with intercultural communication according to the experience of participants who have participated more than once in camp programs. The people they interact with are usually unfriendly due to their colder and more serious manner. Cultural differences and shocks, their customs and behaviors in certain situations. And the different interpretations that cause misunderstandings. The following section mentions the advantages and disadvantages, specifically, of participating in a camp program.

And according to these responses from the participants in relation to how the benefits of learning a language and developing intercultural competence in a real context were explained in theory, having an approach to culture allows the learner not only to improve in the linguistic and comprehension aspects, but also

allows the student to have knowledge of cultural diversity, improve their intercultural interaction skills and have attitudes that allow them to function in any situation.

#### **4.1.4 Advantages and Disadvantages**

The factors that influence intercultural communication during the camp program have already been mentioned, which are mainly: personality differences, behavior, cultural differences, differences in interpretation that lead to misunderstandings, as well as language barriers. However, it is important to know in what way these factors played a positive or negative role in relation to intercultural communication. The data revealed that some factors functioned as a motivation for the participants to make an effort and improve their communication with native speakers. And on the contrary, some data decreased their interest in obtaining more knowledge or interaction with the culture of the country of the camp program. According to the theory, interculturality is an essential part of the learning process and the development of intercultural competence. Being in an environment where a diversity of cultures coexist is sometimes stressful, since each individual has a different cultural identity, that is, thoughts, behaviors and different realities. Therefore, students have to make an effort to be able to communicate and behave appropriately, adapting and learning to solve their difficulties. Thus, by recognizing the advantages and disadvantages during your experience you can improve your development in

your ability to develop knowledge, skills and attitudes to be effective in your communication with culturally different people.

**Table 2: Advantages and Disadvantages of participating in an camp program**

Advantages	Disadvantages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Own research to understand native people</li> <li>• Learn from culturally different people</li> <li>• Inclusion of the people around them</li> <li>• Corrections in the language by the people around them</li> <li>• Motivation to listen to native speakers</li> <li>• Get motivated to practice the language through different academic or work activities</li> <li>• Improve both formal and informal language</li> <li>• Avoid the use of the Spanish language</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of linguistic and cultural knowledge</li> <li>• Unfriendly people</li> <li>• Contact with Spanish speakers</li> <li>• Stress for not understanding or being able to express</li> <li>• Feeling misunderstood</li> <li>• Culture shock</li> <li>• English level</li> </ul>

This table provides evidence how advantages and disadvantages have value in intercultural competence. These advantages and disadvantages may influence their development of skills, motivation and effort to analyze and understand the behaviors and expressions of culturally different people. In addition, they may influence the participants' attitude to resolve misunderstandings. In conclusion, the presence of these factors during the international exchange process influenced intercultural communication, and although the experiences of the participants were different, in the end these

domains served to motivate them and helped or interfered in some way.

## **4.2 Discussion of the results**

Once the analysis of the results was carried out, we were able to find those factors that influence intercultural communication during the period in which the students participate in the summer camps. These factors were interaction factors, those related to culture (related to people's habits and ways of being and thinking) and those factors that interfered with achieving intercultural communication and thus developing intercultural competence in a real context. In the results it was evident that some of the factors had a positive impact, a utility in the participants from the beginning, such as the use of the Target Language and being corrected by native speakers. It is a fact that the participants seek to immerse themselves in a context different from the one of origin in which they can develop and communicate fluently.

On the other hand, there were other factors that were a constant obstacle to the development of intercultural communication, such as the occasional use of Spanish with other Hispanic students. Although there were some factors that may have been a challenge or a problem for the participants, some were a motivation to improve their communication and comprehension skills. For example, the lack of cultural or linguistic knowledge, accents, vocabulary, expressions or even contractions, but despite everything they felt motivated to work hard and gain

confidence. Each factor and situation had an impact on the development of intercultural competence in the participants and certainly on the development of the Target Language of the students once they returned to Mexico, although perhaps not to a great extent. As mentioned in the section on intercultural communication, "learning to communicate in an additional language involves developing an awareness of how culture intersects with the language each time it is used" (Köhler, 2003). Thus, unconsciously the students made an improvement in their development of skills to communicate in a deeper intercultural way that would allow them to understand other people.

After obtaining and analyzing the results of the instrument (structured interview), the research questions were answered taking into account the theory provided in the chapter on the theoretical framework, the results found in the interview, and the opinion of the researcher.

### **1. How useful was participating in a summer camp to develop intercultural competence?**

In recent years, English is considered and accepted by most people as an international language, so knowing how to communicate in this language is an essential skill, especially in a work environment such as the one in which participants in summer camps work. From my own point of view, this study makes me consider that language without taking into account knowledge of culture is nothing and, in the same way, there is no culture without language, and not having knowledge of it is not recognizing cultural and linguistic diversity. If students are to learn English in order to communicate more effectively, schools

and institutions have to develop and implement English teaching techniques with culture courses. Carrying out a practice in which both culture and language can be taught can make English learners understand more deeply the cultural background of the language and, therefore, learn the language itself. Grammar rules, vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation can be learned during English classes, phrases, idioms and accent pronunciations can also be learned during camp programs, but only through a deeper study of the culture will students be able to learn the cultural ties of the language they learn, even without going directly to another country.

In other words, summer camps are not only useful for putting language knowledge and skills into practice, not only being able to literally understand what a speaker of the language of interest is saying, but also, understanding other points of view and ways of being. And according to the findings in the responses of the participants of this study, interacting with culturally different people is often one of the complications and decreases the interest in the culture of the language being learned precisely because of the cultural differences. However, it also forces the speaker to work hard and develop skills (e.g. analyzing misunderstandings, interpreting) and attitudes (e.g. accepting cultural differences, empathy) that help him or her cope with any difficult situation or misunderstanding.

**2. What factors influenced students to improve intercultural communication skills upon participating in a summer camp program for the**

**first time?**

The results of the instrument show, in a way, that learning languages is learning a culture and as a language learner, one obtains in one way or another the knowledge of the culture of the language being learned. However, it is important to recognize and be aware that as a learner one should not settle for the previous knowledge that one has in English classes if one wants to communicate in a real environment with culturally different speakers. The participant Montse mentions from her perspective that having some knowledge of the culture of the language is important because it is a way of preparing to act and communicate correctly with the people with whom one is going to interact. For this reason, it is important to recognize the factors that influence students to improve their intercultural communication in contexts such as participating in a summer camp. In this study, it is mainly factors related to interaction that make them open their minds to understand beyond the words, but what is really transmitted between the lines. Cultural factors during communication such as values, customs, habits and behaviors of people. The negative factors that can be faced are misunderstandings, linguistic barriers and cultural differences.

All students and teachers should be aware of learning the culture of the language being learned and make the most of it to sharpen the cultural awareness of the student. It means that the student has the advantage of broadening his perspectives of the world and also sharing his ideas. In being an “intercultural speaker” as Bryam (1997) mentions in his article. So, the student as an intercultural speaker, becomes someone who can read and understand texts of all



kinds, for example: linguistic, visual or digital, in a critical and comparative way with his previous knowledge and his way of seeing as a speaker of a different language and coming from a different context (country), analyzing its meaning in its context and interpreting it. Finally, I can say from my point of view, cultural knowledge leads to a better understanding of cultural habits and expectations in one way or another. And on the other hand, in the aspect of a target language, improve your linguistic skills (vocabulary, pronunciation, listening and reading comprehension). Furthermore, it seems to help create a contextualized learning environment that is more relevant to learning about English culture primarily for LEI students than simply learning grammatical structures.

In summary these findings were also exemplary of the concepts discussed in the theory and how it is supported by these experiences. Students go through difficulties in communicating and interacting properly, and these factors mentioned influence their communication, help them learn to improvise and strive to understand the other. Being intercultural is more than just knowing another culture, it is learning to understand how one's own culture shapes one's cultural identity and the world. It provides opportunities to expand your knowledge, develop your intercultural interaction skills, and change your attitude toward cultural differences.

### **4.3 Conclusions**

This chapter presents a conclusion of the results after having applied the

structured interviews as well as having presented the results found within the research answering the research questions. The results show support for the theory of the study. Participants in a real context such as a summer camp in another country with culturally different people face complicated situations that make interaction and communication a challenge. However, they are somehow aware that learning a language requires more than just linguistic skills but also understanding cultural aspects, understanding those aspects to communicate successfully with native speakers by putting themselves in the other's place. And thus, developing skills, acquiring attitudes and knowledge that will make them value their cultural identity and interact with others to be able to communicate not only linguistically, but to have intercultural communication. This knowledge is not fully represented through information bases such as books or watching videos, it is in expressions or situations of daily life in the context of the language, in a real context, in this case in the country of the United States. In the next chapter, the final conclusions of the general results of the study on the usefulness of intercultural competence for effective communication in summer camps will be given.

## **CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY**

This chapter presents a summary of the results and the most notable ideas after having applied the interviews answering the research questions. In addition, the implications of the study are explained and why; also the limitations that arose throughout the research process. Finally, some guidelines are provided for future research related to the topic of intercultural competence.

### **5.1 Limitations of the study**

In general, throughout the development of this research some inconveniences were found. Some of the most important limitations faced were the following. In the first place, the lack of time of the participants to carry out the structured interview, an exception had to be made to one participant and a questionnaire was sent to him with the same interview questions to obtain results. The second limitation is related to the results found with the two participants, the experiences had several differences because the situations vary, so it was difficult to organize

One of the main concerns when developing this research was to emphasize the usefulness of intercultural competence in learning the English language, in other words, about the results. Finally, another limitation was to identify in the answers obtained from the instrument to answer the research questions. However, it is expected that the results of this research will be useful

for most of the students of the Faculty of Languages, BUAP.

## **5.2 Directions for further research**

One of the main concerns when developing this research was to emphasize the usefulness of intercultural competence in learning the English language, in other words, about the relationship that exists between culture and learning a foreign language, such as learning the culture helps in the interaction with native English speakers, in this case mainly from the US. It focused only on students from camp programs in Mexico, but there is still a lot of extensive information on this point, and there is the possibility of expanding the study with exchange participants from the university. At the same time, it would be productive and useful to continue this research with Mexican students who have had experience of participating in exchange programs in other English-speaking countries such as England to find out if there are variations in the advantages or disadvantages during their stay.

Also, a more extensive study that could include the participation with a greater number of students to participate in the interview. In addition, the data was only collected by questions and answers, so that in future research related to this topic more instruments may be available. For example, a narration that would provide more information about the experiences of the participants about some situation during the exchange program. But, in the meantime, it is hoped that this study adds to part of the research that has been done regarding the area of culture

and specifically more to that of intercultural competence and communication, and likewise, provides some ideas that may be useful for students looking for an exchange program.

### **5.3 Final conclusions**

The purpose of this research was to deepen the experiences during a camp program of some students and, based on this, emphasize the usefulness of intercultural competence in order to have a higher level of communication. Likewise, to know what are the cultural factors that influenced during their interaction with culturally different speakers? And, once the factors have been identified, analyze whether those factors served as a motivation or were an obstacle to the effectiveness of intercultural communication. Finally describe the benefits obtained by developing intercultural competence during and once they returned to Mexico. The theoretical framework of this research was based on studies on Culture, Interculturality and the Benefits of learning a language in a real context, with authors such as Bryam (1997), Deardorff (2009), and Mulder (2011). With these theoretical bases, it was possible to make an analysis and have a theoretical basis for the analysis of the results.

The research approach is qualitative, so the structured interview was the instrument selected to obtain the results. The participants were mainly chosen who had participated in summer camp programs more than once. Once the

analysis was done, the results of the three participants allowed to answer the two research questions. And it can be concluded that there are mainly interaction factors such as accents, attitudes or lack of knowledge about other cultures, cultural factors such as habits and factors that caused a challenge for the students but at the same time made them develop skills, take different attitudes and learn new cultural knowledge. In any case, each factor and each situation had an impact on intercultural communication and, of course, influenced their development of intercultural competence. The students are aware that being in a real context such as a summer camp in another country and interacting directly with culturally different people not only improves the literal understanding of what they say in the language, but also the understanding of behaviors, so they are able to communicate and act correctly in any type of situation. Finally, I consider that developing knowledge about beliefs, experiences and values, understanding the behaviors and attitudes of the people we surround ourselves with allows us to communicate more fully and competently, which in turn will benefit your academic, work and social life. Having the ability to adapt and work well within a global environment and overcome stereotypical relationships.

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## APPENDIX A

### Questionnaire

#### Información General de los Participantes en las Entrevistas y Observaciones

The usefulness of summer camp programs for LEI students to develop intercultural competence  
for effective communication

Nombre \_\_\_\_\_

Correo electrónico \_\_\_\_\_

Teléfono celular \_\_\_\_\_

Semestre \_\_\_\_\_ Edad \_\_\_\_\_ Sexo \_\_\_\_\_

Por favor contesta las siguientes preguntas

1. ¿Cuántos años has estudiado inglés formalmente? 1-3 - 4 -5 - 6-7- 8-9 más de 9

2. ¿Ha participado en un programa de campamento de verano? Si es así ¿Cuántas veces  
has participado?

¿Dónde?

¿Cuánto tiempo?

3. ¿Has vivido en Estados Unidos o en otro país de habla inglesa? Sí No

De ser así, ¿dónde y por cuánto tiempo? \_\_\_\_\_

**4. ¿Diariamente tienes oportunidad de hablar inglés con hablantes nativos o con mucha fluidez en inglés (sin contar a tus maestros)? Sí No**

**¿Aproximadamente qué porcentaje del día pasas hablando en inglés? \_\_\_\_\_ %**

**5. ¿En promedio, cuánto tiempo pasas hablando inglés fuera de la clase con hablantes nativos o con mucha fluidez en inglés?**

**Normalmente ¿cuántos días a la semana? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7**

**Normalmente ¿cuántas horas al día? 0-1 -2 -3 - 4-5 más de 5**

**6. ¿Cuánto tiempo pasas hablando inglés con tus maestros?**

**Normalmente ¿cuántos días a la semana? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7**

**Normalmente ¿cuántas horas al día? 0-1-2 -3- 4-5 más de 5**

**7. ¿Cuánto tiempo pasas hablando inglés con tus compañeros de clases?**

**Normalmente ¿cuántos días a la semana? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7**

**Normalmente ¿cuántas horas al día? 0-1-2 -3- 4-5 más de 5**

**8. ¿Cuánto tiempo pasas leyendo periódicos, revistas o libros en inglés fuera de clases?**

**Normalmente ¿cuántos días a la semana? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7**

**Normalmente ¿cuántas horas al día? 0 0-1 1-2 2-3 4-5 más de 5**

**9. ¿Cuánto tiempo pasas escuchando música en inglés?**

**Normalmente ¿cuántos días a la semana? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7**

**Normalmente ¿cuántas horas al día? 0 0-1 1-2 2-3 4-5 más de 5**

**10. ¿Cuánto tiempo pasas viendo películas, programas de televisión o videos en inglés?**

**Normalmente ¿cuántos días a la semana? 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7**

**Normalmente ¿cuántas horas al día? 0 0-1 1-2 2-3 4-5 más de 5**

## APPENDIX B

### FORMATO DE CONSENTIMIENTO PARA PARTICIPANTES EN LAS ENTREVISTAS

#### Introducción

**Mi nombre es Ana Maria Diaz Sirio. Actualmente llevo a cabo una investigación para mi tesis en la Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés (LEI) en la Facultad de Lenguas y me gustaría invitarte a participar en este estudio.**

#### Propósito

Los objetivos de este estudio son

#### Objetivo General

Determinar cómo la experiencia de trabajo en campamentos de verano y la interacción cultural influye en la efectividad de la comunicación intercultural de los estudiantes de LEI.

#### Objetivos Específicos

- 1) Determinar qué tan útil fue participar en un campamento de verano para desarrollar la competencia intercultural.
- 2) Identificar qué factores influyeron/jugaron un papel en la mejora de las habilidades de comunicación intercultural al participar por primera vez en un programa de campamento de verano.

Si aceptas participar en este estudio se te pedirá

1. Participar en responder un cuestionario individual para las cuales usted- te reunirás conmigo en el lugar de su elección de la Facultad de Lenguas por máximo 30 minutos.

- Hablarás de tu experiencia en campamentos de verano.

#### Confidencialidad

La información recolectada será usada para fines de investigación, ni tu nombre o alguna otra información que pueda identificarte será utilizada en cualquier publicación o presentación de los resultados del estudio. Toda la información recolectada para este estudio será confidencial. Se utilizará un seudónimo cuando me refiera a ti.

#### Riesgos y beneficios

No hay riesgos conocidos por participar en este estudio.

#### Participación voluntaria

La participación en este estudio es voluntaria. Puedes negarte a participar, contestar cualquier pregunta o retirarte del estudio en cualquier momento sin que afecte en tus estudios en la Facultad de Lenguas.

#### Preguntas

Si tienes preguntas acerca de este estudio, contacta a Ana Maria Diaz Sirio  
azusenaandl@gmail.com o a mi teléfono de celular 2461901992

Esta carta de consentimiento te pertenece y servirá como referencia en un futuro.

Firma (Formato basado en Despaigne, 2013)



## APPENDIX C

### Structure interview questions

The usefulness of summer camp programs for LEI students to develop intercultural competence  
for effective communication

**El propósito de este cuestionario es recopilar información sobre su experiencia durante su programa de campamento. La información de este cuestionario se utilizará únicamente con fines de investigación y se mantendrá confidencial, al igual que su nombre.**

**Gracias por su participación.**

1. ¿Cómo mejoraron tus habilidades comunicativas en inglés la interacción en un contexto real?  
(comprensión cultural).

2. Cuénteme sobre un momento en el que la falta de comunicación afectó su desempeño laboral.  
(Interacción en el trabajo)

(Piense en un momento en el que la comunicación podría haber sido mejor en el lugar de trabajo y explique la situación, la tarea, la acción y el resultado, incluyendo cómo una mejor comunicación podría haber llevado a mejores resultados). ¿Pudo analizar que este malentendido se debió a diferencias culturales? / ¿Podrías explicar este malentendido?

3. Cuénteme sobre algún momento en el que tuvo dificultades para colaborar con un miembro del equipo en su lugar de trabajo. (Debido a la diferencia cultural).

4. ¿Puedes hablarme de alguna ocasión en la que aprendiste algo nuevo para completar una tarea

en la que la comunicación era difícil? (Debido a la diferencia cultural)

5. ¿Lograste desarrollar un sistema de interpretación que te permita percibir las características particulares de una cultura? (por ejemplo, significados, creencias, prácticas culturales, etc.)

6. ¿Has tenido una experiencia en la que tuviste que dejar de lado tus valores y creencias culturales para comprender una forma cultural?

7. Durante tu experiencia en el campamento de verano, ¿pudiste identificar (o reconocer) préstamos o palabras de origen internacional o regionalismos?

8. ¿Puedes comparar tipos de habla en diferentes idiomas?

9. ¿Hubo ciertos momentos durante el programa del campamento en los que sentiste que no podías expresarte plenamente?

10. Cuéntame en algún momento, ¿solicitaste ayuda a la hora de comunicarte? ¿Cómo influyó la actitud de los lugareños hacia usted en el desarrollo de su inglés?

11. De la siguiente lista, elige los factores/situaciones que permitieron que mejoraras tu

a. habilidad de comunicación

Presentación de ideas (claridad y concisión)

Comunicación verbal

Comunicación no verbal

Improvisación

Escucha activa

Retroalimentación (Feedback constructivo)

Resolución de problemas

Adopción de la perspectiva del otro

b. comprensión intercultural

Conciencia de los diferentes valores y creencias

Empatía

Flexibilidad

Apertura mental

Sensibilidad cultural

Actitud crítica

Tolerancia