

The development of Transcultural Competence in a
multilingual and multicultural university classroom

A case study from a social interaction perspective

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Abstract

With a social interaction perspective, this research investigates the development of Transcultural Competence in a *multi-dimensionally internationalized* university classroom. Adopting a mixed-method approach and a longitudinal design, it aims to explore if, and to what extent, first-year undergraduates increase their Transcultural Competence – as regards attitudes, sensitivity, and identity – during one academic year and to determine the impact of in-class intercultural social networks in such a process. Results reveal that the internationalized environment *per se* does not foster the development of Transcultural Competence; still, students from the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom show a higher degree of Transcultural Competence than those in lesser internationalized ones. Moreover, meaningful, intimate intercultural interactions are crucial in such a development, and they may happen spontaneously if students enact their agency. The intercultural experience emerges as highly individual, and five patterns of the interaction between intercultural relationships and Transcultural Competence are detected. This study joins the call for widespread intercultural education and the implementation of interventions in this respect.

Keywords: global identity; intercultural interaction; intercultural sensitivity; intergroup contact; international posture; internationalization; linguistic cosmopolitanism; social networks; transcultural competence.

Resum

Amb un enfocament interaccional, aquesta investigació indaga el desenvolupament de la Competència Transcultural en una aula universitària *multidimensionalment internacionalitzada*. Adoptant una metodologia mixta i un disseny longitudinal, l'objectiu és explorar si, i fins a quin punt, estudiants de primer any de grau augmenten la seva Competència Transcultural – pel que fa a actituds, sensibilitat i identitat – durant un curs acadèmic i determinar l'impacte de les xarxes socials interculturals a l'aula en aquest procés. Els resultats revelen que el context internacionalitzat per si no propicia la Competència Transcultural; tanmateix, els estudiants de l'aula multidimensionalment internacionalitzada mostren un grau més elevat de Competència Transcultural que els de les aules menys internacionalitzades. A més, les interaccions interculturals íntimes són decisives en aquest desenvolupament, i poden produir-se espontàniament si els estudiants posen en joc la seva agència. L'experiència intercultural es revela altament individualitzada i emergeixen cinc patrons de la interacció entre les relacions interculturals i la Competència Transcultural. Aquest estudi s'uneix a la crida per a una educació intercultural generalitzada i la implementació d'intervencions per a aquest fi.

Paraules clau: competència transcultural; contacte intergrupals; cosmopolitisme lingüístic; identitat global; interacció intercultural; internacionalització; postura internacional; sensibilitat intercultural; xarxes socials.

Resumen

Con un enfoque interaccional, esta investigación indaga el desarrollo de la Competencia Transcultural en un aula universitaria *multidimensionalmente internacionalizada*. Adoptando una metodología mixta y un diseño longitudinal, el objetivo es explorar si, y hasta qué punto, estudiantes de primer año de grado aumentan su Competencia Transcultural – con respecto a actitudes, sensibilidad e identidad – durante un curso académico y determinar el impacto de sus redes sociales interculturales en el aula en dicho proceso. Los resultados revelan que el contexto internacionalizado per se no propicia la Competencia Transcultural; sin embargo, los estudiantes del aula multidimensionalmente internacionalizada muestran un grado más elevado de Competencia Transcultural que los de las aulas menos internacionalizadas. Además, las interacciones interculturales íntimas son decisivas en dicho desarrollo, y pueden producirse espontáneamente si los estudiantes ponen en juego su agencia. La experiencia intercultural se revela altamente individualizada y emergen cinco patrones de la interacción entre las relaciones interculturales y la Competencia Transcultural. Este estudio se une al llamamiento para una educación intercultural generalizada y la implementación de intervenciones con este fin.

Palabras clave: competencia transcultural; contacto intergrupar; cosmopolitismo lingüístico; identidad global; interacción intercultural; internacionalización; postura internacional; redes sociales; sensibilidad intercultural.

Table of contents

Acknowledgements	iii
Abstract	v
Resum	vii
Resumen	ix
Table of contents	xi
List of figures	xvii
List of tables	xix
Chapter 1 - INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 Purpose and significance of the study.....	4
1.2 Overview of the study.....	6
Chapter 2 -REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND FOCUS OF THE STUDY	9
2.1 Transcultural Competence as a theoretical approach	9
2.1.1 Interculturality or transculturality?.....	10
2.1.2 International Posture.....	18
2.1.3 Intercultural Sensitivity	20
2.1.4 Global Identity	22
2.1.5 Plurilingualism and Cosmopolitan stances.....	25
2.1.6 Operationalizing Transcultural Competence.....	30
2.2 Models of social (intercultural) interactions	31
2.2.1 Socialization Theory and Tertiary Socialization	32
2.2.2 Intergroup Contact Theory	34
2.2.3 Intercultural interactions in Higher Education	38
2.2.4 Social Networks mapping.....	46
2.2.5 Operationalizing Social Intercultural Interactions.....	51
2.3 Studies on Transcultural Competence and Intercultural Interactions in Higher Education	52
2.3.1 Studies on Transcultural Competence in Higher Education.....	53
2.3.2 Studies on Intercultural Interactions in Higher Education	66
2.4 Focus of the study	78
2.4.1 Research gaps	78

2.4.2	Research questions	80
2.4.3	Research hypothesis	81
Chapter 3 - METHODOLOGY.....		83
3.1	Research context	84
3.1.1	The Universitat Pompeu Fabra	84
3.1.2	The Global Studies degree.....	87
3.2	Participants	89
3.3	Research approach and design.....	94
3.4	Data collection: Quantitative instruments	96
3.4.1	Background Information questionnaire	97
3.4.2	Transcultural Competence questionnaires.....	99
	• <i>International Posture questionnaire</i>	101
	• <i>Intercultural Sensitivity scale</i>	102
	• <i>Global Identity scale</i>	103
3.4.3	Contact Generator.....	103
3.5	Data collection: Qualitative instruments.....	106
3.5.1	In-class observation	107
3.5.2	Semi-structured individual interviews.....	108
3.6	Ethical considerations	110
3.7	Data analysis	111
3.7.1	Quantitative statistical analysis	112
3.7.2	Social network analysis	114
3.7.3	Qualitative thematic analysis.....	117
3.8	Methodological limitations.....	119
Chapter 4 - TRANSCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN FIRST-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE CLASSROOMS.....		121
4.1	Transcultural Competence in a context of multi-dimensional internationalization: The Global Studies group	122
4.1.1	Profiling Global Studies students' background.....	122
4.1.2	Transcultural Competence of Global Studies students at the beginning of the academic year	131
4.1.3	Transcultural Competence of Global Studies students at the end of the academic year	133

4.1.4	Changes in Transcultural Competence of Global Studies students after one academic year	134
4.1.5	Transcultural Competence of Global Studies students and the variable of international friends.....	137
4.2	Transcultural Competence in a context of no multi-dimensional internationalization: The Control Group.....	138
4.2.1	Profiling Control Group students' background.....	139
4.2.2	Transcultural Competence in the Control Group at the beginning of the academic year	147
4.2.3	Transcultural Competence in the Control Group at the end of the academic year	148
4.2.4	Changes in Transcultural Competence in the Control Group after one academic year	149
4.2.5	Transcultural Competence in the Control Group and the variable of international friends.....	150
4.3	The impact of multi-dimensional internationalization on students' Transcultural Competence: A comparison of the Global Studies group with the Control Group.....	152
4.3.1	International Posture questionnaire	153
4.3.2	Intercultural Sensitivity scale	154
4.3.3	Global Identity scale.....	156

Chapter 5 - SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THEIR IMPACT ON TRANSCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN THE MULTI-Dimensionally INTERNATIONALIZED CLASSROOM..... 159

5.1	Social Networks as reported by students in the Contact Generator.....	161
5.1.1	Overview of the networks in the whole classroom.....	162
5.1.2	Three whole networks	164
5.1.3	Ingroup and outgroup friendships and their impact on Transcultural Competence	170
5.2	Transcultural Competence and trajectories of ingroup/outgroup ties as reported in students' interviews: Five patterns	179
5.2.1	Students with Transcultural Competence above the mean value and with tendency to outgroup ties	181
	• <i>Social interactions and classmates as affordances</i>	183
	• <i>Belonging to the local with a global perspective</i>	187
	• <i>Perceiving the class as divided into groups</i>	190
5.2.2	Students with Transcultural Competence above the mean value and with tendency to ingroup ties	193

•The role of family and previous intercultural experiences.....	195
•My identity cannot be limited to a single country.....	196
•It is not fair to choose English as an international language.....	200
•Preferring ingroup relationships in the valuable internationalized classroom	202
5.2.3 Students with Transcultural Competence under the mean value and with tendency to ingroup ties	206
•The Global Studies degree as the first international experience.....	208
•Giving value to heritage and local languages.....	210
•Oriented towards a localist identity	212
•Being afraid to interact with the outgroup	216
5.2.4 Students with Transcultural Competence under the mean value and with tendency to outgroup ties	220
•Moving as a triggering experience	222
•Interested in people, interactions, and plurilingualism.....	225
•I have no problems in interacting with my classmates, but... ..	228
5.2.5 Students who formed only ingroup ties: two atypical cases.....	230
•Similar personal and linguistic background.....	231
•Constructing identity: through comparison or adaptation?.....	233
•Two opposite in-class socialization experiences	235

Chapter 6 - DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS 241

6.1 The development of Transcultural Competence in first-year university students 241

6.1.1 Changes in students' Transcultural Competence in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom (RQ1)..... 242

6.1.2 Differences between the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom and lesser internationalized ones as regards students' Transcultural Competence (RQ2)..... 246

6.2 Intercultural interactions and Transcultural Competence in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom (RQ3)..... 250

6.2.1 The benefits of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom for exploring intercultural interactions and Transcultural Competence

6.2.2 In-class social networks and the process of homophily

6.2.3 Enablers and blockers in intercultural friendship development

6.2.4 The overall impact of intercultural interactions on Transcultural Competence

6.2.5 Five patterns of personal trajectories.....

 •Intercultural interactions as affordances for increasing Transcultural Competence.....

• <i>The influence of previous experiences in the development of a glocal, flowing identity</i>	273
• <i>Reinforcing a localist perspective during the first international experience</i>	275
• <i>The multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom as a mere academic space</i>	276
• <i>Going beyond the patterns: two antithetical cases</i>	278
6.3 Recommendations for Higher Education	280
6.4 Venues for future research	282
6.5 Concluding remarks	285
REFERENCES	291
APPENDICES	315
APPENDIX A – Transcultural Competence questionnaires	315
APPENDIX B – Consent letter for the Global Studies participants	318
APPENDIX C – Percentage of ingroup and outgroup ties for the three in-class networks and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires in T1 and T2 for each of the 23 interviewed students	320

List of figures

Figure 2.1 - The functional model for friendship patterns of overseas students (Bochner et al., 1977); from Spencer-Oatey & Franklin (2009: 157).....	41
Figure 2.2 - Coleman’s concentric circles’ representation of study abroad social networks; from Coleman (2013).....	42
Figure 2.3 - A three-stage ecological and person-in-context conceptual framework of intercultural relationship development; from Kudo et al. (2019).....	45
Figure 2.4 - Example of a <i>sociogram</i>	47
Figure 3.1 - Research design	95
Figure 3.2 - Example of instructions and items of the Transcultural Competence questionnaires (T1).....	100
Figure 3.3 - Example of an item with explanation from the Transcultural Competence questionnaires (T1).....	101
Figure 3.4 - Sample answers to the Contact Generator	106
Figure 4.1 - Gender and year of birth of Global Studies students who completed the Background Information questionnaire	124
Figure 4.2 - Birthplace and family place of origin of Global Studies students who completed the Background Information questionnaire	125
Figure 4.3 - Spoken and family languages of Global Studies students who completed the Background Information questionnaire	127
Figure 4.4 - Context of primary and secondary schooling of Global Studies students who completed the Background Information questionnaire	128
Figure 4.5 - Accommodation and previous intercultural experiences of Global Studies students who completed the Background Information questionnaire	129
Figure 4.6 – Global Studies students’ number of international friends and language of interaction in T1 and T2	130
Figure 4.7 - Boxplot of International Posture in T1 and T2 for Global Studies students	135
Figure 4.8 - Boxplot of Intercultural Sensitivity in T1 and T2 for Global Studies students	136
Figure 4.9 - Boxplot of Global Identity in T1 and T2 for Global Studies students.....	136
Figure 4.10 - School of Control group students who completed the Background Information questionnaire.....	139

Figure 4.11 - Gender and year of birth of Control group students who completed the Background Information questionnaire	140
Figure 4.12 - Birthplace of Control group students who completed the Background Information questionnaire.....	141
Figure 4.13 - Spoken and family languages of Control group students who completed the Background Information questionnaire	143
Figure 4.14 - Context of primary and secondary schooling of Control group students who completed the Background Information questionnaire	144
Figure 4.15 - Accommodation of Control group students who completed the Background Information questionnaire.....	145
Figure 4.16 - Number of international friends and language of interaction of Control group students in T1 and T2	146
Figure 4.17 - Boxplots of International Posture, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Global Identity in T1 and T2 for Control group students.....	150
Figure 4.18 - Boxplots of International Posture for the Global Studies students (GS) and Control group (CG) in T1 and T2.....	154
Figure 4.19 - Boxplots of Intercultural Sensitivity for the Global Studies students (GS) and Control group (CG) in T1 and T2	156
Figure 4.20 - Boxplots of Global Identity for the Global Studies students (GS) and Control group (CG) students in T1 and T2.....	157
Figure 5.1 - Visualization of the Studying network among the 33 respondents to the Contact Generator.....	167
Figure 5.2 - Visualization of the Leisure network among the 33 respondents to the Contact Generator.....	168
Figure 5.3 - Visualization of the Intimate network among the 33 respondents to the Contact Generator.....	169
Figure 5.4 - Intimate network in T1: Regression analysis between percentage of outgroup ties and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires	176
Figure 5.5 - Intimate network in T2: Regression analysis between percentage of outgroup ties and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires	178

List of tables

Table 3.1 - Number and percentages of Global Studies students who took part in the research, according to birthplace and gender	91
Table 3.2 – Percentages of participants of the Control group for each School	94
Table 3.3 - Instructions for filling out the Contact Generator	105
Table 4.1 - Gender and birthplace of Global Studies students who completed the Background Information questionnaire in T1	123
Table 4.2 - Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires at the beginning of the academic year (T1) for the Global Studies students: means, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation.....	132
Table 4.3 - Global Studies students who completed the Transcultural Competence questionnaires in T2, according to birthplace and gender	133
Table 4.4 - Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires at the end of the academic year (T2) for the Global Studies students: means, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation.....	134
Table 4.5 - Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires for the Global Studies students in T1 and T2: means, standard deviations, and statistical analysis ...	134
Table 4.6 – Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires for the Global Studies students according to participants’ International Friends in T1: means, standard deviations, and statistical analysis	138
Table 4.7 - Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires at the beginning of the academic year (T1) for the Control group students: means, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation.....	147
Table 4.8 - Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires at the end of the academic year (T2) for the Control group students: means, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation.....	148
Table 4.9 - Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires for the Control Group students in T1 and T2: means, standard deviations, and statistical analysis	149
Table 4.10 – Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires for the Control group students according to participants’ International Friends in T1: means, standard deviations, and statistical analysis	151
Table 4.11 - Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires for the Control group students according to participants’ International Friends in T2: means, standard deviations, and statistical analysis	152

Table 4.12 – Results of the International Posture questionnaire for the Global Studies students and the Control group in both timings (T1 and T2): mean, standard deviation, and statistical analysis	153
Table 4.13 - Results of the Intercultural Sensitivity scale for the Global Studies students and the Control group in both timings (T1 and T2): mean, standard deviation, and statistical analysis	155
Table 4.14 - Results of the Global Identity scale for the Global Studies students and the Control group in both timings (T1 and T2): mean, standard deviation, and statistical analysis	157
Table 5.1 - Number of ties and values of degree centrality of the Studying, Leisure, and Intimate networks in the whole classroom	163
Table 5.2 - Minimum and maximum values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires for the Global Studies students in T1 and T2: all respondents vs. respondents to the Contact Generator.....	165
Table 5.3 - General measurements of the structure of the three complete networks...	166
Table 5.4 - Percentage of ingroup and outgroup ties for the Studying, Leisure, and Intimate networks	171
Table 5.5 - Homophily: E-I index, rescaled E-I index, and p-value for the Studying, Leisure, and Intimate networks	171
Table 5.6 - Percentage of ingroup and outgroup ties for each interviewed student, with a distinct color for each group; sorted by decreasing ingroup and increasing outgroup ties	173
Table 5.7 - Studying network in T1: Regression analysis between percentage of outgroup ties and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires	174
Table 5.8 - Leisure network in T1: Regression analysis between percentage of outgroup ties and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires	175
Table 5.9 - Intimate network in T1: Regression analysis between percentage of outgroup ties and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires	175
Table 5.10 - Studying network in T2: Regression analysis between percentage of outgroup ties and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires	176
Table 5.11 - Leisure network in T2: Regression analysis between percentage of outgroup ties and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires	177
Table 5.12 - Intimate network in T2: Regression analysis between percentage of outgroup ties and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires	177
Table 5.13 - Interviewed students presenting a Transcultural Competence global value above the classroom mean value and a tendency to form outgroup ties	182

Table 5.14 - Interviewed students presenting a Transcultural Competence global value above the classroom mean value and a tendency to form ingroup ties	193
Table 5.15 - Interviewed students presenting a Transcultural Competence global value under the classroom mean value and a tendency to form ingroup ties.....	207
Table 5.16 - Interviewed students presenting a Transcultural Competence global value under the classroom mean value and a tendency to form outgroup ties.....	221
Table 5.17 - Interviewed students reporting only ingroup ties	231

Chapter 1 - INTRODUCTION

“In meeting with other lifeforms there are always not only divergences
but opportunities to link up”

Welsch (1999)

“Real dialogue isn’t about talking to people who believe the same things as you”

Zygmunt Bauman

Some decades ago, in the framework of his Socio-Cultural Theory, Vygotsky (1978) claimed that human development is a *socially mediated process*. He believed that through interaction with “more knowledgeable” or “expert” members of the society they live in, children get to acquire those cultural values and behaviors that will allow them to become active and integrated members of that society themselves.

Almost forty years later, we can still fall back on Vygotsky’s intuition to explain an individual’s learning process. However, today the picture is somewhat different and more multi-layered. On the one hand, we now know that learning and identity construction is a life-long process. Although embarking on such a journey as children, we keep acquiring and developing new values and beliefs, or negotiating the ones we already have, throughout our whole life. On the other hand, the effects of globalization are becoming more extensive and evident every day, and the world is smaller than it was once. The ease with which we communicate and move has strongly reshaped our reality through new technologies, immigration, exchange programs, and overseas working opportunities. As a consequence, societies, nations, and cultures have now blurrier and more context-changing boundaries.

Such a situation has often been interpreted in a negative key, suggesting that a possible outcome of globalization is an increasing homogenization, in which individuals and communities may lose their specificities and distinguishing characteristics. However, we can also look at it as an opportunity for *tertiary socialization* (Byram, 1989): interacting with people with very different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and learning from and with them. In fact, in a world permeated by multiculturalism, multilingualism, and transnational flows, we have the possibility to interact and share knowledge, values,

beliefs, and experiences with groups and individuals once considered “from the other side of the world” and take advantage of this new cultural baggage.

As a matter of fact, if the Intergroup Contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998) is correct, the continuous interaction with diverse individuals would change our vision of the world and lead us to reconsider the “other”, the “different”, whilst rethinking ourselves and our identity. Still, to engage with these circumstances meaningfully and fruitfully, we are required to reconsider our ability to interact in such contexts and develop new skills and attitudes, such as openness, flexibility, empathy, and suspension of judgment. In essence, in today’s world, to become “active and integrated members of the society”, we have to develop what has been labeled *Intercultural* or *Transcultural* Competence – that is, that set of skills, attitudes, competences, and behaviors that would allow us to successfully function in the transcultural society and carry out meaningful interactions with individuals coming from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Acknowledging that we are “social animals” living in a transcultural and interconnected world, two concepts become then crucial: Transcultural Competence and intercultural interactions. The present dissertation precisely addresses the relation between the two, believed to be highly intertwined: thanks to interaction with the culturally and linguistically different, we develop new competences; in turn, those competences make us more willing to interact transculturally. Actually, this is something I link to my personal experience.

As a citizen of a *first-world* nation of this era, I have had the privilege to undertake many travels and live in different places. My first valuable experience of transcultural contact was my six-month exchange program in Australia at the age of 16. I was hosted by an Australian family and regularly attended public high school, while dealing with learning a new language and a new culture. My theatre teacher at school had travelled all around the world and was then strongly committed to the aboriginal cause. She showed me how aboriginal people were mistreated while public institutions did nothing about it; aboriginal students were ghettoized even at school. She brought me to the biggest festival the aboriginal community organizes every year in a different part of Australia. At first, it was hard; I did not feel in the right place. Then, I realized how much I could have learned by sharing knowledge and experiences with those people. Suddenly it was not just about

myself and *la mia Italia*: I was a tiny point in a huge and colorful map. Ever since, when I think about my position in the world, a world map comes to my mind with tiny dots indicating the places – and the individuals – I can call “home” and unforeseeable lines connecting them. I often think about that experience in Australia as a critical turning point in my life.

Nowadays, I perceive myself as a plurilingual and pluricultural human being, who adopts highly *translanguaging* practice and ascribes to a *glocal* identity that “retains the local while embracing the global” (Jacob, 2013). Each journey gave me the chance to interact with very different individuals, and each interaction made me learn something and rethink and reinvent myself, contributing to who I am now. For this reason, the present research arises from a strong personal experience and the firm belief that we need more than ever to interact, debate, and work together.

Although being true that discourses on competences, interculturality, immigration, adaptation, and global citizenship are almost an urgency and every day in the spotlight in newspapers and politics' speeches, I believe that to effectively become *transculturally competent*, we should start from the micro-level. In natural sciences, measurements depend on a *frame of reference*, the system from which a phenomenon is observed. For instance, if X is on a train at 40 km/h, it will have a speed of 40 km/h for an outside observer, a farmer on a field, but for an inside observer, another passenger sitting next to it, X will be still. Thus, starting from the micro-level means that we – as unique individuals – should become able to change our personal “cultural frame of reference” and engage in meaningful interactions with the “other”, the “different” to understand and accept the differences instead of trying to smooth them over. Moreover, since interaction is a bi-directional process, both interactors will undergo some kind of transformation.

Accordingly, I believe that we cannot implement well-done policies for immigration and integration if we do not first research the outcomes of intercultural contact at the individual level. Hence, in this scenario, the educational context has a fundamental role, since it entails culture, politics, society, and language at a micro-level. Also, the majority of international mobility programs are born in schools and universities, and classrooms are now, more than ever, spaces of transcultural contact. Therefore, education has the

double role of promoting such programs while dealing with the multilingual and multicultural contexts they create.

Specifically, Higher Education reveals itself as an optimal context to study the relation between intercultural interactions and the development of Transcultural Competence. Although it is true that not everyone has access to tertiary education and universities are well-structured and supervised environments, they represent a micro-scale sample of the broader contemporary society: different profiles of individuals as regards their cultural and linguistic backgrounds are required to interact among them.

1.1 Purpose and significance of the study

Although being mainly prompted by economic reasons, the process of *internationalization* is impacting XXI-century higher education institutions all around the world, transforming them into growing intercultural and transcultural spaces. As a matter of fact, on the one hand, universities are fostering intercultural education cross-curricula (Krebs, 2020) and/or implementing interventions to enhance local students' intercultural competences (i.e. internationalization at home; Harrison, 2015), along with increasing the amount of courses offered in English-Medium Instruction (EMI; Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2013); on the other hand, they attract more and more students on mobility.

Actually, Study Abroad programs have a long history, existing from the beginning of the 20th century, they became widespread and officially recognized in Europe with the implementation of the Erasmus program in 1987. However, these students go to study in a foreign country for one or two semesters – i.e. *credit mobility* –, and often remain tourists during their experience. In contrast, nowadays, students may decide to move for the whole length of their degree – i.e. *degree mobility* –, aspiring to become active participants of the new social, cultural, and linguistic environment. Also, student population is much more diversified. Indeed, to the long-standing dichotomy between *international* and *local* students, we have to add students with heritage language(s) and culture(s) – who may have been born locally from immigrant families or moved with them during primary or secondary school –, as well as students who have gone through other kinds of mobility experiences prior to entering university.

What has not changed is that all these students will be required to interact among them, both in and outside the classroom walls. To fully take advantage of intercultural interactions, students will have to be or become enough transculturally competent; in turn, precisely those interactions may have an impact on students' intercultural experience and learning. However, existing literature underlines a lack of spontaneous interactions among students from diverse background, while also remarking that intercultural contact has a large positive effect on individuals' plurilingual and pluricultural attitudes, affective engagement in the interaction, respect of cultural differences, and the development of an identity affiliation oriented to the global. Hence, this dissertation attempts to bring further evidence on such a process, in order to have a clearer and deeper understanding of it.

Specifically, the present study is settled in the broader framework of the TRANSLINGUAM-UNI research project¹, aiming to investigate an educational context on the rise: what we have labelled a *multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom* (Trenchs-Parera, 2018; Trenchs-Parera & Pastena, 2021). Such a classroom is formed by students schooled locally – i.e. Catalans, who may or may not have heritage language(s) and culture(s) –, students schooled in other bilingual or monolingual Autonomous Communities in Spain, and students who went through schooling in foreign countries, both European and extra-European. Moreover, these students follow an internationalized curriculum, specifically focused on global topics and cultural issues, and receive full English-Medium Instruction teaching. In this sense, the degree as a whole may be seen as a “comprehensive international learning experience” and, thus, it becomes ideal for studying such a phenomenon.

The main aim of this research is to explore undergraduates' development of Transcultural Competence in a highly culturally and linguistically diverse environment – that is, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom – adopting a social interaction perspective. In other words, it treats the social networks developed by students in the classroom as an explanatory variable, in order to detect the impact of in-class intercultural interactions on the development of students' intercultural and transcultural competences

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throughout one academic year, and to what extent. Also, building on the bi-directional nature of contact, both local and international students will be considered as two sides of the same coin.

It is clear that, for a comprehensive understanding, we should take into account various aspects of such an environment, as well as consider individual differences that go beyond students' birthplace and context of schooling or the language(s) they speak. Moreover, complex constructs as Transcultural Competence need some kind of approximation to be investigated, both from a theoretical and practical point of view, as it would not be otherwise possible to categorize such unfixed entities accurately. Therefore, the present research will not attempt to give an exhaustive explanation of ongoing processes. Still, it aims to shed new light on a highly relevant phenomenon in contemporary society – that is, the interaction between intercultural contact and the development of Transcultural Competence –, which understanding is believed to be fundamental if we want to shift from an *internationalized* Higher Education to a truly *transcultural* and *intercultural* one.

1.2 Overview of the study

The present dissertation is structured in six chapters. This first Chapter serves as an introduction, and it presents the focus of the study, as well as both personal and social relevance for undertaking such research. Also, it includes the current overview of the chapters of this work.

Chapter 2 offers a review of literature on concepts, theories, and empirical studies on Transcultural Competence and intercultural interactions. Firstly, it differentiates the concepts of Intercultural and Transcultural Competence, explaining why I opt for the second and describing its main components under analysis: attitudinal, affective, identity, and linguistic. Secondly, the Chapter traces theories, methods, and findings on intergroup contact in the globalized society, specifically focusing on intercultural interactions among university students. Accordingly, the two concepts – Transcultural Competence and Social Intercultural Interactions – are operationalized for the purposes of the present research. Finally, research gaps are individuated, and three research questions are presented along with the research hypothesis.

Chapter 3 focuses on the methodology adopted in the present research. Firstly, it presents the wider context in which the study has been conducted and the participants, while also illustrating the research design and approach. Subsequently, the Chapter focuses on the data collection process, describing in detail both the quantitative instruments – i.e. the Background Information questionnaire, the Transcultural Competence questionnaires, and the Contact Generator – and the qualitative ones – i.e. semi-structured individual interviews and in-class observation. Also, some ethical considerations are presented, and the data analysis procedures employed are described. Finally, the Chapter presents the methodological limitations the study had to deal with.

Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 are devoted to the results of the present research through an analysis of the data collected by means of the above-mentioned instruments. Specifically, Chapter 4 focuses on the quantitative results of the Background Information questionnaire and the Transcultural Competence questionnaires, presenting the sociolinguistic and educational profile of the participants and their self-reported degree of Transcultural Competence at the beginning and the end of the academic year. Such results are presented separately for the students of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom and those in classes with a lesser degree of internationalization, and then compared. As for Chapter 5, it presents the social networks built by the students in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom for studying, leisure, and intimate purposes, as reported in the Contact Generator. Also, it focuses on the impact of intercultural interactions on Transcultural Competence quantitatively and qualitatively exploring students' personal trajectories and in-class experiences, triangulating the data collected by means of the Transcultural Competence questionnaires, the Contact Generator, the semi-structured individual interviews, and the in-class observation.

Finally, Chapter 6 presents a discussion of the results in relation to existing literature, in order to confirm prior findings and highlight the new ones of the present study. It is structured following the three research questions proposed. Also, some recommendations for enhancing intercultural interactions and the development of Transcultural Competence in higher education are presented. Lastly, the Chapter presents venues for future research, and some final conclusions are drawn.

Chapter 2 - REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND FOCUS OF THE STUDY

In this chapter, I present a review of the relevant literature on theoretical frameworks that will help to understand the two central issues under investigation in the present research: the construct of Transcultural Competence, as opposed to the most common one of Intercultural Competence (Section 2.1), and the types and roles of social intercultural interactions (Section 2.2). Accordingly, the two concepts will be operationalized for the purposes of the present research (Section 2.1.6 and Section 2.2.5). Moreover, as the focus of this dissertation will be on undergraduate students in the internationalized higher education space, recent empirical studies on local and international university students are also reviewed with the aim of exploring the development of what we call Transcultural Competence (Section 2.3) and the effects of intercultural contact (Section 2.4) in such an educational context. Finally, research gaps are identified in order to define the focus of the present study and the research questions it addresses (Section 2.5).

2.1 Transcultural Competence as a theoretical approach

In the present section, the concept of Transcultural Competence will be presented as a theoretical approach to investigate contemporary multilingual and multicultural higher education contexts. Transcultural Competence is here understood as a multi-dimensional and transdisciplinary construct adding new dimensions to the more well-known concept of Intercultural Competence. Thus, the two constructs will be defined by relying on their conceptualization in recent literature and underlining similarities and differences between them (Section 2.1.1). Subsequently, I will take into account the several concepts that will contribute to the construct of Transcultural Competence as understood in this study (Section 2.1.2 to 2.1.5). Finally, I will operationalize such a construct for the purposes of the present research, providing a definition and describing its components under investigation (Section 2.1.6).

2.1.1 Interculturality or transculturality?

The construct of Intercultural Competence (IC, from now on) is a common and well-known concept that has been widely used in several fields – such as communication, psychology, and education – during the last 50 years. It was introduced to account for those competences, skills, attitudes, and values that an individual ought to possess to deal with the *super-diversity* (Vertovec, 2006) of contemporary society, characterized by: globalization, increasing mobility, enhancement of technology, and world-wide communication. Due to the growing process of internationalization experienced by higher education, students are now required to develop specific competences – i.e. intercultural competences – that go beyond the academic contents, allowing them to relate and interact with such a super-diverse environment.

It is challenging to provide a unique definition of the IC concept, as it is complex and comprises multiples dimensions that are difficult to identify (Deardoff, 2006). Moreover, the terminology being used is various, making an accurate delineation of the construct a hard task. Indeed, IC has been referred to as encompassing one or some of the following: *global competence*, *cross-cultural awareness*, *cross-cultural adaptation*, *cultural competence*, *plurilingualism*, among others (Awad, 2019; Pogorelova, 2016). In fact, several different definitions have been provided by scholars in the last years, each one entailing a slightly different understanding of the construct.

Very broadly, IC could be defined as the ability to *communicate* effectively in an intercultural setting – i.e. when people of different cultures and languages interact with each other. However, this first definition would better apply to what has been called Intercultural *Communicative* Competence, the concept from which IC takes its origin. As a matter of fact, the notion of Intercultural Communicative Competence was first introduced in the field of Second and Foreign Language Acquisition (SLA or FLA) to overcome the Native-Speaker Model that stated that a learner should abandon its own cultural identity to adopt the one of the target culture (Byram, 1997; Kramsch, 1993, 1998). On the contrary, both Byram (1997) and Kramsch (1993, 1998) suggest that foreign language learners act as “mediators” between the two cultures. Thus, apart from the linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competences in the target language, they

should also acquire another competence, the intercultural one, in order to become *intercultural speakers* (Byram & Zarate, 1994). Byram (1997) describes an intercultural speaker as someone who is “able to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language [...] able to negotiate a mode of communication and interaction which is satisfactory to themselves and the other and [...] able to act as mediator between people of different cultural origins” (Byram, 1997: 70). In order to achieve this goal, the intercultural speaker has to be interculturally competent, an individual owning specific abilities. To explain and categorize such characteristics, Byram proposed the Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence, a multidimensional approach including five components, the *savoirs*: attitudes of openness and curiosity (*savoir être*), knowledge of the interlocutor’s culture (*savoirs*), skills of interpreting and relating with the other culture (*savoir comprendre*), skills of discovery and interaction (*savoir apprendre/faire*), and critical cultural awareness (*savoir s’engager*). Byram’s (1997) *Five Savoirs* model represents the first and most known model to account for IC, focusing explicitly on communicative competence in the context of foreign language(s) learning.

To respond to critiques, clarify definitions, and incorporate new developments and ideas, Byram (2020) has recently revised his model. Although the key concepts are substantially unaltered and the *Five Savoirs* are maintained, new emphasis is given to the *savoir s’engager* – i.e. critical cultural awareness –, as a fundamental asset in critical pedagogy. Thus, the scholar extensively addresses the importance of intercultural citizenship education in an increasingly diversified society, extending his audience from teachers to include all the other actors involved in language education. Several other models and frameworks have been proposed to account for IC, expanding and reformulating both the concept and its components.

For instance, Chen and Starosta (2000) developed a model strongly based on communicative competence. For them, Intercultural Communicative Competence comprises three closely related but separate concepts: *intercultural awareness* (cognitive), “the understanding of culture conventions that affect how we think and behave” (Chen & Starosta, 2000: 3); *intercultural sensitivity* (affective), individual’s “active desire to motivate themselves to understand, appreciate, and accept differences

among cultures” (ibidem); and *intercultural adroitness* (behavioral), “the ability to get the job done and attain communication goals in intercultural interactions” (ibidem).

To shed new light on IC’s controversial concept, intended as an expected outcome of internationalization, Deardoff (2006) conducted an interesting exploratory research. She used a questionnaire and a Delphi technique² to determine if, and to what extent, intercultural scholars and higher education administrators agreed on definition, components, and assessment methods of the IC construct. Although different definitions were proposed by the two groups, data revealed consensus on various aspects. Among the higher education administrators, very general definitions of IC were preferred compared to the ones detailing specific components of the construct, and the most commonly accepted definition was the one proposed by Byram (1997): “Knowledge of others; knowledge of self; skills to interpret and relate; skills to discover and/or to interact; valuing others' values, beliefs, and behaviors; and relativizing one's self. Linguistic competence plays a key role” (Byram, 1997: 34, as quoted in Deardoff, 2006: 247). Intercultural scholars were less consistent in providing a unique definition; among the numerous being proposed, the most commonly accepted one was IC as “the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations based on one's intercultural knowledge, skills, and attitudes” (Deardoff, 2006: 247). Both groups also identified various elements of IC, underlining the importance of awareness – both of one own's and others' cultures –, experiencing other cultures, and cognitive flexibility. Attitudes emerged as fundamental to intercultural competence: “openness, respect (valuing all cultures), curiosity and discovery (tolerating ambiguity)” (ivi: 255) are viewed as starting points for its development. In fact, both scholars and administrators underlined the importance of the process of acquiring IC.

More recently, Griffith, Wolfed, Armon, Rios, and Liu (2016) proposed a new framework based on an exhaustive review of the precedent literature. They focus on the cross-cultural interactions' process itself and split it into three stages at the individual level. Each stage acts as a dimension, including the skills that an individual ought to develop for successful

² The Delphi technique – or method – is a forecasting method in which experts in a certain field are required to complete a questionnaire or a survey in different rounds. After each round, experts are provided with anonymized answers of other members and can reevaluate their responses, in order to achieve consensus.

interaction. The stages are: *to approach*, involving “the characteristics that impact the likelihood that an individual will initiate and maintain cross-cultural contact voluntarily” (Griffith et al., 2016: 27) and including positive cultural orientation, tolerance for ambiguity, and self-efficacy; *to analyze*, capturing “an individual's ability to take in, evaluate, and synthesize relevant information” (ibidem), it includes self-awareness, social monitoring, perspective-taking/suspending judgement, and cultural knowledge application; and *to act*, incorporating “behavior determined by the previous dimension” (ibidem) and including behavioral regulation and emotional regulation.

At this point, it is worth noting that, regardless of the model and the terminology, all scholars seem to agree on grouping the components of the IC construct in three broad domains: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. The cognitive domain refers to the knowledge of other cultures' traits and features, including values, beliefs, norms, and interactional patterns. The affective domain involves emotions and interest towards cultural differences, openness, flexibility, respect for different points of view, and suspension of judgment. The behavioral domain contains the skills to effectively communicate in a different socio-cultural environment, such as tolerance for ambiguity, anxiety management, and adaptability (Pogorelova, 2016).

Nevertheless, it should also be remarked that, as mentioned, the concept of IC was first introduced with respect to Second and Foreign Language Learning and Teaching; hence, the focus is on *communicative* competence and on those cognitive, affective, and behavioral abilities that learners have to develop to face intercultural encounters (Awad, 2019). Indeed, in Deardoff's (2006) study, both intercultural scholars and administrators agreed on considering “effective and appropriate communication” in intercultural contexts as an essential element of Intercultural Competence.

Actually, Byram (1997) differentiates between Intercultural Competence and Intercultural Communicative Competence, where the former refers to the ability of an individual to interact with a non-native speaker in one's own language, while the latter applies to the ability “to interact with people from another country and culture in a foreign language” (Byram, 1997: 71). However, in both cases, the emphasis is on the effective and appropriate communicative skills that an individual has to acquire and enhance to act as a “mediator” between two specific languages and cultures. In this sense, Jacob (2013)

claims that the long-standing controversy between Native (NS) and Non-Native (NNS) speakers of a language (Firth & Wagner, 1997) is maintained. Byram's (2020) revised Model of Intercultural Communicative Competence takes into account that individuals may interact in a language which is not the native one of any on the interactors. However, the model is largely grounded in Second and Foreign Language Teaching and, thus, it focuses especially on language learners and education institutions.

In contemporary society, in return, communication between people from very different languages and cultures in a "foreign language" is a frequent and everyday phenomenon, both in and outside the educational context. These circumstances, as remarked by Jacob (2013), demand a remodeling of the current IC paradigm, as "it lacks the transcultural context of use of EIL and does not contemplate the notion of transnational identity" (Jacob, 2013: 59). Therefore, it seems that only recently the concept of Intercultural Competence is beginning to encompass the possibility that two individuals are both speaking in a foreign language or making use of plurilingual practices, and that those same interactors, in relating themselves to a bigger, imagined community, transform their personal and social identities.

As noted by Abdallah-Preteille (2012), when dealing with interculturality, the focus should shift from cultural differences to the construction of the *otherness*: how we interact and relate with the other "in a specific context and in a specific network of relationships", considering the other as a unique singularity. Indeed, contemporary society is characterized by the increasing presence of *otherness* and different cultures within the same community (Byram, 2008; Kramsch, 1998), and there is no need to go abroad to neither encounter interculturality nor develop specific competences for carrying out such interactions. Similarly, Pennycook (2006) suggests moving beyond the argument of homogeneity or heterogeneity of cultures, using the term *transcultural flows* to account for the movement of cultural forms across contexts, such as borrowing, blending, remaking, and returning between the local and the global.

Therefore, to relate with the globalized multicultural and multilingual world, individuals should develop a competence which includes: on the one hand, what Byram (1997, 2020) calls *critical cultural awareness*, "an ability to evaluate critically and on the basis of explicit criteria perspectives, practices and products in one's own and other cultures and

countries” (Byram, 1997: 53); and, on the other hand, the ability to recognize those cultural frames and construct a new identity in-between two or more cultures (Bennett, 1993; Crozet & Liddicoat, 1999), in order to become an *intercultural personhood* (Kim, 2001, 2008, 2015).

To account for such a competence, conveying both contact and communication in multicultural societies and the new identities that may arise, Jacob (2013) has suggested the term Transcultural Competence (TC, from now on). She draws on the work of Thompson (2011), who, pointing to the complex nature of interactions among people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, opposes the two prefixes – *inter* and *trans* – stating that the latter captures “a sense of multidirectional movement, flow and mixing” (Thompson, 2011: 207) that the former does not have, leaning on “notions of bi-directionality, stasis and separation” (ibidem).

Actually, the term TC was already in use in applied linguistics and foreign language education (Kramsch, 2010, 2013), being first conceptualized by Welsch (1999). This scholar contrasts the three concepts of interculturality, multiculturalism, and transculturality, remarking why the latter is more adequate when it comes to describing contemporary society. Interculturality acknowledges the existence of different cultures, but they are seen as “islands or spheres”, separated, and thus necessary leading to conflict. Multiculturalism is similar to interculturality in maintaining the traditional conception of cultures as “autonomous”, but it differentiates since the different cultures live in the same sphere or community. On the contrary, transculturality demolishes the barriers among nations and cultures as it stands for “a multitude of varying ways of life and lifestyles” that are “extremely interconnected and entangled” (Welsch, 1999: 197), allowing for new, hybrid cultural practices to arise. Transculturality is a consequence of three macro-level characteristics of today's cultures: (1) their increasing inner differentiation and complexity; (2) the new contexts and forms of interaction caused by migratory processes; and (3) the process of hybridization modern cultures undergo, blending characteristics, features, problems and conditions once considered deeply different. The same effects may be noted at the individuals' micro-level: “we are cultural hybrids” (ivi: 198). Thus, the attention is on diversity *per se*, as each individual is a result of different cultural references and possesses multiple identities.

An analogous distinction between *intercultural* and *transcultural* has been pointed out by Meyer (1991) at the communicative competence level. She distinguishes the transcultural level of interaction from the intercultural one as it involves a mediation and negotiation feature, implicating the “first-hand experience of the foreign culture or the opportunity to communicate with people from other, very different cultures” (Jacob, 2013: 7). Moreover, Meyer (1991) remarks that a competent *transcultural speaker* is able to address “principles of international co-operation and communication which give each culture its proper right and which allow the learner to develop his own identity in the light of cross-cultural understanding” (ivi: 143). Similarly, Ting-Toomey (1999) labels Transcultural Communication Competence the “transformation process connecting intercultural knowledge with competent practice” (ivi: 261), explaining that such a competent practice would allow “individuals to cross cultural boundaries flexibly and adaptively” (ibidem). Once again, the identity trait is seen as fundamental for cross-cultural mutual understanding.

Therefore, although both IC and TC address the issue of the interaction with “the other” – that is, an individual or group of people with different language(s) and culture(s) –, Transcultural Competence explicitly involve the idea of “movement, flowing”, while embracing the emergence of plurilingual practices and an additional component, identity. The purpose of the interaction does not rely solely on effective and adequate communication but the transmission of various aspects, could they be social, cultural, or personal. Hence, TC includes all those above-mentioned cognitive, affective, and behavioral dimensions that lead an individual to reconsider its view of the world and build a flexible identity, considering itself as “a member of a far wider and more complex group of people” (Jacob, 2013: 9).

Nonetheless, whether we decide to investigate IC or TC, one of the main problems is how to assess such competences. Scholars agree that they can be measured and that their assessment is crucial; still, there is no widespread consensus on how to do it (Fantini, 2009; Sercu, 2010). Two interesting and quite exhaustive reviews of assessment techniques used in the literature are proposed by Griffith et al. (2016) and Fantini (2009), while Matsumoto and Hwang’s (2013) review addresses the ecological validity and reliability of 10 available tests. The problem is that questionnaires and other quantitative

instruments often rely only on one component of the IC construct; hence, some scholars have attempted to develop more comprehensive measures. For instance, in Deardoff's (2006) study, both groups inquired – i.e. intercultural scholars and higher education administrators – agreed on a mix of quantitative (i.e. indirect) and qualitative (i.e. direct) measures as the best method to assess IC, with case studies and students' interviews as the best instruments. Indeed, a research conducted by Pruegger and Rogers (1994), aiming to compare indirect and direct assessment tools, revealed that qualitative data allowed for a more in-depth analysis of individuals' intercultural development.

Another problem connected to the assessment of IC or TC is that the manifestation and understanding of such a competence depend heavily on several other factors, such as individual characteristics, the specific context of the interaction (Borghetti, 2017), and the broader cultural context in which it takes place (Ting-Toomey, 1999). Indeed, several scholars pointed out that IC is often conceptualized and assessed from the perspective of westernized societies; however, recent research seems to suggest that the model may be extended to eastern societies as well (e.g. Jon, 2013; Peng & Wu, 2016).

Moreover, IC and TC are better understood in terms of a *process*: their components are not cut-off abilities, instead they lie on a continuum. On the one hand, this means that such a competence cannot be assessed solely at a certain point in time because it is constantly changing and evolving due to everyday experiences and interactions, nor it can be assessed exhaustively, as each individual may have different degrees of knowledge, awareness, and skills (Awad, 2019; Cross, Bazron, Dennis & Isaacs, 1989). On the other hand, the fact that IC/TC is a *process* entails that it can be acquired and developed through time, thanks to real-life intercultural experiences (Byram, 2020; Krajewski, 2011) or specific interventions (e.g. Bodycott, Mak & Ramburuth, 2014; Jon, 2013). This is precisely what the internationalized Higher Education (HE, from now on) aims to: educating and shaping *global citizens* – that is, citizens with competences, skills, and attitudes that would allow them to function in the transcultural environment successfully (i.e. *intercultural* or *global citizenship* education; Barrett, 2016; Byram, 2008, 2020; Guilherme, 2002; UNESCO, 2014).

2.1.2 International Posture

As it is the case of Intercultural Competence, also the concept of International Posture was firstly developed in the field of SLA and FLA, and specifically in relation to English. However, as we will see, it was introduced precisely to overcome the Native-Speaker Model, in order to take into account the transcultural makeup of contemporary society and, so, the internationalized higher education. Indeed, International Posture (IP, from now on) was conceptualized by Yashima (2002) to describe an individual's positive disposition towards different languages and cultures and an interest in global issues.

Drawing on the so-called socio-educational model on Second Language (L2) learning proposed by Gardner (1985), Yashima (2002) calls attention to the major role played by attitudes, motivation, and anxiety in communication and proficiency achievements when learning an L2. Gardner's (1985) well-known construct of *integrativeness* underlines the importance of a positive affective disposition towards the L2 culture, which is responsible for increasing the learner's motivation and, consequently, maximize the linguistic gains. Hence, an *integrative orientation* reflects the desire of an individual to learn an L2 to interact with the members of the L2 community, in order to identify with them. However, several scholars found Gardner's model inadequate when applying it to English as an International Language (EIL) learning contexts (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011; Yashima, 2009). In fact, often EIL speakers do not own affective involvement with any specific linguistic and cultural group; instead, their linguistic skills allow them to relate and identify with a broader, imagined community. Indeed, due to international business and immigration processes, nowadays English is used as a *lingua franca*, a key-language enabling interaction with any other person in the world about any topic (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Geoghegan, 2018; Jacob, 2013; Yashima, 2002, 2009; Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide & Shimizu, 2004; see also Section 2.5). Moreover, in English learning, *instrumental motivation* has also been found to be in action, and it is often difficult to separate the two aspects, as also shown by research on English-Medium Instruction (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2018; Henry & Goddard, 2015; Lasagabaster, 2016).

Consequently, Yashima (2002) introduced the concept of IP to illustrate the learner's attitude in relating itself to such an imagined community, defining IP as: “interest in

foreign or international affairs, willingness to go overseas to stay or work, readiness to interact with intercultural partners, and, one hopes, openness or non-ethnocentric attitude towards different cultures” (Yashima, 2002: 57).

Relying on the Theory of Possible Selves and the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011), in Yashima et al. (2004), the construct was operationalized, and an “IP questionnaire” was developed to make its assessment possible. The construct includes three components: *intergroup approach-avoidance tendency*, “an individual's tendency either to approach or to avoid interaction with people from different cultures” (Yashima, 2002: 58); *interest in international vocation and activities*, namely “how interested an individual is in an international career and living overseas” (Yashima et al., 2004: 129); and *interest in foreign affairs*, an individual's interest in international issues and global topics. In 2009, Yashima updated the framework by adding a fourth component to the construct: *having things to communicate to the world*, relying on the assumption that if you want to communicate with an international community, you should hopefully have something to talk about.

Yashima (2002, 2009) and Yashima et al. (2004) conducted several studies relating IP to the willingness to communicate (WTC) – “the tendency of an individual to initiate communication when free to do so” (Yashima, 2002: 55) – in order to account for differences in L2 acquisition and communication. They found out that the two concepts are strongly interrelated: the more international posture, the more willingness to interact. Similar results were obtained in other SLA contexts (Thurston, 2015). Moreover, the construct was extended and applied also to the Study Abroad context, showing that students tend to increase their International Posture after an experience abroad (Geoghegan, 2018; Lee, 2018). Thus, we can affirm that a favorable attitude influences interest and motivation towards intercultural contact (Krajewsky, 2011); and International Posture can be defined as the positive attitude toward the “international”, the favorable disposition and interest of an individual towards the transcultural, broader global community.

2.1.3 Intercultural Sensitivity

In the literature, the terms Intercultural Competence and Intercultural Sensitivity (IS, from now on) have often been used interchangeably, causing an overlapping of two different concepts (Pogorelova, 2016). As discussed above, IC refers to all those competences and skills that an individual should have to communicate and behave appropriately in an intercultural context, whereas IS could be better defined as “the ability to experience and discriminate relevant cultural differences” (Hammer, Bennet & Wiseman, 2003: 422).

This concept is closely related to Byram’s (1997) *critical cultural awareness*, the ability to step out from one’s own cultural frame of reference to consider and understand the one of the interlocutor(s) and behave accordingly. Indeed, Bhawuk and Brislin (1992), in reference to students undertaking a study abroad experience, remark that “to be effective in another culture, people must be interested in other cultures, be sensitive enough to notice cultural differences, and then also be willing to modify their behavior as an indication of respect for the people of other cultures” (ivi: 416). This set of qualities, that the authors label *intercultural sensitivity*, is considered the major outcome of the Study Abroad experience.

A well-known operational approach to IS is offered by Bennett’s (1986, 1993) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS). Such a model is based on two assumptions: the first one states that “people can be more or less sensitive to cultural differences” (Bennet, 2004: 72); the second one is that such “sensitivity” is not fixed, rather it can be developed. Accordingly, the model describes the move from *ethnocentrism* to *ethnorelativism*, considered as the two extreme points of a continuum, where an individual can be situated depending on its personal worldview in terms of cultural differences. The DMIS does not focus on the change of any particular knowledge, attitude, or skill; rather, it aims to integrate the cognitive, affective, and behavioral domains. Still, the model attempts to describe the “learner’s subjective experience of cultural difference” (Bennett, 1993: 22), which, as noted, applies more to IS specifically than to IC in general. Since the DMIS is developmental in nature, six stages could be identified – three ethnocentric and three ethnorelative:

- *denial*, cultural difference simply does not exist, an individual experiences its own culture as the single real one,
- *defense*, the existence of different cultures is recognized, thus maintaining an “us and them” worldview,
- *minimization*, specific cultural elements are minimized and experienced as universals,
- *acceptance*, cultural differences are perceived, an individual considers its own culture as one of many,
- *adaptation*, cultural differences are appreciated and considered in relation to an individual's own culture, enhancing communicative skills, and
- *integration*, cultural differences became essential for an individual's identity, integrating multiple and dynamic aspects.

It is worth noting that the point is to recognize cultural differences, not necessarily agree with others' worldviews. Building on the importance of assessment, Hammer et al. (2003) designed the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) to measure the degree of Intercultural Sensitivity in the framework of the DMIS. Nevertheless, as noted by Spencer-Oatey and Franklin (2009), Bennett's model involves several controversial issues, such as whether the transition through each stage is sequential and “whether people may (appear to) be at different stages with respect to different cultural groups and/or different issues” (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009: 160). Moreover, both *ethnorelativity* and *ethnocentrism* depend on the specific cultural context, as some cultural practices may be seen as unethical by a community but are common in another.

Another framework of reference for IS has been proposed by Chen and Starosta (2000). As mentioned, in their model of IC, Intercultural Sensitivity is the affective component of the construct. The authors consider such restriction of the concept necessary to develop a valid measure of assessment. Thus, IS is defined as “a person's ability to develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promote appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication” (Chen & Starosta, 2000: 4), being strongly associated with the “interaction aspect” of the transcultural experience. Interculturally sensitive individuals are not only conscious of the interactions and able to recognize and distinguish among culturally different

behaviors and feelings, but they also appreciate and respect the diverse opinions and ideas, even if they do not share them. Chen and Starosta (2000) identify six elements related to IS, which an individual should preferably possess: high self-esteem, to deal with ambiguous situations; self-monitoring ability, to behave appropriately; open-mindedness, in recognizing and accepting diversity; empathy, to share feelings and emotions with interactional partners; interaction involvement, comprising responsiveness, attentiveness, and perceptiveness; and non-judgment in interaction.

Based on this conceptualization, Chen and Starosta (2000) developed a scale to assess the degree of Intercultural Sensitivity, the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS), comprising five dimensions: *interaction engagement*, *respect of cultural differences*, *interaction confidence*, *interaction enjoyment*, and *interaction attentiveness*. The ISS was translated to German by Fritz, Möllenberg, and Chen (2002) and Fritz, Graf, Hentze, Möllenberg, and Chen (2005), and a confirmatory factor analysis was performed, assuring the validity of the assessment tool and the consistency of its dimensions.

2.1.4 Global Identity

As noted, the construct of TC takes into account that, in interacting in the global society, individuals may transform their identity. Consistently with the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and the post-structuralist approach, identity is perceived as flexible and fluid, and it may change in different contexts. A person can, thus, develop multiple and contextually dependent identities. Accordingly, identity is seen as “something we constantly renegotiate during the course of our lives” (Wenger, 1998; as quoted in Jackson, 2008: 45), as a result of the new experiences we may face, such as the encounter with new *communities of practices* and engaging in intercultural interactions and communication (Byram, 2008; Lubbers, Molina & McCarty, 2007; UNESCO, 2013). At the core of this view, there is the belief that when individuals enter culturally unfamiliar contexts, “they often experience some challenges to their senses of identity – their individual, interpersonal and community identities” (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009: 161).

Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) asserts that a determining factor in the construction of an individual's identity may be found in the relationship between *ingroups* and *outgroups*. Indeed, people tend to categorize themselves by ingroups – with whom they share characteristics or views – and acquire a “positive group distinctiveness” comparing their group to the other existing outgroups. However, in the global society, many new socio-cultural contexts are created, increasing the complexity of social categorization, as new groups arise and individuals may belong to several ingroups at once.

Similarly, Fougère (2008) introduces the notions of *place* and *space* to account for transitions in individuals' identities. *Place* is what gives us a sense of belonging, providing us with “a fixity and a familiarity” with which we feel identified. Conversely, *space* is where identities change and evolve, as it “is something one can explore, seemingly forever, and thus represents a possible emancipation from the pressure of one's place, in a way at once exciting, because of the promises of new experiences it offers, and worrying, because of its unknown character” (Fougère, 2008; as quoted in Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009: 163).

In the context of contemporary society, such “space” becomes the entire world since we move in *global spaces* (Block, 2006, 2011). Indeed, whether we consider globalization an economic, social, or political process, one of its most essential and unique features is the *transcendence of borders* – conceived not only as physical and territorial borders (Türken & Rudmin, 2013): we share, we have all access to the same information and objects, the same phenomena reach any part of the world, allowing for people from different cultures to share the same worldview and feel more similar (Nwafor, Obi-nwosu, Atalor & Okoye, 2016).

As a consequence, people may experience a “developmental change in their sense of identity” (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009: 164), as they no longer perceive themselves as solely in relation to their local culture or community, but to a much larger world. A multitude of concepts has described this phenomenon, often with overlapping meanings, such as *cosmopolitanism*, *internationalism*, *transnationalism*, *multiculturalism*, and *worldism* (Türken & Rudmin, 2013).

Actually, this process may have two opposite outcomes. On the one hand, it could bring to a new enhancement of a *localist* or *particularist* identity positioning, an increasing attachment to one's own nation and culture, and the emergence of stereotypes and prejudices as a way to "protect our group membership boundaries" (Ting-Toomey, 1999: 149). On the other hand, the ingroups are larger, they transcend the borders and connect people with a sense of belonging – here is when a *global identity* arises. Although there is no uniform consensus on the definition of global identity, all the conceptualizations seem to include the original Greek root meaning – *kosmopolitès* – of being "citizen of the world" and entailing: a sense of relating to the world, engaging with the others, ethical responsibility, and decentring (Türken & Rudmin, 2013; Vertovec & Cohen, 2002).

However, identity is better understood as a continuum – going from an extremely localist identity positioning to an absolute global one – on which individuals may place themselves differently and move across contexts and time, always in a flexible process. Indeed, people may find new and diverse solutions to manage their identities since, rather than implying the homogenization of cultures, cosmopolitanism highlights the importance of diversity and the new cultural practices emerging from contact (Jacob, 2013; Welsh, 1999). This new transcultural space leads to the creation of what Bhabha (1990) has called *third spaces*, in which *hybrid* identities may arise.

Similarly, Kim (2008) defines an *intercultural personhood* as "a constructive way of being a member of our increasingly integrated communities, both local and global [...] that conjoins and integrates, rather than separates and divides" (Kim, 2008: 360). As a matter of fact, features of a more personal and local-oriented identity do not have to be rejected; on the contrary, they can be integrated in an additive and dynamic manner, taking part in developing "an identity which retains the local whilst embracing the global" (Jacob, 2013: 8).

Several other labels have been proposed for such an identity positioning. For instance, in linguistic anthropology, a *cosmopolitan stance* describes the co-existence of a particularist identity position along with a more global one and that position is reflected in more or less plurilingual practices (Newman, Trenchs-Parera & Corona, 2019; Trenchs-Parera, Larrea-Mendizabal & Newman, 2014; Trenchs-Parera & Newman, 2009). Likewise, Arnett (2002) talks about "a bicultural identity that combines their local

identity with an identity linked to the global culture” (ivi: 774). Kramersch (1999) also remarks that such *bicultural identity* is fundamental for English learners in contemporary society. Ultimately, Robertson (1995) introduced the term *glocalization* to account for the “bi-directional flows of the global and the local” (Sung, 2014: 53), where the two spheres are involved in the process of simultaneous and mutual influence. In this sense, individuals embracing hybrid or dual identities are constructing and ascribing to a *glocal identity*: “a dynamic negotiation between the global and the local, with the local appropriating elements of the global which it finds useful, at the same time employing strategies to retain its identity” (Koutsogiannis & Mitsikopoulou, 2007; as quoted in Sung, 2014: 53).

2.1.5 Plurilingualism and Cosmopolitan stances

As explained above, the concept of Intercultural Competence was first introduced in the context of FLA and SLA, putting emphasis on the communication aspect of the intercultural encounter; hence, it is evident that language plays a major role in both the acquisition and the development of those skills, values, and behaviors that allow an individual to function successfully in the transcultural environment. Indeed, language is one of the main tools through which we experience other cultures, offering us the possibility to interact with diverse people, gain knowledge, develop intercultural sensitivity, and transform our identity.

Nevertheless, in research on IC, the focus is often on the language of the interaction and the linguistic resources available to the speakers involved, on account of the fact that the intercultural encounter takes place in a different language than the speaker(s)’ native one(s). In this sense, Intercultural Communicative Competence is conceived as an added dimension of communicative competence in a foreign language, implying “competence in the social and cultural practices of a community of which language is a large part” (Roberts, Byram, Barro, Jordan & Street, 2001: 26).

Shifting from Intercultural to Transcultural Competence demands widening the linguistic dimension of the construct to what, drawing from sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology, may be called Linguistic Cosmopolitanism (Newman & Trenchs-Parera,

2015; Newman, Trenchs-Parera & Ng, 2008; Trenchs-Parera & Newman, 2009). This term was initially introduced to account for Spanish/Catalan bilingual speakers who, regardless of their political positioning, manifest a stance opposed to the traditional ideology of one language - one people - one nation: they perceive active bilingualism as “a tool for social harmony because it shows a willingness to respect a group associated with another language” (Newman et al., 2008: 328). In the context of Catalonia, thus, both the local and the official languages become positively evaluated, and bilingual behavior is commonly accepted and widely practices.

As remarked by Woolard (2016), often there is a strict connection between local languages and the ideology of *authenticity* – “the genuine expression of a community or of a person’s essential ‘Self’” (Woolard, 2016: 22) –, and this is more so in the case of minority languages, perceived as fundamental to vehiculate social belonging and ethnic identity. Accordingly, young people see Catalan as strong trait of their linguistic identity, while it being also “a resource for the construction of their cosmopolitan selves” (Lasagabaster, 2017: 586).

In the globalized and transcultural society, however, the concept of Linguistic Cosmopolitanism may be extended in two different – yet strictly interrelated – directions. On the one hand, at the attitudinal or stance level, it may embrace not only favorable attitudes towards the local or the dominant language, but positive attitudes towards any languages and language varieties³. As a matter of fact, in recent years language attitudes have received growing attention (Lasagabaster, 2017). The feelings and beliefs people have towards languages in general or one language specifically are highly relevant in the development of interculturality and a transcultural mindset (Fernández-Costales, Lapresta-Rey, Huguet Canalís & González-Riaño, 2021). Similarly, a strong relationship has been found between International Posture – i.e. positive attitude towards the “international” – and willingness to communicate in another language – i.e. English – with members of a culturally different community (Lee, 2018; Thurston, 2015; Yashima, 2002, 2009; Yashima et al., 2004).

³ In linguistic anthropology, such an issue is conceptualized as *language ideology*.

On the other hand, at the practices level, Linguistic Cosmopolitanism may be extended to encompass not just active bilingualism, but also the use of English as an International Language and the emergence of both plurilingual and translanguaging practices. Actually, as mentioned, English is often at the core of the research on the development of TC. Indeed, English has a fundamental role in today's transcultural and globalized society: it is the international *lingua franca*, making English the world's most taught foreign language (Pennycook, 2017). In such a context, more than a foreign language, English has become a "tool for intercultural exchange" (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011), as it allows for interactions among people speaking very different first languages and coming from diverse cultural backgrounds – in essence, it gives individuals the opportunity to access, share, and negotiate knowledge building on common ground. Such English used in transcultural interactions "belongs to everyone who speaks it, but it is nobody's mother tongue" (Rajagopalan, 2004: 111). Thus, it is often referred to as *World English* (WE), *English as a Lingua Franca* (ELF), or *English as an International Language* (EIL) (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Crystal, 1998/2003; Jacob, 2013).

In reviewing the spread and change of English from both the linguistic and sociopolitical points of view, Brutt-Griffler (2002) recalls that one of the earliest definitions of EIL was offered by Smith (1977), who operationalized the term "*international language* as a language used by people of different nations to communicate with one another" (Brutt-Griffler, 2002: 5). Moreover, drawing from Smith (1987), she underlines the three main features of EIL:

- (1) There is no necessary relationship between speaking the language and embracing the cultural norms and behaviors of the mother tongue speakers.
- (2) An international language is denationalized, and it is not the property of its mother tongue speakers.
- (3) English as an International Language has a functional role, aiming to facilitate communication of ideas and culture in an English medium (Brutt-Griffler, 2002).

Therefore, EIL functions as a tool that does not have to be associated with any specific culture nor country, and English learners should not aim to acquire native-like proficiency, neither the spread of English should be perceived as a form of "linguistic imperialism", as some scholars have suggested (Phillipson, 1992). Instead, EIL serves the

purpose of fostering communication between people with different L1s, giving them the possibility to access the variety of cultures and worldviews, share their backgrounds and create a sense of unity – in essence, EIL fosters the sense of belonging to the international community and the development of a *cosmopolitan* or *glocal identity* (Arnett, 2002; Jacob, 2013; Kramersch, 1999). With the same objective of educating transculturally competent citizens, Higher Education is increasing the presence of English in the curriculum; in universities all around the world several subjects – or full degrees – are now taught in English-Medium Instruction (EMI), on the belief that English is a fundamental component of students' cultural and economic capital, necessary to interact with and within the international environment (Doiz et al., 2013).

Nevertheless, in the global society, multiple other languages coexist in the same space along with English, and their importance should not be diminished, as they may serve other functions. Indeed, Crystal (1998/2003) makes a distinction between the *instrumental* and *identification* functions that different languages may serve. Accordingly, EIL would be highly instrumental, as it “is seen as a valuable instrument enabling people to achieve particular goals” (Crystal, 2003: 24), such as having a voice in world affairs and communicating at the global level. On the contrary, local languages would have an identification function, as they give individuals the possibility to express their identity and articulate their sense of belonging. In fact, Crystal (1998/2003) notes that, contrarily to what may be expected, the rise of English as a global language has caused a strong response by local languages.

Therefore, English should not substitute any other language; rather, it should be conceived as an extra knowledge to be added to one's linguistic repertoire, supporting and enhancing the interest in other languages and other cultures, the same as it happens among young Catalan/Spanish bilinguals. In the translingual society, speaking more than one language is fundamental and plurilingualism is highly valued, as it would allow maintaining individuals' cultural heritage while offering them the opportunity to interact in the global environment (Byram, 2008). This is actually what is happening in what will be the social context for the present study Catalonia and, more specifically, Barcelona as a global city with wide use of plurilingual translingual practices and social and official bilingualism (Newman et al., 2019). In fact, the promotion of plurilingualism is on the

agenda of both the UNESCO – aiming to protect individual cultures and local languages – and the European Union and the Council of Europe. Their language policies (COE, 2009, 2011) promote plurilingualism, linguistic diversity, mutual understanding, democratic citizenship, and social cohesion.

It is also important to remark that the different languages forming an individual's linguistic repertoire should not be seen as separate monolingualism. For instance, Canagarajah (2013) makes a difference between *multilingual* and *translingual*: the first term conceives each language as a different unit, both in one's cognitive system and in the society, where they can combine in an additive manner; on the other hand, translingual practices entail the constant contact and exchange between languages in a dynamic manner, giving rise to a multitude of communicative modes and codes. Several names have been proposed for this practice, such as *translanguaging*, *heteroglossia*, *crossing*, and *dynamic bilingualism* (Bakhtin, 1981, 1984; Creese & Blackledge, 2010; Garcia, 2009; Rampton, 1995; Blommaert & Rampton, 2011).

On this line, more recently, the CEFR Companion (2018, 2020) – aiming to promote action-oriented quality language education across Europe – has defined *plurilingualism* as “the dynamic and developing linguistic repertoire of an individual user/learner”, building on the belief that “plurilinguals have a single, inter-related, repertoire that they combine with their general competences and various strategies in order to accomplish tasks”. Such a conceptualization takes into account that users/learners may have different levels and resources both in the same language and across different languages and language varieties, shifting the focus on real-world communicative needs and contexts. Accordingly, proficiency is not assessed in terms of what learners have not yet acquired, rather it is conceived as what they “can do” with the resources available in their linguistic repertoire.

Moreover, users/learners are envisioned as mainly social agents and, thus, the traditional model of the four skills – i.e. *listening*, *speaking*, *reading*, and *writing* – is replaced by four *modes of communication*: reception, production, interaction, and mediation. Such modes put emphasis on language as a strongly social event in which meaning are co-constructed in the interaction among individuals, and between the individual and the society. Hence, language teaching should pursue the aim of helping learners in developing

plurilingual and pluricultural competence, allowing them to “reduce the distance between two poles of otherness” and “build bridges or narrow the gap between different individuals, contexts or communities” (Beacco et al., 2016). Indeed, as suggested by Galante (2020), “plurilingual and pluricultural competence” should be treated as a unidimensional construct, being language and culture highly interrelated, inseparable dimensions.

2.1.6 Operationalizing Transcultural Competence

In the present research, the main construct under investigation will be Transcultural Competence (TC), intended as an operationalization of what is needed in intercultural encounters in broader and more complex socio-cultural environments. Following the TRANSLINGUAM-UNI research project, TC is here understood as a multi-dimensional and transdisciplinary construct, and it comprises four dimensions (Trenchs-Parera, 2018; Trenchs-Parera & Pastena, 2021):

- (1) Attitudinal, understood as: (a) International Posture – i.e. willingness to go abroad and favorable disposition towards intergroup interaction, international news and affairs (Yashima, 2004, 2009); and (b) positive attitudes towards linguistic varieties (Newman & Trenchs-Parera, 2015).
- (2) Affective – or Intercultural Sensitivity –, understood as respect for cultural differences, and interest, confidence, and engagement in interaction with people from other cultures (Chen & Starosta, 2000).
- (3) Identitary, understood as the development of a cosmopolitan identity, a flexible identitary adscription that integrates the global and the local (Kim, 2008; Türken & Rudmin, 2013).
- (4) Linguistic, understood as adopting individual plurilingual and translingual practices, as a reflection of linguistic cosmopolitan stances (Newman et al., 2008; Trenchs-Parera & Newman, 2009) and the development of individual plurilingualism, which may include English or not.

It should be remarked that, although relevant in this conceptualization of TC, the linguistic dimension will not be investigated in the present research – neither from a

sociolinguistic nor a language acquisition point of view – in order to limit the objectives of this dissertation. This dimension will be explored in future research (Section 6.4). However, since linguistic practices are intrinsically linked with attitudes, some aspects of such a dimension have emerged in the individual interviews collected for the study and will, therefore, be mentioned in the Results (Section 5.2) and Discussion (Section 6.2) sections.

2.2 Models of social (intercultural) interactions

As mentioned in the Introduction (Section 1.1), the present research adopts a social interactionist perspective, considering students as primarily social actors and giving value to contact – specifically, intercultural contact – as a triggering experience that may produce a positive change in students' plurilingualism, attitudes, sensitivity, and identity affiliation. Thus, in this section, the focus will be on the role played by social intercultural interactions in students' socialization process and the models in the literature that have been proposed to deal with them.

Firstly, I will introduce the Socialization Theory and the relatively new concept of *tertiary socialization*, developed to take into account socialization processes in the transcultural and translingual society (Section 2.2.1). Then, Allport's Intergroup Contact Theory will be presented, underling the relevance of contact among members of culturally distinct groups in reducing prejudices (Section 2.2.2), and attention will be drawn on intercultural interactions in the internationalized higher education context, describing several models accounting for the formation of friendship patterns between local and international students and the development of intercultural relationships (Section 2.2.3). Moreover, basic purposes and concepts of Social Network Analysis will be outlined, relying on recent research that makes use of this method as a tool for measuring, quantifying, and analyzing intercultural contact (Section 2.2.4). Finally, an operational definition of intercultural social interactions will be provided for the aims of the present research in order to deal with two different aspects of the phenomenon: the *type of the relationship* – ingroup or outgroup – and the *purpose of the interaction* (i.e. relational stage) – academical, leisure, or intimate (Section 2.2.5).

2.2.1 Socialization Theory and Tertiary Socialization

Drawing from a variety of different fields – such as psychology, sociology, and education –, *socialization* may be defined as the basic and fundamental process that allows an individual to become a member of society and deal efficiently with everyday life (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1986). Since human beings are “social animals”, the socialization process takes place primarily through interaction with other members of the society. For instance, Bakhtin (1984) conceives the *dialogue* as the fundamental creative act, enabling individuals to construct themselves and their realities thanks to the “continual interaction with other voices, or worldviews” (ivi: 36).

Such a conceptualization is grounded in the well-known Socialization Theory (Berger & Luckmann, 1966). Affirming that reality is per se socially constructed, Berger and Luckmann (1966) believe that the everyday experience of social interaction allows individuals to share reality with others and, in some ways, participate in its construction. In fact, from birth, every individual takes part in a dialectic process in which they “externalizes his own being into the social world and internalizes it as an objective reality” (ivi: 149). Through this process – socialization itself – an individual acquires the specific social norms, beliefs, and knowledge to effectively become a member of society. Besides, the scholars distinguish between primary and secondary socialization. The former refers to the process a person experiences in childhood, whilst the latter entails “any subsequent process that inducts an already socialized individual into new sectors of the objective world of his society” (ivi: 150). Furthermore, Berger and Luckmann (1966) highlight that, thanks to the continuous dialectic with reality and others, individuals are induced to negotiate and challenge their values, allowing for identification processes to arise.

Not differently, Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) states that social interactions play a fundamental role in the development of cognition and the acquisition of sociocultural competence. Values, beliefs, and strategies are acquired by means of a two-level process, in which it is only through collaborative interaction with others that new knowledge “makes meaning” and can be integrated into one's own mental structure.

Ochs and Schieffelin (1984, 2012) and Schieffelin and Ochs (1987) also stress out the role of language in becoming a competent member of the society, as it is “a major if not the major tool for conveying sociocultural knowledge and a powerful medium of socialization” (Ochs & Schieffelin, 1984: 3). Accordingly, they argue that socialization occurs both through language and to the use of language, contributing to children to become “certain kinds of situationally organized persons, with certain emotions, moral understandings, and beliefs, who engage in certain kinds of social and cognitive activities” (Ochs & Schieffelin, 2012: 16). Such a process is interactional in nature, as well as culturally determined and locally situated.

Consequently, through the process of socialization, individuals establish and cultivate *group membership* (Byram, 2009), the sense of belonging to a group or a community with whom they share values, beliefs, and worldviews. Group membership involves the emergence of an emotional bond that is fundamental in the construction of an individual’s social identity (Block, 2009; Tajafel & Turner, 1986). Thus, socialization and interaction with members of different groups play a key role in the formation and re-formation of identity.

As a natural consequence of globalization and migratory processes, in today’s society, individuals interact with people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds on a daily basis, without necessarily going abroad. As previously noted (Section 2.1.4), such *transcendence of borders* demands for a more flexible conceptualization of identity, as “group” and “community” have now blurrier and more variable boundaries. Consequently, the patterns of behavior and skills acquired in childhood may not be effective or be challenged in such a “fluid” and “hybrid” society (Doyé, 2008). Similarly, Ochs and Schieffelin (2012) observe that immigration and international mobility create new “zones of contact wherein children and youths become at once agents and targets of language socialization” (ivi: 16), allowing for immigrant children to build new, hybrid identities that rely on cultural and linguistic resources of both cultures.

Even though Berger and Luckmann (1966) considered the possibility of re-socialization as new contexts of interaction arise, their conceptualization of the socialization process has been classified as too static, and the term *tertiary socialization* (Byram, 1989) has been introduced to account for how such a process unfolds in contemporary transcultural

society. In the tertiary socialization process, individuals are encouraged to go “beyond a focus on their own society, into experience of otherness, or other cultural and belief values and behaviours” (Byram, 2008: 29), developing the ability to reevaluate culturally-based assumptions and “establish a community of meanings across cultural boundaries” (ibidem).

Byram (2008) underlines the importance of educational policies and schooling – and Foreign Language (FL) education in particular – in such a process of “fitting” and internationalized socialization, since “teachers and others can and should help learners to understand new concepts [...] which, being juxtaposed with those of the learners' other language(s), challenge the taken-for-granted nature of their existing concepts” (ivi: 114). In essence, FL education should be in charge of students' tertiary socialization, aiming to teach them to *act interculturally* – that is, to enhance students' conscious awareness and their ability to suspend the values and beliefs learned during early socialization in order to become able to understand and empathize with the ones of others and successfully interact with them. In line with this objective, and in order to promote and assure quality inclusive FL education to all EU citizens, the Council of Europe has recently published an updated version of the CEFR Companion (2018, 2020) including plurilingual and pluricultural competence, as well as mediation skills, among its descriptors.

2.2.2 Intergroup Contact Theory

Several terms have been adopted in the literature to point to the phenomenon of interaction and contact among people from diverse groups – whether culturally, socially, linguistically, or ethnically different –, such as *intercultural communication*, *intercultural interactions*, *cross-group friendship*, and *intergroup contact*. Still, despite the label being used, all these approaches assume that interaction among individuals belonging or ascribing to different groups produces a change in their attitudes – generally in positive terms – towards the members of the outgroup.

This idea was first conveyed by Allport's (1954) Intergroup Contact Theory, which has been taken as a point of departure for several subsequent studies in this direction. The theory has a sociopsychological foundation, stating that contact among members of

different groups is able to produce a positive effect at both individual and group level. Accordingly, contact contributes to favorable changes in attitudes and behavior, and such changes can be observed in subsequent contact. Moreover, Allport outlines four conditions that have to be met for optimal contact to occur: (1) the groups involved should have equal status; (2) their members should have common goals; (3) there is absence of competition between the groups – i.e. intergroup cooperation; and (4) contact is supported by authorities, law, or customs – i.e. the existence of explicit social sanction for the contact. Relying on the Intergroup Contact Theory, research has focused on the effect of contact in reducing prejudice, stereotype, and discrimination towards a variety of groups, such as interracial workers, foreign school students, disabled persons, immigrants, and homosexuals (Pettigrew, 1998).

Building upon previous results of an extensive study on the relationship between intergroup friendship and the reduction of prejudice (Pettigrew, 1997), Pettigrew (1998) revised the precedent literature and reformulated the theory. The scholar underlined the importance of time in building cross-cultural relationships, as long-term contact would facilitate the development of more positive outgroup attitudes. Moreover, he included a fifth factor, the *friendship potential*: the contact situation has to give participants the opportunity to become friends since friendship “implies close interaction that would make self-disclosure and other friendship-developing mechanisms possible. It also implies the potential for extensive and repeated contact in a variety of social contexts” (Pettigrew, 1998: 76).

To further understand the relationship between intergroup contact and prejudice reduction, Pettigrew and Tropp (2000, 2006, 2008) and Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner and Christ (2011) carried out an extensive and systematic meta-analysis of 515 precedent studies – for a total of 713 data samples – addressing several aspects and issues of the phenomenon. Overall, results seem to corroborate the theory, as 94% of analyzed samples confirm the development of positive intergroup attitudes; however, the scholars also remark that negative effects may arise from contact, requiring further investigation (Pettigrew et al. 2011; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). Moreover, as several studies lacking Allport’s optimal conditions report positive contact outcomes (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), they conclude that such conditions facilitate the effects but are not a *conditio-sine-qua-*

non, while potential friendship emerges as a determining factor. Indeed, cross-group friendship produces larger effects than other forms of contact. Nevertheless, more factors may play a role in the process, such as individual and contextual differences. It is also worth noting that effects are usually larger for the majority than the minority group, although the latter has rarely been on focus in most studies (Binder et al., 2009; Pettigrew et al., 2011).

As concerns how intergroup contact reduce individual's prejudice, the literature suggests that face-to-face interaction allows for four processes of change (Pettigrew, 1997, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008): (1) at the cognition level, contact fosters learning about the outgroup; (2) there is a change in behavior, usually preliminary to a change in attitudes; (3) repeated interaction reduces anxiety and increase empathy, promoting the development of affective ties; and (4) individuals are encouraged to reshape their values and beliefs and distinctive group characteristics – i.e. *ingroup reappraisal*. In essence, intergroup contact would foster the development of transcultural competence itself, as it operates at the attitudinal, affective, behavioral, and identity levels of the individual. Moreover, although not taken into account in predominant Intergroup Contact research, studies in the field of Study Abroad demonstrate that intergroup contact has positive effects also on the linguistic dimension, enhancing Foreign Language(s) proficiency, as well as positive attitudes towards plurilingualism (e.g. Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018; Bown, Plews & Dewey, 2018; Pérez-Vidal, 2014).

More recently, research has focused on the aspects that allow contact to produce positive outcomes, such as the different forms of contact, mediating mechanisms and moderating factors, and the actual outcomes⁴. For instance, Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew, and Wright (2011) investigated specifically cross-group friendship, as it seems to be the context of interaction most associated with the development of both affective and cognitive positive attitudes. Their meta-analysis of 135 studies – comprising 208 samples – suggests that positive outcomes are stronger when contact has an affective dimension – i.e. close personal relationships – rather than just cognitive. Moreover, studies assessing friendship in terms of time spent and self-disclosure yielded larger effects than those

⁴ For an extensive review, see Dovidio, Love, Schellhaas, and Hewstone (2017).

focusing on the number of friends, the proportion of friendship circle, closeness, and the inclusion of other in self. Davies et al. (2011) observe that the two former measures capture the degree of actual engagement in the relationship from both individuals involved. They conclude that friendship is a process, as the more time cross-group friends spend together, “the more opportunities exist for friends both to be reminded of their differing group memberships as well as to learn that they are each unique individuals who may share some meaningful commonalities” (ivi: 341).

Nevertheless, scholars have manifested several issues and concerns about Intergroup Contact, preferring to label it “hypothesis” rather than “theory” (Hunter & Elias, 1999; Dovidio et al., 2017). The first one is if, and to what extent, positive outcomes of contact can be generalized. Pettigrew (1998) suggests three potential types of generalization: across situations (i.e. from one specific context to other situations involving the same groups); from the outgroup individual to the whole outgroup; and from the immediate outgroup to other outgroups. Indeed, the reappraisal of the ingroup would entail a three-step *process of deprovincialization* – i.e. decategorization, salient categorization, recategorization – through which individuals progressively “gain distance from their own group and form a less provincial perspective on other groups in general” (Pettigrew, 1997: 174). Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) and Pettigrew et al.’s (2011) meta-analytic findings seem to confirm this trend, but further studies are needed in this direction, as studies that support generalization to unacquainted outgroups are often conducted in artificial and laboratory environments (Nesdale & Todd, 2000).

Another issue concerns the direction of the process, or *selection bias*. Pettigrew (1997) and Pettigrew and Tropp (2000) found that the causal path from more friendship to lower prejudice was larger than the reverse path from lower prejudice to more friendship. However, Binder et al. (2009), investigating high-school students from three European countries, pointed out that both paths are in act: on the one hand, longitudinal contact reduces prejudice; on the other hand, more prejudiced people try to avoid the contact or keep it superficial. Scholars suggest the use of longitudinal designs to reduce such a selection bias.

Furthermore, most studies examine only the contact between two groups. Nonetheless, in order to account for the complexity of contemporary transcultural society, more studies

are required to investigate the interaction among multiple groups, taking into account that the same individual may belong to different social groups at once (Hunter & Elias, 1999). Also, scholars remark the importance of considering the effects of both outgroup and ingroup contact on intergroup bias, as they may reveal a “hydraulic effect, whereby as outgroup contact increases, ingroup contact decreases” (Dovidio et al., 2017: 612).

2.2.3 Intercultural interactions in Higher Education

The higher education space offers an ideal context to study transculturality and specifically intercultural contact as, due to the growing process of internationalization at universities, local and international students have to co-exist in the same educational sphere, under both Allport and Pettigrew’s conditions. Consequently, they are required to successfully interact with each other for academic purposes, while relationships may also transcend the borders of university and become more intimate.

In this context, much attention has been devoted to Study Abroad (SA) and to those students going on or coming for *credit mobility* – i.e. within-program mobility –, while few studies make reference to the perspective of the host community (Kinging, 2009). As a matter of fact, several scholars have pointed to SA as the optimal context in which to study cross-cultural experiences because of its institutionalization – through well-known programs such as the Erasmus+ – and the relative facility to obtain data. Indeed, exchange students are enrolled in an official program, they are monitored by both outgoing and in-going universities for the whole length of the experience, and they are interested in reflecting on their experience. Moreover, assessment tasks can be easily included in other forms students are required to fill out.

Studies in this field have investigated intercultural competences’ development, adaptation process, and linguistic gains (e.g. Isabelli-Garcia, 2006; Coleman, 2013; Pogorelova, 2016; Pogorelova & Trenchs-Parera, 2018) with the aim of measuring and describing the effects of mobility programs on international students from all over the world (Griffith et al., 2016). The focus has primarily been on the linguistic aspects of the experience, to the extent that SA is often considered a sub-field of SLA (Kinging, 2013; for an exhaustive

review, see Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018); however, “‘language learner’ may constitute only a very small part of the identity of SA participants” (Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018: 460).

As a matter of fact, by the end of the 20th century, SLA research witnessed a “social turn” (Block, 2003) and, adopting Coleman’s (2013) terminology, SA participants have started to be considered as *whole persons* rather than as simply (language) learners. Indeed, he notes that SA – like other transcultural environments – is not only about language and “learning to speak like a native”, for two main reasons. First, languages are not clear-cut entities but more fluid and flexible objects. Coleman (2015) notes that all speakers are *flexilingual*⁵ even in their own language, changing styles and registers according to the situation. Secondly, students have to be considered “as rounded people with complex and fluid identities and relationships which frame the way they live the study abroad experience” (Coleman, 2013: 17). Hence, students should be understood as individuals with specific characteristics, stories, and goals, with agency playing a central role in the development of their individual trajectories and the construction of their identities (Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018). A cross-cultural experience, thus, requires taking into account the whole context and the whole individual, as well as the constant and fluid interaction between these two spheres (Coleman, 2013). Likewise, Tyne and Ruspini (2021) suggest looking at SA students as “transnational agents” since they are involved in multiple activities and perform different roles, leading to the emergence of highly diversified patterns of socialization and transnational practices that do not cease at the end of the experience abroad.

Moreover, if we assume that international students’ goal is to actively participate in the new community, they are motivated and encouraged to engage in interaction. Accordingly, in both Study Abroad and educational psychology research, there is a growing interest in the social networks’ students establish, maintain, and develop while abroad, on the belief that social interactions play a crucial role in the intercultural experience (Coleman, 2013, 2015; Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018; Mitchell, Tracy-Ventura & McManus, 2017). In fact, according to “complex dynamic system” theories, social

⁵ Coleman (2015) states to prefer this term to the more common *bilingual* and *multilingual* because it gives an idea of movement and flexibility the other two do not provide.

interaction is a space in which we all constantly and dynamically renegotiate and reconstruct culture, identity, motivation, attitudes, and beliefs (Coleman, 2013, 2015). In order to describe, measure, and analyze students' social interactions and friendship networks, scholars have often made use of the sociological concept of *social network* (Section 2.2.4).

Attention has been placed more on the quality and depth of the contact than how much time students spend with the other peers. Coleman (2013, 2015) suggests that any research in the SA field should investigate “with who, how many, how deeply” the students interact, remarking that even when peers speak the same language, interaction has an impact on their knowledge and intercultural skills. Research has shown that international students' social networks and friendship patterns have a positive effect on foreign language learning and proficiency (Griffith et al., 2016; Isabelli-Garcia, 2006, 2017; Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018; Kinginger, 2013; Mitchell, Tracy-Ventura & McManus, 2015); both personal and academical adaptation and adjustment (Bochner, 1982; Furnham & Bochner, 1982, 1986; Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018); acculturation, satisfaction, and contentment (Hendrickson, Rosen & Aune, 2011); development of intercultural competence and understanding (de Federico de la Rúa, 2003, 2008; Eisenclas & Trevaskes 2007; Leask 2009; Nesdale & Todd, 1993; Volet & Ang, 1998/2012); and identity construction (Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018; Mitchell et al., 2017).

The basic assumption is that the type and composition of international students' social networks reflect the extent of their social integration and the amount of social support they have, ultimately exemplifying the success of the experience. Thus, to account for patterns of friendship formation of international students when abroad, two different – yet similar – models have been proposed.

The “functional model for friendship patterns of overseas students” (Bochner, McLeod & Lin, 1977) should be considered the first attempt to describe with whom students interact and for which purpose, and has now become a reference for contact studies in the educational psychology field. Bochner et al. (1977) conducted a small but complete study to “develop a social psychological model of the academic sojourn” (ivi: 279) from an interactionist perspective. Analyzing students' self-reported “best friends” and preferred companions for several activities, these scholars found that international students tend to

form three types of social networks, having descending order of salience and each one serving a different function (Figure 2.1): a *co-national network*, to affirm and express the culture of origin and receive emotional support; a *host-national network*, with the instrumental functions of improving language and facilitating academic and professional goals; and a *multi-national network*, with a mainly recreational function.

Concept 7.5 Functional model of the friendship patterns of overseas students		
Network	Membership	Typical function
Primary monocultural	Co-nationals	Provide close friendship (compatibility of cultural and ethnic values)
Secondary bicultural	Significant host nationals, such as academics, fellow students, advisors and officials	Help the student succeed at university and adjust to the new culture
Tertiary multicultural	Other friends & acquaintances	Provide companionship for recreational and non-task-oriented activities
(Bochner, McLeod and Lin 1977)		

Figure 2.1 - The functional model for friendship patterns of overseas students (Bochner et al., 1977); from Spencer-Oatey & Franklin (2009: 157)

To further investigate these results, Furnham and Alibhai (1985) carried out a similar study in the European context, including a larger and more varied population of participants and extending the definition of co-national to cover “people from larger geographic areas [...] on the assumption that societies in physical proximity are likely to have had similar linguistic, religious and cultural roots” (Furnham & Alibhai, 1985: 712). Results confirmed the functional distinction of the three social networks pointed by Bochner et al. (1977); however, students in such a data sample reported to prefer multi-national friends above host-national ones.

Likewise, in the framework of SA and SLA, de Federico de la Rúa (2008) identifies “three types of friendship ties” of international students abroad: local people, compatriots or fellow countrymen, and people from other countries. Drawing from this consideration, Coleman (2013) developed another model for describing and investigating exchange students’ social networks. He explains the interaction patterns of international students as

three concentric circles (Figure 2.2): interaction starts with co-nationals, then it progresses to other foreigners (i.e. students from different countries) and, finally, students get in contact with locals. Unlike Dunbar's Circles of Acquaintanceship (Dunbar, 2010) – focusing on the intimacy of relationships –, Coleman's (2013) model represents an additive process, building on the dynamic nature of friendship and not on the intensity of the relationship. Although it is an over-simplification since it does not take into account individual and contextual variations, the model may be used as an orientational pattern of friendship progression.

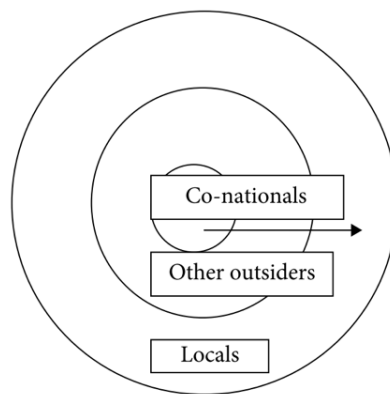


Figure 2.2 - Coleman's concentric circles' representation of study abroad social networks; from Coleman (2013)

As in the case of Bochner et al.'s (1977) model, Coleman's (2013) concentric circles address the social groups within which friends are made and the function they serve. However, differently from Bochner et al. (1977) – yet in line with Furnham and Alibhai's (1985) later findings –, multi-national relationships are perceived as more salient, frequent, and occurring earlier than host-national ones. Indeed, international students, regardless of their country of origin, share the similar experience of being in a foreign culture, still offering the possibility to interact in the local language (e.g. Hendrickson et al., 2011; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Neri & Ville, 2008). Also, Coleman's (2013) concentric circles consider that social networks experience longitudinal changes, and students may form more host-national friendships as time passes by (Hendrickson, 2018; Kim, 2001). Nonetheless, there is a lack of studies on the longitudinal development of international students' social networks during the sojourn.

Literature on intercultural relations suggests that friendship with locals plays a positive and fundamental role in SA participants' adaptation process, as host-nationals offer international students precious insights and resources to understand the local culture and its patterns of communication and behavior. Indeed, Kim (2001) affirms that the more students interact with locals, the more they experience an "intercultural transformation". However, studies so far often report a lack of or limited and not long-lasting interactions between local and international students (Harrison, 2015; Volet & Jones, 2012).

Furthermore, research has often adopted an "unilateral approach" (Volet & Jones, 2012), focusing solely on international students on incoming or outgoing mobility. For instance, in SA e SLA studies, local students have usually been taken into account merely as a control group for linguistic gains (Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018). Some more attention has been given by educational psychology (for a review, see Harrison, 2015). Still, research is limited to local students' sense-making of intercultural interactions (e.g. Colvin, Volet & Fozdar, 2014; Halualani, 2008, 2010), the evaluation of the effectiveness of specific educational interventions to promote intercultural learning (e.g. Eisenclas & Trevaskes, 2007; Jon, 2013; Leask, 2009; Nesdale & Todd, 2000; Volet & Ang, 1998/2012), and mixed-group academical work (e.g. Rienties, Hernández-Nanclares, Jindal-Snape & Alcott, 2013; Rienties, Hélot & Jindal-Snape 2013).

Actually, as noted by Kinginger (2009, 2013), it would be important to devote more research to the host community's perspective, namely the local students undergoing a process of *internationalization at home* (Harrison, 2015). Indeed, gaining insight into local students' social networks and the effects that intercultural contact has on them would allow to have a more complete understanding of the phenomenon, as well as promote meaningful interactions between the two groups. As a matter of fact, Ujitani and Volet (2008) underline that "intercultural relational development is a situated, interactive and dynamic process" (ivi: 297). Consequently, Volet and Jones (2012) advocate a more holistic perspective on intercultural interactions in the higher education context, one that would consider: the developmental nature of the phenomenon, the individuals as actors and agents engaging in interaction in situated contexts, and "the reciprocity of transformative opportunities" (ivi: 272). Similarly, Kudo, Volet, and Whitsed's (2017) review highlights that previous research on intercultural relationships lacks "a focus on

understanding to what extent, and in what ways the individual (e.g. reciprocity, motivation, goals of interaction) and environmental (e.g. global student mobility, policies and strategies aiming to promote intercultural interactions, on-campus facilities, curricula) interact with one another to co-create positive relational outcome” (ivi: 101-102).

Relying on these observations, more recently a new conceptual model has been proposed to account for intercultural relationships development: the Ecological and Person-in-Context Framework (EPiC; Kudo et al., 2017, 2019), which takes into account both individual and environmental characteristics of the interaction and considers intercultural relationships as a dynamic and bi-directional process. The EPiC framework is grounded in two theoretical approaches: Bronfenbrenner’s (1979) multi-layered ecological model of human development, stating that an individual’s experience is nested in five systems embedded with each other (i.e. microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem); and Volet’s (2001) “person-in-context” perspective, that situates learning at the *experiential interface* between affordances of the environment and effectivities of the individual (i.e. agency). Moreover, Kudo and colleagues (2019) put emphasis on the developmental nature of intercultural relationships, from the first encounter to intimate bonding.

Thus, the two main assumptions of the EPiC framework are: “(1) intercultural relationship development occurs at the dynamic experiential interface between environmental affordances and students’ agency; and (2) this interface evolves along three stages of relationship, which capture the development of cosmopolitanism and relational identity” (Kudo et al., 2019: 474).

Following Lee (2008), Kudo et al. (2019) identify three stages of relationship, each one having a distinct purpose of interaction and characterized by specific environmental affordances and students’ agency (Figure 2.3):

- (1) *Interactivity stage*: voluntarily or involuntarily interactions with a functional focus. This stage is promoted by contexts of institutional proximity and institutional collaborative and sociable environments; situated agency plays a significant role, especially when spontaneous.

(2) *Reciprocity stage*: mainly voluntary interactions with instrumental and growingly personal foci. This stage requires spaces of interpersonal proximity in which students may employ their cosmopolitan agency; also, it seems that dyadic interactions are preferred over group ones, while cultural differences are perceived in positive terms or as unimportant.

(3) *Unity stage*: highly voluntary interactions with a personal focus. This stage involves students’ creative agency in developing personalized interactions in contexts of individualized proximity.

Although requiring at least one common language among interactors, the three stages are not strict nor unidirectional; instead, they are in constant fluidity, may overlap, and stage backward can also occur. Moreover, such a process encompasses the development of both *cosmopolitanism* – conceptualized as “interest, sensitivity, understanding, acceptance and respect in the face of cultural differences” and “a universal and more inclusive identity” (Kudo et al., 2019: 479); in essence, Transcultural Competence – and a *relational identity* – i.e. “a reality or culture that reflects the values, the rules and the processes of the relationship” (ivi: 480).

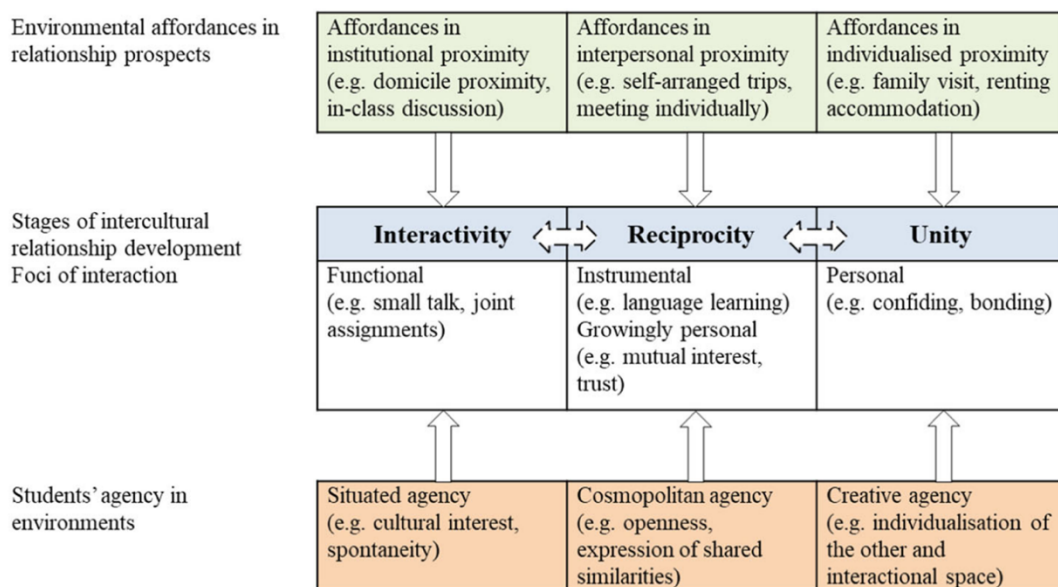


Figure 2.3 - A three-stage ecological and person-in-context conceptual framework of intercultural relationship development; from Kudo et al. (2019)

2.2.4 Social Networks mapping

As mentioned in the previous section, scholars from both the SA and SLA field and the social-psychology strain in education have made use of the methodological approach of Social Network Analysis (SNA) as a tool to visualize, measure, and predict local and international students' patterns of interaction and their development, in order to understand how the two groups learn from each other, both formally and informally (Hommes et al., 2012; Rienties & Nolan, 2014). The underlying assumption is that “students' social activity is an integral part of their learning experience” (Montgomery & McDowell, 2009: 464); thus, the social networks that students establish and cultivate may be conceived as a reflection of their adaptation process and the degree of social support they have, while having an impact on their intergroup attitudes and development of competences.

More broadly, SNA belongs to the research area of Network Science, which crosses many disciplines interested in network studies, such as physics, computer science, social contagion, and social sciences. According to scholars, all these fields can be unified under the common premise of a “complex structure among the entities being studied” (Robins, 2015: 4). In the sociology domain, the entities under analysis are social agents – such as people or organizations – and, thus, SNA may be defined as the study of the social relations existent among a set of actors.

A social network can represent a general social context or be focused on the pattern of relationships of a single individual. In the first case, it is referred to as a *sociocentric network* or *whole network study*, and the emphasis is on the network *per se*, taking into account a group of individuals (i.e. the *actors*) and all the relationships (i.e. the *ties*) among them. On the other hand, an *egonet* or *egocentric/personal network* is focused on a focal actor (i.e. the *ego*) and the ties they establish with their partners (i.e. the *alters*).

Theoretically, a social network posits a principle of dependence among individuals (Hommes et al., 2012) and between individuals and relationships, assuming that “outcomes are affected by a structure of relations among people” (Robins, 2015: 4). Importantly, social actors have intentionality. Hence, SNA is used to investigate a social system, a social environment, or a social context, and it aims to describe the structure

implemented by the actors, the relationships they develop, and the impact such relationships have on them (Grunspan, Wiggins & Goodreau, 2014; Robins, 2015). Accordingly, underlying SNA, there are two broad classes of hypotheses: the first aims to explain on which basis the relational ties are formed; the second considers “the influence that the structure of ties has on shaping outcomes, at either the individual level [...] or the population level” (Grunspan et al., 2014: 167).

From a more operational point of view, usually social networks are visualized by means of a *sociogram*, a graph showing the relational patterns among the members of the system under analysis, like the one in Figure 2.4. Each actor is a *node*, and it is represented as a point in the space; it is connected to the other actors with lines – the network *ties* or *edges* in graph terminology. Two actors connected by a tie form a *dyad*, the fundamental unit. Ties indicate that there is some kind of relation between two actors (e.g. friendship, antagonism, etc.); such a relation may be bidirectional – as, for instance, two classmates studying together – or it can be directed – as in the case of bullying (i.e. A is bullied by B, but obviously B is not bullied by A).

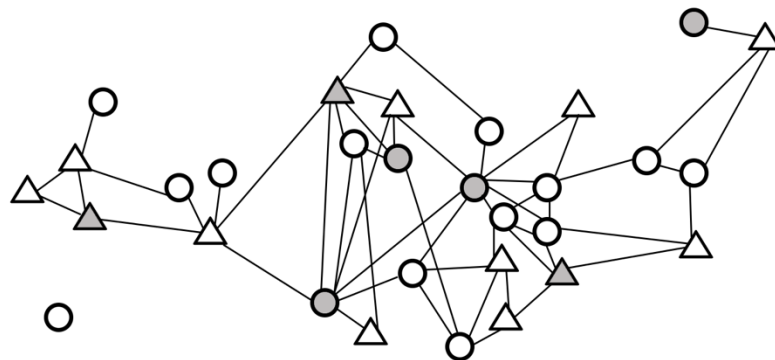


Figure 2.4 - Example of a *sociogram*

Furthermore, both ties and actors may have several properties, often displayed in the sociogram. With regard to ties, they may stand for only one type of relationship (i.e. an *uniplex* tie or network) or represent different kinds of relationships at once, such as two individuals being friends and co-workers (i.e. a *multiplex* tie or network). Also, ties can

be of *first-order*, if the relationship is direct (e.g. a friend), or *second-order*, when the relationship is mediated by another individual (e.g. a friend of a friend); still, crucially, one can lead to the other.

Usually, ties are just assumed to be present or absent, but sometimes they may be *weighted*, including additional information about the relation as, for instance, the number of hours two actors spend together or the intensity of the contact. A weighted tie points to the strength of the relation, namely “a (probably linear) combination of the amount of time, the emotional intensity, the intimacy (mutual confiding), and the reciprocal service which characterize the tie” (Granovetter, 1973: 1361). Strength of ties plays an essential role in individuals’ building of social capital. Although requiring more effort to establish and maintain, strong and dense ties allow for sharing and co-building of complex knowledge. However, they may not offer adequate new inputs of learning. Indeed, Granovetter (1973) pointed to the *strength of weak ties* with acquaintances, as they give individuals the opportunity to bridge different networks, getting in contact with other groups, and achieving novel resources and stimuli; in the study abroad context, “weak ties enable sojourners to develop as individuals” (Coleman, 2015: 42).

Additionally, as actors are people, they are characterized by *attributes* – namely, individual-level properties such as gender, age, or experience. Attributes may be represented in a sociogram by means of nodes of different sizes, shapes, or colors (e.g. circles and triangles in Figure 2.4). Actors’ attributes are especially important because they give an insight into partners' selection or influence patterns; in fact, individuals can choose their partners because they share one or more attributes with them (i.e. the *homophily process*), or may “change some attributes due to the influence of network partners” (Robins, 2015: 33).

A social network may be described and analyzed relying on different dimensions and characteristics, depending on its general structure – e.g. density, closure, centrality and degree distribution, reciprocity and transitivity of ties – and/or on the actors’ attributes – e.g. homophily. More details on these measures will be provided in the Methodology chapter (Section 3.7.2).

As concerns SNA applications, Dovidio et al. (2017) believe that such an approach is well suited to investigate “a range of contact effect and intergroup relations” (ivi: 614) – i.e. intergroup contact –, as it allows to quantify both direct and indirect contact and their effects on individuals. In this sense, research may shift its focus from dyadic relationships to a more complete network dynamic. Also, Grunspan et al. (2014) remark that SNA can be easily applied to the study of social interactions within a classroom, offering the possibility to represent and analyze how students form networks at any time during their studies and the impact the network has on their learning process. As a matter of fact, Rienties and colleagues (Rienties, Heliot, et al., 2013; Rienties, Hernández, et al., 2013; Rienties & Nolan, 2014) specifically used this tool to investigate how international and host students build networks within two large classrooms and develop learning interactions over time. Similarly, adopting a more sociolinguistic perspective, Sorolla-Vidal (2015) uses SNA to analyze interactions, linguistic choices, and sociolinguistic roles in several primary classrooms in the Catalan districts of Baix Cinca and Llitera in the Spanish region of Aragón, both inside and outside the educational context.

Actually, in the context of intercultural contact in higher education, both a more complete network approach (e.g. McFaul, 2016; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Rienties, Heliot, et al., 2013; Rienties, Hernández, et al., 2013) and ego-networks (e.g. Hendrickson, 2016, 2018; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Shu, Ahmed, Pickett, Ayman & McAbee, 2020) have been adopted by researchers. Still, as amply discussed, studies so far have mainly addressed international students’ social networks during the course of their sojourn abroad, aiming to explore the effects of several network variables on student’s overall adjustment, considered as an indicator of the success of the cross-cultural experience. Specifically, the focus is on if, and to what extent, the quality, quantity, and strength of ties (i.e. where contacts are from, the nature of the relationship, the frequency of contact, and the total network size) impact international students’ homesickness, anxiety and stress, satisfaction, academic performance and success, social support, communication skills, intercultural competences, and identity affiliation. Analogous studies have also been conducted in the migration field, aiming to explore the size and composition of immigrants’ social networks in the host country, as well as the effects of network’s characteristics on their social integration (Bolívar-Planas, 2014), ethnic identification (Lubbers et al., 2007), and acculturation (Maya-Jariego & Domínguez, 2014).

The two most explored variables are the type and the frequency of interactions, measured taking into account the homophily or heterophily of the ties with respect to students' country of affiliation (e.g. country of origin, country of birth, nationality, ethnicity). Accordingly, in the field of educational psychology, research has adopted Bochner et al.'s (1977) functional model, looking at the number of co-nationals, multi-nationals, and host-nationals in international students' networks (e.g. Furnham & Alibhai, 1965; Hendrickson, 2016, 2018; Hendrickson et al., 2011). Likewise, in the areas of SLA, SA, and migration studies, the focus has been on the frequency of ingroup and outgroup ties (e.g. Baerveld, Zijlstra, de Wolf, Van Rossem & Van Duijn, 2007; Carnine, 2014, 2015; de Federico de la Rúa, 2002, 2003; Lubbers et al., 2007).

Nevertheless, Shu et al. (2020) notice that most research only investigates “one type of network and/or network characteristic, such as network size in ‘friendship’ networks, rather than also examine multiple network types (e.g., instrumental and socio-emotional) and composition (e.g., diversity)” (ivi: 140), claiming for more studies in such a direction. Also, students' network evolution over time has been rarely taken into account (e.g. de Federico de la Rúa, 2003; Rienties, Heliot, et al., 2013; Rienties, Hernández, et al., 2013).

As concern data collection, the two most used instruments in SNA are *name generators* and *name interpreters*, self-report tools asking participants to provide the names of their partners, as well as any relevant information about both the relationship and the partners (Robins, 2015). Both instruments have been adapted by scholars for the specific purpose of collecting data on international students' social networks, as in the Language Contact Profile (Freed, 1990; Freed, Dewey, Segalowitz & Halter, 2004), the “check lists” (Bochner et al., 1977; Furnham and Alibhai, 1985), and the Friendship Network Grid (Hendrickson, 2016, 2018; Hendrickson et al., 2011). However, calling on the benefits of a mixed-method approach (Bolíbar-Planas, 2015), these data are often complemented with more qualitative tools – such as in-depth interviews (e.g. Carnine, 2014, 2015; Hendrickson, 2016, 2018; McFaul, 2016), observation (e.g. Montgomery & McDowell, 2009), or contact diaries and logs (e.g. Fu, 2007; Isabelli-Garcia, 2006) –, or combined with other quantitative instruments aiming to collect more information on actors' attributes.

2.2.5 Operationalizing Social Intercultural Interactions

In the context of the present research, social interactions are considered as having a fundamental role in the socialization process, enabling individuals to construct and negotiate their knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and identities, employing of a variety of linguistic and plurilingual practices. Accordingly, students are here understood as “whole persons” (Coleman, 2013, 2015; Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018) whose interactions in the internationalized educational context contribute to their learning experience. Also, on the belief that intercultural relationships are a dynamic, bilateral, and mutual transformative process (Kudo et al., 2017, 2019; Ujitani & Volet, 2008; Volet & Jones, 2012), both international students and local ones become agents and targets of the changes prompted by intercultural contact.

Moreover, higher education classrooms present a prosperous context to explore intergroup contact’s effects (Kudo & Simkin, 2003), as they comply with both Allport's (1954) four optimal conditions and friendship potential (Pettigrew, 1998). Indeed, the participants in the present study are university students of similar age, enrolled in the same degree, and aiming to succeed academically in a formal educational context – they share generation, interests, and goals, thus, presenting all the attributes to become friends.

Accordingly, both local and international students will be in the spotlight, treated as individuals enacting their agency in the context of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom. Two main variables will be considered in order to explore their in-class interactions and social networks:

- (1) The purpose of the relationship (i.e. quality of ties or *degree of intimacy*). Relying upon educational psychology research, the quality of the interaction is believed to be more relevant than its quantity (Davis et al., 2011; Dovidio et al., 2017). Hence, intercultural relationships have been classified according to three *degrees of intimacy*: academical, with a functional focus (i.e. the *interactivity stage* in the EPiC framework; Kudo et al., 2019); leisure, with instrumental and growingly personal foci (i.e. *reciprocity stage*); and intimate, with a personal focus (i.e. *unity stage*).

- (2) The type of relationship (i.e. homophily or heterophily of ties). Following SLA and SA research, frequency of ingroup and outgroup ties in each students' in-class network has been considered, adopting the linguistic and schooling background as the criterion for grouping (Section 3.2). In the case of international students, no difference has been made between co-national and multi-national relationships (Bochner et al., 1977), as they are believed to share analogous characteristics and experience (e.g. Montgomery & McDowell, 2009).

In this framework, Social Network Analysis will be used as a tool to visualize, describe, and analyze social interactions in the classroom consistent with the two above-mentioned variables. Accordingly, a quantitative instrument has been designed for collecting data – namely, the Contact Generator (Methodology, Section 3.4.3).

Moreover, in accordance with previous literature emphasizing the positive effects of intergroup contact on individuals' cognitive, affective, behavioral, identity, and linguistic dimensions, intercultural interactions in the classroom will be treated as an explanatory variable for the development of Transcultural Competence.

2.3 Studies on Transcultural Competence and Intercultural Interactions in Higher Education

In this chapter, I will present several empirical studies on students' development of Transcultural Competence (Section 2.3.1) and their experiences of intercultural interactions (Section 2.3.2) in the higher education context by summarizing their results and conclusions.

It is worth remarking that studies in both the SA field and educational psychology often adopt a “unilateral approach” (Volet & Jones, 2012), focusing on international students' challenging experiences and adjustment in a foreign country. Conversely, local students undergoing a process of *internationalization at home* are generally neglected by current research on intercultural experiences and interactions, yet they play a crucial role (Harrison, 2015).

Moreover, Volet and Jones (2012) argue that the same use of the label *international students* in comparative studies is problematic, as “it often represents groups that are highly heterogeneous, the only common factor being their sojourn status in the country in which they were studying” (ivi: 250) and it may prove useless to explain differences between them and permanent residents. Likewise, permanent residents or local students “may include individuals from a diverse range of ethnicities of first, second or third generation citizens” (ibidem). As a matter of fact, international students may have already travelled or sojourned in the country of their studies, while local students may have undertaken other experiences abroad and, thus, “student mobility is such a heterogeneous feature that hardly any generalisation can be made about its modes and its impact” (Teichler, 2015: 16). Similarly, Krajewski (2011) points out that “each experience of becoming intercultural will be an individual, subjective one” (ivi: 150).

Accordingly, scholars call for more research including the perspective of host students and taking into account individual differences, as studies in such a direction may offer us meaningful insights into both the adaptation process of international students and the development of intercultural skills and competences in both groups (Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018; Ujitani & Volet, 2008; Volet & Jones, 2012).

2.3.1 Studies on Transcultural Competence in Higher Education

The development of intercultural and transcultural competences is consistently studied through the lens of undergraduates on mobility – either incoming or outgoing. In fact, Study Abroad (SA, from now on) is often considered as the optimal transcultural space from both an illustrative and a methodological point of view: students on mobility well represent the challenges and benefits of facing another culture and another language, and it is easy to collect data as participants are often supervised through the whole length of their experience.

Although not being a modern phenomenon, students’ mobility had gained attention in the 80s, when the path towards a globalized society was clear, tackling directly into the reasons for undertaking an experience abroad which has now become an “ideal in an hyper-modern world” (Murphy-Lejeune, 2008). As a matter of fact, SA is one of the

biggest actions undertaken by higher education institutions all around the globe to promote internationalization (Byram & Dervin, 2008), defined by Knight (2004) as “the process of integrating international, intercultural, or global dimensions into the objective function and provision of higher education” (ivi: 2). In this respect, Byram and Dervin (2008) point out that mobility may start because of financial needs – students get better career prospects while paying higher tuition fees to HE institutions –, but the experience of mobility may also change both “individuals and institution in other, fundamental ways”.

Thus, studies in this field aim to measure and describe the effects that such mobility programs have on university students, as well as the processes they go through. The focus may either be on *credit* – or *temporary* – mobility or on *degree* – or *academic* – mobility; however, the two programs differ consistently, and research so far has shown larger interest in short-term programs due to the relative ease of collecting data (Teichler, 2015). Still, the emphasis is on the foreign, international student and how they experience such a condition. In a few cases, studies may adopt a comparative perspective, contrasting the gains of students on mobility with a control group remaining at-home (e.g. Lee & Song, 2019; Williams, 2005).

As concerns the geographical areas in which research has been conducted, the majority of studies are settled in the context of European mobility since the European Union largely promotes mobility among HE institutions through the well-known Erasmus program established already in 1987 (now, Erasmus+), which does not only concern undergraduates but also trainees, language assistants, and teachers (e.g. Mitchell et al., 2017; Pérez-Vidal & Juan-Garau, 2011). Nevertheless, underpinning the function of English as a fundamental *lingua franca* or international language, another set of studies has focused on English-speaking students going abroad (e.g. Mitchell et al., 2017), with great interest in USA outgoing students (e.g. Isabelli-García, 2006; Kinginger, 2008), as well as on students going to English-speaking countries and mainly coming from Asian countries, such as Japan and Hong Kong (e.g. Jackson, 2008, 2010, 2011).

Most of the research on SA stems from the field of Second Language Acquisition (Freed, 1995). Accordingly, students have been mainly conceived as *language learners*, and empirical studies have emphasized the linguistic aspect of the experience abroad in an

outcome-oriented perspective – that is, to what extent and how the SA program enhances participants' proficiency in the foreign language(s), taking into account single linguistic tokens (e.g. lexicon, morphology, syntax), overall language ability (e.g. fluency, listening), and/or communicative competence (e.g. Isabelli-Garcia, 2006; Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018; Jackson, 2008; Juan-Garau, 2015; Kinginger, 2009, 2013; Mitchell et al., 2015, 2017; Pérez-Vidal, 2014). Strictly connected with linguistic proficiency (Mitchell et al., 2017), some interest has also been devoted to participants' adaptation process in the host culture (e.g. Beaven, 2012; Pogorelova, 2016; Pogorelova & Trenchs-Parera, 2018). In this regard, several models have been proposed to describe students' paths of adjustment, such as the *U* and *W* curves or the *stress-adaptation-growth dynamic* (Kim, 2005; Ward, Bochner & Furnham, 2001), and studies often take into account students' motivation to go abroad and their expectations from the experience.

Although it is proved that both enhanced proficiency in the host language and successful adaptation are two essential features in making the mobility experience a truly “transformative” one, studies in this respect are not directly relevant for the aims of the present research and will not be reviewed. Indeed, what is of interest here is how the encounter with the culturally different may impact students' Transcultural Competence, as conceptualized in this study (Section 2.1.6).

Actually, the mobility experience transcends the academic and linguistic gains, as the immersion in a different cultural and linguistic environment may affect participants at a more personal level, triggering a “dynamic and integrative transformation of identity that reflects less dualistic and more meta-contextual conceptions of self and others” (Kim, 2008; as quoted in Awad, 2019). Likewise, Volet and Jones (2012) remark that students on mobility may experience “cognitive, emotional and behavioural changes resulting in broadened worldviews, intercultural competence, tolerance of difference, more open-mindedness, communication skills and greater confidence” (ivi: 269).

In fact, at the cognitive level, research reports that one general consequence of the SA experience is that participants learn new knowledge about the host culture and its patterns of communication and behavior (e.g. Krajewski, 2011; Medina-López-Portillo, 2004). However, such an outcome is often mediated by the amount of contact with members of the local community. Indeed, in a longitudinal study on 21 Italian students participating

in the Erasmus program, Beaven (2012) remarks that, for those students not having sufficient interactions with host peers, the knowledge of the local culture was limited to travels and other functional activities, supporting Kinginger's (2008) claim that some students tend to remain tourists when abroad.

Nevertheless, participants may also learn about other cultures, thanks to the multiple sources they have available to gather information (Lee & Song, 2019) and the formation of networks of international students (de Federico de la Rúa, 2002, 2003; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Papatsiba, 2006). Furthermore, such knowledge may stimulate new linguistic, cultural, and professional desires (Tyne & Ruspini, 2021) and a more general interest in international issues (Jackson, 2008), as well as the development of more favorable attitudes towards other cultures and less ethnocentric views (Ngai & Janusch, 2015). That is, providing support to the *process of deprovincialization* posited by the Contact Hypothesis (Pettigrew, 1998; see also Section 2.2.2), students enhance their *intercultural awareness*, being more willing to “call into question their own cultural norms as well as reflect on the linguistic and cultural values of the new environment” (Magliacane, Devlin & Iwasaki, 2020: 12).

Accordingly, students on mobility may experience a rise in International Posture (Yashima & Zenuk-Nishide, 2008). Interestingly, such International Posture seems to be strictly connected with the motivation to learn and the willingness to communicate (WTC) in the L2 – especially in the case of English – as it would give access to the international community. Indeed, although focusing on high-school students, Yashima et al. (2004) found that, among 60 Japanese peers going to the USA for one year, the ones showing more International Posture and WTC before the departure were also the ones engaging more in interactions with the locals once abroad.

Following Yashima and colleagues' studies (Yashima et al., 2004; Yashima & Zenuk-Nishide, 2008), Lee (2018) focused on 67 Korean students of English and Mandarin going for a short-term SA program to USA, Canada, Malaysia, and China. He reports a significant increase in participants' both International Posture and WTC after the experience, more so in the case of students with an intermediate or advanced proficiency level in the target language. Using the same International Posture questionnaire (Yashima, 2009), Geoghegan (2018) carried out a pre- and post-test study on 68

undergraduate Spanish/Catalan bilinguals on a compulsory trimester abroad in either English, French, or German-speaking countries. She found out that the SA program enhanced students' WTC, especially in the case of "thoughts they wished to share with others of different nationalities", pointing to a rise in International Posture as an outcome of the experience abroad. Therefore, these studies seem to suggest that mobility would increase participants' cultural knowledge and awareness, enhancing their feeling of being part of the international community, which, in turn, brings to a rise in engagement in interaction (Lee, 2018).

Precisely interaction with individuals from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds is in the spotlight of another set of studies, focusing on the development of students' intercultural sensitivity as an outcome of SA. Usually, these empirical studies use a pre- and post-test design to detect changes in time, while measuring the construct with different instruments, such as the Intercultural Sensitivity Scale (ISS; Chen & Starosta, 2000), the Intercultural Sensitivity Inventory (ICSI; Bhawuk & Brislin, 1992) and the Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI; Hammer et al., 2003). Although several scholars point out that students tend to self-assess their Intercultural Sensitivity higher than it actually is (Jackson, 2008a, 2008b; Medina-López-Portillo, 2004), research so far shows a positive impact of SA programs on participants' empathy, respect for cultural differences, and interaction confidence, engagement, and enjoyment.

For instance, Gordon and Mwavita (2018) did not observe any difference in Intercultural Sensitivity – measured by means of the ISS – between undergraduates taking an "international" course at their home institution and those who did not; yet, their analysis revealed higher mean values in students who had studied abroad. Focusing more on students undertaking a SA experience, Pogorelova (2016) conducted an in-depth study on 12 Spanish/Catalan bilingual undergraduates going to different countries for 4 to 6 months. Using the ISS, she found out that only the Interaction Confidence component increased significantly; however, qualitative data showed a clear positive effect of the sojourn on participants' intercultural sensitivity, as they reported improvement in cultural awareness, empathy, respect, and tolerance, as well as reduced stereotypes.

The advantages of qualitative data to obtain a greater understanding of students' experiences are further endorsed by Medina-López-Portillo (2004). Indeed, exploring the

intercultural sensitivity of 28 University of Maryland students by means of a mixed-method approach, she reports that during the interviews half of the participants showed to have reached at least the ethnorelative stage of Bennett's (1986) model, a result that was not evident in the quantitative analysis. Also, the scholar points at the length of the program as a crucial factor, as students who sojourned abroad during more time displayed greater improvement. Similarly, Engle and Engle (2004) compared two groups of American students studying for either a semester or one year at the American University Center of Provence (AUCP). Using the IDI to measure participants' intercultural sensitivity, they conclude that, although all of them had a predisposition towards intercultural interactions and they further increased their scores after the experience, "full-year program participants make significantly more progress than others in areas of cultural understanding and cross-cultural communication" (ivi: 235).

As for studies adopting a comparative perspective, Williams (2005) used the ICSI to detect differences in intercultural sensitivity between a group of students who spent a semester abroad and another group who did not. As expected, he found that the former group showed greater gains in intercultural sensitivity; however, the best predictor emerged to be "exposure to various cultures", regardless having or not having studied abroad. This latter finding seems to be reinforced by Lee and Song's (2019) study comparing intercultural interaction's engagement and confidence, and respect for cultural differences (Chen & Starosta, 2000) among three groups of students over six weeks: American undergraduates studying abroad, Korean and American students paired in a telecollaboration program, and two separate on-campus language courses for American learners of Chinese and Korean learners of English. Although no effect of group was found, students in both the study abroad and the telecollaboration groups increased their engagement and confidence in the interaction over time, highlighting once again the importance of frequent interactions in reducing "negative feelings such as anxiety and fear" and generating "positive feeling, including comfort and empathy" (Lee & Song, 2019: 190). Also, the scholars remark that the affective domain plays an essential role as, "although knowledge plays a mediating role in diminishing prejudice, simply learning about an outgroup does not necessarily lessen prejudice" (ibidem).

As already mentioned, apart from having an impact on the cognitive and affective domain of the participants, the SA may encourage them “to reflect on their lives in a global context, coming to know ‘the cross-cultural’ as ‘not only within the intercultural’ but ‘within themselves’” (Volet & Jones, 2012: 269). In this sense, the experience of the culturally different fosters a re-evaluation of one’s own identity, towards the development of what has been called *whole person* (Coleman, 2013; Kinginger, 2008), *intercultural personhood* (Kim, 2001), or *intercultural citizenship* (Guilherme, 2007).

In this respect, several studies point to an inverse relationship between national identity and the development of a more global, intercultural perspective. For instance, focusing on Erasmus students from different countries, Murphy-Lejeune (2002) observed that, during the course of the sojourn, participants’ national identity was substituted by a more pan-European identity, complemented by an increase in intercultural awareness. Also, she remarks that “even the negative or difficult aspects of the stay are eventually perceived as enriching” (ivi: 231). Indeed, other studies on American students abroad seem to suggest that, although cultural differences may foster ethnocentric attitudes, acknowledging such differences contributes to the development of a more intercultural identity (e.g. Isabelli-García, 2006; Kinginger, 2004).

Nevertheless, Plews (2015) remarks that such “simplistic equation in which less intercultural is equated with more national and more intercultural equals less national” (ivi: 286) may be an effect of focusing research on students coming from “countries with strong myths of monocultural nationhood and national belonging or with an overriding ideological project” (ibidem), such as the USA or Europe. To shed further light on the topic, he conducted a qualitative study on 33 Canadian students participating in a short-term immersion SA program in Germany, on the premise that Canadians’ identity discourse is already characterized by multiculturalism. The results differ from previous ones, revealing a more nuanced picture and several subject positionings. All in all, Plews’ (2015) findings reveal that national identity and a more intercultural one are not mutually exclusive; actually, several participants “exhibit a sense that being more intercultural means being more Canadian” (ivi: 299).

At this point, it is worth noting that identity in SA has been rarely studied as detached from other aspects of the experience. As a matter of fact, several scholars remark that

such identity expansion or transformation relies consistently on the fact that students use one or several foreign languages during their everyday lives. As language and identity are considered as interdependent features, students on mobility develop a Second Language Identity, which “is, therefore, largely a matter of incorporating experiences of second language learning and use into an ongoing sense of who we are” (Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodycott & Brown, 2013: 2). Accordingly, language plays a fundamental role in the success of the programs. As mentioned, research reports an improvement of proficiency in the target language(s) as one of the main outcomes of SA (e.g. Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018; Juan-Garau, 2015; Pérez-Vidal, 2014). Still, the whole experience abroad may also affect students’ linguistic practices and attitudes – i.e. *extended Linguistic Cosmopolitanism* (Newman et al., 2008).

As for linguistic practices, several empirical studies clearly show that sojourners usually operate plurilingually, including their own language(s) for certain purposes (Dewey, Bown, Baker, Martinsen, Gold & Eggett 2014). For instance, findings from the LANGSNAP project (Mitchell et al., 2015, 2017) – exploring the experiences of 56 British undergraduates conducting their third year of studies in France, Spain, or Mexico – reveal that participants make regular use of bilingual behavior; still, their practices may also include other languages, such as heritage languages or other ones they are studying. However, Mitchell et al. (2017) remark that students tend to rely on standard or international languages, showing little interest in local ones. Mocanu and Llorca’s (2019) study seems to confirm this finding, as SA students in their data sample report to be motivated to learn English and Spanish but no other minor local languages, such as Finnish, Romanian, and Catalan.

Furthermore, whether the country of the stay or their first language, international students make use of English as a *lingua franca*, employing it as the unmarked choice for intercultural interactions (Dervin, 2013; Kinginger, 2008; Mitchell & Güvendir, 2021; Mitchell et al., 2017). Both English-speaking students (Mitchell et al., 2017) and other students on mobility (Mitchell & Güvendir, 2021) even complain that their interlocutors stick with English, not allowing them to practice the target language. As a matter of fact, also when other languages are used as *lingua franca* – such as French – English is present in students’ repertoires and experiences (e.g. Behrent, 2007; Dervin, 2013).

Nevertheless, students on mobility show complex attitudes towards English as an International Language (EIL). In a study conducted by Dervin (2013) on Erasmus students going on mobility to either France or Finland, participants report perceiving international English in negative terms, labelling it as *broken English* and not using it with their co-nationals. Also, students conceive not being native speakers as a deficiency. This latter finding suggests that international students tend to rely on the Native-Speaker (NS) Model, corroborating other studies pointing to students preferring NS-based English accent and believing that only “standard” varieties should be taught (e.g. Friedrich, 2000; Li, 2009; Mossu & Llurda, 2008). Actually, such a view may be extended to other languages, as shown by Borghetti and Beaven (2017). Exploring the language attitudes and beliefs of 141 Italian students at the end of their Erasmus program, the scholars found out that their participants positioned themselves between two contradictory stances: although affirming that interactions with NSs were better to improve the language and, thus, supporting the primacy of the Native-Speaker Model, they also felt more confident and satisfied in interacting with other Non-Native-Speakers (NNS), giving “value to the fact that NNSs know from experience that communicative needs can change, are contextual and shared among NNSs” (ivi: 236).

As concerns the role and use of English in the EMI classroom, the situation seems to be slightly different. Indeed, in such a context, both students and instructors make high use of other languages, such as their L1s or other ones, as well as of translanguaging, proved to be beneficial practices for enhancing both learning and positive linguistic attitudes (e.g. Block & Khane, 2020; Doiz, Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2014; Lasagabaster & Doiz, 2021). Moreover, exploring teachers’ and students’ motivation in the EMI classroom by means of the L2 Motivational Self System (Dörnyei, 2005, 2009), Doiz and Lasagabaster (2018) found that students seem not to rely on the Native-Speaker Model, believing that competence in English could give them access to the international community and global market. However, in the case of English being an L3 in an already bilingual social context, such as in the Basque Country, students may also perceive the increasing presence of EMI as a threat for the minority language – i.e. Basque (Doiz et al., 2014).

The specific context of Spain deserves further attention, being “a multilingual country which 41% of the population lives in officially bilingual regions” (Lasagabaster, 2017:

583). In fact, much research on linguistic attitudes and practices has been conducted in Catalonia due to the region's specific linguistic and historical situation. After a period of imposed monolingualism, Catalonia is now officially bilingual and actively promoting plurilingualism. In the educational context, the promotion of Catalan – along with Spanish and at least one foreign language – is seen as a strategy to achieve internationalization and interculturality, in order to form European citizens belonging to a “local, national and international community” (Pérez-Vidal et al., 2020). Several studies provide support to this plan: HE actors support the spread of multilingualism at the educational level (Doiz et al., 2014) as it would “foster linguistic cosmopolitanism and encourage social harmony, social integration, respect for all language groups, as well as the co-existence of diverse identities” (Lasagabaster, 2017: 586). Consequently, the use of Catalan is settled in a broader cosmopolitan framework (Trenchs-Parera & Newman, 2009; Woolard & Frekko, 2013), in which speakers may adopt flexible practices and experience *linguistic mudes*, “the specific biographical junctures where individuals enact significant changes in their linguistic repertoire” (Pujolar, 2019: 165).

Nonetheless, it has to be noted that the intercultural experience may not always be a success. Jackson (2011) argues that being present in the host culture does not necessarily mean that participants will engage in intercultural interactions nor develop transcultural competences. As a matter of fact, even if students put into action their agency, the context may constrain them. For instance, physical appearance might cause that individuals feel like “forever foreigner” (e.g. Deng & De Costa, 2020; Reichmuth, 2020) or experience some form of racism (e.g. Jackson, 2008). Also, the “first-hand experience” of another culture may not only bring to re-evaluate previous stereotypes (e.g. Beaven, 2012; Pogorelova, 2016), but also to reinforce them (e.g. Coleman, 1998; Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Krajewski, 2011; Peacock & Harrison, 2009). Consequently, students develop more ethnocentric attitudes, increase their national identity or feelings of national superiority, and exhibit less willingness to interact interculturally (e.g. Isabelli-García, 2006; Jackson, 2008, 2015; Kinginger, 2008, 2010; Pogorelova, 2016).

Furthermore, several factors may influence the process of becoming a *whole person* (Kinger, 2013), both at the internal and external levels. Although with mixed results, empirical evidence seems to suggest a positive impact of previous individual experiences

on the depth of intercultural learning (Krajewski, 2011). For instance, both travelling experience and having lived abroad (e.g. de Santos-Velasco, 2018; Del Villar, 2010, 2012; Ruiz-Bernardo, 2012; Ruiz-Bernardo, Ferrández-Berruero & Sales-Ciges, 2012), and plurilingualism (e.g. Aksoy & Akkoç, 2019; de Santos-Velasco, 2018; Meydanlioglu, Arikan & Gozum, 2015; Ruiz-Bernardo, 2012; Vilà-Baños, 2006) seem to be positively correlated with participants' intercultural sensitivity. Jackson (2011) also emphasized that participants' receptiveness and commitment are crucial for intercultural development. Moreover, as already remarked, proficiency in the host or target language plays a fundamental role (e.g. Medina-López-Portillo, 2004; Mitchell et al., 2017; Pogorelova, 2016). Vande Berg, Connor-Linton and Paige's (2009) study partially confirm these results as prior language study emerged as a good predictor for intercultural growth while living experiences abroad did not. Still, students without previous experiences displayed the most significant improvements after the sojourn.

As for variables depending on the program, both accommodation – i.e. living with locals (Bracke & Aguerre, 2015; Vande Berg et al., 2009) – and the length of the stay (Behrnd & Porzelt, 2012; Engle & Engle, 2004) may have an impact on participants' intercultural engagement. These two last aspects, along with language, are strictly interconnected as they may directly affect the amount and quality of interactions between local and international students. As a matter of fact, intercultural interactions have proved to be crucial in students' adjustment (Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013; Pogorelova, 2016; Pogorelova & Trenchs-Parera, 2018), linguistic gains (Mitchell et al., 2017), intercultural learning (Benson et al., 2013), and national identity (Carnine, 2014, 2015). Also in the local context, having foreign friends or daily contact with cultural differences emerged as a good predictor of intercultural sensitivity (Aksoy & Akkoç, 2019; de Santos-Velasco, 2018; Del Villar, 2018; Meydanlioglu et al., 2015; Ruiz-Bernardo, 2012; Vilà-Baños, 2006).

Thus, in order to both maximize the gains of the experience abroad, enhance intercultural learning, and overcome personal and contextual constraints, several scholars point to the importance of how programs are structured and of carrying out systematic program reviews at different stages and in different contexts (Engle & Engle, 2004; Jackson & Oguro, 2018). As a matter of fact, a set of studies on over 100 Chinese-Hong Kong

participants conducted by Jackson (2006, 2008, 2011, 2013) remarks the relevance of critical reflection, pre- and post-sojourn activities, cultural mentoring, and interventions to “to help sojourners make sense of their personal journeys of discovery of Self and Other” (Jackson, 2008: 68), more so in the case of short-term sojourns.

Jackson’s research focuses specifically on a program established by the English Department at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, giving the opportunity to second-year English majors to study for five weeks in England. At the home institutions, participants are provided with the tools of ethnographic research, in order to conduct autonomous research once abroad and become more conscious of the experience. Students who took part in the program “displayed a stronger desire to make connections across cultures, open themselves up to new ideas and worldviews, and experiment with novel forms of expression and behaviours” (Jackson, 2008: 212), eventually taking “significant steps toward a more sophisticated, cosmopolitan self through deep reflection and intercultural interaction in localized, global spaces” (Jackson, 2011: 81). Thus, the scholar concludes that “carefully designed and sequenced intercultural education which incorporates critical reflection and experiential learning in an international setting” (ibidem) may further enhance intercultural learning.

Actually, such kinds of activities and interventions may not only help students on mobility in their adaptation and mean-making process throughout the experience abroad, but also be implemented with local students to foster their cultural awareness and intercultural competences, as well as to promote meaningful intercultural interactions on campuses (Oguro & Jackson, 2018; Williams, 2005). As a matter of fact, intercultural education and internationalization at home are nowadays on the agenda of institutions such as the UNESCO (2006) and the Council of Europe (CEFR Companion; 2018, 2020). The idea behind it, as summarized by the Council of Europe (2016), is that all citizens should learn how “living together as equals in culturally diverse democratic societies”, whether they undertake an experience abroad or not.

Although scholars remark that such interventions may be problematic, since students tend to resist mixed-group work (Harrison, 2015; see also Section 2.3.2) and not an easy process, as nurturing intercultural sensitivity and positive attitudes is a more challenging task than providing knowledge (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009), several methods have

been developed, ranging from more experiential to more didactic, and from culture-specific to culture-general (Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009). Specific activities to foster intercultural education may be implemented in the FL and SLA classrooms (e.g. Byram, 2008, 2020; Chimeva, 2021; Gómez-Rodríguez, 2013), as well as at the university level, either in the form of group work and collaborative learning tasks (e.g. de Hei, Tabacaru, Sjoer, Rippe & Walenkamp, 2020; Karajewski, 2011; Popov, Brinkman, Biemans, Mulder, Kuznetsov & Noroozi, 2012; Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2017) or integrating global, international, and intercultural (GII) learning into the whole curriculum (Krebs, 2020). Also, to overcome financial constraints, several researchers point to telecollaboration as a valuable tool for promoting intercultural interactions and engagement (e.g. Chimeva, 2021; Lee & Song, 2019).

In sum, transcultural competence has been mainly approached from the point of view of international students as an outcome of the mobility experience. Research shows that the encounter with the culturally diverse can be understood as a “transformative experience”, as it may enhance students’ knowledge about other cultures and their interest in international issues, foster a feeling of belonging to an international community while raising participants’ intercultural awareness and sensitivity, and ultimately nurture a more global identity affiliation. Also, apart from enhancing students’ linguistic proficiency in one or more foreign languages, the SA context promotes plurilingual practices and interactions. Still, negative attitudes and views may arise from the experience abroad, and several personal and contextual factors may constrain intercultural learning. Therefore, scholars underline the importance of mentoring and training to maximize the gains of SA, as well as to promote intercultural education among at-home students.

Nevertheless, although recognizing the crucial role played by participants’ social networks during their SA, studies usually only consider students’ interactions to explain or justify other aspects of the experience, such as linguistic gains or the adaptation process, and rarely overtly point to the relationship between social networks and transcultural competences. Also, even studies conducted in Europe tend to address the role of English as the primary *lingua franca* and the attitudes towards it, and little attention is given to other linguistic practices. Finally, research so far is mainly focused on undergraduates on short or mid-term – i.e. *credit* – mobility, and no interest has been

devoted to those students going abroad for the whole length of their degree – i.e. *degree mobility*. In this context, students at-home become key actors in the multilingual and multicultural classroom while, in previous research, they are often only taken into account as a control group to emphasize the benefits of the SA experience.

2.3.2 Studies on Intercultural Interactions in Higher Education

As amply discussed (Section 2.2.3), social interactions play a crucial role in students' overall adjustment, academic performance, linguistic proficiency, and development of intercultural and transcultural competences, as well as in the process of internationalization of higher education. As a matter of fact, to function effectively in the globalized society, individuals are required to carry out meaningful and successful interactions with people from very diverse backgrounds. Thus, there is growing interest in describing and investigating students' social networks and intercultural interactions, from both the SA perspective (e.g. Coleman, 2013, 2015; de Federico de la Rúa, 2002, 2003; Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018) and an educational psychology approach (e.g. Kudo et al., 2017, 2019; Volet & Jones, 2012), this last one often stemming from Allport's Intergroup Contact Hypothesis (Section 2.2.2). Indeed, as pointed out by Gareis (2000), studying intercultural interaction in the educational context provides us with the opportunity to explore how intimate relationships are formed and the personal and environmental characteristics acting as enablers or blockers, as well as the cultural aspects influencing such a process.

Although scholars call for a focus on individuals rather than groups, there is a tendency to divide students into *internationals* and *locals*. Students on mobility have been at the core of research on intercultural interactions, while the interest in how local students perceive, interpret, and experience intercultural contact is relatively new (Colvin et al., 2014; Dunne, 2009, 2013; Halualani, 2008, 2010; Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Peacock & Harrison, 2009). Still, studies often address just one of the two parts, and the two groups are considered jointly only in mixed-group tasks or in an interventionist perspective. Furthermore, interestingly, most of the research in this area is conducted in Australia, a country with an increasing presence of “Confucian” Asian students on degree mobility

who often show difficulties in interacting and mixing with permanent residents; other studies point to the specificities of the “Chinese learner”, needing to be further addressed (Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2017). More studies come from other English-speaking countries – i.e. UK, Ireland, USA, and New Zealand – or focus on English speakers on credit mobility. Little attention has been devoted to the topic in Europe, where research focus mainly on Erasmus students and social interactions are treated as one aspect of the wider mobility experience; accordingly, studies usually take into account intercultural relationships to explain other processes, such as linguistic gain and students’ adaptation (e.g. Beaven, 2012; Mitchell et al., 2017).

Overall, one of the main themes tackled in the literature on intercultural interaction is the composition of university students’ social networks. Studies so far report a lack of contact between international and local students or the formation of superficial, task-oriented relationships (e.g. Neri & Ville, 2008; McFaul, 2016; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Nesdale, Simkin, Sang, Burke & Fraser, 1995; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Saura-Sánchez, 2004; Volet & Ang 1998/2012), more so in the case of foreign students with a large cultural difference from the hosts, such as “Confucian” Asian ones (e.g. Carnine, 2015; Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Rienties, Héliot, et al., 2013; Rienties & Nolan, 2013). Thus, as noticed by De Vita (2005), it seems that “intercultural interaction, in and outside the classroom, is not developing naturally and is at best limited among students from culturally diverse backgrounds” (ivi: 75), resulting in two strongly segregated social worlds.

Indeed, as first pointed out by Bochner et al. (1977) and Furnham and Alibhai (1985), international students’ social networks are predominantly formed by co-nationals and/or other international peers (e.g. de Federico de la Rua, 2003, 2008; Mitchell, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2017; Montgomery, 2010; Neri & Ville, 2008). For instance, investigating the experiences of 80 French students on sojourns abroad, Papatsiba (2006) observes that they mainly interact within an “Erasmus bubble”. Similarly, Volet and Ang (1998/2012) found that, even after a successful experience of mixed group work, students preferred to work with partners from similar cultural backgrounds. Also, in two qualitative studies by Peacock and Harrison (2009) and Harrison and Peacock (2010) in a British university, local students manifested the same preference to form ingroup relationships.

Research shows that international students perceive relationships with other international peers as easier due to sharing a similar ethnic background or the analogous experience of being in another culture (e.g. Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Rienties, Hernández-Nanclares et al., 2013). Actually, these connections may serve to reduce the stress of crossing cultures (Kim, 2001) and develop feelings of belonging to a group (Krajewski, 2011), ultimately acting as support networks. As a matter of fact, although confirming the tendency to form minor relationships with local students, Montgomery and McDowell's (2009) in-depth study on seven international students in the UK reveals the emergence of an "international community of practice" through which students receive both academic and psychological support while developing new, global identities. In this sense, ingroup interactions would help students "to replace the social capital they had lost in their transition to a new culture" (ivi: 458).

Nevertheless, in a study on 86 international students at a university in Hawai'i, Hendrickson et al. (2011) found that those students with a higher ratio of host nationals in their network were the ones reporting higher satisfaction, contentment, and significantly lower homesickness. Also, students with varying local friendships emerged as the more satisfied and socially connected. Moreover, providing evidence to the Intergroup Contact hypothesis, Levin, van Laar, and Sidanius (2003) showed that international students with more outgroup friends during their second and third year of university presented less ingroup bias and intergroup anxiety at the end of the fourth year. On a similar line, Papatsiba's (2006) and Kinginger's (2008) studies point out the relevance of students' social experience to develop more favorable attitudes towards the host culture, providing support to Kim's (2001) claim that "the greater the co-national interpersonal communication, the lesser the intercultural transformation" (ivi: 91).

As a matter of fact, ties with local students and host nationals provide international students with unique resources to learn new knowledge and skills about their country of sojourn (Furnham & Bochner, 1982), as well as the host culture's communication patterns (Kim, 2001), enhancing both their academic performance (De Vita, 2002; Dunne, 2009) and their overall socio-cultural adjustment (Dunne, 2009; Kim, 2001; McFaul, 2016). For instance, Neri and Ville's (2008) findings seem to suggest that social capital investment

by international students in Australia is not associated with academic performance because they tend to interact mainly with co-national peers.

Nonetheless, as discussed, there seems to be substantial social segregation between international and local students in their personal and academic networks. Consequently, in the last fifteen years, research has expanded in two different – yet highly intertwined – directions, aiming to explore: (1) what personal and contextual characteristics foster the formation and development of intercultural interactions at university or act as blockers; and (2) the effects of successful contact experiences on international students' adjustment and linguistic gains, as well as on the development of intercultural competences in both cohorts. In both cases, as we will see, mixed-group work, specific interventions, and/or other forms of institutional support emerge as fundamental, corroborating Allport's (1954) condition that, for optimal contact to occur, it has to be supported by social or institutional authorities.

As concerns the first issue, several studies point out that international students' expectations on the social experience abroad are often not met, as they wished to establish more intimate relationships with local peers and host nationals (e.g. Beaven, 2012; Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013; Jackson, 2008). For instance, a study by Hotta and Ting-Toomey (2013) on 20 international students studying at a public four-year university in Southern California reveals that, although wishing to be treated like guests and welcomed in the foreign culture, they often feel invisible, ignored, excluded, and in some cases even discriminated. Consequently, international peers tend to close themselves to new friendships, ultimately feeling "like an alien".

However, although not having a hostile view on intercultural contact, local students often do not perceive the need or the benefit to engage in interaction with their international peers (Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2017), or their motivation is mainly pragmatically driven (Dunne, 2013; Peacock & Harrison, 2009). Even when interaction occurs, Dunne's (2009) study on 24 local UK students shows that they perceive intercultural engagement as "more demanding and less rewarding". Therefore, the lack of interaction between the two groups is primarily explored by the perspective of the local students (Harrison, 2015), and reasons may be grouped in four themes:

- *Linguistic and cultural aspects*: Host students report difficulties in interacting with international peers as they do not have proficiency in the local language (e.g. Burdett, 2014; Dunne, 2009; Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Krajewski, 2011; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Montgomery and McDowell 2009; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Saura Sánchez, 2004; Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2017; Volet & Ang, 1998/2012). Also, perceived discrimination and stereotypes, especially towards “Chinese” students (e.g. Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Volet & Ang, 1998/2012), as well as differences in humor and lack of shared cultural reference points (e.g. Dunne, 2009; Kimmel & Volet 2012; Peacock and Harrison 2009; Ujitani & Volet, 2008) may inhibit the development of intimate relationships.
- *Anxiety and concern*: Local students may experience fear of being judged for their own cultural practices, as well as anxiety about causing offence to their peers’ culture (e.g. Dunne, 2009; Peacock & Harrison, 2009). Overall, intercultural communication is perceived as requiring a large effort (e.g. Dunne, 2013; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Ujitani & Volet, 2008).
- *Academic life*: Local students believe that working with international classmates may affect their academic performance and grades (e.g. Burdett, 2013; De Vita, 2002; Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Peacock & Harrison, 2009). Also, group work is made more complex by differing academic norms, as well as working and learning styles and ethics (e.g. Burdett, 2014; De Vita, 2001; Dunne, 2013; Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Peacock & Harrison, 2009). Interestingly, in the Australian context, host students perceive international peers as less committed, while in UK and Ireland as highly involved in academic tasks.
- *Social life*: Most host students have already well-established friendship networks (e.g. Hendrickson et al. 2011; Rienties, Beausaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet & Kommers, 2012; Rienties, Grohnert, Kommers, Niemantsverdriet & Nijhuis, 2011) or show a tendency to become friends with friends of their friends who are locals (e.g. Dunne, 2009). Conversely, international students tend to keep in contact with family and friends in their country of origin (e.g. Beaven, 2012; Kinginger, 2008; Mitchell, 2015). Also, local and international students usually

spend their free time in different ways (e.g. Kimmel & Volet, 2012; McFaul, 2016).

Another set of studies put emphasis on either the individual characteristics or on the contextual and external factors that may act as *enablers* or *blockers* for intercultural interactions. The variable of time emerges as transversal since students may or may not form more relationships or transform superficial contacts into more intimate friendships as time passes by (e.g. Bown, Dewey & Kirk Belnap, 2015; de Federico de la Rúa, 2002; Hendrickson, 2018; Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013; Kim, 2001; Rienties & Nolan, 2013).

With regard to individual characteristics, previous intercultural experiences and plurilingualism seem to positively impact intercultural engagement (e.g. Jon, 2013; Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Peacock & Harrison, 2009), entailing already favorable attitudes towards cultural differences (e.g. Jon, 2013; Krajewski, 2011). Also, Colvin and colleagues (2014) revealed a consistent relationship among students' conceptualization of culture (i.e. *ethnorelative* vs. *ethnocentric*), perception of diversity (i.e. *heterogeneous and permeable* vs. *homogeneous and impermeable*), and engagement in intercultural interactions.

In an extensive qualitative study on 15 international students – from Germany, India, and Taiwan – in the USA, Gareis (1995) individuates 12 key factors involved in the formation and development of intercultural friendships: culture, personality, self-esteem, friendship elements, expectations, adjustment stage, cultural knowledge, communicative competence, external variables, proximity, US (host) elements, and chemistry. In a more recent model (Gareis, 2000), such a list is reduced to six factors: cultural differences in perceptions of friendship, personality, homophily, adjustment stage, communicative competence, and proximity.

Drawing upon Gareis's (1995, 2000) conclusions, Kudo and Smikin (2003) conducted a small but interesting qualitative study on six female Japanese undergraduates studying at an Australian university. The scholars identified four themes, each one including two elements, relevant for intercultural friendship formation: (1) *frequent contact*, including propinquity (i.e. classroom and accommodation) and shared networks; (2) *similarity* (i.e. homophily), including individual similarity (hobbies, attitudes, values, and personality)

and age; (3) *self-disclosure*, including spoken English skills (related with anxiety and quality of message exchange) and openness of communication; and (4) *receptivity of other nationals*, including cross-cultural orientation and empathy. Kudo and Smikin (2003) conclude that “close friendships have an individual focus: they view people as unique individuals rather than as representatives of certain ethnic or cultural groups” (ivi: 101); however, besides requiring receptive and facilitative behavior by host national and adaptive and disclosure skills by international students, intercultural friendship demands contextual preconditions and opportunities.

As a matter of fact, specific environments and activities, both inside and outside the classroom, have proved to be fruitful contexts for students to establish learning relationships and become friends, especially those offering peers the opportunity for repeated contact (McFaul, 2016). For instance, several studies point to the relevance of extra-curricular activities – such as going to clubs, volunteering, and/or having a part-time job – to get in touch with people outside of one’s own culture (e.g. Hendrickson, 2018; Mitchell, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2017; Neri & Ville, 2008), highlighting the impact of informal social learning (Hommes et al., 2012). Also, the context of study abroad – i.e. university or study abroad centers (e.g. Hendrickson, 2016) – and on-campus participation (e.g. McFaul, 2016), as well as the type of accommodation (e.g. Bracke & Aguerre, 2015; Mitchell, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2017), may shape students’ social networks.

Nonetheless, much attention has also been devoted to intercultural interactions in the educational setting, focusing mainly on in-class mixed-groups work or specific intervention activities in the classroom. This set of studies usually takes into account both local and international students. Research shows that, although students tend to prefer to work with partners with similar backgrounds (e.g. Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Volet & Ang, 1998/2012) and differences in academic performance and fear of receiving lower grades may be perceived as limitations (e.g. Burdett, 2014; De Vita, 2002), engagement in culturally-mixed group work seems to impact the emergence of learning relationships among students positively.

For instance, several longitudinal studies by Rienties and colleagues (Rienties, Héliot, et al., 2013; Rienties, Hernández, et al., 2013; Rienties & Nolan, 2013) explore how

international and local students build learning and working relationship in- and outside several UK university classrooms with different degrees of internationalization. Results show that the primary predictor of learning relations was initial team division, having an effect from 3 to 8 times stronger than similarity of cultural background. However, students kept strong relationships with co-national peers, especially in the case of “Confucian” Asian ones. They conclude that “instructional design might have a strong influence on how international and host students work and learn together” (Rienties, Héliot, et al., 2013: 489). As a matter of fact, a similar study by Kimmel and Volet (2012), aiming to shed light on the conditions of successful group work, unveiled the combined effect of “interdependent task characteristics, structured teacher support, and cohort characteristics creating an enabling environment for efficient collaborative processes to emerge regardless of group configuration” (ivi: 164). Among others (e.g. Eisenchlas & Trevaskes, 2007; Jackson, 2015; Krajewski, 2011; Volet & Jones, 2012), these findings emphasize the relevance of implementing collaborative activities in the classroom, as well as the key role of teachers in facilitating group dynamics (e.g. Krajewski, 2011; Leask, 2009; Volet & Jones, 2012; Yefanova, Montgomery, Woodruff, Johnstone & Kappler, 2017), since the presence of both international and local students does not mean that contact will occur (Burdett, 2014; Campbell, 2012; De Vita, 2005; Dunne, 2009; Leask, 2009; Peacock & Harrison, 2009). Indeed, in a student-centered environment, students from different cultural backgrounds are “forced” to work together (Rienties, Hernández, et al., 2013).

Attempting to further explore the development of intercultural interactions at university, more recently, Kudo et al. (2017) conducted an in-depth review of 13 empirical papers analyzing at least one individual and one environmental dimension fostering or blocking positive intercultural relationships. They identify four specific themes:

- (1) Environmental constraints and affordances in relation to relationship prospects:
 - a. Institutional or situational constraints (e.g. lack of institutional or pedagogical strategies, close co-national communities).
 - b. Institutional or situational affordances (e.g. carefully designed contact zones promoting cooperation, equality, and mutual respect).
- (2) Personal blockers and enablers in constrained environments:

- a. Blockers that exacerbate environmental constraints (e.g. nationality or country of origin, recreation, age and maturity, economic situation, work ethic, alcohol consumption, and physical dissimilarity).
 - b. Interaction enabled by personal skills (e.g. linguistic proficiency) and agency despite environmental constraints.
- (3) Personal blockers and enablers in intervention environments (e.g. past experiences, intercultural knowledge and openness).
- (4) Cultural barriers and intolerance at individual and environmental levels.

Kudo et al. (2017) conclude that the development of intercultural relationships is influenced by the interaction of both the individual and the environmental dimensions. For instance, even in constrained environments, positive intercultural relationships may develop if students mobilize their agency, whereas student-centered environments maximize successful interactions.

Therefore, once again, institutional involvement arises as critical in nullifying the blockers of intercultural relationships' development, but also in nurturing agency and intercultural competences in both international and local students in order to achieve reciprocal understanding (Burdett, 2014; de Hei et al., 2020; Harrison & Peacock, 2009; Jon, 2013; Ujitani & Volet, 2008). In fact, the major outcome of the internationalization of higher education would be to shape individuals who can function efficiently in the transcultural and global world. Such goal depends heavily on successful intercultural interactions and relationships since, relying on the Intergroup Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954), contact would affect *social categorization*: by learning information about the outgroup, group identities become less relevant and, thus, the conceptual representation may shift from the *us versus them* perspective to a more inclusive *we* (Harrison, 2015).

Consequently, a substantial body of empirical work focuses on the design, implementation, and effects of specific group-work assignments or other outcome-oriented tasks aiming to foster meaningful relationships and “build greater cultural understanding, challenge stereotypes and promote equality” (De Vita, 2002: 155). Indeed, interactions between local and international students may eventually lead to both the development and enhancement of intercultural competences in the host community and

the formation of a network of social support in the case of peers on mobility. In this sense, intercultural interactions should be conceived as a two-sides, mutually beneficial process (Kudo et al., 2019; Volet & Jones, 2012).

For instance, Volet and Ang's (1998/2012) results show that, after a successful experience of culturally mixed group work, students realized that individual differences and having similar goals and mutual commitment are more important than cultural differences. Likewise, in a mixed-group task of experiential, self-directed learning implemented in a university course in Sidney, Krajewski (2011) reports that, overall, students acquired new knowledge about one or more cultures. However, she also underlines the importance of previous knowledge, emotional intelligence, and language proficiency in how intercultural learning is experienced.

Focusing more on internationalization at home, Campbell (2012) implemented a "buddy project" in an intercultural communication class in New Zealand, pairing 30 host students with newly arrived international students. She found that, thanks to a practical experience of intercultural communication, local students not only learned about another culture but also increased their awareness and sensitivity about other cultures in general and reevaluated their stereotypes. Overall, mentoring programs emerge as successful not just in fostering competences but also interaction itself (Bodycott et al., 2014; Eisenclas & Trevaskes, 2007), as local students in Campbell's (2012) study became friends with their partners and expressed the willingness to engage in intercultural contact in the future. Providing further evidence, Jon's (2013) study on 95 local students at a Korean private university showed that institutional interventions – such as a buddy program and a culture and language exchange one – have a strong and direct effect on intercultural interactions, which in turn have a positive and indirect effect on their intercultural competence – i.e. interest in other countries and higher cultural sensibility and awareness. Moreover, as previous intercultural experiences proved to impact students' engagement in interaction, these findings point to the bidirectional nature of the relationship between formation of intercultural interactions and development of intercultural competences.

On a similar line, Nesdale and Todd's (2000) designed an intervention to promote contact between Australian and international students in a university residential hall including several techniques and activities to enhance meaningful interactions, such as an

orientation program, hall tutorials, floor group activities, and allocating approximately the same number of Australian and international students on each floor. Nevertheless, their results seem to suggest that successful intercultural contact impact local students' knowledge and openness but has no effect on international peers, as they may start from a higher base. Also, negative effects may arise from the interaction. For instance, local students in Kimmel and Volet's (2012) study admitted that listening to negative experiences of intercultural contact from others "reaffirmed their already unfavourable attitudes towards intercultural mixing" (ivi: 173). Similarly, Krajewski (2011) highlights that "working with people from different cultures does not automatically lead to better understanding but may at times reinforce existing stereotypes" (ivi: 147).

Some other scholars argue that single activities or projects alone are not enough to foster intercultural interactions and achieve a fully internationalized university, and call for more holistic strategies and interventions (e.g. Bodycott et al., 2014; Eisenclas & Trevaskes, 2007; Jackson, 2015; Leask, 2009). Leask (2009) suggests to "strategically use both the formal and the informal curriculum within a dynamic and supportive institutional culture of internationalization" (ivi: 207) to improve quality and quantity of the contact and develop intercultural competences and took part in the development of a campus environment fostering cross-cultural interactions (i.e. learning guide, peer-mentoring system, conversation groups, cross-cultural lunches). However, Dunne (2013) observes that interventions produce "an intercultural catch-22 situation": contact should be ideally voluntary to fully benefit student diversity; still, in line with the principle of homophily, individuals tend to interact with similar partners. Thus, it seems that "the condition posited to facilitate positive interaction is also the one which reduces the likelihood of it taking place" (ivi: 570).

Another set of studies investigating the effects of intercultural contact have addressed more specifically students on mobility and their individual experiences. Research shows that meaningful and repeated interactions with the local community increase international students' adjustment (e.g. Hendrickson et al., 2011; McFaul, 2016; Shu et al., 2020) and linguistic gains (e.g. Dewey, Bown & Eggett, 2012; Isabelli-Garcia, 2006; Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018; Mitchell et al., 2015; Mitchell et al., 2017). Also, carrying out a study on the social networks developed by a group of Erasmus students in Lille, France, de Federico

de la Rúa (2002, 2003) found that, although students mainly interacted within the Erasmus network, the development of confidence and solidarity relationships between members of two different groups can increase the sense of identification with an imagined community, thus not perceiving the other as foreign.

Interestingly, contact has been proved to produce language and intercultural learning also when it is mediated by screen, such as in *direct* contact through blogging and interviews online with native speakers (e.g. Campbell, 2012; Ngai, 2019; Zhang, Cheung & Lee, 2012), or *indirect*, as being exposed to foreign cultural products and artifacts (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2005; Kormos & Csizér, 2007). In a recent study by Peng and Wu (2016) on 531 Chinese university students, both direct (i.e. social media, intercultural communication activities) and indirect (i.e. cultural products, multimedia and courses) contact emerged as having a positive impact on intercultural communicative competence. Similarly, Jacob (2013) reports that, through interaction in an online blog, a group of teenage students of English, living in Spain and Poland, showed clear interest in understanding the others, the “foreigners”, and reevaluating previous images and stereotypes. Moreover, since the participants shared the same age, the process of bonding is put into action, initiated by common interests (e.g. music, animals).

To sum up, research on intercultural interaction in the higher education context shows a lack of contact between international and local students or the emergence of outcome-oriented interactions. Several aspects and characteristics may act either as enablers or blockers for the development of meaningful intercultural relationships, both at the individual and the environmental level. Accordingly, scholars remark that intercultural interaction is a situated, reciprocal, and dynamic process that “requires high levels of sensitivity, and a genuine and mutual search for reciprocal understanding” (Ujitani & Volet, 2008: 297). Moreover, in order to both promote interaction between local and international students and enhance their intercultural competences, institutional support is crucial, either in the form of collaborative, student-centered mixed-group work or through the implementation of specific interventions.

Nevertheless, research so far seems limited to English-speaking countries or English-speaking students on mobility, with a few studies in Asian universities, while little or no attention has been devoted to the European context. Also, studies tend to adopt a unilateral

approach, either focusing on international students' networks composition or on local students' perceptions of intercultural contact, and rarely the two groups are taken into account as two sides of the same coin. Finally, there is a lack of empirical research on the relationship between voluntary, agency-motivated contact and the development of intercultural competences, that is the "link between deep-level, motivated engagement in cultural transitions and the emergence of transformative experiences, leading to intercultural personhood and global citizenship" (Volet & Jones, 2012: 276).

2.4 Focus of the study

In this section, I will summarize the research gaps emerged in the review of literature, in order to present the focus of the present dissertation (Section 2.4.1). Subsequently, the research questions the study will try to answer will be introduced (Section 2.4.2), as well as the hypothesis based on previous empirical results (Section 2.4.3).

2.4.1 Research gaps

The foregoing review of literature has highlighted several gaps in the empirical studies on the development of Transcultural Competence (Section 2.3.1) and the formation of intercultural relationships (Section 2.3.2) in the context of higher education. Moreover, research so far has mainly considered the two topics as separate.

On the one hand, intercultural and transcultural competence have been mainly approached through the lens of international students undertaking a SA experience, relying upon the field of Second Language Acquisition. Although recognizing the transformative value of the encounter with the culturally diverse from a cognitive, affective, behavioral, identity, and linguistic point of view, such a set of studies:

- only take into account students' social interactions as an explanatory variable for linguistic gains and adaptation,
- rarely focus on students on degree mobility,

- give little attention to linguistic attitudes towards local and heritage languages as they emphasize English as the major *lingua franca*, and
- consider students at-home as a control group to contrast the benefits of SA, and small interest is devoted to those experiencing internationalization at home.

On the other hand, intercultural contact and relationships have been primarily studied from the perspective of educational psychology, pointing to a lack of meaningful interactions between international and local students. Although remarking that intercultural interaction is a situated, reciprocal, and dynamic process, studies at this respect:

- focus on either international students' network composition or local students' perceptions of intercultural contact,
- are mainly undertaken in English-speaking countries (e.g. Ireland, UK, USA, Australia) and far less in European ones,
- often adopt an interventionist perspective, with a pedagogical aim, and
- do not focus on the relationship between voluntary, agency-motivated contact and the development of intercultural and transcultural competences.

Thus, in both cases, research seems to adopt an “unilateral approach”, treating local and international students as two separate groups; even when they are taken into account together, it is often in a comparative perspective. Moreover, both groups are mainly considered as being internally homogeneous, and research on individual difference and trajectories is far from exhaustive.

Therefore, the present dissertation aims to explore undergraduates' development of Transcultural Competence from an interactionist perspective in a real-life context. Joining the two afore-mentioned fields, students are here considered as *whole persons* (Coleman, 2013, 2015; Isabelli-García et al., 2018) – acknowledging the relevance of “with whom” students interact – and the concept of *person-in-context* (Kudo et al., 2017, 2019; Volet, 2001) – assuming student's agency to be in dynamic interaction with the environment.

The focus of the study is on first-year university undergraduates in a multicultural and multilingual classroom with an internationalized curriculum – i.e. a multi-dimensionally

internationalized classroom –, and both local and non-local students will be investigated under the same aspect and parameters. Indeed, we will consider the internationalized classroom as a “critical experience” (Benson et al., 2013) for both groups, providing students with different kinds of affordances, strongly correlated with their agency as they join it at their own will.

Accordingly, the study will adopt a transdisciplinary approach. On the one hand, it aims to explore the changes in attitudes, sensitivity, and identity that may occur in an individual through time when exposed to a multilingual and multicultural context. On the other hand, it deals with students as social interactors, considering socialization as a fundamental process for human beings and intercultural contact as an asset in today’s transcultural society that may, or may not, promote intercultural learning.

2.4.2 Research questions

Multilingual and multicultural environments are claimed to have a transformative impact on individuals’ transcultural competences, as they offer affordances for meaningful interactions and intercultural relationships’ development that allow individuals to gather first-hand knowledge about other cultures and nurture their cultural awareness and sensitivity, ultimately fostering a re-evaluation of one’s own identity. Also, higher education classes are proved to be a successful context for such a transformation to occur, more so when provided with institutional support and specific teaching strategies, such as in collaborative learning activities and an internationalized curriculum.

Thus, focusing on first-year undergraduates in a multilingual and multicultural university class with an internationalized curriculum and full EMI-teaching – that is, the *multi-dimensionally internationalized* classroom –, the present study aims to explore changes in students’ Transcultural Competence in such a context and if, and to what extent, intercultural interactions contribute to those changes. Consequently, I will try to answer to the following research questions:

RQ1. In the context of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom, does undergraduates' Transcultural Competence increase during the first year at university? If so, to what extent?

RQ2. As regards their degree of Transcultural Competence, do undergraduates from the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom differ from those from lesser internationalized ones? If so, to what extent?

RQ3. In the context of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom, to what extent is students' degree of Transcultural Competence influenced by their intercultural in-class social networks?

2.4.3 Research hypothesis

Drawing from the findings of previous empirical studies on the development of Transcultural Competence and Intercultural Interactions in the Higher Education, I expected that:

- Students enrolled in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom will present a higher degree of Transcultural Competence than students in classes with a lesser degree of internationalization (Krebs, 2020; Trenchs-Parera, 2018).
- Local students will tend to engage less likely in intercultural interactions and relationships (Dunne, 2013; Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2017).
- International students will tend to cultivate cosmopolitan friendships among themselves and/or form closed co-national groups (de Federico de la Rúa, 2003; Mitchell et al., 2017; Montgomery, 2010; Neri & Ville, 2008; Papatsiba, 2006).
- Students who do interact in mixed groups will be the ones experiencing most/greatest changes in international attitudes, intercultural sensitivity, identity affiliation, and linguistic cosmopolitanism (Benson et al., 2013; Hendrickson et al., 2011; Kim, 2001; Pogorelova, 2016).

- The intercultural experience may not always be a success and negative effects may arise from contact (Isabelli-García, 2006; Jackson, 2008, 2011; Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Peacock & Harrison, 2009).
- Other factors, rather than or jointly with interactions, may contribute to students' development of Transcultural Competence (Vande Berg et al., 2009; Krajewski, 2011).
- Students will present individual trajectories (Isabelli-García et al., 2018; Krajewski, 2011; Volet & Jones, 2012), as for their socialization experience in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom and the development of Transcultural Competence, that may be influenced by both personal and contextual factors (Gareis, 2000; Jackson, 2011; Kinginger, 2013; Kudo & Smikin, 2003; Kudo et al., 2017).

Chapter 3 - METHODOLOGY

As stated in the previous chapter, the present study aims to contribute to recent literature investigating multicultural and multilingual educational environments. Its main aim is to shed new light on the outcomes that such context may have on students' Transcultural Competence (Section 2.1.6) while stressing out the role of social interactions in this process. For this purpose, the present study adopts a mix-methods approach, with both quantitative and qualitative data, and a longitudinal design. The research takes the form of a case study, focusing on one classroom of the bachelor's degree of Global Studies at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF) of Barcelona. Moreover, a Control group was also selected, formed by students from other degrees at the same university, allowing for contrasting and comparing results.

From both a theoretical and methodological point of view, the present study is highly transdisciplinary. As we have seen in the previous chapter (Chapter 2), this research is grounded in two research fields – the Study Abroad perspective and the (intercultural) social interactions one – that only in recent literature are starting to be considered highly intertwined and the two faces of the same coin. Thus, it makes use of concepts and instruments from a variety of scientific fields, such as sociolinguistics, social psychology, pedagogy, and sociology.

In this chapter, I will illustrate the methodology used to carry out the study, which partially relies on the methodology adopted by the TRANSLINGUAM-UNI research project⁶. Firstly, the research context (Section 3.1) and participants (Section 3.2) will be presented; then, the instruments for collecting data and the process of data collection will be described in detail (Section 3.4 and Section 3.5), as well as some ethical considerations (Section 3.6) and the analysis procedures (Section 3.7). Lastly, I will underline the methodological limitations I had to face while conducting this research (Section 3.8).

⁶ <https://www.upf.edu/es/web/translinguam-uni>

3.1 Research context

Although the present study has its focus on a particular group of students at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra of Barcelona, I believe the broader context in which this university fits in is not to underestimate. The city of Barcelona is an emerging European urban area, presenting a multicultural and multilingual environment accessible to anyone in everyday life. Along with the two official languages – Catalan and Spanish –, a large amount of other linguistic varieties can be heard while walking through its streets, carrying with them cultural features and traits. It is not rare to listen to people speaking in Arabic, Russian, or any other language in the metro, shopping at a Pakistani supermarket or a Chinese bazaar, or even taking part in a solely English-speaking cultural event. In this setting, the educational contexts act as a space that intend to promote tolerance and respect toward the different while allowing for contact to be systematic.

In line with the Bologna Process and the subsequent creation of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), schools and universities show an increasing interest in international mobility programs and in encouraging activities on topics such as cultural awareness, heritage languages, and ethnic identity. Moreover, these institutions often create specific spaces of contact themselves, such as academic workshops, stays abroad, linguistic exchanges, and voluntary linguistic tandems (Trenchs-Parera, 2019). Therefore, the city of Barcelona presents an ideal context for trying to understand how people experience transculturality and the effects it has on their attitudes, cultural sensitivity, and identity and linguistic affiliation, as Newman et al. (2019) have pointed out.

Concretely, this study has been carried out in the context of the Universitat Pompeu Fabra, and it has the focus on first-year students of the bachelor's degree of Global Studies. I will, thus, provide more details on the university and this degree in the next two sections.

3.1.1 The Universitat Pompeu Fabra

The Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF) is a high-quality public university in the Autonomous Community of Catalonia in Spain. Since the foundation, in 1990, its

reputation has continuously grown, and it appears in prestigious international rankings, such as the QS World University ranking and the Times Higher Education ranking⁷ with high standards. Nowadays, it represents an excellent example of 21st century higher education space, exhibiting a strong international orientation and a multilingual language policy.

After the Bologna process and the formation of EHEA, universities all around Europe were invited to take actions towards their internationalization (Knight, 2004) – that is, to increase international mobility – of students, instructors, and staff –, create a multicultural and multilingual environment, and foster the development of intercultural learning, among others.

UPF committed to achieving these goals in a twofold way. On the one hand, it has become a strong internationalized university. Indeed, in one section of the UPF website – indicatively labelled *International*⁸ – it states that “with the highest percentage of international faculty in Spain and one of the most international in Europe, every year UPF also hosts a high number of international students”. Thanks to its initiatives and agreements with over 250 universities around the world – such as the Erasmus+ program and other bilateral agreements with countries outside Europe –, UPF attracts a large number of international students both on short-time programs (*credit mobility*) and for complete academic degrees (*degree mobility*). During the academic year 2020-2021, for instance, international students were 44% in MA degrees and PhD programs. Moreover, in 2019-2020, 46% of UPF undergraduate students undertook a study abroad experience; and percentages are constantly increasing. Among other initiatives aiming to internationalization, the Barcelona International Summer School (BISS⁹) should be mentioned. It is a program offering a wide variety of one to four weeks courses developed during the summer term, open to both domestic and international undergraduate students who want to enhance their curriculum.

⁷ <https://www.upf.edu/web/universitat/la-upf-en-els-ranquings>

⁸ <https://www.upf.edu/international/>

⁹ <https://www.upf.edu/web/barcelonasummerschool>

Since 2008, UPF is strongly committed to promoting multilingualism, thanks to the development of the Plan of Action for Multilingualism at UPF (PAM¹⁰). This document set up an innovative “three-language policy”, with English, Spanish, and Catalan as official languages of the university. Official documents are written in the three languages, courses are often given in more than one language, and students have the possibility to do academic tasks and exams in either Catalan, Spanish, or English. Besides, a law of the Catalan parliament (*Article 211 de la Llei 2/2014, de 27 de gener*), into force in the year of data collection, established that students who had enrolled at a Catalan university from the academic year 2018-2019 would have to provide a B2 certificate in English, German, French, or Italian by the end of their studies, in order to receive their degree certificate.

Competences and proficiency in other languages can be acquired thanks to the Idiomes UPF¹¹ service. During the whole academic year, this service offers Catalan and Spanish courses for international students, as well as a variety of foreign languages courses (i.e. English, German, Arabic, Russian, Chinese, among others) as extracurricular activities. Moreover, the Voluntariat Lingüístic¹² program provides international students with the opportunity to participate in language tandems and tours and other cultural events in Catalonia.

From a more didactic point of view, and in comparison to other Spanish universities, currently the UPF offers a large number of undergraduate classes with English-Medium Instruction (EMI) – i.e. 28.1%. Additionally, thanks to PAM, all undergraduates’ degrees include a course on English for Specific Purposes within the discipline(s) of that given degree. This allows for both promoting competence in a third language among the students and attracting highly trained international instructors. In fact, the presence of international teaching and research staff, with experience in linguistically and culturally diverse classrooms, is another step the UPF took towards internationalization. In the academic year 2020-2021, for instance, 27% of UPF instructors came from abroad.

¹⁰ https://www.upf.edu/documents/6602910/7420376/2007_pam_en.pdf/

¹¹ <https://www.upf.edu/web/idiomesupf/>

¹² <https://www.upf.edu/web/voluntariat-linguistic>

Furthermore, the university encourages a tailored educational philosophy, based on a student-centered approach that stimulates work in small groups and interaction between the students in all the modules. The Centre for Learning Innovation and Knowledge (CLIK¹³) has been created to promote teaching innovation, keep instructors up to date on new methodologies, and ensure high-quality education. Currently, the UPF is redesigning its educational model – EDvolució – with the aim of offering to the students a global, cross-disciplinary learning based on flexibility and versatility¹⁴.

3.1.2 The Global Studies degree

The bachelor's degree in Global Studies is a perfect example of what we have labeled a *multi-dimensionally internationalized* classroom (Trenchs-Parera & Pastena, 2021). It was one of the first attempts in Spain to offer an interdisciplinary degree focused on the importance of globalization and its effects at different levels. It is a three-year-long degree, and it was offered for the first time in the academic year 2016-2017.

The themes and fields covered in the degree concern interculturally relevant topics, such as culture, geography, global issues, and history, as well as foreign languages. The website of the degree states that “the degree course is intended for students from all over the world interested in understanding the cultural, economic, legal, environmental, political, social, and technological phenomena that affect us regardless of our precise geographical location, the understanding of which requires a transdisciplinary approach and a comprehensive view of human beings”¹⁵. Due of its socio-humanistic and transdisciplinary focus, the degree is included in the Faculty of Humanities at the UPF; indeed, it is anchored in “the conviction that the solution of humanity’s global problems and challenges involves studying, understanding, and reconciling, *from a humanistic perspective*, the mentalities, ideologies, and particular visions of the world with which they are perceived locally in the planet’s different regions”. Nonetheless, the Global Studies degree adopts a strongly contemporary perspective, aiming to describe, analyze,

¹³ <https://www.upf.edu/web/clik>

¹⁴ The EDvolució project: <https://www.upf.edu/web/edvolucio>

¹⁵ <https://www.upf.edu/web/graus/grau-estudis-globals>

and explain the *geolocal* phenomena, as “considered simultaneously and synchronously by the relevant actors at the local, national, regional, and global levels”.

Other factors further enhance internationalization. Firstly, the composition of classes. Indeed, according to statutory regulations, a significant percentage of the available spots are reserved for international students – i.e. non-European students – during the length of the whole degree¹⁶, thus creating a balanced and interesting multilingual and multicultural environment from the first year of studies. The degree is characterized by full EMI-teaching in the first two years of studies since all compulsory subjects are taken in English. During the third year, optional courses may be taken in Catalan, English, or Spanish at the UPF, and in other languages during a compulsory stay abroad. Furthermore, the degree promotes multilingualism, including three compulsory courses in a foreign language of choice among Chinese, Arabic, Russian, and French, as well as Spanish for international students. Lastly, during the third year, a semester abroad is mandatory; for this purpose, the degree has exclusive agreements with several universities around the world.

In order to be admitted to the degree, interested students have to send the application during the previous academic year. The selection process is different for EU students and international ones. In the first case, admission depends on the mark students got in Catalonian standardized university-entry tests, i.e. *Proves d'Accés a la Universitat*, or *Selectivitat* exam¹⁷; for instance, the cut-off mark to be admitted in the Global Studies degree in 2018-2019 was the highest of the whole university – i.e. 12.67 out of 14. Differently, students who completed their secondary education outside the EHEA have to request the recognition of their studies to the Spanish Ministry of Education, as well as certify a minimum B2 English level.

¹⁶ Available places per academic year: 2017-18: 70 students (40 EU + 30 non-EU); 2018-19: 80 students (40 EU + 40 non-EU); 2019-20 and 2020-21: 60 students (40 EU + 20 non-EU).

¹⁷ *Selectivitat* is the common name given to the standardized university entry test (*Evaluación de Acceso a la Universidad* – E.V.A.U. – in Spain, specifically called *Proves d'Accés a la Universitat* – PAU – in Catalonia). All students have to take this exam after secondary school if they want to get into university.

Finally, following the university guidelines, the degree's courses and classes adopt a teaching method strongly based on group-work in tasks and projects, promoting interaction among the students.

3.2 Participants

The participants of the present study were students from a variety of undergraduate degrees at the UPF. They were all students enrolled in their first year at the university in the academic year of data collection and took part in the research voluntarily. The decision of selecting only first-year pupils, following the focus of the TRANSLINGUAM-UNI project, was made on the belief that these students were new to the higher education context and, therefore, were more willing to experience some kind of change when being faced with the multilingual and multicultural environment the UPF offers. Besides, a large number of students decide to embark on a different study path than their high school friends and acquaintances, allowing for new relationships to be formed and develop during the first term of university.

Furthermore, since the focus of my research was on the effects that multi-dimensional internationalization might have on students' Transcultural Competence, I selected both a case study group and a control group, the first one presenting a higher degree of internationalization in their classrooms than the second one. This has allowed me to compare the results and evaluate the impact of the multi-dimensionally internationalized environment on students' attitudes, sensitivity, and identity affiliation.

The participants of the Case Study group were the first-year students of the bachelor's degree in Global Studies. They were selected for several reasons. Firstly, the Global Studies degree gives the opportunity to study different profiles of students at the same time, as well as their patterns of interactions. In fact, the classroom is composed by:

- (1) local bilingual students from Catalonia, schooled in the Catalan educational system,

- (2) local students with family of immigrant background and first-generation immigrants – students born abroad who have been schooled in Catalonia – who may have or not heritage languages and cultures,
- (3) students coming from other Autonomous Communities in Spain, both from monolingual regions of the country (such as Extremadura, Castilla-La Mancha, and the Canary Islands) and bilingual educational and social contexts (i.e. from Galicia, Basque Country, Valencia, and Balearic Islands, for instance), and
- (4) students of international background, whose have completed compulsory education outside of Spain and are moving to Barcelona for their university studies.

Secondly, it should be noted that students of international background are moving to Barcelona for the whole length of the degree – that is, on *degree mobility* –, unlike students undertaking a SA experience for *credit mobility* (Wächter, 2014). This latter group of students – such as the Erasmus ones – are usually aware of the fixed-term of their experience and act as a consequence of these circumstances, living as long-term tourists. On the contrary, the participants of the present study are on degree mobility and acquire a status that can be compared to the one of immigrants in that they are interested in fitting in the city and building a durative and trustworthy network of relationships, at least for a minimum time of three years.

Moreover, since the degree presents a widely internationalized curriculum focused on characteristics and effects of globalization, I expected that both international and local students were interested in questioning cultural and identity issues and motivated in interacting with people from distinct backgrounds. A favorable disposition is a prerequisite for contact to produce a more significant positive effect and a change in attitudes and behavior (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew et al., 2011).

In sum, Global Studies students have been chosen as a case study for the present research because they experience what may be called a *multi-dimensionally internationalized* classroom; that is, a context formed by both international students on *degree mobility* and local students experiencing an *internationalization at home* process – who may or may not have heritage languages and cultures –, along with an internationalized curriculum and full-EMI teaching.

During the academic year of data collection¹⁸, 74 students¹⁹ were enrolled in the first year of the Global Studies degree, of whom 42 were born in Catalonia (56.8%), 16 in other Autonomous Communities in Spain (21.6%), and 16 were born in the rest of the world (21.6%). With respect to students' gender, the classroom was formed by 23 males (31.1%) and 51 females (68.9%). Not all 74 students decided to take part in the research, nor the ones who expressed their willingness to participate in the study completed all the tasks. Therefore, 49 students (66.2% of the whole classroom) completed the questionnaires at the beginning of the academic year – the Background Information questionnaire and the Transcultural Competence questionnaires (Section 3.4.1) –, and 39 students (52.7%) answered the Transcultural Competence questionnaires at the end of the academic year. Moreover, I collected all expected quantitative data – i.e. questionnaires in both timings and Contact Generator – for 33 students (44.6% of the whole classroom) and I also interviewed 23 of them (31.1%).

	<i>Students enrolled in the degree</i>	<i>Participants in Time 1</i>	<i>Participants in Time 2</i>	<i>Contact Generator respondents</i>	<i>Interviewed students</i>
Catalonia	42 (56.8%)	28 (57.1%)	23 (59%)	19 (57.6%)	10 (43.5%)
Rest of Spain	16 (21.6%)	11 (22.4%)	9 (23.1%)	7 (21.2%)	6 (26.1%)
Rest of the world	16 (21.6%)	10 (20.4%)	7 (27.9%)	7 (21.2%)	7 (30.4%)
Males	23 (31.1%)	13 (26.5%)	9 (23.1%)	8 (24.2%)	7 (30.4%)
Females	51 (68.9%)	36 (73.5%)	30 (76.9%)	25 (75.8%)	16 (69.6%)
Total	74	49	39	33	23

Table 3.1 - Number and percentages of Global Studies students who took part in the research, according to birthplace and gender

¹⁸ The exact year of data collection will not be revealed in the present dissertation, in order to preserve participants from being identified.

¹⁹ This number (and the following percentages) refers to students enrolled in the first year of the Global Studies degree at the beginning of the academic year in which I collected data. It may not correspond to the number of students who completed the course and/or continued their studies in the second year. As often happens, students may have dropped off during the year, generating new available spots and, thus, allowing for the enrollment of new peers.

Nonetheless, my sample well exemplifies the general population of the degree, as all different types of students are represented – that is, local bilingual students, local students with heritage language(s) and culture(s), students from other Autonomous Communities in Spain, and students born and schooled abroad. Moreover, as illustrated in Table 3.1 summarizing students' participation in data collection, the proportion of participants are mostly respected, for what concerns both students' birthplace and gender.

For analysis purposes, the Global Studies participants were divided into three groups according to students' context of schooling: Catalans (CAT), Spaniards (SPA), and Internationals (INT). Catalans and Spaniards were not grouped together since they had experienced different educational contexts. Although several other Autonomous Communities in Spain offer a bilingual educational system – in the case of the Balearic Islands and the Valencian Autonomous Community even based on the same two languages, i.e. Catalan/Spanish – and students could be grouped together from a linguistic point of view, the perspective adopted by the present research is a social interactionist one. Indeed, students coming from other Autonomous Communities in Spain did not have a pre-built network of relationships at their arrival in Barcelona – similarly to the ones coming from abroad on degree mobility. Moreover, even though students schooled in Catalonia may have been raised with heritage culture(s) and language(s) or undertaken an experience abroad, the focus is on stable and long-term interactions. Equally important, international students cannot be grouped with the ones schooled in other Communities in Spain since they do not have fluency in Spanish nor Catalan. Thus, this division considers both the context of schooling and the linguistic proficiency as crucial aspects in students' prospects to build and maintain a network of relationships.

Two students posed a problem as they were born in a country but were schooled for a few years in another. In fact, one student was born in the Valencian Autonomous Community in Spain but attended secondary school in the United States where she had moved due to her mother's job; the other student was born in Nigeria but was schooled for a few years in an English primary school in Madrid where a part of his family lives. In this case, I decided to rely on: (1) the context in which they had formed a stronger and more stable social network, and (2) the perception the other classmates, unaware of their schooling background at the start of the academic year, had of them. Consequently, they were

grouped accordingly to their birthplace. Indeed, other-perception has proved to be more reliable than self-affiliation in students' grouping (Boda & Néray, 2015).

The Control group was formed by first-year students from undergraduate BA degrees with a lesser degree of internationalization, coming from the Schools of Humanities²⁰, Translation and Language Science, Communication, Political and Social Sciences, Economic and Business, Law, Life and Health Science, and Engineering. Due to UPF's considerable number of activities and mobility agreements, these classrooms are not formed entirely by local students, yet the percentages of international students are non-significant when compared to those in the Global Studies classroom, as very little placement is open to them. Moreover, none of these degrees is characterized by either full EMI-teaching or an integral internationalized curriculum.

The Control group was needed to compare and contrast the results regarding the effects of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom on students' Transcultural Competence (i.e. RQ2, Section 2.4.2). Therefore, only quantitative instruments – the Background Information questionnaire (Section 2.4.1) and the Transcultural Competence questionnaires (Section 3.4.2) – were administered to this group.

In agreement with the deans of each degree and the instructors in first-year classrooms, I presented my research and the questionnaires in several classrooms at the beginning (Time 1: September/October) and at the end (Time 2: May/June) of the academic year. Students were asked to complete the questionnaires on a voluntary basis. In Time 1, the questionnaires were presented in 19 classrooms and 447 students took part in the research, accounting for 17% of all first-year students at UPF²¹. In Time 2, the questionnaires were presented in 23 classrooms and 299 students completed them, accounting for 12% of all first-year students at UPF. Table 3.2 shows the percentages of participants for each School.

²⁰ Actually, the School of Humanities includes both the Global Studies and the Humanities undergraduate degrees. However, for the aims of the present research, each degree was considered separately.

²¹ The total number of students enrolled in their first year at the UPF in the academic year of data collection was 2.625.

	<i>Time 1</i>	<i>Time 2</i>
Humanities	7.8%	9.7%
Translation and Language Science	11.9%	8.4%
Communication	2.9%	1.2%
Political and Social Sciences	8.7%	7.7%
Economic and Business	21.2%	19.1%
Law	11.2%	26.8%
Life and Health Science	20.6%	14.7%
Engineering	15.7%	12.4%
Total	447	299

Table 3.2 – Percentages of participants of the Control group for each School

3.3 Research approach and design

Relying on the assumption that the more different the kinds of data are, the better we can explain a given phenomenon (Creswell, 2003), the present research has adopted a mixed-methods approach. Indeed, in recent literature, scholars are pointing to the insufficiency of quantitative instruments alone to measure complex concepts such as Transcultural Competence (Deardoff, 2006). More and more often it is becoming evident that, when trying to explain and analyze a multifaceted construct as such, researchers need the help of more qualitative instruments that could give us a different and deeper insight into the phenomenon under study (Medina-López-Portillo, 2014; Pogorelova, 2016). In fact, a mixed-method approach allows not only to measure the parameters under analysis but also – thanks to the triangulation process – explain the *why* of the results in our measurements. Thus, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected.

Moreover, as explained above, to assess the effects of the multi-dimensional internationalization on students' Transcultural Competence, the research includes both a Case Study group and a Control group, the latter characterized by a lesser degree of internationalization than the former.

Lastly, to be able to evaluate the changes in students' Transcultural Competence, the research took the form of a longitudinal study with two times of data collection for the

questionnaires, corresponding to the beginning and the end of the academic year: September/October and May/June – Time 1 (T1) and Time 2 (T2)²², from now on.

In order to measure the degree of students’ Transcultural Competence, I adapted three questionnaires taken from the literature and accounting for three dimensions – attitudinal, affective, and identity – of the construct under analysis (Section 3.4.2). These questionnaires were administered to the Control group and the Global Studies group in both timings, to detect if any changes occurred between the beginning and the end of the academic year. Furthermore, drawing from Social Network Analysis, I developed another quantitative instrument – i.e. the Contact Generator (Section 3.4.3) – aiming to collect information on the in-class social interactions of Global Studies students for studying, leisure, and intimate purposes. Qualitative methods – in the form of semi-structured individual interviews and in-class observation – were used with the Global Studies group to further explain the development of Transcultural Competence and the impact of in-class intercultural interactions in such a process.

Figure 3.1 summarizes the research design that has been adopted, indicating the times of data collection and the instruments that have been used to collect data from each group of participants.

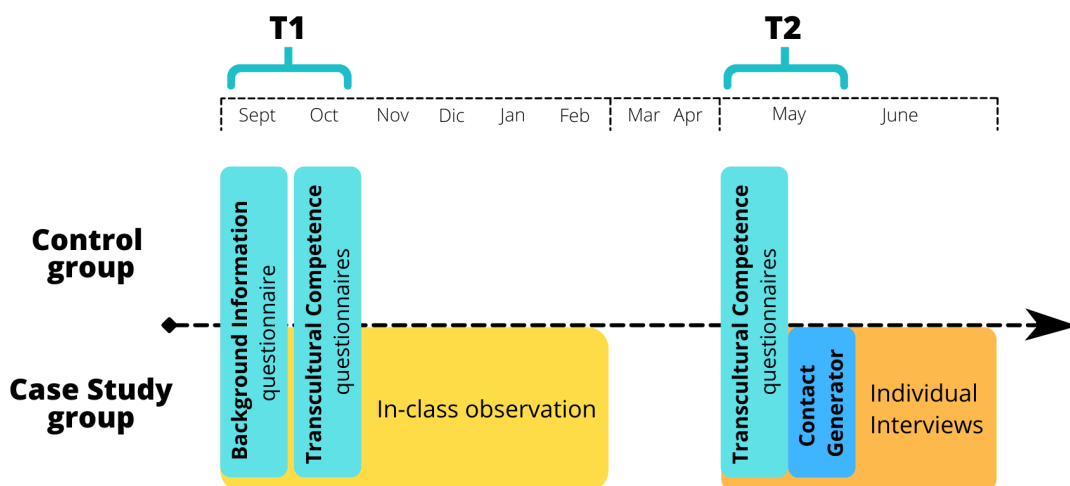


Figure 3.1 - Research design

²² In the present study, the two timings (i.e. T1 and T2) should be intended as two *phases* of data collection, as different tools were used in each of them. As a matter of fact, the only instrument adopted in both timings, and for both the Control group and the Global Studies students, were the Transcultural Competence questionnaires, in order to quantitatively detect changes in time and compare the two groups.

3.4 Data collection: Quantitative instruments

In the present research, quantitative data were collected by means of three questionnaires: (1) the Background Information questionnaire (T1), to have an insight into participants' linguistic and educational background; (2) the Transcultural Competence questionnaires (T1 and T2), to assess students' international attitudes, intercultural sensitivity, and global identity affiliation; and (3) the Contact Generator (T2), to describe students' social networks formed in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom. The first two instruments were administered to both the Case Study group and the Control group, while only the Global Studies students completed the latter additionally.

Data were collected in the following way. Before the beginning of the academic year, I had a meeting with the coordinator of the Global Studies degree to inform him of the purposes and the design of the research. He gave his consensus to the collection of data among the Global Studies students during his lessons and declared his availability to collaborate. Thus, at the beginning of October, I presented the study during one of his lessons, and I administered the Background Information questionnaire and the Transcultural Competence questionnaires to the students. To avoid bias in the responses, the study was justified to the participants as a research to improve the Global Studies degree and better administer multicultural and multilingual university classrooms where there are both local and international students. In this occasion, students were asked to firm a consent form, giving me permission to use the data anonymously for research purposes (Appendix B). In May of the same academic year, the same procedure was followed to administer the Transcultural Competence questionnaires for the second time and the Contact Generator.

With regard to the Control group, between May and July of the academic year previous to data collection, I contacted the Deans of each School at the UPF and organized a meeting with each one of them to ask for permission for collecting data and discussing the best way to administer the questionnaires. At the beginning of the academic year, I contacted several professors who were giving classes to first-year students in all the Schools. With their consensus, I organized a short informative session (5-10 minutes) in each of the first-year classrooms they taught to explain the general aims of the study and

the task students had to complete. The questionnaires were presented as a research to determine the composition of today's classrooms and assess competences of university-level students in order to improve teaching methods. Students were not required to answer the questionnaire in class and took part in the study on a voluntary basis. The same data collection procedures were used in T2, between May and June. In this occasion, only the Transcultural Competence questionnaires were administered.

All three quantitative instruments were presented in an online digital form; the link was given in class on the day of the presentation. Moreover, some professors shared the link in the virtual classrooms that accompany all classes at UPF (i.e. Aula Moodle) to encourage participation. In Time 1, Google Forms was used to create the questionnaires and collect the responses for both groups of students. In Time 2, the same platform was used to administer the Transcultural Competence questionnaires to the Control group, while for the Case Study group I used Survey Hero²³, a similar website allowing for survey development and response collection. This choice was made because this platform gave me the possibility to merge the Transcultural Competence questionnaires and the Contact Generator in a single survey; this merging was not possible with Google Forms. At the beginning of each questionnaire, both in T1 and T2, there was an item asking participants to give their consent to the use of their responses anonymously for research purposes; if the respondent did not give consent, the answer was automatically saved and they were not able to complete the questionnaire.

All data collection was done in English. However, when the questionnaires were administered to the Control group, I presented them in Spanish so that all students could correctly understand the task.

3.4.1 Background Information questionnaire

The Background Information questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the academic year (T1) –, along with the Transcultural Competence questionnaires. It aimed

²³ <https://www.surveyhero.com>

to investigate participants' social, cultural, and linguistic background and to draw a primary picture of the intercultural interactions participants had before entering the higher education context. The questionnaire was designed by the GREILI-UPF research group, as part of the broader TRANSLINGUAM-UNI research project in which the present research fits in (Trenchs-Parera, 2018; Trenchs-Parera & Pastena, 2021).

The Background Information questionnaire was administered to both the Case Study group and the Control group, but the two versions were slightly different. The Control group version included 17 multiple-choice questions, while the Global Studies version was formed by 23 questions, mixed between multiple-choice and short open answers. The shared items intended to collect the following information on the students:

- Anagraphic information: age, gender, and birthplace.
- Linguistic background and competence: first language, other spoken languages, languages they have studied or are currently studying, languages they were planning to study during the year, languages spoken with and within their families.
- Cultural and educational background: family place of residence, context of primary and secondary schooling, degree of enrollment at the UPF.
- Kind of accommodation in Barcelona (family home, host family, shared flat, individual apartment, student residence).

In the case of the Global Studies students, the additional questions aimed to obtain a more complete picture of their background, asking for: family place of origin, where they lived before coming to Barcelona, previous experiences abroad (for study, work, or leisure), motives for enrollment in the degree, and classmates they were already friend with before beginning the degree.

Moreover, the Background Information questionnaire included two items accounting for intercultural relationships of the participants before the study – i.e. their *international friends*, defined in the questionnaire as: “an ‘international friend’ is intended as someone who is - or whose parents are - born in a country different from your own”, since I also wanted to include individuals with heritage languages and cultures. Specifically, these questions asked for: (1) the number of international friends the students had, and (2) the

language(s) students spoke when interacting with their international friends. These two items were also included in the Transcultural Competence questionnaires in Time 2, to observe the changes fostered by the internationalized higher education environment as a whole.

3.4.2 Transcultural Competence questionnaires

The Transcultural Competence questionnaires were used as a quantitative measure of the Transcultural Competence of the participants, as regards their attitudes towards the international, their intercultural sensitivity, and their global identity affiliation. In line with the longitudinal design of the research, they were administered at the beginning (T1) and at the end (T2) of the academic year to detect changes in time. Moreover, both groups – the Case Study group and Control group – completed these questionnaires, allowing for comparing the results.

Following Pogorelova (2016) from the GREILI-UPF research group, the Transcultural Competence questionnaires combined three different self-reported questionnaires taken from the literature and accounting, respectively, for the attitudinal, affective, and identity components of the construct (Section 2.1.6): the International Posture questionnaire (Yashima, 2009), the Intercultural Sensitivity scale (Chen & Starosta, 2000), and the Global Identity scale (Türken & Rudmin, 2013). These are referred all-together in this study as Transcultural Competence questionnaires.

Each of these questionnaires includes a list of statements, for each one the respondent has to indicate the degree to which they agree or disagree with on a Likert-type scale. In the original versions, each questionnaire had to be evaluated on a different scale; thus, in order to reduce ambiguous responses and balance them, I decided to adopt a 5-point Likert-type scale for all questionnaires, from *Strongly disagree* (1) to *Strongly agree* (5), as can be seen in Figure 3.2. All the three questionnaires included some reversed-key items – i.e. negative worded question. The statements of the three questionnaires were mixed randomly, paying attention to not generate any biased response, and presented as a single survey comprising 54 statements. An explanation of the task was added at the beginning of the section (Figure 3.2).

Section 2

IN THIS SECTION, YOU WILL BE ASKED TO INDICATE THE DEGREE TO WHICH YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS. YOU HAVE TO GRADE EACH STATEMENT FROM 1 TO 5, MEANING:

- 1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE
- 2 = DISAGREE
- 3 = UNCERTAIN
- 4 = AGREE
- 5 = STRONGLY AGREE

RECORD YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION AND REMEMBER THAT THERE ARE NO RIGHT OR WRONG ANSWERS.

My country is one of the best in the world. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
Strongly disagree	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Strongly agree

Figure 3.2 - Example of instructions and items of the Transcultural Competence questionnaires (T1)

Moreover, the three questionnaires were slightly adapted to the context. Bearing in mind that not all participants would have a high level of English, some statements were reformulated, or a short explanation was supplied when the meaning was considered to be rare or ambiguous – e.g. in several statements in which appeared the word “counterpart”, a description was added: “*Counterpart* means ‘acquaintance, colleague, classmate, workmate’” (Figure 3.3).

I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues. *

This sentence means: "I use verbal and nonverbal signals when I am with my culturally-distinct counterpart to show my understanding" - "Counterpart" means "acquaintance, colleague, classmate, workmate".

1 2 3 4 5

Strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ Strongly agree

Figure 3.3 - Example of an item with explanation from the Transcultural Competence questionnaires (T1)

For the purpose of assessing the test reliability for both the three dimensions and the Transcultural Competence questionnaire as a whole (54 items), a confirmatory factor analysis was performed²⁴. Results confirmed the three-factor model with an adequate fit (Chi square/df = 1.925; RMSEA = .044; CFI = .928; TLI = .925; SRMR = .074). Consequently, the reliability coefficients for the three factors and for the total questionnaire were calculated. The Cronbach alpha coefficients for each questionnaire were all adequately high: Intercultural Posture questionnaire ($\alpha=0.89$), Intercultural Sensitivity scale ($\alpha=0.91$), and Global Identity scale ($\alpha=0.80$). The total Transcultural Competence questionnaire also obtained a good reliability index ($\alpha=0.95$).

I will now describe each questionnaire in detail (for the complete versions, see Appendix A):

- ***International Posture questionnaire***

The International Posture questionnaire (IP) was developed by Yashima (2002, 2009) to measure the attitude of an individual toward intercultural encounters and its interest in foreign affairs and activities. It has been used in the literature to account for individuals'

²⁴Confirmatory factor analysis and reliability coefficients were calculated thanks to the precious collaboration of Albert Sesé, professor at the Department of Psychology at the Balearic Islands University and member of the TRANSLINGUAM-UNI research project.

tendency to relate oneself to the international community (Lee, 2018; Thurston, 2015; Yashima, 2009).

For this research, I chose the 2009 version comprising 20 items divided into four components: *intergroup approach-avoidance tendency* (6 items; e.g. “I would talk to an international student if there was one at school”), *interest in international vocation or activities* (6 items; e.g. “I want to work in a foreign country”), *interest in international news* (4 items; e.g. “I often read and watch news about foreign countries”), and *having things to communicate to the world* (4 items; e.g. “I have thoughts that I want to share with people from other parts of the world”).

The questionnaire has been slightly adapted to the context since the original one referred to students in Japan; the first item was, thus, changed as: “I want to make friends with international students studying *in Barcelona*”. In the original version, each item had to be evaluated on a 7-point Likert-type scale, from totally disagree to totally agree. As already mentioned, in the present research, a 5-point Likert-type scale was adopted to balance it with the other two questionnaires.

- ***Intercultural Sensitivity scale***

The Intercultural Sensitivity scale (IS) was developed by Chen and Starosta (2000) to assess participants’ degree of intercultural sensitivity, the affective component in their model of intercultural competence, as well as in the present research. It accounts for students’ “ability to develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promote appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication” (Chen & Starosta, 2000: 4). It has been widely used in the literature to explore the affective predisposition of an individual toward intercultural interactions (Fritz et al., 2002; Pogorelova, 2016)

The scale includes 24 items divided into five factors: *interaction engagement* (7 items; e.g. “I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures”), *respect for cultural differences* (6 items; e.g. “*I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded”), *interaction confidence* (5 items; e.g. “I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures”), *interaction enjoyment* (3 items; e.g. “*I get upset easily when

interacting with people from different cultures”), and *interaction attentiveness* (3 items; e.g. “I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures”). The original rating on a 5-point Likert-type scale, from totally disagree to totally agree, was maintained.

- ***Global Identity scale***

The Global Identity scale (GI) is a cross-cultural measurement for global identity developed by Türken and Rudmin (2013). Global identity has been operationalized as an attitude, measuring the “sense of belonging to a bigger community”. Phelps, Eilertsen, Türken, and Ommundsen (2011) and Nwafor et al. (2016) have tested the GIS, proving its criterion validity.

The scale contains 10 items divided into two components: *cultural openness* (5 positively keyed items; e.g. “I consider myself more as a citizen of the world than a citizen of some nation”) and *not-nationalism* (5 negatively keyed items; e.g. “*My own culture is the best in the whole world”). In the original version, each item had to be rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale; again, the rating was adapted to a 5-point Likert-type scale.

3.4.3 Contact Generator

Since the present research adopts a social interaction perspective, an essential point was to find a way to measure contact among students as well as to have some information on the quality of the ties of such interactions, i.e. the degree of intimacy. The Contact Generator served this purpose. It was used to collect data about social interactions among the students of the Global Studies degree taking into account three different degrees of intimacy – namely, *studying partners*, *leisure partners*, and *intimate friends* –, while investigating the language(s) of interaction. It was administered at the end of the academic year (T2), along with the Transcultural Competence questionnaires. It is worth noting that the Contact Generator used in the present research is a highly innovative instrument, as it

was designed specifically for this purpose by me, under the supervision of Professor Bolívar-Planas²⁵.

Nevertheless, the Contact Generator draws from two well-known and frequent instruments used in Social Network research, the *name generator* and the *name interpreter*. A name generator is a “survey item that asks respondents to nominate partners” (Robins, 2015: 96), either *by recall* or *by recognition*. In the first case, participants are asked to write the names of all their interactional partners in a specific domain (e.g. “people you ask for advice”), whilst in the second case a list is provided and participants are asked to underline or place a cross on the name of their partners. The number of nominations can be limited or not. Depending on the number and types of relational ties under investigation, different name generators may be administered; for instance, if we are researching on “people you ask for advice” and “people you go out with”, participants will be provided with two surveys – two name generators –, one for each question. On the other hand, a name interpreter serves to obtain more information on the relationship, asking the respondent about frequency, deepness, or motivation of the contact (Grunspan et al., 2014; Robins, 2015).

The Contact Generator used in the present research is similar to a recognition name generator, but it also included an interpreting item as in name interpreters (Grunspan et al., 2014). In fact, participants were provided with a list of the names of all their classmates, and they were asked to indicate with whom they interacted (Haythornthwaite & Wellman, 1998). At the same time, students were required to write down the language(s) used to communicate with each interactional partner.

Moreover, as mentioned, I decided to investigate three different kinds of relational ties, namely if students were studying partners, leisure activities partners, and/or intimate friends, as can be seen in the instructions that were provided (Table 3.3).

²⁵ The Contact Generator was designed and developed in its final version thanks to the precious advice and suggestions of Mireia Bolívar-Planas, researcher and instructor in Sociology at the Department of Politics and Social Sciences at UPF.

Think about your classmates, the other students whom are enrolled in the first year of the Global Studies degree like you.

1. During this academic year, who would you consider your “**studying partners**” (that is, with whom you have gone to the library to study, prepared exams and worked on academic projects and tasks)?

2. During this academic year, with whom you have spent time on **leisure activities**, such as going to the UPF bar, going out on Friday/Saturday night to have a beer or going to a party or a concert?

3. During this academic year, with whom have you become “**intimate friend**” (that is, who would you contact if you have a personal problem or talk to about intimate/private things: for instance, you are ill and need to go to the doctor, you are suffering a love breakdown, you miss your family, ...)?

Here is a list of all your classmates, check the ones you have been doing each of these activities with and, in the corresponding box, **write the language** you usually speak with him/her while doing such activities.

If you speak more than one language, please specify all of them, separated by a comma (e.g. "English, Spanish").

If you do not have interacted with someone in any of the contexts, please leave those boxes blank.

Table 3.3 - Instructions for filling out the Contact Generator

The first item stand for instrumental interactions, that is, relationships that are built with the common purpose to succeed academically (stage of *interactivity* in Kudo’s model of intercultural relationships development; Kudo et al., 2019); the second item accounted for expressive interactions, connected to leisure and fun time (stage of *reciprocity*; ibidem); the third one provided information on the intensity of the relationship, since it is evident that studying or going out together does not implicate a deep relationship (stage of *unity*; ibidem). The language of interaction was also asked to determine whether the participants accommodate the language of the partner, use their own language, or choose a third one. However, data on the languages used in the interaction were not analyzed as they fall beyond the scope of the present research, and its study will be left for future publications (Section 6.4). An example of the task is provided in Figure 3.4.

	1. Studying Partner	2. Leisure Partner	3. Intimate Friend
Andreana	English	Catalan, English	
Pau	Spanish	French, English	French

**When studying with Andreana I speak English, when going out with her I speak both English and Catalan*
**When studying with Pau I speak Spanish, when going out French or English, while when I tell him about my new boyfriend I speak French.*

Figure 3.4 - Sample answers to the Contact Generator

3.5 Data collection: Qualitative instruments

For the aims of the present study, I employed two qualitative instruments: non-participant observation and semi-structured individual interviews. These tools gave me the opportunity to triangulate the data and to assure the validity of the results. Moreover, by means of both observation in a natural setting and students' narratives from the interviews, it is possible to explain the results of the questionnaires more exhaustively while being able to capture different dimensions of the phenomenon that could have been missed by only using quantitative measurements (Deardoff, 2006; Pruegger & Rogers, 1994). Due to the resource limitations of a doctoral thesis as regards time constraints and human resources, these instruments were used only with the Case Study group.

For what concerns data collection, with the consensus of the degree coordinator and the professor giving the course, I conducted observation during several lessons between the first and second term – i.e. from October to February – of the data collection academic year. Observation was conducted during both plenary theoretical sessions and seminar sessions. Students to interview were selected on a voluntary basis. By the end of the academic year, in April, I sent an email to students' institutional address asking their availability to take part in a short interview (30-60 minutes) about their first year in the Global Studies degree. In order to have complete information about students' trajectory, the email was sent only to the students who had completed the questionnaires in T1 (49 participants), and it included a Doodle link to schedule the interview. On the day before

the scheduled appointment, I sent an email reminder to the students. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted between May and June in a meeting room the UPF made available for this purpose.

3.5.1 In-class observation

In-class observation aimed to collect qualitative data that, triangulated with the interviews and the questionnaires, could contribute to obtaining a broader and more exhaustive picture of the interactional patterns of the participants. For this purpose, I conducted observation in both plenary and seminar sessions, as well as during regular classes, break time, and two out-of-class activities.

The main purpose of this tool was to contribute to describing participants' both social interactions and the language used in them, as well as detecting changes in students' social networks (Robins, 2015). The focus was primarily on spontaneous grouping (Rosselló i Peralta, 2010) during in-class work and break time. Observation was also needed to check the correspondence between the results of the other instruments and the effective behavior of participants and detect false responses; in fact, the social practice could not always be fully in line with personal attitudes and stands expressed in the transcultural competence questionnaire.

Observation was direct – I was present in the classroom and students were aware of my role –, yet non-participant, since the focus was on the behavior of the participants in a natural setting (Adler & Adler, 1994; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; Spradley, 1980). Even though I tried not to interfere in the dynamics of the class, I am aware of the observer's paradox and that my presence could have influenced in some way students' behavior. However, the observational data would offer a complementary point of view to data collected by the other instruments. For the full length of observation, descriptive field notes were taken following Spradley (1980).

Observation was conducted between October and February. In total, I took part in 14 plenary sessions and 18 seminar sessions, from the courses Introduction to Global Studies (1st term), Global History I (1st term), and Geography, Environment and Sustainability

(2nd term). Each plenary session had the approximate length of 2 hours, while seminar sessions lasted around 1h30 each. During seminars, students were divided into four groups (of 15-20 students each), attending class at a different time; the formation of seminar groups is up to the professor (alphabetical order, random, ...). In seminar sessions students have to work in small groups: occasionally they can choose their partners, while at times is the professor who assigns them. In any case, seminar sessions create a more familiar and intimate environment and entail group work, which fosters interactions necessarily.

Moreover, on two different occasions, the seminar professor organized an activity outside the classroom, and I joined them. In the first outing, to each seminar group was assigned a different neighborhood of the city center to investigate, while, in the second outing, the activity was on the different buildings and spaces of the Ciutadella Campus at UPF. I included these outings in my observations because they were a non-formal context in which students grouped spontaneously. This granted a more relaxed atmosphere as well as a more favorable disposition to communicate spontaneously in the languages – whether English or others – that participants would usually use when being unobserved.

3.5.2 Semi-structured individual interviews

Individual interviews are a powerful and flexible self-report instrument for obtaining qualitative data. Indeed, scholars point out the value of narrative(s) for (re)positioning oneself and the others, (re)constructing the social world, and nurturing discourses on language and identity (Codó, 2018). This means that, through interviews, participants are enabled “to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view” (Cohen et al., 2007: 349). Thus, they give us the chance to explore the *whys* of quantitative data and explain the observed behaviors.

In the present study, interviews aimed to document explanations for the results collected through the questionnaires by triggering more information on the Transcultural Competence of the participants and their social interactions with their classmates. The focus was on the changes students experienced between Time 1 and Time 2 as regards

their international attitudes, intercultural sensitivity, and identity affiliation, and the motives of such a development or lack of thereof. Moreover, interviews investigated why participants choose some interactional partners above others and why they used a certain language to communicate instead of another, giving an insight on the motives of formation of observed social networks, as well as accounting for students' intercultural interactions outside the classroom. The interview protocol included five main sections:

- Students' linguistic, family, and educational background: to confirm the responses to the Background Information questionnaire.
- The Global Studies degree: to obtain information on motives for enrolling in the degree and how students experienced the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom.
- Languages: to investigate students' linguistic repertoires, practices, and attitudes.
- Social networks: accounting for intercultural interactions in and outside the class and their evolution through time.
- Transcultural Competence, culture, and identity: to explore students' perception of their identity, as well as their cultural awareness and sensibility.

Despite these predetermined topics, I conducted semi-structured interviews. They were structured because they focused on exploring these specific topics – the ones listed above –, but questions were not strictly fixed, in order to allow the students to eventually bring other topics in the conversation, as well as give them the opportunity for clarifications (Cohen et al., 2007).

Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted by the end of the academic year, between May and June, following the procedures described in the earlier section (Section 3.5). Before starting the interview, students were informed of the purposes and contents of it. Moreover, I tried to create a “safe space”, in which students could feel comfortable and develop their narrative without restraints. In this sense, I assured them that I would only use the data anonymously for educational purposes and research and that they were free to not answer to any questions or ask me to turn off the recorder.

Interviews were audio-recorded and lasted between 35 and 60 minutes each. To assure consistency of data, all students were interviewed in English. However, I gave them the

possibility to speak Spanish or Catalan when they did not know how to say of a word or a sentence.

3.6 Ethical considerations

In April of the academic year before data collection, I had a meeting with the coordinator of the Global Studies degree, to inform him of the purposes and the design of the present research. He gave his consensus to data collection during his classes and declared his availability to collaborate. At the beginning of the academic year, along with the degree coordinator, a short informative session was organized to illustrate the methodology of the research to the participants of the Case Study group and to inform participants about the tasks they were required to complete while avoiding to provide information that may bias the responses. The in-class observation and the questionnaires were justified to the participants as a research to improve the Global Studies degree – following procedures of research projects FFI2014-52663-P (i.e. the TRANSLINGUAM-UNI research project) and 2010ACUP 00344 – and better administer multicultural and multilingual university classrooms where there are both local and international students. A consent letter was prepared, and participants were asked to sign it after the informative session. The letter (Appendix B) stated that participants were aware of the broad objectives of the study and explained what they were required to do during the research. Moreover, the informed consent specified that, even if complete names were asked for data collection and analysis purposes, confidentiality would be guaranteed by the researcher and names would not be used in the final dissertation or any other future dissemination of research results. To further assure students' anonymity the exact academic year of data collection will not be provided in this dissertation.

As concerns the Control group, a similar procedure was followed, as already explained in Section 3.4. The Deans of each School at the UPF gave me permission for data collection. Afterwards, a short informative session was held in each classroom selected to explain the aims of the research and share the link to the questionnaires with the students. As mentioned, in both Time 1 and Time 2, the questionnaires were introduced by a short text asking respondents' consent to use their responses.

As already discussed, in-class observation was non-participant so that interactions among the students could be more spontaneous. Thus, during observation, I tried to minimize my presence in the classroom not to influence the participants by sitting in the back rows and aside from them.

Interviews were conducted on UPF premises, in a room made available for this purpose, and students participated on a voluntary basis. Moreover, they had the possibility to choose their preferred date and time from an extended list of options. This allowed for interviews to be conducted in a relaxed atmosphere and make the participants feel comfortable and safe. A confidential and friendly relationship has been pursued between participants and interviewer through active listening and attention to non-verbal communication (Cohen et al., 2007). Before starting the recording, I clearly explained the nature and the duration of the interviews, as well as assure the participants that data would have been used anonymously for research purposes. Moreover, students gave permission to use their interviews by recording a short sentence of consent at the beginning of the interview session.

The processing of personal data has been undertaken in accordance with *Reglament general de protecció de dades*, approved on April 2016 [i.e. *Reglament (UE) 2016/679 del Parlament i del Consell, de 27 d'abril de 2016, relatiu a la protecció de les persones físiques pel que fa al tractament de dades personals i a la lliure circulació d'aquestes dades i pel qual es deroga la Directiva 95/46/CE*]. Consequently, the exact year of data collection, names, and other sensitive information will not be provided in the present dissertation in order to preserve students from being identified; accordingly, codes were used for analysis and pseudonyms will be used for data presentation. Moreover, only myself and my thesis supervisor had access to all the data collected.

3.7 Data analysis

Since the present study adopted a mixed-method approach, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were employed. Therefore, to analyze the data collected through the Background Information questionnaire, the Transcultural Competence questionnaires,

and the Contact Generator, I made use of both descriptive and inferential statistics. The network structural properties were further analyzed with Social Network Analysis methods. On the other hand, individual interviews were analyzed by performing content analysis. Observation was treated as descriptive data, and field notes were used as a support to confirm the data collected by means of the Contact Generator.

3.7.1 Quantitative statistical analysis

For both the Background Information questionnaire and the Transcultural Competence questionnaires, the Case Study and the Control group respondents were treated as two groups of participants, in order to compare the results and evaluate the differences and similarities between the students experiencing the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom – namely, the ones enrolled in the Global Studies degree – and the other first-year students at the UPF in classrooms with a lesser degree of internationalization.

The Background Information questionnaire was descriptively analyzed to collect information about the cultural, linguistic, and educational background of the students and obtain a basic picture of the previous intercultural relationships of the participants. Firstly, data were cleaned, and responses from participants who did not give consent were eliminated. Secondly, a self-explanatory code was assigned to each item of the questionnaire and to each response, relying on the options given in the multiple-choice questionnaire administered to the Control group. In order to allow for comparison between the two groups, the open questions included in the Global Studies questionnaire were also treated as multiple-choice, grouping the answers. Thus, responses were coded using the same codes for both the Case Study group and the Control group. Moreover, two new variables were introduced counting: (1) the total number of languages each participant reported to speak, and (2) the total number of languages spoken in the family, in order to obtain a measure of students' plurilingual repertoires.

Each item of the questionnaire was treated as a variable, in order to outline participants' profile according to: degree of enrollment, gender, birthplace, first language(s), total number of spoken languages, primary family language, number of languages spoken in the family, context of primary and secondary schooling, kind of accommodation, number

of international friends, and language(s) spoken with international friends. In the case of the Case Study group, two more variables were taken into account: family place of origin, and previous intercultural experiences. Afterwards, methods from descriptive statistics were used and, for each of these variables, the number of occurrences of each coded response was calculated as percentages, and visually represented by means of graphs.

The Transcultural Competence questionnaires were analyzed statistically replicating the analysis carried out in precedent literature (Fritz et al., 2002; Phelps et al., 2011; Pogorelova, 2016; Yashima, 2009). Each of the three questionnaires – the International Posture questionnaire, the Intercultural Sensitivity scale, and the Global Identity scale – was treated as an independent questionnaire. Again, data were cleaned, removing respondents who had not given their consensus. Moreover, in T2, some of the participants of the Case Study group completed the questionnaire twice; this was due to a disadvantage of the platform used to administer the questionnaire – i.e. Survey Hero –, as it is not possible to limit the responses to a survey to one per participant. However, since students were asked to provide their name and the platform records the exact date and time of the response submission, I was able to detect these double responses. Hence, in these cases, the only complete response or the one closer to the interview date was kept.

The three questionnaires were analyzed employing the following procedure. Firstly, negatively keyed items' scores were reversed. Therefore, the mean value for each sub-component of each questionnaire (Section 3.4.2) was calculated and averaged separately on a five-point Likert-type scale – the closer the value was to 5, the more the student possessed that competence. The global value of International Posture, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Global Identity of each participant has then been calculated as the mean value of the sub-components of each questionnaire.

For both groups – Case Study group and Control Group – results obtained in T1 were then compared with T2 results applying three Mann-Whitney tests to detect if any significant changes occurred at both individual and group level for each of the three questionnaires. The test of statistical significance was performed only on the global mean value of each questionnaire. Consequently, results of the two groups – Case Study and Control group – were compared by means of inferential statistics, in order to see if there

was a significant difference between the results of the two groups. A p-value of $p \leq 0.05$ was considered as highly statistically significant while a p-value of $p \leq 0.1$ but above $p = 0.05$ was considered marginally significant.

Finally, results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires were statistically compared with the variable of international friends, in order to determine if there was a correlation between transcultural orientations and intercultural interactions. Mean values for the three questionnaires were calculated dividing students into two groups – “having” and “not having” at least one international friend –, and Mann-Whitney test for statistical significance was performed.

All the statistical analyses mentioned above were performed using R-Studio²⁶.

3.7.2 Social network analysis

Data obtained through the Contact Generator allowed for the identification of three different in-class networks depending on the degree of intimacy in the relationship: the first accounting for study relationships in the classroom – the Studying network –, the second for the leisure partners – the Leisure network –, while the third showing the intimate friendships’ pattern – the Intimate network. These data were primarily analyzed with a descriptive approach, graphically visualizing and generally describing the three networks, and looking for similarities and differences between them.

First of all, data were cleaned, and three adjacency matrixes were created, one for each of the above-mentioned degrees of intimacy of the relationship. An adjacency matrix is “a matrix in which the rows and columns represent nodes and an entry in row i and column j represents a tie from i to j ” (Borgatti, Everett & Johnson, 2013), assuming that an entry value equal to 1 indicates the presence of a tie, while a value of 0 indicates no tie. It has to be noted that even though the names of all the students enrolled in the Global Studies degree were included in the Contact Generator, only 33 students completed it. Thus, six

²⁶ R-Studio is an integrated development environment for the programming language R. It is a free software for statistical analysis of data. It is freely accessible at: <https://rstudio.com>

adjacency matrixes were generated in total and two different rounds of analysis were performed: (1) considering the three networks including the whole classroom; (2) taking into account only the ties among the 33 respondents and treating them as three sample networks of the classroom's studying, leisure, and intimate patterns of interaction.

In the first round, the three networks were incomplete, as information on the ties of the non-respondents were missing. Consequently, it was only possible to calculate the number of total ties and degree centrality for each network. Degree centrality is the simplest centralization measure, accounting for the number of ties an actor has in a network. As our networks are directed, there are two measures to be considered: indegree and outdegree ties. Precisely, the indegree value indicates the number of times each actor has been nominated – i.e. the “popularity” or “prestige” they have in the network –, while the outdegree value refers to the number of actors in the network the respondent has nominated – i.e. their “gregariousness” or “expansiveness” (Borgatti et al., 2013).

In the second round, the resulting adjacency matrixes were squared – i.e. they have the same number of row and columns –, allowing for networks' visualization and in-depth structural measurements (Borgatti et al., 2013; Grunspan et al., 2014). Along with the number of total ties and degree centrality, each of the three networks was graphically visualized and analyzed according to: *density* – i.e. the number of actual links divided by the number of all possible links, ranging from 0, total absence of ties, to 1, all possible ties among actors are present; *connectedness* – i.e. “the proportion of pairs of nodes that are located in the same component” (Borgatti et al., 2013), where components are sub-portions of the network disconnected from each other; *closure* – i.e. degree to which nodes in a graph tend to cluster together; *geodesic distance* – i.e. the length of the path between two nodes; *number of dyads* – i.e. couples of connected nodes – and *dyad reciprocity*. Thus, the three sample networks were compared according to these structural properties.

Furthermore, following literature on social networks in Study Abroad contexts (Baerveldt et al. 2007; Carnine, 2015; de Federico de la Rúa, 2003; Hendrikson et al., 2011), frequency of ingroup and outgroup ties was calculated for each of the three networks. For this purpose, the 33 respondents to the Contact Generator were divided into three groups

– i.e. Catalans (CAT), Spaniards (SPA), and Internationals (INT) – taking into account both students’ context of schooling and proficiency in the local languages, two aspects believed to be crucial in the formation and development of an individual’s social networks, as previously explained (Section 3.2).

Therefore, frequency of intergroup and outgroup ties was calculated for each of the three networks – Studying, Leisure, and Intimate – by means of the E-I function in Ucinet, taking into account only the ties emerged in the sample networks. This function allowed also to analyze the homogeneity or heterogeneity of the ties – i.e. the patterns of *homophily* (Grunspan et al., 2014) –, that is if, and to what extent, relationships are formed among actors sharing a certain characteristic (i.e. students’ context of schooling). Homophily does not consider the direction of ties; this means that both an out-tie and an in-tie constitute a tie between two actors (Hanneman & Riddle, 2005). The E-I (external-internal) index ranges from -1, pointing to high homophily, to +1, meaning that all ties are external (Krackhardt & Stern, 1988). The E-I function returns three main values: the actual E-I index; the expected E-I index “if all the observed ties had been evenly spread within and between the groups” (Krackhardt & Stern, 1988); and the re-scaled E-I index, taking into account network density and group sizes. The strength of these measurements relies on the fact that they automatically perform a permutation test²⁷, in order to assess whether the computed value differs significantly from what we would expect by random mixing. As in common statistical measurements, a p-value of $p \leq 0.05$ is considered as highly statistically significant.

Lastly, to investigate the link between students’ in-class intercultural interactions and their transcultural orientation, the percentage of outgroup ties in each student’s network was correlated with the mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires by means of regression analysis. All three networks were taken into account, as well as results of the Transcultural Competence questionnaires in both T1 and T2.

²⁷The number of permutations may be variable. In the present case, the program performed 5000 permutations for each network.

Even though students were asked to indicate the language(s) of interaction for each of the three degrees of intimacy, these data were not analyzed since they fall beyond the scope of the present research and will be analyzed in future publications (Section 6.4). Field notes were used as a support for Contact Generator analysis, in order to detect false responses and either confirm or not the interactional patterns that emerged from the analysis.

This analysis was carried out with both Ucinet²⁸, an open-source software for visualizing and analyzing social networks (Borgatti et al., 2013; Grunspan et al., 2014; Sorolla-Vidal, 2015), and R-Studio, for statistical measurements.

3.7.3 Qualitative thematic analysis

Individual interviews were analyzed by performing qualitative thematic analysis, a widely used method in intercultural research to simplify and codify oral and written data in the form of narratives, as in Awad (2019) and Pogorelova and Trenchs-Parera (2018). The focus of the analysis was on the content of the interview – rather than the form or the linguistic accuracy – since the main aim of this instrument was to provide more information to explain the quantitative results of the Transcultural Competence questionnaires and the Contact Generator, as concerns the link between intercultural interactions and students' Transcultural Competence.

The 23 interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed; the transcriptions were then coded and analyzed. For the present research, content analysis was carried out with a direct approach (Cohen et al. 2007; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). This approach consists in having a predetermined set of categories – i.e. *codes* – to start the analysis with, while allowing for new codes to emerge during the scrutiny of data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

The initial idea was to code the interviews' transcripts according to the components of the three questionnaires accounting for students' Transcultural Competence (Section 3.4.2) and the three levels of in-class interaction – i.e. studying partners, leisure partners,

²⁸ <https://sites.google.com/site/ucinetsoftware/>

intimate friends. However, when performing a first round of analysis, I realized that several of these categories were strictly intertwined and did not serve my purposes. Therefore, I decided to analyze the interviews adopting a case study approach and focusing on the students. Thus, students were grouped according to two quantitative parameters emerged from previous analysis: (1) a global Transcultural Competence value, calculated as the mean value of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires – as all respondents presented from high to very high responses, the mean value among the 23 interviewed students was set as threshold (i.e. T1: 4.23; T2: 4.20); and (2) the mean percentage of ingroup and outgroup ties across the three networks, setting the 50% as cut-off point. The combination of these two criteria allowed to divide the students into five groups:

- (1) Students presenting a global Transcultural Competence above the classroom's mean value and a tendency to form outgroup ties (n=7),
- (2) Students presenting a global Transcultural Competence above the classroom's mean value and a tendency to form ingroup ties (n=5),
- (3) Students presenting a global Transcultural Competence under the classroom's mean value and a tendency to form ingroup ties (n=5),
- (4) Students presenting a global Transcultural Competence under the classroom's mean value and a tendency to form outgroup ties (n=4),
- (5) Students who formed only ingroup ties (n=2).

In order to find an explanation of the quantitative results in students' narratives, each group was then analyzed separately looking for similarities and differences among students sharing certain transcultural orientation and socialization tendencies. Indeed, for each of the five groups it was possible to disclose some common characteristics, conveying both students' self-reported degree of Transcultural Competence – i.e. their International Posture, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Global Identity – and their socialization experiences in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom. Results will, thus, be presented according to these shared themes, underling potential different trajectories among the members of the same group.

Recursive analysis of the content was carried out re-examining the categories several times (Saldaña, 2013), to assure consistency of results.

3.8 Methodological limitations

Due to the time constraints and limitations of a doctoral dissertation as regards human resources, it was not possible to deal with all the aspects of the multi-dimensionally internationalized educational environment and how it evolves through time. As noted in the previous sections, the present research has adopted a social interaction perspective, focusing on the relationships students build with their classmates during their first academic year at university. In this sense, I had to leave aside other facets of this environment, such as the internationalized curriculum, teaching methods, academic success, or linguistic proficiency. Also, the time devoted to the field research has not allowed for an exhaustive analysis of the evolution of the participants' competences and networks. Nevertheless, the study attempts to provide a first in-depth analysis of a spreading phenomenon – i.e. multi-dimensionally internationalized classrooms – which, despite its relevance, is still lacking investigation.

I am aware that a complex and composite construct such as Transcultural Competence cannot be assessed in a solely quantitative way, since it is not as a one-time competence, and it should be addressed as a life-long process. Questionnaires are fix tools that heavily rely on theoretical conceptualization and binary values, not always accounting for personal differences between respondents. Moreover, in the present research, I took into account the attitudinal, emotive, and identitary dimensions of the construct but I left aside *skills*, the fourth component included in Barrett (2006), Byram (1997), and Deardoff (2006)'s models. Indeed, a mixed-method approach has been chosen on this evidence. Individual interviews aimed to counter these limitations, as well as to provide first-hand narratives from the students that would balance the lack of depth of quantitative data.

The present study had to deal with a common problem in ethnographic research, namely, demanding too much work from participants. Indeed, to fully investigate interactional patterns, the Contact Generator should have been administered more often and to both the Case Study group and the Control group; the whole classroom should have taken part in the research as well. Moreover, to fully acknowledge the role of intercultural interactions in students' development of Transcultural Competence, the study should have made use of in-depth personal networks and also consider the role of internet and

online social networks. The Contact Generator should be seen as a first attempt to measure students' in-class intercultural interactions in a systematic way. Future research will take into account the advantages and limitations of this instrument, while aiming to investigate students' social networks outside the class.

Furthermore, the study has the form of a case study, not allowing results to be generalized. When investigating the development of students' Transcultural Competence, different factors may be in action that the present research may not have been able to detect. An attempt to overcome this limitation has been made by conducting several in-depth interviews and observation. As interviews are self-report instruments, data cannot be verified nor generalized but, at the same time, the strength of this method is that it enables for personal trajectories to be analyzed and examined in detail. As a matter of fact, the elevated number of interviews conducted allowed to identify recursive topics and paths in students' narratives that may occur in similar contexts and settings.

Finally, I am aware that the Global Studies degree presents an ideal multicultural and multilingual environment, and different contexts would present different properties and results. However, the context under investigation is extremely relevant since, as already noted, multicultural and multilingual classrooms are just starting to flourish in higher education thanks to internationalizing educational policies and growing compulsory SA programs at universities all over the world. Accordingly, I propose to further investigate these topics – i.e. the development of Transcultural Competence in the context of the internationalized Higher Education – as a member of both the GREILI-UPF and the ALLENCAM research groups and a researcher in the above-mentioned TRANSLINGUAM-UNI research project (Section 6.4).

Chapter 4 - TRANSCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN FIRST-YEAR UNDERGRADUATE CLASSROOMS

In this chapter, I will present the results of the analysis of the data obtained by means of the Background Information questionnaire and the Transcultural Competence questionnaires. The purpose of the chapter is twofold: on the one hand, it intends to draw a picture of the sociolinguistic profile of first-year undergraduate students at UPF; on the other hand, it aims to explore students' self-reported Transcultural Competence, as regards attitude, sensitivity, and identity, at the beginning and the end of their first year in the higher education context.

Results will be presented separately for the two groups under analysis, the Global Studies group (Section 4.1) and the Control group (Section 4.2). For each group, I will firstly outline the sociolinguistic profile of the participants in the study, as reported in the Background Information questionnaire in T1 (Section 4.1.1 and 4.2.1). Secondly, I will present the results of the Transcultural Competence questionnaires at the beginning (Section 4.1.2 and 4.2.2) and at the end (Section 4.1.3 and 4.2.3) of the academic year; each of the three questionnaires will be treated as independent in order to investigate the International Posture, the Intercultural Sensitivity and the Global Identity of the students. Afterwards, I will examine the development of Transcultural Competence, comparing the data collected in T1 with the results of T2, in order to detect if any change occurred throughout the year (Section 4.1.4 and 4.2.4). Finally, I will statistically consider if having or not having international friends has an impact on students' Transcultural Competence (Section 4.1.5 and 4.2.5).

The last section of this chapter (Section 4.3) will be dedicated to statistically comparing the results of the Transcultural Competence questionnaires of the two groups – Global Studies students and Control group –, to evaluate the impact of multi-dimensional internationalization on students' transcultural orientation.

4.1 Transcultural Competence in a context of multi-dimensional internationalization: The Global Studies group

In this section, I will present the results of the Background Information Questionnaire and the Transcultural Competence questionnaires – in both timings, Time 1 and Time 2 – for the Global Studies students. This group is the case study of the present research, and it experiences a context of multi-dimensional internationalization, being the class formed by both international students on degree mobility and local students – who may have heritage language(s) and culture(s) –, receiving full-EMI teaching and following an internationalized curriculum.

In the first place, students will be portrayed according to the items included in the Background Information questionnaire (Section 4.1.1): gender, age, birthplace, family place of origin, first and other spoken languages, context of schooling, accommodation, previous experiences, and international friends. In the subsequent sections, I will report the results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires at the beginning (Section 4.1.2) and at the end of the year (Section 4.1.3); then, results of the two timings will be statistically compared (Section 4.1.4) to evaluate if, and to what extent, students' International Posture, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Global Identity changed throughout their first year in the higher education context. Finally, the variable of international friends – codified as having or not having friends from other origins – will be analyzed in relation to the results of the Transcultural Competence questionnaires (Section 4.1.5), in order to detect the impact of the intercultural socialization on students' Transcultural Competence.

4.1.1 Profiling Global Studies students' background

The Background Information questionnaire allowed outlining the sociolinguistic, cultural, and educational profile of the students enrolled in their first year in the Global Studies degree. This information is valuable because, as mentioned, in the Global Studies degree half of the available classroom spots are reserved to students coming from outside of the EHEA. Therefore, students enrolled in this course may present cultural,

educational, and linguistic backgrounds that are different from those of their first-year university peers attending other degrees – namely, the Control group students.

The Background Information questionnaire was formed by 23 questions, mixed between multiple-choice and short open answers (Section 3.4.1); however, for analysis purposes, answers of this second kind were treated and coded as multiple-choice (Section 3.7.1). This questionnaire aimed to collect information on students’ age, gender, birthplace, context of schooling, family place of origin, linguistic background, current accommodation, and previous intercultural experiences, as well as number of international friends and language(s) spoken with them.

A total number of 49 students completed the questionnaire (66.2% of the whole classroom). They can be considered a good sample of the whole classroom since the proportion of respondents, as regards their gender and birthplace, adequately corresponds to the one of the whole class²⁹, as can be seen in Table 4.1. Thus, we believe this group represents the general population of the degree well.

	<i>Whole class</i>	<i>Respondents in T1</i>
Catalonia	42 (56.8%)	28 (57.1%)
Spain	16 (21.6%)	11 (22.4%)
Rest of the world	16 (21.6%)	10 (20.4%)
Males	23 (31.1%)	13 (26.5%)
Females	51 (68.9%)	36 (73.5%)
Total	74	49

Table 4.1 - Gender and birthplace of Global Studies students who completed the Background Information questionnaire in T1

Among the 49 students who completed the questionnaire, 36 were females (73.47%), and 13 were males (26.53%); this distribution is in line with enrollment per gender in both Spanish higher education institutions and UPF specifically. The majority of them was

²⁹ I have data about the gender and birthplace of all the students enrolled in first year thanks to the degree coordinator.

born in the years 2000 (71.43%) or 1999 (10.2%), meaning that students were 18-19 years old when they took part in the research. Just one participant was born in 2001, being the youngest in the study, while the remaining students were born in 1998 (8.16%), 1997 (2.04%), 1994 (2.04%), 1991 (2.04%), and 1987 (2.04%). Figure 4.1 summarizes these results.

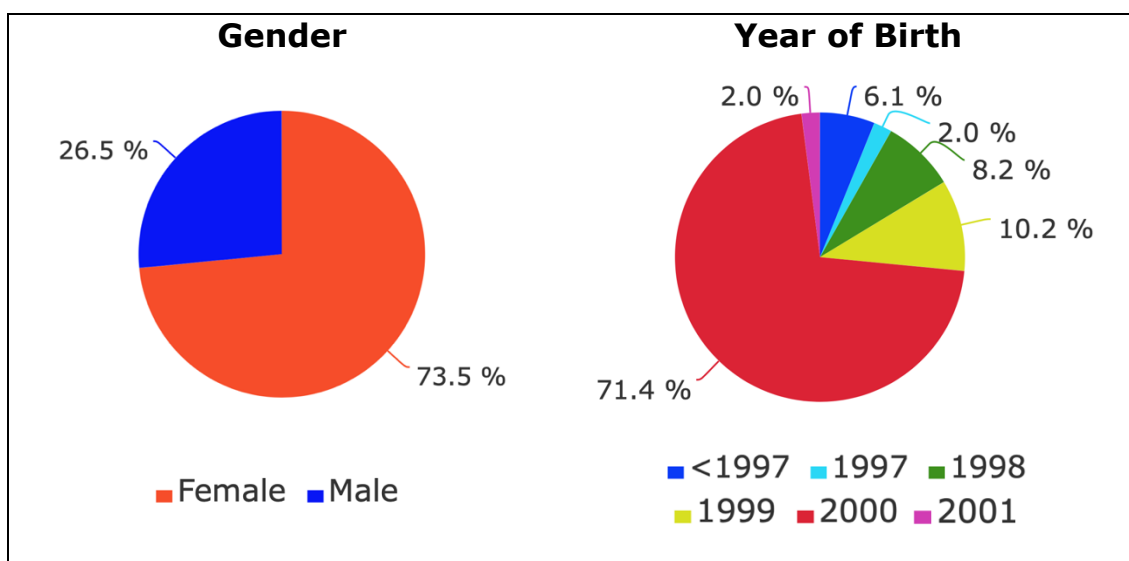


Figure 4.1 - Gender and year of birth of Global Studies students who completed the Background Information questionnaire

As regards participants' birthplace and family place of origin, results showed a highly diversified background (Figure 4.2). Students born in the Barcelona metropolitan area (from now on and in graphics and tables, "Barcelona area") were 15 (30.61%) while the ones born in other areas in Catalonia (from now on and in graphics and tables, "Catalonia") were 12 (24.49%), for a total number of 27, a little more than half of the total respondents. Just one participant was born in Europe (2.04%), while the rest of the students, 11, were born in other Autonomous Communities in Spain (22.45%) or in other countries of the world, ten in total (20.41%). With respect to the place of origin of participants' families, results were slightly different, indexing to the presence of students with parents coming from places other than the ones they were born into and, thus, the presence of heritage languages and cultures. In fact, less than half of the respondents had family from Catalonia (40.92%) while 13 had parents coming from another Autonomous

Community in Spain (26.53%), and 12 from the rest of the world (24.49%) – including one student whose parents came from another Spanish-speaking country (2.04%). Moreover, 4 participants had a family of mixed origins³⁰ (8.16%).

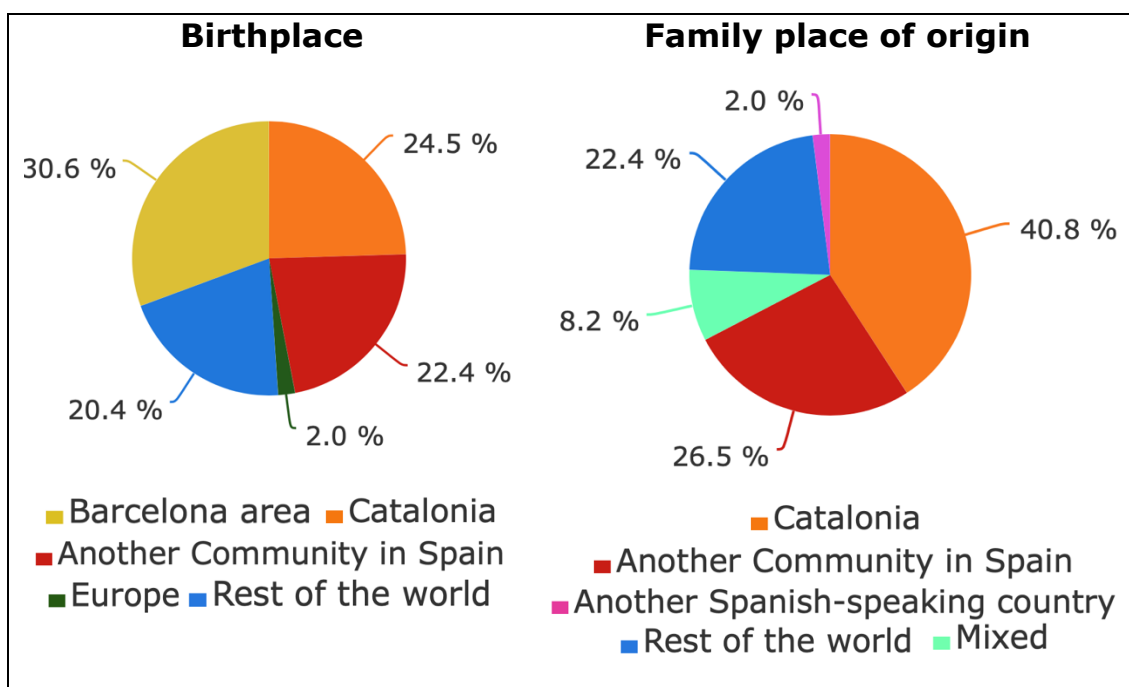


Figure 4.2 - Birthplace and family place of origin of Global Studies students who completed the Background Information questionnaire

Moreover, there were several items in the questionnaire aiming to collect information on the linguistic repertoires of the students and their families, i.e. questions inquired about participants' first language, other spoken languages, primary family language, and other languages spoken in the family. Results are summarized in Figure 4.3.

As regards students' first language, one-third of participants identified themselves as fully bilingual in Catalan and Spanish (n=16, 32.65%), while three more reported to be bilingual in Spanish and another language (6.12% - i.e. Euskara, Chinese, and German).

³⁰ These students had one parent who was born in Catalonia or in another Autonomous Community in Spain and the other parent born in another country. Specifically, students reported the following combinations: father from a Latin American country and mother from Catalonia; father from Catalonia and mother from a Northern-European country; father from Spain and mother from another European country with a main official Romanic language; father from a Central-European country and mother from Spain.

Monolingual students accounted for 60% of the participants but showed high variability when it comes to the specific language. In essence, 19 respondents reported to have either Catalan (20.41%) or Spanish (18.37%) as their first language, followed by four students speaking non-European languages (8.16% – i.e. Hebrew, Turkish, and Korean), three having English as their mother tongue (6.12%), and three more considering a Romance language – i.e. Portuguese – as their first one (6.12%). Lastly, one student indicated to be a Euskara native speaker (2.04%).

Moreover, participants reported having highly plurilingual repertoires. In fact, the majority of students declared to have proficiency in three or four different languages (36.73% and 38.78%, respectively), and seven students mentioned up to five languages (14.29%). Just five students reported to spoke only two different languages (10.2%), being in all the cases the student's mother-tongue and English. At a qualitative level, unsurprisingly, English was mentioned by all the participants while the second most spoken language was French (n=23), followed by German (n=6).

Data on the language(s) students spoke within their family and the total number of spoken languages present a different picture. Bilingualism and multilingualism emerged to be less common in families' practices than in students' ones (18.36%, between bilingual families in Catalan and Spanish, and other combinations), and either Catalan (36.73%) or Spanish (24.49%) turned out to be the preferred languages students used to interact in the family context. Interestingly, one participant reported adopting trilingual practices with their parents – i.e. Spanish, English, and German. Furthermore, students reported from one to seven total languages spoken in their families, showing highly diverse linguistic environments in which they were raised.

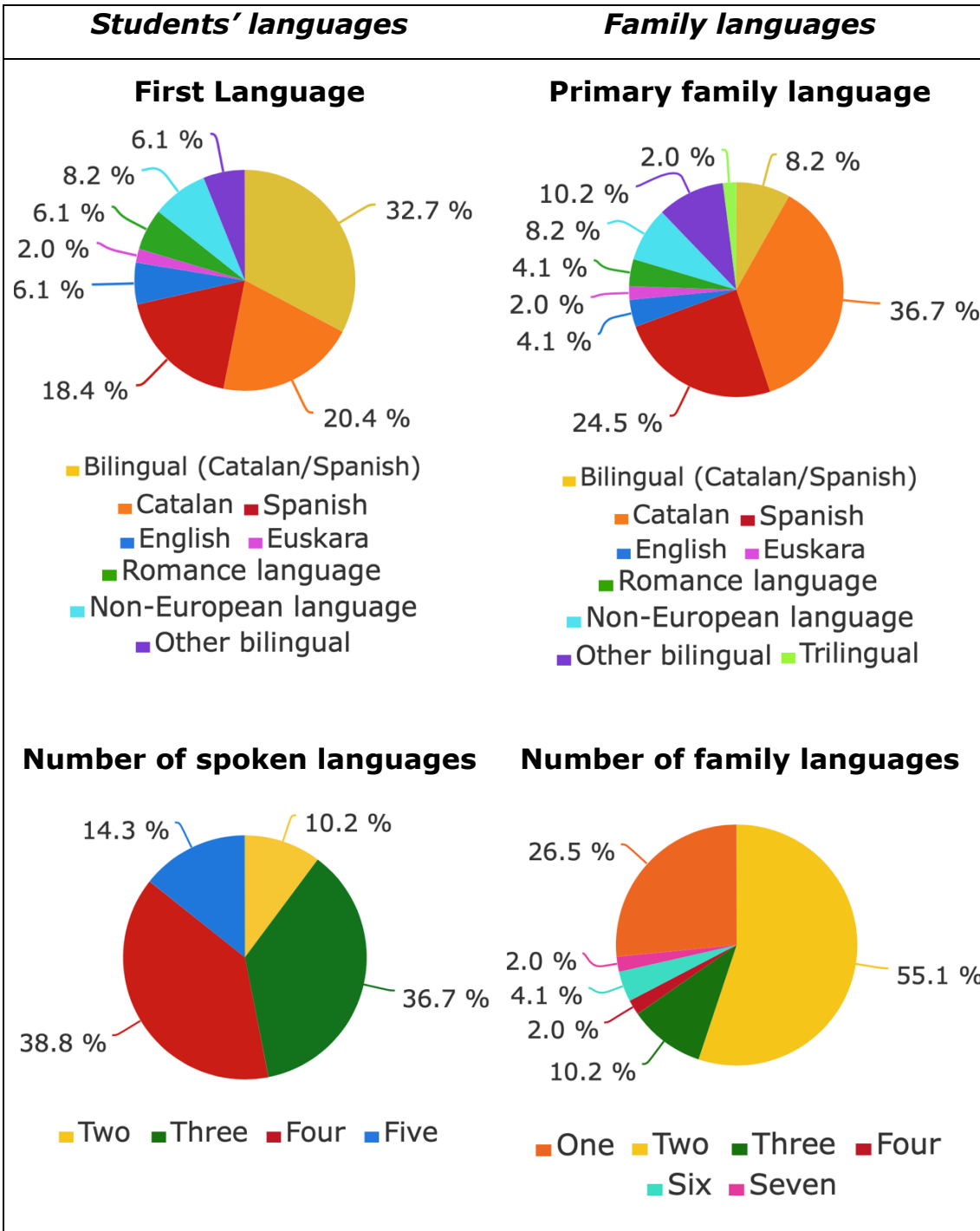


Figure 4.3 - Spoken and family languages of Global Studies students who completed the Background Information questionnaire

To further explore students' cultural background, it is useful to take into account the context of schooling. In fact, the educational context – and the broader socio-cultural environment in which the school is located – may have substantial impact on our (inter)cultural practices and the ways we construct our identity. As we can see in Figure 4.4, half of the respondents were schooled in Catalonia (including Barcelona's metropolitan area), during both primary (51.02%) and secondary (48.98%) education, and around the 27% of them attended school in another Autonomous Community in Spain. The major change can be seen in the students who went through the educational system of a foreign country: from 20.41% in primary school to 24.49% in secondary one: it is the case of two students who moved with their families to the USA but then came back to Spain.

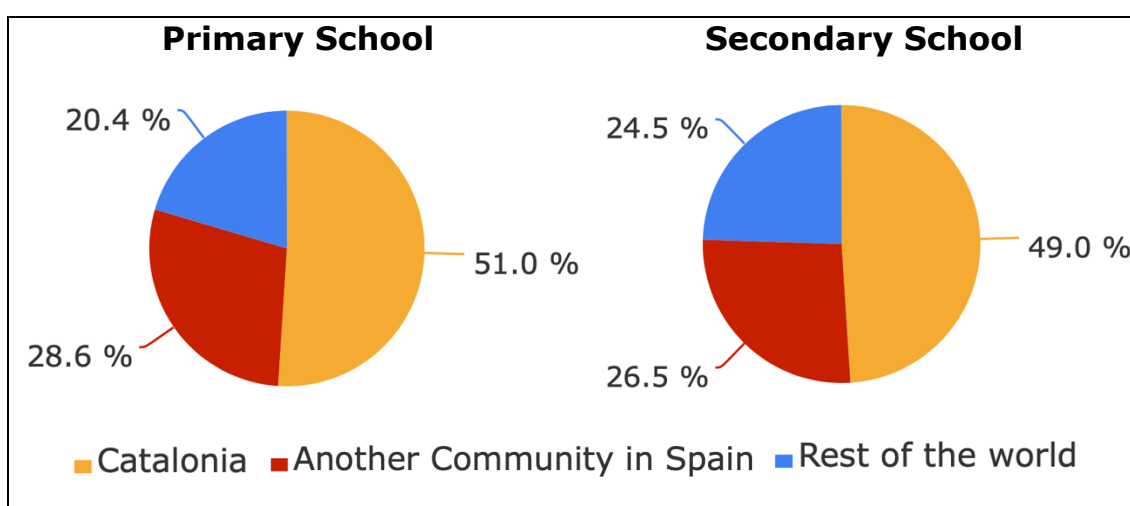


Figure 4.4 - Context of primary and secondary schooling of Global Studies students who completed the Background Information questionnaire

Furthermore, the questionnaire asked for students' current accommodation in Barcelona and previous intercultural experiences (Figure 4.5). Literature on Study Abroad (e.g. Mitchell et al., 2015) suggests that these two aspects have a significant role in both the adaptation process of international students and their building of social networks and intimate relationships. As expected from the results concerning students' birthplace and context of schooling, half of the participants were living with their families (51.02%). The second preferred accommodation was the student residence (20.41%), while the rest

of the students lived in a shared flat – either with co-nationals (2.04%), other foreigners (8.16%), or with Spaniards-Catalans (16.33%). Just one participant had an individual apartment. Lastly, nearly half of the respondents (42.86%) had experienced a previous stay abroad of at least one month.

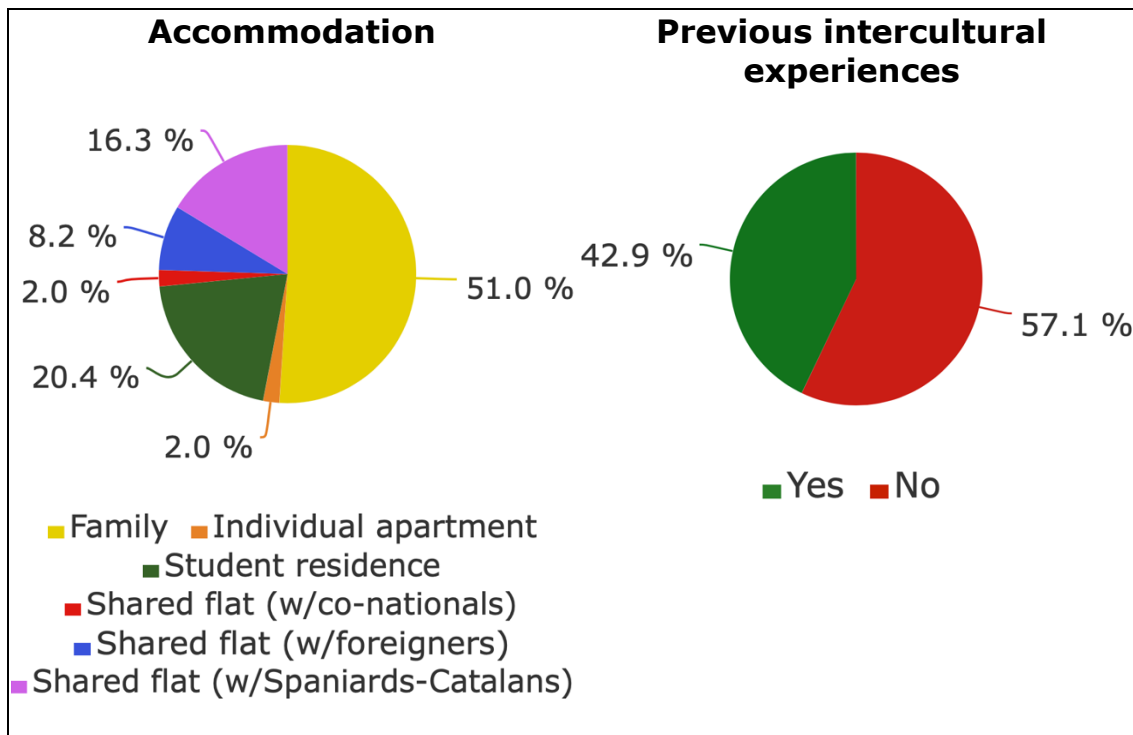


Figure 4.5 - Accommodation and previous intercultural experiences of Global Studies students who completed the Background Information questionnaire

As explained in the Methodology chapter (Section 3.4.1), the Background Information questionnaire also included two questions aiming to investigate students' intercultural interactions before entering the university – namely, the number of international friends students had and the language they spoke in interacting with them. According to the questionnaire responses, before enrolling in the Global Studies degree, students showed already predisposition towards intercultural encounters. Only seven participants reported not to have any international friends (14.29%). On the contrary, the majority of students declared to have between 1 and 6 international friends (1 to 3, 34.69%, and 4 to 6, 20.41%), while the rest of respondents had 7 or more friends who, or whose parents, were born in another country (30.61%). With respect to the languages of interaction,

unsurprisingly, nearly two-thirds of students reported using English (61.9%). Language switching was also a common practice among respondents (23.81%), while fewer students reported interacting in either their own first language (4.76%) or their interlocutor's one (9.52%).

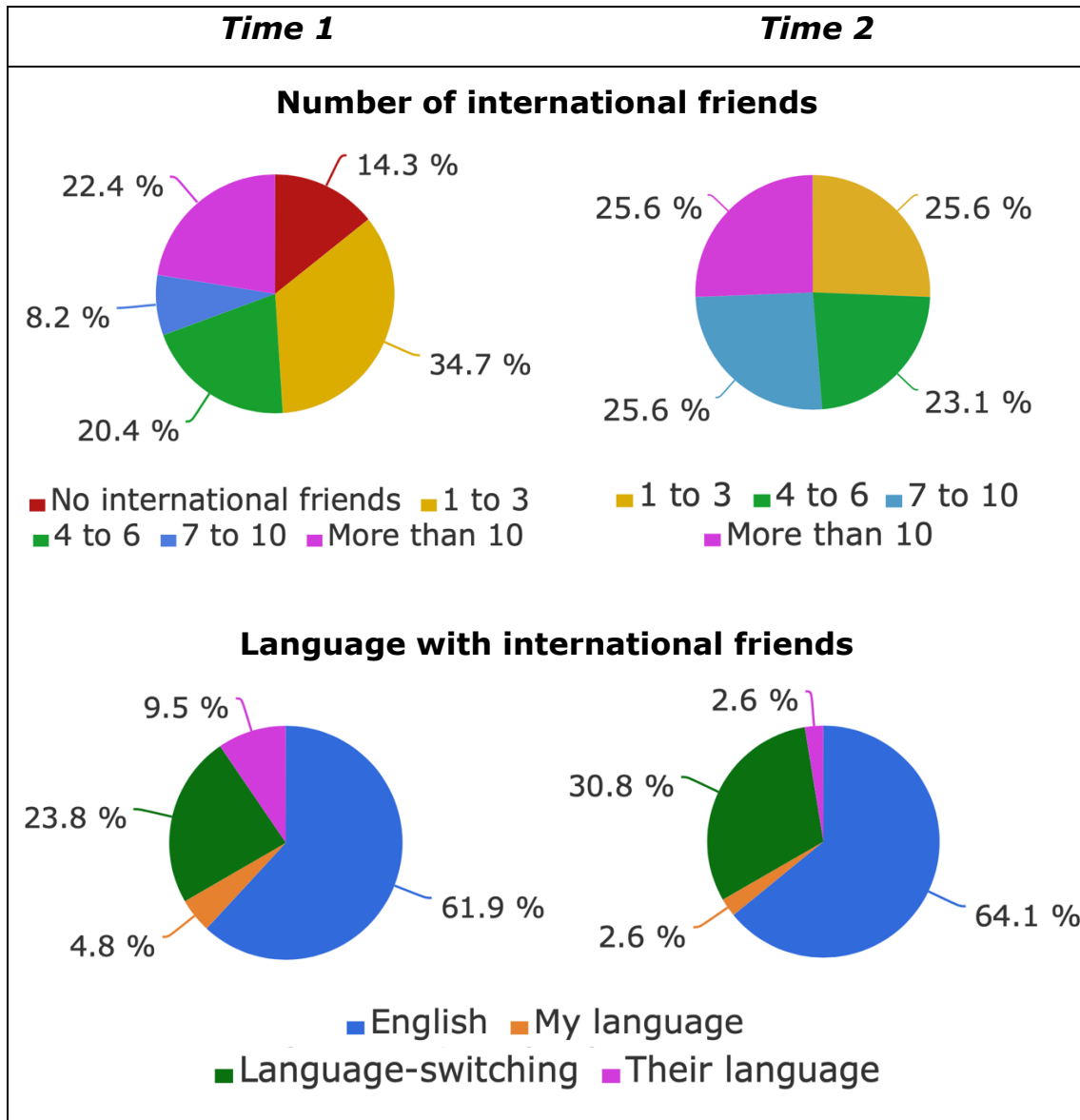


Figure 4.6 – Global Studies students’ number of international friends and language of interaction in T1 and T2

The same question was included in the questionnaire at the end of the academic year, in order to explore changes in students' number of intercultural friends after experiencing one year in an educational context that should have fostered that kind of relationships. In Figure 4.6, there is an overview of the results of the two timings. As we may have expected from the classroom's make-up, all students reported to have at least one international friend by the end of the academic year. Interestingly, the class was perfectly divided into four groups according to the number of friendships they had: between 1 and 3 (25.64%), 4 to 6 (23.08%), 7 to 10 (25.64%), more than 10 (25.64%). Again, English emerged as the preferred language of interaction, with two-thirds of students (64.1%) reporting using it when communicating with their international friends. Language switching practices also increased (30.77%), showing participants' predisposition towards translanguaging as a possible consequence of their everyday contact with the three UPF official languages. Student's first language or interlocutor's mother tongue was rarely chosen as tool for interaction.

4.1.2 Transcultural Competence of Global Studies students at the beginning of the academic year

Along with the Background Information questionnaire, at the beginning of the academic year (T1), students were asked to complete the Transcultural Competence questionnaires in order to assess their international attitudes, intercultural sensitivity, and global identity affiliation. Even though questionnaires are self-report instruments and should be looked at with prudence, these results can still inform us of how students portray themselves as regards their transcultural orientations. Overall, participants scored high in all the three questionnaires; indeed, mean values are all above 4 on a 5-point Likert scale (Table 4.2). However, at a closer look, several differences may be detected among the three questionnaires.

The International Posture questionnaire (Yashima, 2004, 2009) was formed by four dimensions, aiming to measure students' attitudes towards international interactions, affairs, and news, as well as their willingness to share thoughts and ideas with the world. The global mean value was the highest one (mean=4.38), and students scored between a

minimum mean of 3.56 and a maximum of 5. Moreover, respondents were quite consistent in their responses, as indicated by the low standard deviation value (s.d.=0.32) and coefficient of variation (c.v.=0.07), demonstrating students' interest in international affairs and interactions.

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>c.v.</i>
International Posture	4.38	0.32	0.07
Intercultural Sensitivity	4.32	0.30	0.07
Global Identity	4.11	0.50	0.12

Table 4.2 - Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires at the beginning of the academic year (T1) for the Global Studies students: means, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation

The second questionnaire – the Intercultural Sensitivity scale, developed by Chen and Starosta (2000) – accounted for the affective component of the Transcultural Competence construct. The objective, here, was to assess students' tendency towards intercultural interactions, namely, in relation to five different dimensions: engagement, confidence, and attentiveness in the interaction, enjoyment in interacting with a “cultural different counterpart”, and respect of cultural differences. Again, Global Studies students scored quite high on this questionnaire, with a global mean value of 4.32 and responses ranging from a minimum mean value of 3.61 to a maximum of 4.78. Standard deviation (s.d.=0.30) and coefficient of variation (c.v.=0.07) reveal low variability in answers and a general consensus among participants.

Lastly, the Global Identity scale (Türken & Rudmin, 2013) intended to explore students' affiliation with a global identity. The questionnaire comprised two different components aiming to assess, on the one hand, cultural openness, and on the other hand, respondents' non-nationalist tendencies. Among the three questionnaires, the GI scale scored the lowest mean value (mean=4.11), but still above 4. However, minimum and maximum values (2.8 and 5, respectively) show quite high variability in answers, as confirmed by the standard deviation (s.d.=0.50) and coefficient of variation (c.v.=0.12). Thus, when relating to the global community, students may identify themselves in very different ways.

4.1.3 Transcultural Competence of Global Studies students at the end of the academic year

Unfortunately, not all students who took part in the study in Time 1 also completed the Transcultural Competence questionnaires in Time 2. Therefore, at the end of the academic year (T2), I collected 39 questionnaires in the Global Studies degree; percentages of gender and birthplace are shown in Table 4.3.

As regards the results, global mean values did not suffer any major changes when compared with the ones of Time 1, being all above 4 on a 5-point Likert scale. However, a slight decrease in the values for all the three questionnaires can be observed, as well as an increase in variability of responses, as presented in Table 4.4.

	Males	Females	Total
Catalonia	4	19	23
Spain	2	7	9
Rest of the world	3	4	7
<i>Total</i>	9	30	39

Table 4.3 - Global Studies students who completed the Transcultural Competence questionnaires in T2, according to birthplace and gender

Students reported high interest in international affairs, encounters, and news at the end of the academic year, as revealed by the International Posture questionnaire's mean score (mean value=4.32). Results showed moderate variability in responses, ranging from a minimum mean of 3.53 to a maximum of 4.9, as confirmed by the standard deviation (s.d.=0.38) and the coefficient of variation (c.v.=0.09). As regards the Intercultural Sensitivity questionnaire, students demonstrated high affective involvement in intercultural interactions and respect for cultural differences (mean value=4.15), as well as moderate consistency in the responses (s.d.=0.38; c.v.=0.09). Once more, the Global Identity questionnaire scored the smaller mean value (mean=4.07) and the highest variability in answers, varying from a minimum mean of 2.4 to a maximum of 4.9 (s.d.=0.52; c.v.=0.13). Hence, even though students seem to share a strong international

attitude and predisposition towards intercultural encounters, they are less likely to be in agreement when it comes to their identity adscription.

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>c.v.</i>
International Posture	4.32	0.37	0.09
Intercultural Sensitivity	4.15	0.38	0.09
Global Identity	4.07	0.52	0.13

Table 4.4 - Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires at the end of the academic year (T2) for the Global Studies students: means, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation

4.1.4 Changes in Transcultural Competence of Global Studies students after one academic year

After reporting results of the three questionnaires at the beginning (T1) and the end (T2) of the academic year, mean values of the two timings were statistically compared by means of three Mann-Whitney tests. The intention here was to detect if students' Transcultural Competence experienced a longitudinal change.

Mean values for each of the three questionnaires in T1 and T2 are summarized in Table 4.5, along with the results of the statistical tests. Overall, students scored lower mean values in Time 2, as well as higher standard deviation values pointing to less consistency in responses. Nevertheless, all values are still above 4, showing students' elevated transcultural orientation in both timings.

	Time 1		Time 2		Mann-Whitney test	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>p-value</i>
International Posture	4.38	0.32	4.32	0.37	989.5	0.7783
Intercultural Sensitivity	4.32	0.30	4.15	0.38	1204.5	0.01842*
Global Identity	4.11	0.50	4.07	0.52	976.5	0.8629

Table 4.5 - Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires for the Global Studies students in T1 and T2: means, standard deviations, and statistical analysis

The mean value for the International Posture questionnaire shifted from 4.38 in Time 1 to 4.32 in Time 2. To establish if the decrease was statistically significant, a Mann-Whitney test was performed comparing the results of the two timings. If we look at the plot – in Figure 4.7 – no a priori difference may be detected between Time 1 and Time 2. Moreover, statistical analysis showed a p-value above the significance level (p-value>0.05). Therefore, even if students' International Posture seems to have decreased through the academic year, this difference was not proved to be statistically significant.

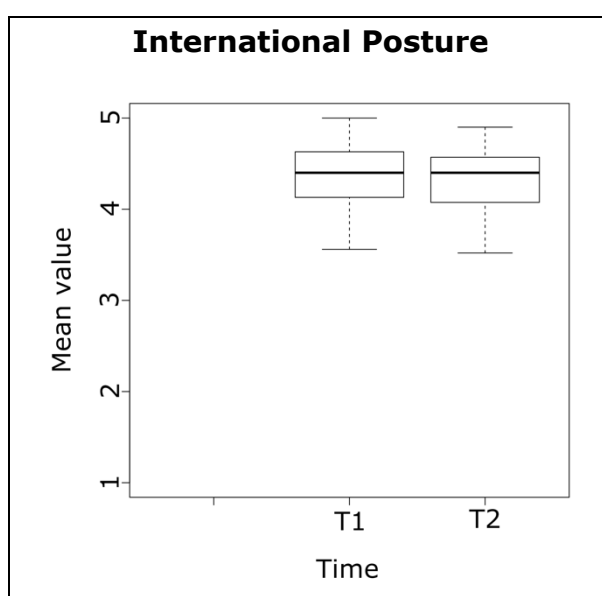


Figure 4.7 - Boxplot of International Posture in T1 and T2 for Global Studies students

As regards the Intercultural Sensitivity scale, also the mean value for this questionnaire presented a decrease in Time 2 and increased variability in responses, as further displayed by the boxplot in Figure 4.8. This difference was proved to be statistically significant by inferential analysis (p-value=0.02), showing that – contrary to what was expected – Global Studies students were less likely to feel engaged, confident, and attentive in intercultural interactions at the end of the academic year than they were at the beginning.

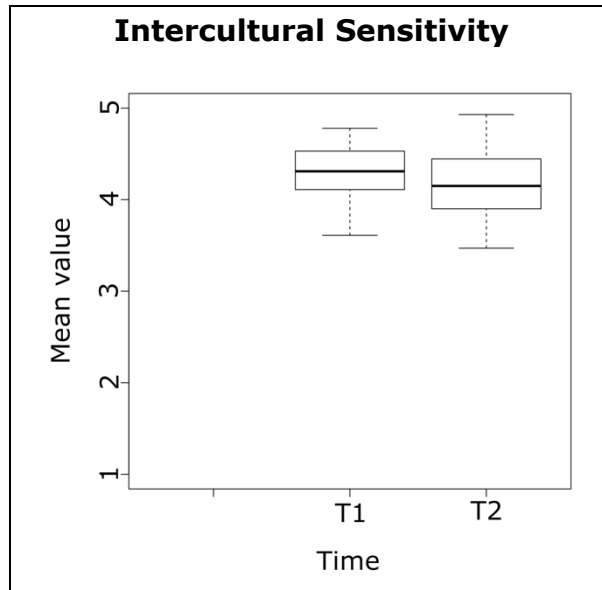


Figure 4.8 - Boxplot of Intercultural Sensitivity in T1 and T2 for Global Studies students

Finally, students did not show major changes in their identity affiliation – namely, the Global Identity questionnaire. Although the mean value was slightly smaller in Time 2, no significant difference was found between participants’ responses at the beginning and at the end of the academic year ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$), denoting no development in participants’ “feeling of belonging to a bigger community”.

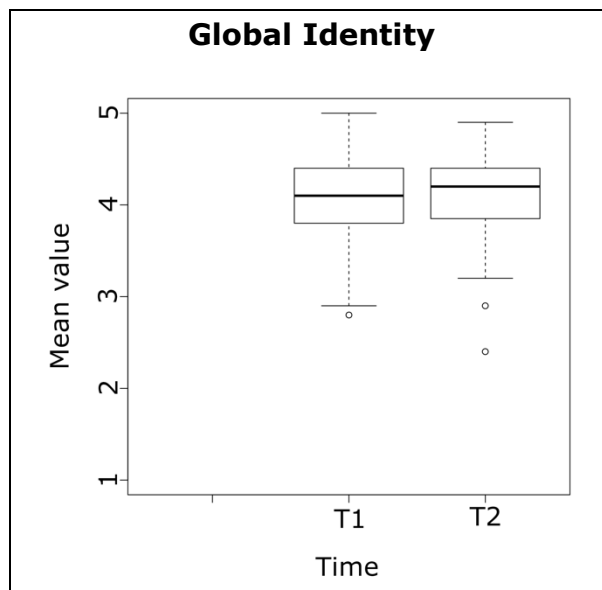


Figure 4.9 - Boxplot of Global Identity in T1 and T2 for Global Studies students

In sum, time did not emerge to be a factor in changing either Global Studies students' international attitudes or their global identity affiliation. Instead, after experiencing one academic year in a multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom, participants' Intercultural Sensitivity decreased significantly, denoting a loss of engagement in intercultural interactions. This phenomenon will be discussed in depth in the Discussion chapter (Section 6.1.1).

4.1.5 Transcultural Competence of Global Studies students and the variable of international friends

Lastly, as the present research aims to explore students' transcultural orientations through the lens of intercultural interactions, results of the Transcultural Competence questionnaires were correlated with one question of the Background Information questionnaire directly aiming to investigate students' intercultural friendships – i.e. the number of international friends they reported to have. Respondents were divided into two groups: students not having any international friends and students who reported to have at least one. Hence, responses to the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires were statistically compared by means of the Mann-Whitney test, in order to determine if students' International Posture, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Global Identity are correlated with having international friends.

At the beginning of the academic year, among the 49 respondents to the Background Information questionnaire in Time 1, 42 (85.7%) reported having at least one friend who was, or whose parents were, born in a different country. This group of students showed higher mean values for all the three questionnaires, as well as either smaller or equal standard deviation, denoting less variability in responses (Table 4.6).

The Intercultural Sensitivity questionnaire was the one presenting the larger difference between the two groups; students having at least one international friend scored a global mean value of 4.37 (s.d.=0.25), while the ones reporting not to have such kind of friends scored a mean value of 3.97 (s.d.=0.36). Indeed, the difference in responses between the two groups was proved to be statistically significant (p -value<0.01), pointing out to a correlation between affective engagement in intercultural interactions and having

international friends. Contrarily, no significant difference was found between the two groups for the other two questionnaires – i.e. International Posture and Global Identity.

	Having int'l friends (n=42)		Not having int'l friends (n=7)		Significance in Mann-Whitney tests	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>p-value</i>
International Posture	4.39	0.3	4.29	0.44	126	0.5577
Intercultural Sensitivity	4.37	0.25	3.97	0.36	50.5	0.003039*
Global Identity	4.12	0.51	4.01	0.45	123	0.5008

Table 4.6 – Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires for the Global Studies students according to participants' International Friends in T1: means, standard deviations, and statistical analysis

As regards the end of the academic year (T2), all respondents (n=39) reported to have at least one international friend (Section 4.1.1). Therefore, statistical analysis was not performed.

4.2 Transcultural Competence in a context of no multi-dimensional internationalization: The Control Group

In this section, I will present the results of the Background Information questionnaire and the Transcultural Competence questionnaires – in both timings – for the Control Group students. This group is formed by students from a variety of undergraduate degrees other than Global Studies (Section 3.2). They were all enrolled in their first year at the UPF, and they were experiencing an academic context with a lesser degree of internationalization than their Global Studies counterparts.

The structure of the section will be the same as for the previous one. Firstly, students will be sociolinguistically described according to the items included in the Background Information questionnaire (Section 4.2.1): School, gender, age, birthplace, first and other spoken languages, context of schooling, accommodation, and international friends. In the later sections, I will present the results of the Transcultural Competence questionnaires at the beginning (Section 4.2.2) and at the end of the year (Section 4.2.3); then, results of

the two timings will be statistically compared (Section 4.2.4) to evaluate if, and to what extent, students' transcultural orientations changed throughout their first year in the internationalized higher education context. Finally, the results of the Transcultural Competence questionnaires will be analyzed according to students' number of international friends (Section 4.2.5), in order to detect the impact of the intercultural socialization on students' transcultural orientation.

4.2.1 Profiling Control Group students' background

As regards the Control Group students, again data collected by means of the Background Information questionnaire allowed to profile the students with respect to their linguistic, cultural, and educational background. Since respondents were selected among all first-year UPF students, in this case the questionnaire also included a question asking for the School. Figure 4.10 presents the percentages of respondents per degree, in both Time 1 and Time 2.

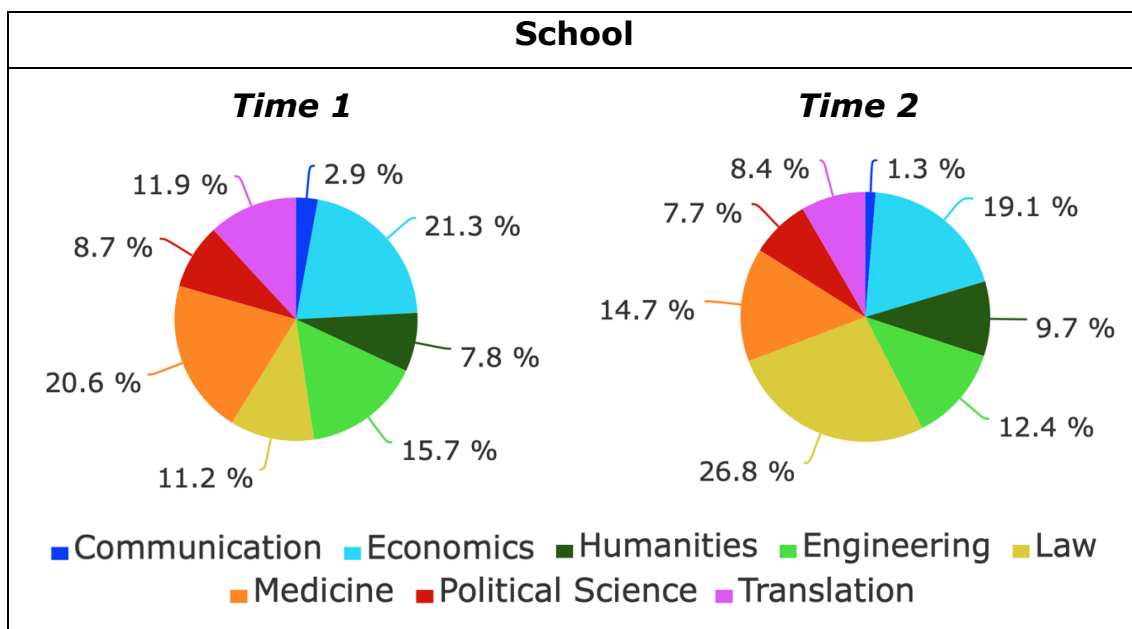


Figure 4.10 - School of Control group students who completed the Background Information questionnaire

No significant changes can be observed, except for two degrees: in T1, students enrolled in the Medicine degree – i.e. Life and Health Science Faculty – accounted for the largest proportion of respondents (20.58% of total participants); whereas, in T2, about one-fourth of all respondents were undergraduates coming from the Law’s Faculty (26.76%).

Respondents’ gender and year of birth well represent both European tendencies and UPF’s ones, as reported by the 2017 Eurostat’s Tertiary Education Statistics³¹. In fact, as can be seen in Figure 4.11, 62.42% of students who completed the questionnaire were females (n=279), while 37.58% were males (n=168); these percentages reflect the trend of more women enrolling at tertiary education level than men. Moreover, as expected, more than 90% of respondents were born between 1999 and 2001, entering the university 18-19 years old. The majority of remaining students (8.46%) were born in 1998, while a small percentage of participants (5.6%) were born in earlier years – respectively, in 1997 (n=7), 1996 (n=3), 1995 (n=2), 1994 (n=2), 1993 (n=2), 1992 (n=1), 1990 (n=2), 1989 (n=2), 1987 (n=1), 1980 (n=1), 1960 (n=1), 1947 (n=1).

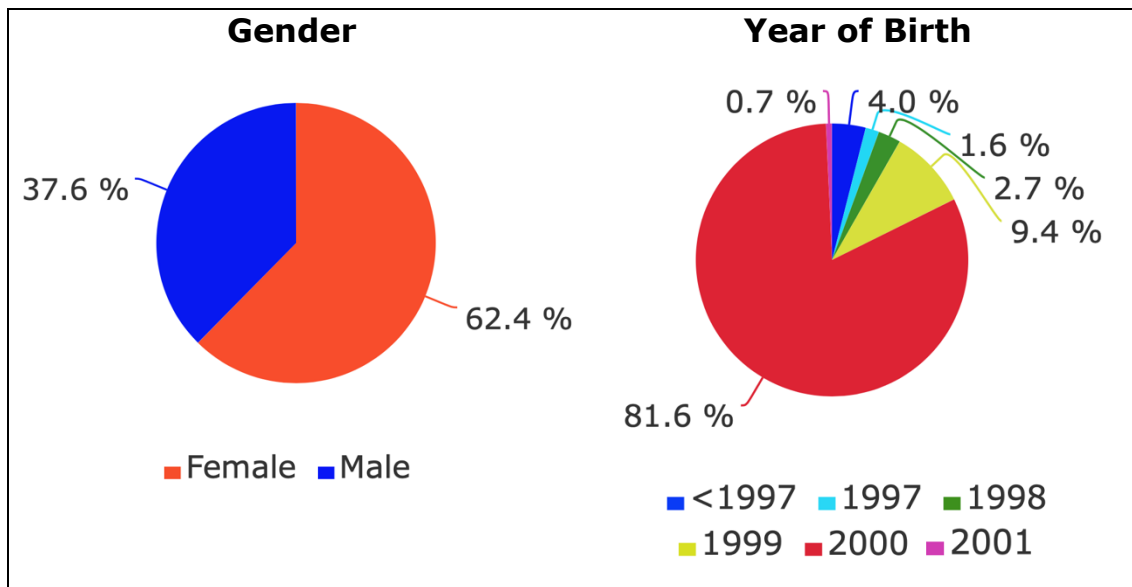


Figure 4.11 - Gender and year of birth of Control group students who completed the Background Information questionnaire

³¹https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tertiary_education_statistics#Participation_of_men_and_women_in_tertiary_education

With respect to students' birthplace (Figure 4.12), data of the Control group showed a more homogeneous figure than in the case of Global Studies participants. Indeed, most students reported to be born in the Spanish country: more than three-quarters of respondents (77.85%) were born either in the Barcelona metropolitan area or in other areas in Catalonia, while 10.74% came from another Autonomous Community in Spain. A lesser amount of students were born abroad, with just ten being born in another European country (2.24%), 12 in another Spanish-speaking country (2.91%), and 28 in the rest of the world (6.26%).

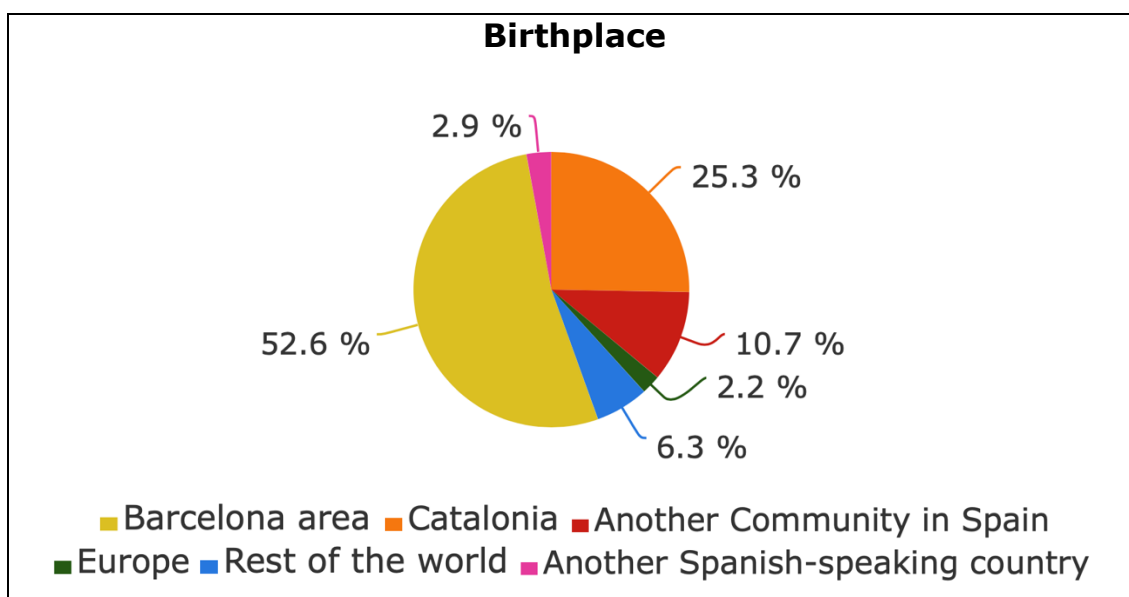


Figure 4.12 - Birthplace of Control group students who completed the Background Information questionnaire

Students' linguistic background and competence also presented quite a consistent picture (Figure 4.13). As regards participants' first language, the 90% of the Control group students reported to be either bilingual in Catalan and Spanish (45.2%) or having one of the two as their mother tongue – 25.28% Catalan and 19.46% Spanish, respectively. Moreover, 19 participants declared to be other kinds of bilinguals, mostly reporting another language along with either Spanish or Catalan. Other languages were scarcely represented: just three participants had English as their first language (0.67%), two Galician (0.45%), and six another Romance language, such as Italian, French, or Portuguese (1.34%). Lastly, 13 students reported to be native speakers of a non-European

language (2.91%) and two identified themselves as trilingual (0.45%; mentioning Catalan, Spanish, and a heritage language).

Furthermore, students declared to speak from two up to seven different languages. The majority of participants mentioned between three (43.18%) and four (45.41%) languages in total, compared to 15 respondents who reported to be competent in just two different languages (3.36%). The small percentage of remaining students identified themselves as highly plurilingual, accounting for five (6.94%), six (0.67%) or seven (0.45%) languages in their repertoire. Apart from the two official languages in Catalonia, again English, French, and German were the most mentioned languages in any case.

As regards the primary language spoken in the family, results were in line with the ones illustrated above. In fact, around 86% of respondents reported to either adopt Catalan/Spanish bilingual practices with their families (29.31%) or to interact in any of the two languages – namely, 31.54% in Catalan and 25.28% in Spanish. Other bilingual families accounted for 5.82% of total participants, while 15 students (3.36%) reported adopting trilingual practices when communicating with their families. The rest of the participants was raised in monolingual settings, speaking either English (0.22%), Galician (0.22%), another European language (0.22%), another Romance language (0.89%), or a non-European language (3.12%).

Lastly, as concerns the total number of languages spoken in the family, students showed high variability in their responses, mentioning from one to seven different languages. However, most respondents only reported between one (26.85%) and two (47.87%) spoken languages in the family. This result – when compared with the total number of languages in students' repertoires – suggests that first-year university students tend to be competent in more languages than their parents and close relatives. Furthermore, 15.66% of participants reported three languages in their families. Highly plurilingual families – in which more than three languages were spoken – accounted for a smaller percentage of total respondents (9.61%).

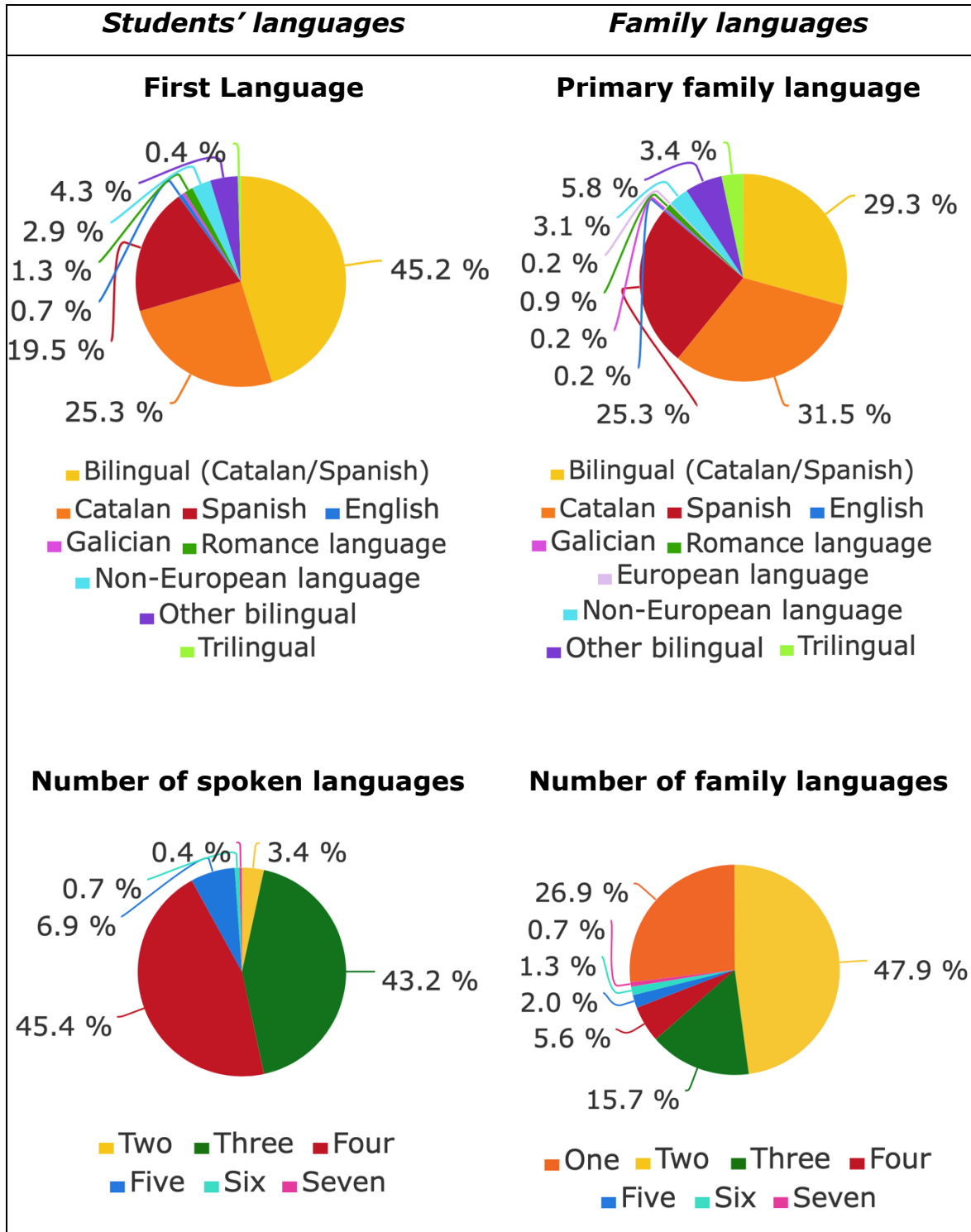


Figure 4.13 - Spoken and family languages of Control group students who completed the Background Information questionnaire

In agreement with earlier results, participants' context of both primary and secondary schooling showed great homogeneity (Figure 4.14), as 83.67% students were schooled in Catalonia in primary school and 85.46% in secondary school. Remaining students were mostly schooled in other Autonomous Communities in Spain, both for primary (11.86%) and secondary (11.42%) education. Just a small number of respondents attended school outside the country. As for primary education, three participants were schooled in Europe (0.67%), five in another Spanish-speaking country (1.12%), and twelve in the rest of the world (2.86%); meanwhile, for secondary education the numbers decreased, as six students attended high school in Europe (1.34%), six in the rest of the world (1.34%), and just two in another Spanish-Speaking country (0.45%). These slight changes may be justified by children of immigrant families that had moved to the region.

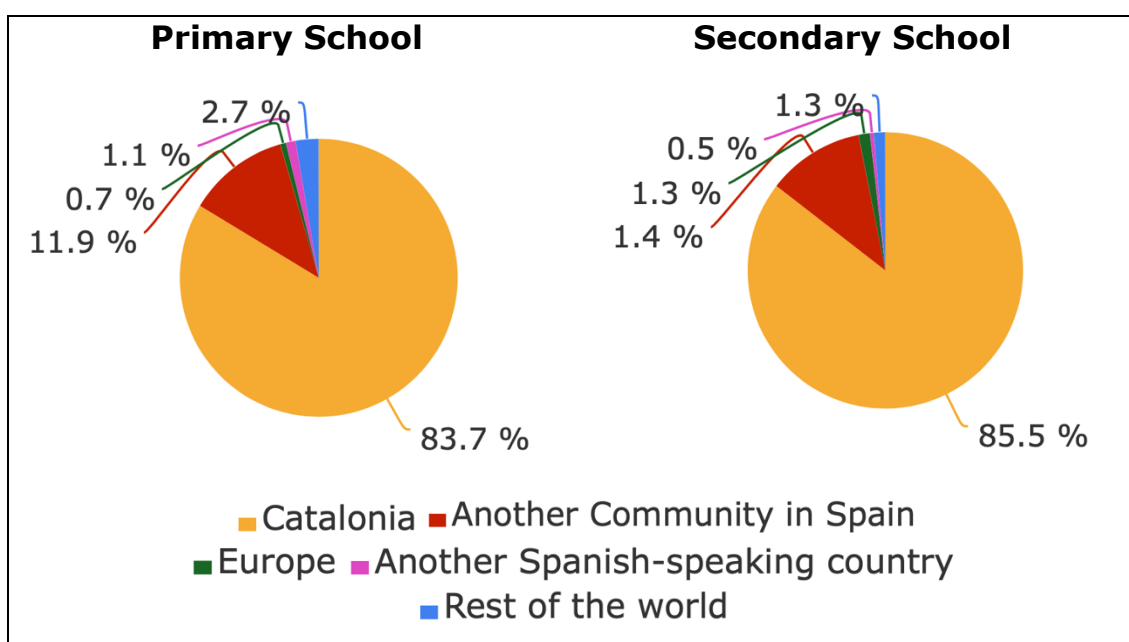


Figure 4.14 - Context of primary and secondary schooling of Control group students who completed the Background Information questionnaire

Results on students' accommodation also fit in the general picture (Figure 4.15), as 71.81% of participant reported to live with their family, followed by 14.09% of respondents living in student residences, and 9.84% sojourning in a shared flat with peers from Catalonia and/or other areas in Spain. A tiny percentage of students was staying with a host family, either non-Spanish (0.22%) or Spanish speaking (0.45%). Finally, just

five respondents reported living by themselves in an individual apartment (1.12%), while the rest shared a flat with other students (being co-nationals, 0.89%, foreigners, 1.34%, or mixed, 0.22%).

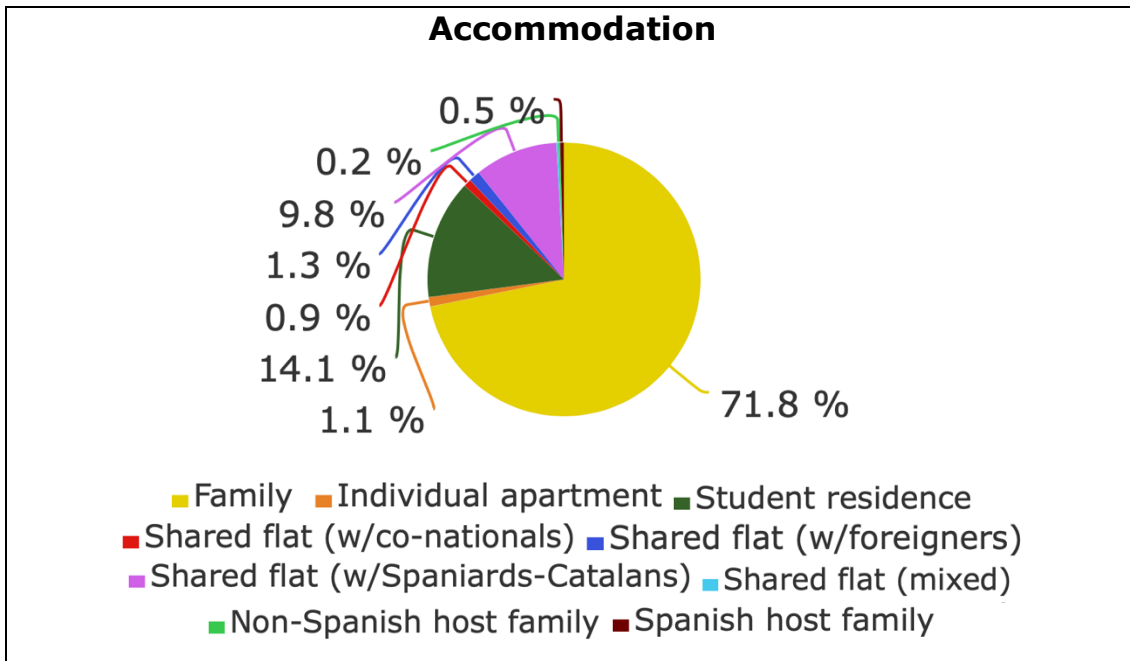


Figure 4.15 - Accommodation of Control group students who completed the Background Information questionnaire

As for the Global Studies students, there were two items in the questionnaire asking for participants' number of international friends and the language they spoke when interacting with them; these questions were included in the questionnaire in both Time 1 and Time 2. Results are summarized in Table 4.16. At the beginning of the academic year, nearly half of the respondents declared to have from 1 to 3 international friends (45.64%), whereas one-third of students (33.11%) reported they did not have any. Remaining respondents had either 4 to 6 (10.51%), 7 to 10 (3.58%), or more than ten friends (7.16%). As concerns the languages used in the interaction, most of the participants reported speaking English (62.46%). Language switching was the second preferred choice (15.14%), followed by the use of the language of the participant (13.88%) and the language of the interlocutor (8.52%). No major changes may be observed by the end of the academic year. Again, half of the respondents (48.83%) reported to have between 1

and 3 international friends, and around one-third (30.77%) declared not to have any. A fewer number of students had between 4 to 6 (14.38%), 7 to 10 (2.01%), or more than ten international friends (4.01%). With respect to languages adopted in these encounters, in Time 2 a slight increase of language switching may be observed (16.88%), as well as a decrease in using the interlocutor's first language; perhaps as a result of international students' acquisition of one of the two official languages.

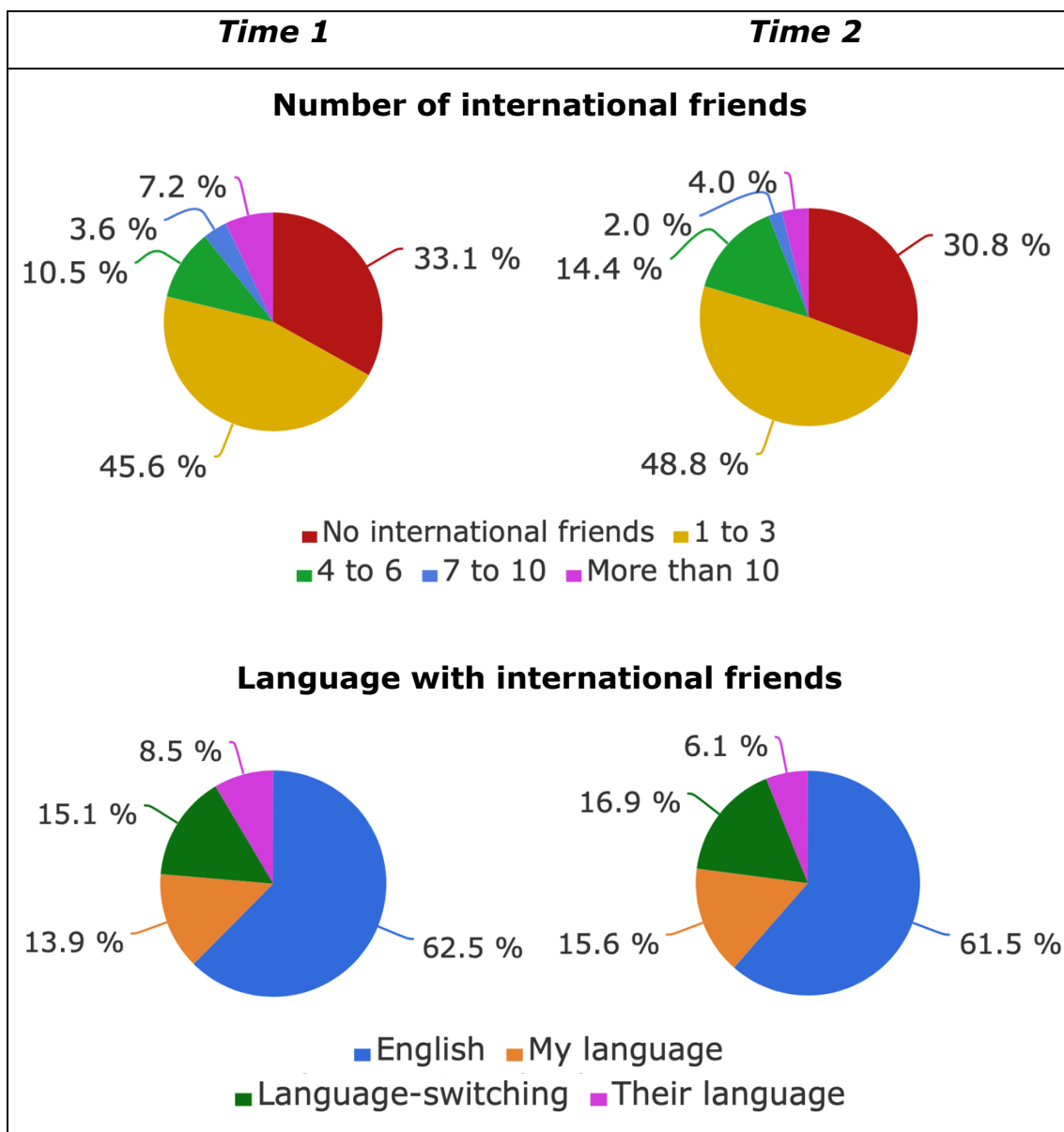


Figure 4.16 - Number of international friends and language of interaction of Control group students in T1 and T2

4.2.2 Transcultural Competence in the Control Group at the beginning of the academic year

As in the case of the Global Studies group, along with the Background Information questionnaire, at the beginning of the year (T1), the Control group students were also asked to complete the Transcultural Competence questionnaires, in order to compare the results of the two groups. These three questionnaires aimed to assess participants' international attitudes (i.e. International Posture; Yashima, 2009), intercultural sensitivity (i.e. Intercultural Sensitivity; Chen and Starosta, 2000), and global identity affiliation (i.e. Global Identity; Türken and Rudmin, 2013).

Table 4.7 presents a summary of the results, reporting the mean value, the standard deviation, and the coefficient of variation for each one of the three questionnaires. Overall, students showed little consensus in the responses.

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>c.v.</i>
International Posture	3.89	0.52	0.13
Intercultural Sensitivity	4.01	0.46	0.11
Global Identity	3.74	0.58	0.16

Table 4.7 - Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires at the beginning of the academic year (T1) for the Control group students: means, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation

Control group participants scored relatively high on the International Posture questionnaire, achieving a mean value of 3.89 on a 5-points Likert-type scale. However, standard deviation (s.d.=0.52) and coefficient of variation (c.v.=0.13) show little consistency in the responses. Indeed, results vary from a minimum mean value of 2.13 to a maximum of 4.94, pointing to very different attitudes and interest towards international news and affairs.

As concerns the Intercultural Sensitivity scale, this questionnaire scored the highest mean value among the three (mean=4.01), pointing to students' engagement, enjoyment, and confidence in intercultural interactions, as well as good respect of cultural differences. Participants showed broader agreement in their responses than in the International Posture

questionnaire, yet several differences may be detected as the mean value ranges between 2.56 and 4.94 (s.d.=0.46; c.v.=0.11).

Lastly, the Global Identity scale emerged as the more controversial questionnaire, suggesting that, when it comes to identity adscription, students may take very different positions. Indeed, participants scored a mean value of 3.74, ranging from a minimum mean of 1.8 to a maximum of 5. High standard deviation (s.d.=0.58) and coefficient of variation (c.v.=0.16) confirm small agreement in responses.

4.2.3 Transcultural Competence in the Control Group at the end of the academic year

The same three Transcultural Competence questionnaires were administered to the Control group students at the end of the academic year (T2), in order to detect if, and to what extent, the broader internationalized higher education context entailed a change in students' transcultural orientations. As for the previous section, each questionnaire has been treated independently, and the results are summarized in Table 4.8.

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>c.v.</i>
International Posture	3.90	0.51	0.13
Intercultural Sensitivity	4.04	0.46	0.11
Global Identity	3.75	0.60	0.16

Table 4.8 - Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires at the end of the academic year (T2) for the Control group students: means, standard deviation, and coefficient of variation

By the end of the academic year, Control group students reported relatively favorable predisposition towards intergroup contact and interest in international affairs and news, as displayed by the mean value for the International Posture questionnaire (mean=3.9). Participants did not show great consensus in the responses, being the standard deviation of 0.51 and the coefficient of variation 0.13.

Again, the Intercultural Sensitivity was the questionnaire that scored the highest mean value (mean=4.04), as well as the lowest standard deviation and coefficient of variation

– s.d.=0.46 and c.v.=0.11, respectively –, confirming students’ elevated involvement in intercultural interactions.

Likewise, the Global Identity questionnaire reported the lowest mean value (mean=3.75) and the smaller consistency in the responses (s.d.=0.6; c.v.=0.16), pointing to the a possible controversy of the construct that will be further discussed in the Discussion section (Section 6.1).

4.2.4 Changes in Transcultural Competence in the Control Group after one academic year

In the previous two sections, I have reported the results of the Transcultural Competence questionnaires for the Control group students at both the beginning (T1) and the end (T2) of the academic year. In this section, I will statistically compare the results of the two timings by means of three Mann-Whitney tests, with the aim of evaluating if time spent in the internationalized higher education context is a factor in changing students’ transcultural orientation, as regards their International Posture, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Global Identity.

As illustrated by Table 4.9, mean values for the three questionnaires did not suffer any major changes although a slight increase may be noticed by the end of the academic year for all of the three. Moreover, students showed low consistency in the responses in both Time 1 and Time 2, with similar differences among the three questionnaires.

	Time 1		Time 2		Mann-Whitney tests	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>p-value</i>
International Posture	3.89	0.52	3.9	0.51	66140	0.8121
Intercultural Sensitivity	4.01	0.46	4.04	0.46	64088	0.3426
Global Identity	3.74	0.58	3.75	0.6	65078	0.5441

Table 4.9 - Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires for the Control Group students in T1 and T2: means, standard deviations, and statistical analysis

In order to prove if the change in students' transcultural orientation was significant, statistical analysis was performed. The three boxplots – in Figure 4.17 – do not show any clear a priori difference and Mann-Whitney tests were not able to confirm any differences, as the p-value was considerably above the significance level ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$) for all the three questionnaires. Thus, one academic year in the higher education context seems not to have triggered any traceable changes in students' transcultural orientations.

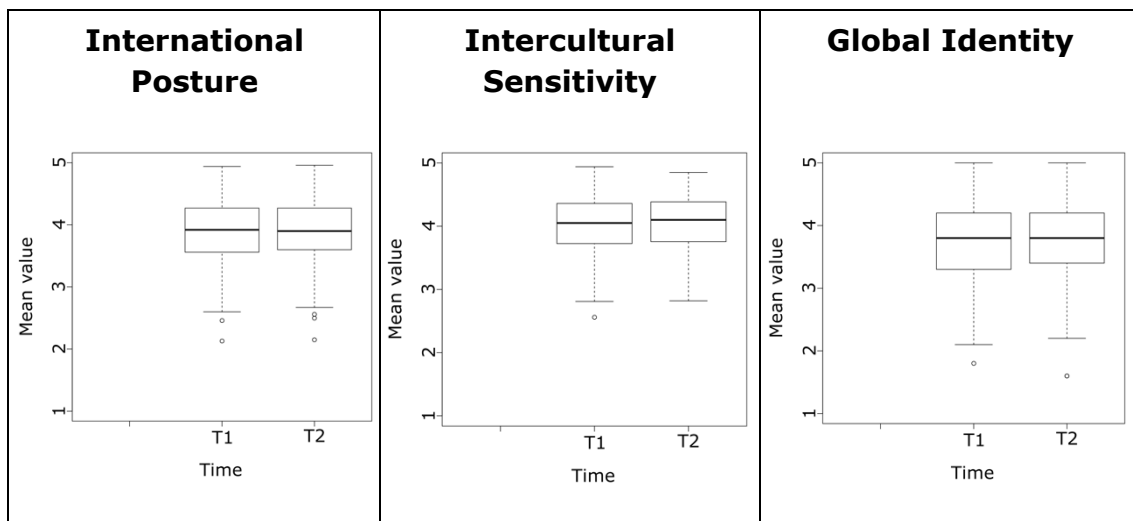


Figure 4.17 - Boxplots of International Posture, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Global Identity in T1 and T2 for Control group students

4.2.5 Transcultural Competence in the Control Group and the variable of international friends

Ultimately, to detect the impact of intercultural interactions on students' transcultural orientation, the results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires were correlated with the variable of international friends. As in the case of the Global Studies group, respondents of the Control Group were divided into two groups – namely, the ones who reported not having any international friends and the ones having at least one. Thus, mean values of the two groups were statistically compared by means of three Mann-Whitney tests, one per questionnaire.

At the beginning of the academic year (T1), among the 447 Control group participants, two-thirds (66.9%) reported having at least one international friend, defined as “a friend who was – or whose parents were – born in a different country from its own”. This group of students showed higher mean values for the three questionnaires when compared to the participants who stated not to have any international friends. However, this second group presented slightly more consistency in the responses, as shown by standard deviation values (Table 4.10). Nonetheless, the difference in Transcultural Competence between participants having and those not having international friendships was proved to be statistically significant, as the p-value was remarkably smaller than the significance level ($p\text{-value} > 0.01$) for each of the three questionnaires.

	Having int'l friends (n=299)		Not having int'l friends (n=148)		Significance in Mann-Whitney tests	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>p-value</i>
International Posture	3.97	0.51	3.74	0.49	16356	3.575e-06*
Intercultural Sensitivity	4.09	0.45	3.86	0.44	15587	1.817e-07*
Global Identity	3.78	0.61	3.66	0.52	18996	0.007389*

Table 4.10 – Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires for the Control group students according to participants’ International Friends in T1: means, standard deviations, and statistical analysis

With regard to the end of the academic year (T2), 69.2% of respondents (n=299) reported having at least one international friend. Again, this group of students reported higher values of International Posture, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Global Identity than their peers not having any friends with a culturally diverse background. Moreover, at a general level, these participants presented more agreement in the responses (Table 4.11). These results were validated by statistical analysis. Mann-Whitney tests revealed a p-value below the 0.05 level for each questionnaire, confirming a significant difference in transcultural orientation between students having and those not having international friends.

	Having int'l friends (n=207)		Not having int'l friends (n=92)		Significance in Mann-Whitney tests	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>p-value</i>
International Posture	3.95	0.49	3.78	0.54	7777.5	0.005738*
Intercultural Sensitivity	4.11	0.4	3.87	0.53	6896	7.081e-05*
Global Identity	3.80	0.61	3.64	0.58	8088	0.01873*

Table 4.11 - Results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires for the Control group students according to participants' International Friends in T2: means, standard deviations, and statistical analysis

In sum, in both Time 1 and Time 2, a significant difference was found between participants having international friends and those who reported not to have such kind of friends, for all the three questionnaires. Thus, we may conclude that students who have at least a friend with a different cultural background tend to display higher international attitudes and intercultural sensitivity, as well as a more global identity adscription.

4.3 The impact of multi-dimensional internationalization on students' Transcultural Competence: A comparison of the Global Studies group with the Control Group

In the two previous sections (Section 4.1 and 4.2), I treated the Global Studies students and the Control group ones as two separate groups, presenting the results of the Background Information questionnaire and the Transcultural Competence questionnaires for each of them. Now, I will statistically compare the results of the International Posture, Intercultural Sensitivity and Global Identity questionnaires for the two groups in both T1 and T2, in order to evaluate the impact of multi-dimensional internationalization on students' attitudes, intercultural sensitivity, and global identity affiliation. Each questionnaire will be analyzed as independent since each one measures a distinct aspect of students' Transcultural Competence. However, as we will see, the Global Studies group showed generally higher values and more consistency in the responses (i.e. smaller standard deviation and coefficient of variation) for each of the three questionnaires. This

picture is not surprising as these students chose to enroll in a degree clearly focused on global and cultural issues and characterized by a multilingual and multicultural outlook.

4.3.1 International Posture questionnaire

As already illustrated, the International Posture questionnaire (Yashima, 2002, 2009) aimed to assess students' attitudes and interest towards the international community. Even though the 2009's version is formed by four components (Methodology, Section 3.4.2), I will only take into account the global mean value, treating it as an indicator of students' interest in international affairs and news, as well as tendency to intergroup contact.

In Table 4.12, there is a summary of the results of the International Posture questionnaire for the two groups, in both Time 1 and Time 2. Overall, mean values are all quite high. However, Global Studies students scored higher values – i.e. mean value above 4.3 on a 5-point Likert scale – than the Control Group respondents – means of 3.89 in Time 1 and 3.90 in Time 2. Moreover, the latter group showed less consistency and more variability in responses, as displayed by standard deviation and coefficient of variation.

	Global Studies			Control group			Mann-Whitney	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>c.v.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>c.v.</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Time 1	4.38	0.32	0.07	3.89	0.52	0.13	4822	6.146e-11*
Time 2	4.32	0.37	0.09	3.90	0.51	0.13	2939	2.357e-07*

Table 4.12 – Results of the International Posture questionnaire for the Global Studies students and the Control group in both timings (T1 and T2): mean, standard deviation, and statistical analysis

In order to assess if such a difference in mean values between the two groups was statistically significant, results were plotted. Differences traced in Figure 4.18 were confirmed by the results of a Mann-Whitney test that was performed for statistical significance. In both Time 1 and Time 2, the p-value was found to be extremely lower than the significance level (p-value<0.05), indicating that students experiencing a multi-

dimensionally internationalized context reported to have higher international attitudes than their peers both at the beginning and the end of the academic year.

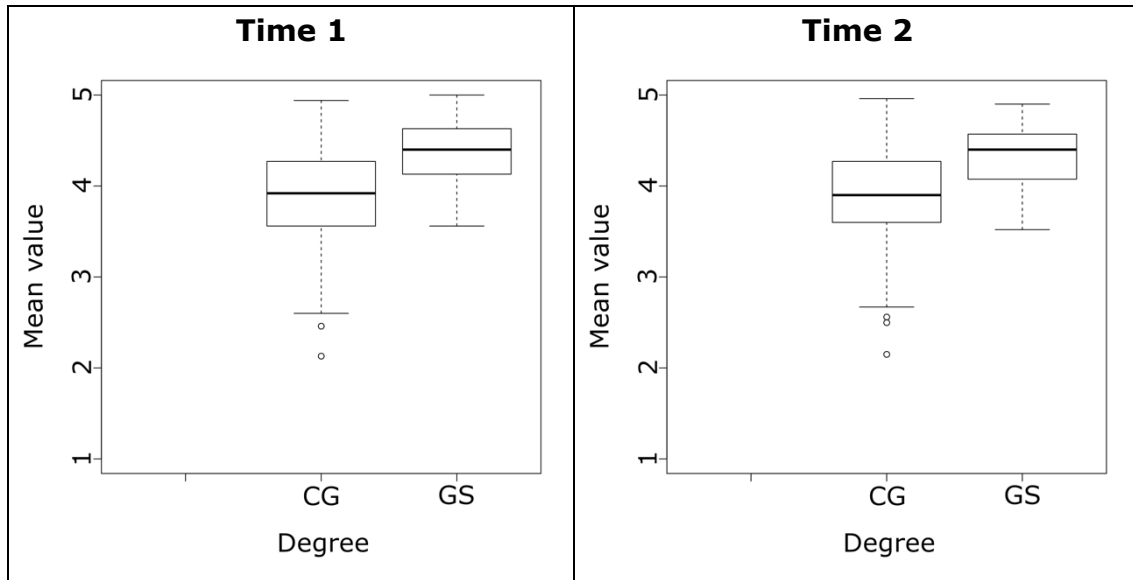


Figure 4.18 - Boxplots of International Posture for the Global Studies students (GS) and Control group (CG) in T1 and T2

In sum, in both Time 1 and Time 2, a significant difference in International Posture was found between the two groups, meaning that both at the beginning and at the end of their first year in university, Global Studies students tend to self-report a higher tendency to intergroup contact, more interest in international news and activities, and more willingness to share thoughts and ideas with the world.

4.3.2 Intercultural Sensitivity scale

The Intercultural Sensitivity scale (Chen & Starosta, 2000) had the purpose of assessing students' affective component in intercultural contact. Again, only global mean values for the two groups have been considered, as an indicator of students' engagement, confidence, enjoyment, and attentiveness in the interaction, as well as their respect of cultural difference.

Both groups of students reported having high sensitivity in intercultural interactions, with mean values all above 4 on a 5-point Likert scale (Table 4.13). However, as in the case of the International Posture questionnaire, Global Studies students scored higher than Control group participants – means of 4.32 and 4.01 in Time 1; means of 4.15 and 4.04 in Time 2. Also, standard deviation values and coefficients of variation indicate that students not experiencing the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom tended to be less consistent in their responses.

	Global Studies			Control group			Mann-Whitney	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>c.v.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>c.v.</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Time 1	4.32	0.30	0.07	4.01	0.46	0.11	6570.5	2.119e-06*
Time 2	4.15	0.38	0.09	4.04	0.46	0.11	5177	0.1276

Table 4.13 - Results of the Intercultural Sensitivity scale for the Global Studies students and the Control group in both timings (T1 and T2): mean, standard deviation, and statistical analysis

Results from Time 1 and Time 2 were plotted (Figure 4.19). In Time 1, the boxplot shows a difference between the two groups, with Global Studies participant showing higher mean values and less variability in their responses. Indeed, a Mann-Whitney test confirmed a significant difference between the two groups (p -values <0.05), pointing to a discrepancy between the two groups in students' Intercultural Sensitivity at the beginning of the academic year. On the contrary, in Time 2, the boxplot presented a different picture, not showing an evident *a priori* difference between Global Studies students and the Control Group participants. Results of the statistical test supported this assumption, displaying a p -value largely above the significance level (p -value=0.13). Thus, no significant difference was found at the end of the academic year.

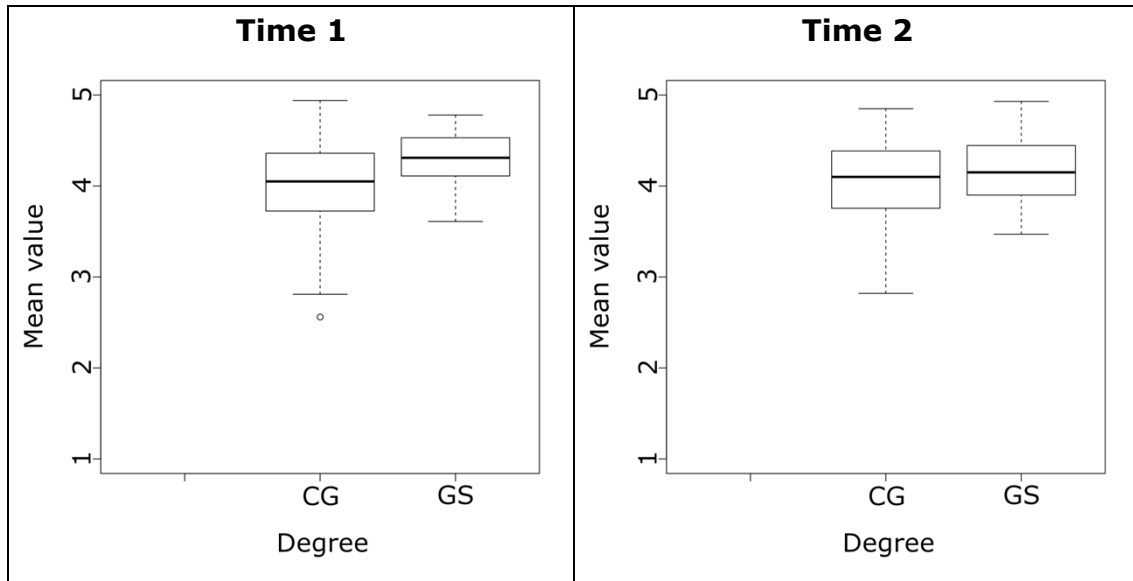


Figure 4.19 - Boxplots of Intercultural Sensitivity for the Global Studies students (GS) and Control group (CG) in T1 and T2

In summary, although at the beginning of the academic year students enrolled in the Global Studies degree reported to have a significantly higher degree of Intercultural Sensitivity than their university peers enrolled in classes with a lesser degree of internationalization, unexpectedly this difference was smoothed down during the year. Consequently, no significant difference was found in students’ engagement in intercultural interactions by the end of the academic year.

4.3.3 Global Identity scale

Finally, the Global Identity scale (Türken & Rudmin, 2013) was adopted to assess the identity affiliation of the participants in the study in a global perspective – that is, to what extent they feel belonging to the international community. Accordingly, this questionnaire was treated as a measure of students’ cultural openness, as well as their tendency to non-nationalism.

As presented in Table 4.14, the Global Identity questionnaire showed the lowest mean values for both groups of students, in both timings. Furthermore, responses exhibited more variability than in the other two questionnaires. Standard deviation was above 0.5 in all cases, pointing to very different positionings in students’ affiliation to a global

identity. Nevertheless, a difference can still be observed between the Global Studies respondents and the Control group ones. In fact, the former group scored a mean value above 4 in both timings.

	Global Studies			Control group			Mann-Whitney	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>c.v.</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>s.d.</i>	<i>c.v.</i>	<i>W</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Time 1	4.11	0.50	0.12	3.74	0.58	0.16	6903	1.042e-05*
Time 2	4.07	0.52	0.13	3.75	0.60	0.16	3865.5	0.000304*

Table 4.14 - Results of the Global Identity scale for the Global Studies students and the Control group in both timings (T1 and T2): mean, standard deviation, and statistical analysis

Indeed, boxplots (Figure 4.20) and results of Mann-Whitney test for statistical significance (Table 4.14) confirmed the tendency observed in the other two questionnaires, as a significant difference was found between the two groups at both the beginning and the end of the academic year ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$). Hence, students experiencing a multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom tended to exhibit a more global identity in both Time 1 and Time 2.

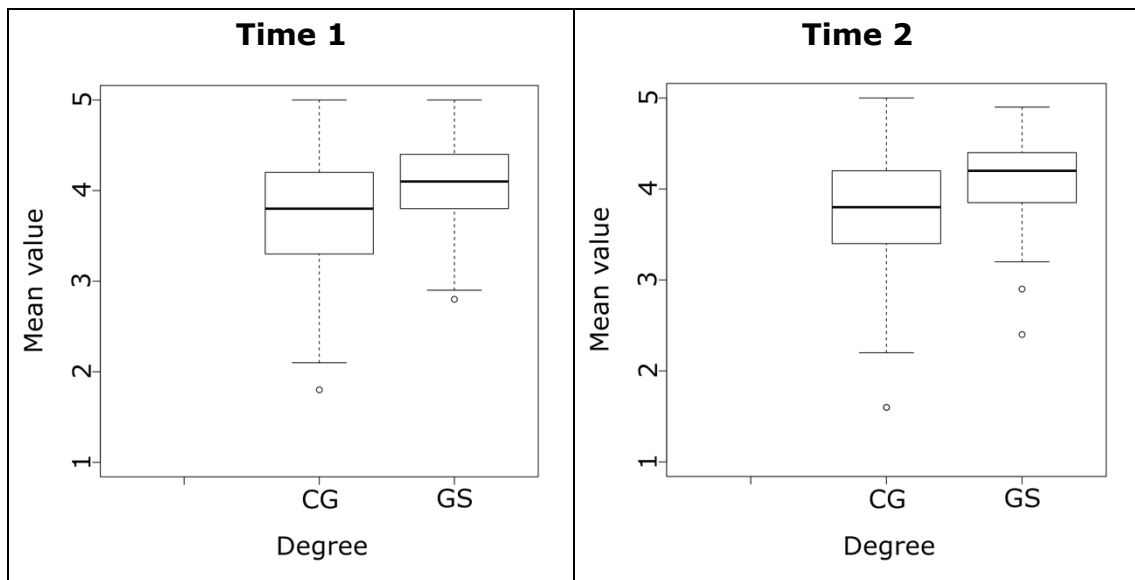


Figure 4.20 - Boxplots of Global Identity for the Global Studies students (GS) and Control group (CG) students in T1 and T2

Chapter 5 - SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THEIR IMPACT ON TRANSCULTURAL COMPETENCE IN THE MULTI-Dimensionally INTERNATIONALIZED CLASSROOM

In the previous chapter, I presented the results of the Background Information questionnaire and the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires for both the Global Studies students (Section 4.1) and the Control group participants (Section 4.2). The aim was, on the one hand, to outline the sociolinguistic profile of first-year students at UPF and, on the other hand, to assess their degree of Transcultural Competence and evaluate if, and to what extent, it increased during one academic year. Moreover, the results of the Transcultural Competence questionnaires of the two groups were statistically compared, in order to detect the impact of multi-dimensional internationalization on students' International Posture, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Global Identity (Section 4.3). In this chapter, I will explore the reasons of such a development – or lack of thereof – through the lens of the social networks built by students in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom. Thus, the focus of this chapter will be on the Global Studies students enrolled in their first year of the degree in the academic year of data collection. Data presented here will draw from both a quantitative instrument – the Contact Generator (Section 5.1) – and a qualitative one – students' semi-structured interviews (Section 5.2). In-class observation and fieldnotes will be complementary to these two instruments and will serve to confirm or reject students' self-reported experiences.

In presenting the results of the two quantitative questionnaires, I already dealt with the topic of *international friends* statistically by comparing the results of the International Posture questionnaire, the Intercultural Sensitivity scale, and the Global Identity scale with the variable of having or not having friends of such a kind (Section 4.1.5 and Section 4.2.5). In this respect, Control Group students who reported to have at least one friend “who was – or whose parents were – born in a different country” showed significantly higher values for all the three Transcultural Competence questionnaire at both the beginning and the end of the academic year. However, results of the Global Studies group presented a different picture. Students having at least one international friend at the beginning of the academic year only reported to have significantly higher Intercultural

Sensitivity than their classmates. Interestingly, for this group of students, this questionnaire was the only one experiencing a significant decrease by the end of the academic year, when all respondents had at least one international friend. Indeed, the Intercultural Sensitivity scale aimed to assess participants' engagement and enjoyment in intercultural interactions and respect for cultural differences. Relying on these results, when actual intercultural contact was in place – and students had the opportunity to interact in a multicultural and multilingual environment on a daily basis –, students' confidence and involvement in the interaction apparently decreased. Thus, the purpose of this chapter is to further investigate students' contact experiences in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom, in order to better understand such quantitative results and have an insight into students' personal trajectories.

Section 5.1 will present Global Studies students' in-class social network, as reported in the Contact Generator. Firstly, for each of the three degrees of intimacy of the relationship – studying partners, leisure partners, and intimate friends – an overview of the networks of the whole classroom will be provided, taking into account the total number of ties (i.e. relationships) and the average of nominated partners (Section 5.1.1). Secondly, the complete whole networks among the 33 respondents to the Contact Generator will be further analyzed as a sample of the whole classroom in line with several parameters accounting for network general structure (Section 5.1.2). Furthermore, these 33 students will be divided into three groups according to the context they were mainly schooled in (Methodology, Section 3.2), and the frequency of ingroup and outgroup ties will be calculated to detect homophilic or heterophilic tendencies. Lastly, the percentage of outgroup ties for each participant will be correlated with the results of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires, in order to determine if, and to what extent, intercultural interactions are linked with students' transcultural orientation – i.e. their International Posture, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Global Identity (Section 5.1.3).

Subsequently, Section 5.2 will qualitatively enquire into students' intercultural experiences in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom, as reported in the semi-structured interviews conducted with the 23 volunteering students. The interviews will be analyzed according to the five case-study groups emerged from quantitative parameters – i.e. percentage of outgroup ties formed in the classroom and general

Transcultural Competence mean value, as explained in the Methodology chapter (Section 3.7.3). The main aim will be to explore how students articulate their Transcultural Competence and whether, and to what extent, it is related to their tendency to form ingroup or outgroup relationships with their classmates. Each Section (from 5.2.1 to 5.2.5) will, thus, focus on one of the five case-study groups, looking for similarities and differences among students' patterns of behavior as regards their transcultural orientation and socialization tendencies.

5.1 Social Networks as reported by students in the Contact Generator

In order to measure and describe students' in-class interactions, case study participants were asked to complete a Contact Generator. As explained in the Methodology chapter (Section 3.4.3), the Contact Generator aimed to collect data about students' in-class social networks at three different degrees of intimacy. In essence, it had the purpose of finding out with which of their classmates, Global Studies students: (1) studied and worked on academic projects (i.e. *studying partners*; instrumental focus), (2) went out on Saturday night or to an event (i.e. *leisure partners*; functional focus), and (3) talked about personal problems or asked for advice (i.e. *intimate friends*; personal focus).

Initially, these three networks will be described and compared at a general level. This means that all the students enrolled in the first year of the degree will be considered when calculating the total number of ties and degree centrality (Section 5.1.1). However, even if the whole classroom was included in the Contact Generator, around half of the students (33 participants, accounting for the 44.6% of the whole classroom) completed it by the end of the academic year. The three networks built among these 33 students are complete whole networks, in that we have information on the ties among all respondents. Hence, they will be treated as samples of the whole classroom's Studying, Leisure, and Intimate networks and described in detail (Section 5.1.2).

Secondly, for the purpose of the present research, and following literature on intercultural interactions (e.g. de Federico de la Rúa, 2002, 2003; Baerveldt et al. 2007; Carnine, 2014,

2015; Lubbers et al., 2007), the analysis of the three networks will zoom on ingroup and outgroup ties. In this regard, students have been divided into three groups taking into account two main parameters: context of schooling and linguistic proficiency (Section 3.2). In fact, these are two key aspects in a social interactionist approach, as schools offer individuals affordances for interaction, while language proficiency is believed to be crucial for relationships to flourish and prosper. Therefore, the frequency of ingroup and outgroup ties will be calculated for each of the three networks, exploring if, and to what extent, participants showed a tendency to interact with classmates from the same group – i.e. the *homophily process*. Moreover, for each student the frequency of outgroup ties will be related with their self-reported global Transcultural Competence – i.e. the mean value of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires (Section 5.1.3).

5.1.1 Overview of the networks in the whole classroom

As just mentioned, around half of the students enrolled in their first year of the Global Studies degree completed the Contact Generator, accounting for the 44.6% of the whole classroom. This implies that information on non-respondents' ties are missing. Given that the structure of the network is especially sensitive to missing data (Huisman, 2009), the three networks cannot be visualized nor analyzed in detail. However, the whole classroom may be taken into account for some general network measurements. Indeed, when calculating the number of outdegree ties – i.e. the number of partners each respondent reported to have –, a more complete picture of in-class relationships can be obtained if we consider all the students in the degree. On the contrary, indegree values – i.e. the number of times a student has been nominated by its classmates – may not be fully reliable in this context. Nevertheless, for the purpose of the present study, I was more interested in the number of outdegree ties, as my focus is on self-reported intercultural social networks.

In Table 5.1, the total number of ties for each of the three networks – i.e. Studying, Leisure, and Intimate – is reported, as well as the mean values of degree centrality – that is, the outdegree value (i.e. number of nominated actors) and the indegree value (i.e. number of nominations).

As we may have expected, the more the relationship is intimate, the more the network is small, and the less ties students reported to have formed. Indeed, 1237 ties emerged in the Studying network, 747 in the Leisure one, and just 278 in the Intimate friends' network. Again, we should consider these numbers with caution, as they refer to the number of ties formed by half of the students in the classroom. However, this figure still shows a general tendency to build smaller networks as the relationships passes from being instrumentally driven to emotionally and personally oriented. Moreover, a similar distribution of ties may be observed in the three sample complete networks (Section 5.1.2).

	Studying network	Leisure network	Intimate network
<i>Number of total ties</i>	1237	747	278
Degree centrality			
<i>Outdegree ties</i>	37.48	22.64	8.42
<i>Indegree ties</i>	16.72	10.09	3.76

Table 5.1 - Number of ties and values of degree centrality of the Studying, Leisure, and Intimate networks in the whole classroom

As regards degree centrality, students have nominated on average 37.48 studying partners (median=36). This means that, during one academic year, each student has interacted with more than half of its classmates for studying purposes, such as doing a group task or working on an academic essay. However, the number of outdegree ties oscillates from a minimum of 2 to a maximum of 73, indicating the presence of both students who have often changed their studying partners and students who have worked with the same classmates throughout the whole year. Moreover, each participant has been nominated as studying partner by fewer classmates, 16.72 on average (median=17) – from a minimum of 5 to a maximum of 27. Nevertheless, it should be noticed that probably the outdegree value is larger than the indegree one as an effect of the missing data on non-respondents' ties.

With respect to the Leisure network, students have reported on average 22.64 partners (median=23) with whom they go out on Friday or Saturday night or to a social event; this value ranges from a minimum of 1 to a maximum of 56, pointing to high variability in

the size of students' leisure networks. Yet participants mentioned a smaller number of leisure partners than in the case of the studying network. This result is in line with the fact that, when it comes to free time, students have more freedom to choose with whom they wish to hang out, while for projects and assignments they may be grouped by instructors. As for indegree ties, each student has been nominated by 10.09 classmates on average (median=10), with values ranging from 0 to 23. Indeed, six students were not reported to be leisure partners by any of the respondents. Interestingly, none of these six students completed the Contact Generator.

Lastly, as for the Intimate network, participants nominated on average 8.42 classmates (median=9). Again, the minimum (0) and maximum (35) values show elevated variability in the size of each student's intimate network. However, just one respondent reported to have up to 35 intimate friends among their classmates, while the maximum number of intimate friends did not exceed 18 in the other cases. Three students – Ibai, Victor, and Yunus – reported not to have intimate friends in the classroom, yet one was nominated by other classmates. Furthermore, for this network, each student was selected as intimate friend by 3.76 respondents on average (minimum=0; maximum=11), and twelve students were not nominated by any of the participants.

As indegree and outdegree values are measures of actors' centrality in a network, we may consider the students who nominated or were nominated by a higher number of classmates as being more central in the classroom.

5.1.2 Three whole networks

The Contact Generator was completed by 33 students enrolled in their first year in the Global Studies degree. These students were the more consistent participants in the study, as they also completed both the Background Information questionnaire and the Transcultural Competence questionnaires in both Time 1 and Time 2. Moreover, 23 of them volunteered for holding individual interviews. I believe that this group of students represents the general population of the degree well, as it includes participants with very different sociolinguistic and educational profiles and degrees of Transcultural Competence. As a matter of fact, proportions between local and international students, as

well as males and females, are overall respected (Methodology, Section 3.2). These 33 students also showed high variability in the results of the Transcultural Competence questionnaires – i.e. minimum and maximum values for each questionnaire do not fundamentally differ from the ones of the larger group of participants (Table 5.2).

	Time 1				Time 2			
	All respondents (n=49)		Respondents to the Contact Generator (n=33)		All respondents (n=39)		Respondents to the Contact Generator (n=33)	
	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>
International Posture	3.56	5	3.56	4.92	3.52	4.90	3.52	4.90
Intercultural Sensitivity	3.61	4.78	3.61	4.78	3.47	4.93	3.47	4.93
Global Identity	2.80	5	2.80	4.80	2.40	4.90	2.40	4.90

Table 5.2 - Minimum and maximum values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires for the Global Studies students in T1 and T2: all respondents vs. respondents to the Contact Generator

Therefore, the three networks among the 33 students who completed the Contact Generator may be considered as samples of the whole classroom’s studying, leisure, and intimate patterns of interaction. As these networks are complete whole networks – i.e. we have information on the ties among all the actors –, a more in-depth analysis can be conducted, both at the level of general networks’ structure and at the actors’ individual level. Table 5.3 reports a summary of some measurements accounting for properties of networks’ structure. Before discussing these results in detail, it should be remarked that the three networks were directed, which means that an actor may have reported the existence of a tie without it been reciprocated. In other words, student A may have mentioned student B as, for instance, their leisure partner, but student B did not include student A in their Leisure network. Measurements take into account this property.

As regards the total number of ties, again, data show a tendency to form fewer ties as the intimacy of the relationship increases. In fact, students reported 594 ties for the Studying network, 390 for the Leisure one, and just 154 in the case of the Intimate friends’ network.

	Studying network	Leisure network	Intimate network
<i>Number of total ties</i>	594	390	154
<i>Av. degree centrality</i>	18	11.82	4.67
<i>Degree centralization</i>	0.466	0.538	0.51
<i>Density</i>	0.563 (s.d. 0.5)	0.369 (s.d. 0.48)	0.146 (s.d. 0.35)
<i>Connectedness</i>	1	1	0.825
<i>Closure</i>	0.74	0.602	0.462
<i>Geodesic distance</i>	1.463 (s.d. 0.55)	1.75 (0.66)	2.589 (s.d. 1.07)
<i>Dyads</i>	402	250	106
<i>Dyads reciprocity</i>	0.478	0.56	0.453

Table 5.3 - General measurements of the structure of the three complete networks

As concerns centrality measurements, in the case of a complete whole network, we may talk about *average degree centrality* without referring to in- and outdegree ties, as the total number of ties in the network is always the same. Yet, even if the two values overlap, we can notice some differences between participants' self-reported expansiveness and their other-reported popularity. Students stated to have on average 18 studying partners, 11.82 leisure partners, and 4.67 intimate friends. However, in all the three cases the number of partners nominated by the students (i.e. outdegree ties) showed higher variability than the number of times each student was nominated (i.e. indegree ties). In fact, as concerns the Studying network, participants reported to have from a minimum of 1 partner to a maximum of 32 (median=18), whilst they were nominated by a minimum of 14 to a maximum of 25 of their classmates (median=17). The Leisure network presents a similar picture: respondents nominated between 1 and 28 leisure partners (median=12), but they were mentioned between 1 and 20 times (median=13). Finally, participants reported to have from 0 to 20 intimate friends in the classroom (median=4); however, each student was only nominated by maximum 10 of their classmates (median=5). These data may result from two different factors. On the one hand, the Contact Generator was a self-report instrument, and students may understand and interpret slightly differently what a "partner" or a "friend" is. On the other hand, these networks include only half of the number of total students enrolled in the Global Studies degree, while data on the ties formed by the other half of the classroom are missing.

Nevertheless, degree centralization shows that in all the three networks there are some students that are more central than others. The degree centralization value is equal to 0

when all actors are equally central, while a higher value means that one, or several, actor(s) are the most central in the network – i.e. they form ties with all the actors in the network, while the others do not form ties among them. In this respect, the three networks show a similar pattern since the degree centralization value is comparable, with around half of participants in a central position and the other half in a peripheral one. If we look at the visualization of the three networks (Figure 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3), we may see the most central students as the ones represented in the middle of the sociographs.

As the three networks are complete, another measurement of centrality could be calculated at student level: *betweenness centrality* – i.e. the number of paths that pass across a node to connect other nodes (Freeman, 1979). However, such a measure falls beyond the scope of the present study and, thus, its analysis will be left for future research.

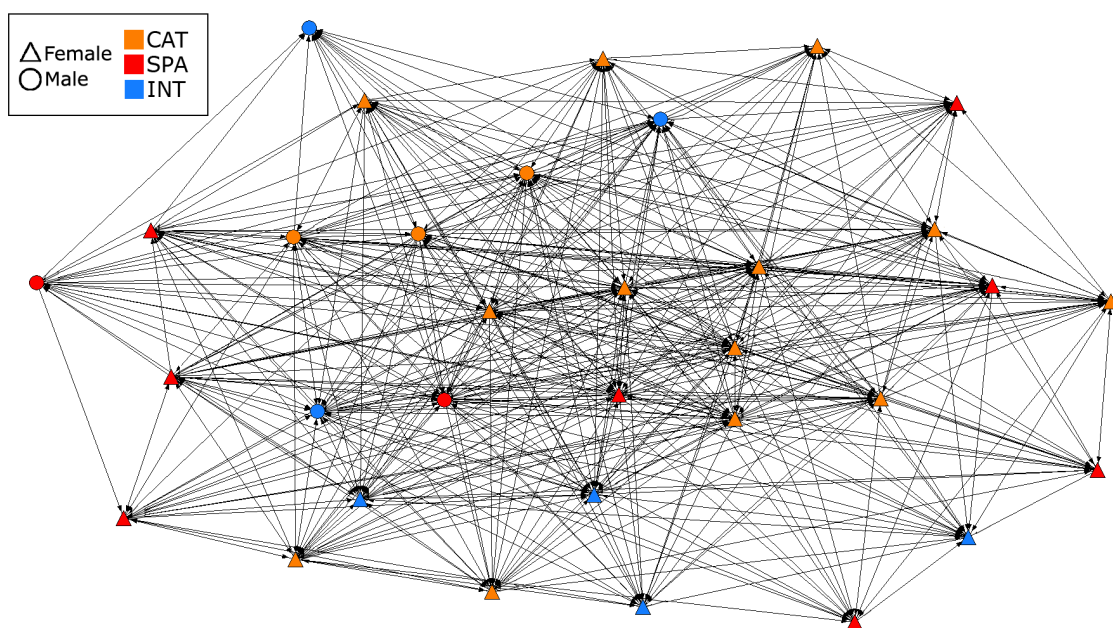


Figure 5.1 - Visualization of the Studying network among the 33 respondents to the Contact Generator

The tendency to form fewer ties as the intimacy of the relationship increases is further illustrated by another measure accounting for network cohesion and that can be easily visualized by means of sociographs (Figure 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3): *density*. Density is calculated as the number of actual links divided by the number of all possible links; it

ranges from 0 – total absence of ties – to 1 – all possible ties among the actors are formed. As we may have expected, the Studying network emerged as being the most dense (0.563; s.d.=0.5), followed by the Leisure network (0.369; s.d.=0.48), and, finally, by the Intimate one (0.146; s.d.=35).

Moreover, the measurements of *connectedness*, *closure*, and *geodesic distance* account for the flow of circulation of information. Specifically, connectedness indicates “the proportion of pairs of nodes that are located in the same component” (Borgatti et al., 2013), where components are sub-portions of the network disconnected from each other. In the case of both the Studying and the Leisure networks, there is just one component, as all students are connected (connectedness=1). On the contrary, in the Intimate network, the value of 0.825 points to the existence of an isolated node, Victor, who did not nominate nor was nominated by any of his classmates.

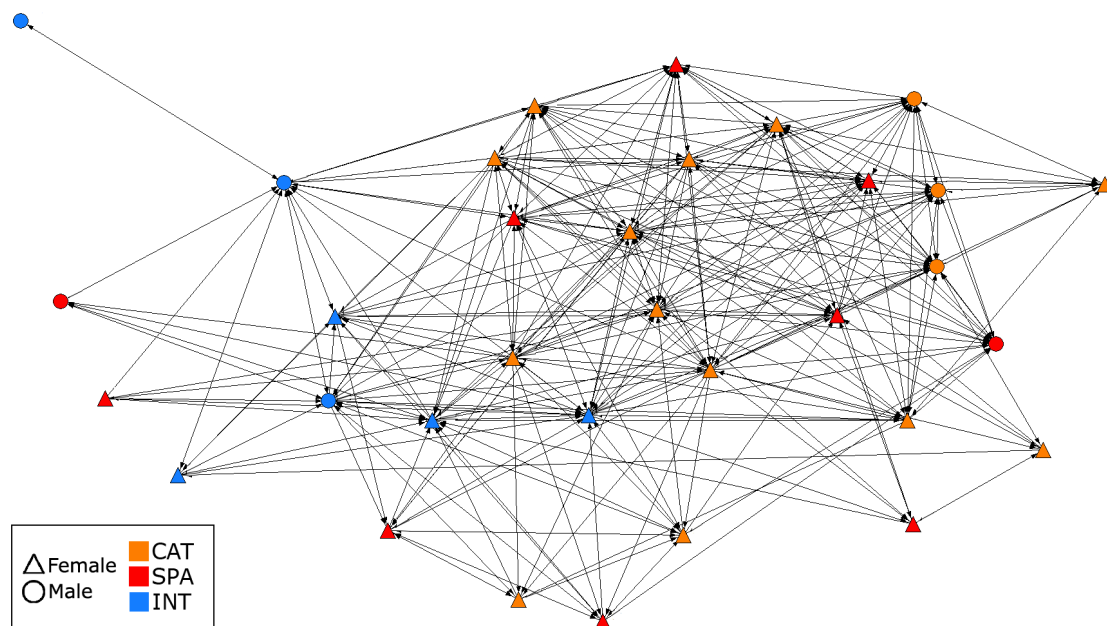


Figure 5.2 - Visualization of the Leisure network among the 33 respondents to the Contact Generator

However, closure suggests that the internal structure of the component(s) of the three networks is not identical. Closure can be interpreted as transitivity among actors’ ties. In other words, if student A is connected to student B and B is connected to student C, we

will have closure if also A and C are connected (Borgatti et al., 2013). Here, the tendency to *triadic closure* is large in the Studying network (0.74), moderate in the Leisure one (0.60), and relatively small in the Intimate network (0.46). This means that, the more the relationship is intimate, the more students will form ties having an individual nature rather than a group one.

Also, geodesic distance provides information on the speed of circulation of information. It may be defined as the length of the path between two nodes – that is, the number of ties that have to be crossed by actor A to be connected to actor B. Unsurprisingly, in our networks, geodesic distance increases according to the degree of intimacy. Specifically, in the Studying network, a piece of information will have to cross just 1.5 ties to arrive to another actor and in the Leisure one 1.75 ties, while in the Intimate network it will have to cross 2.6 ties. Such a result indicates that information will circulate at nearly half of the speed among close friend than studying partners.

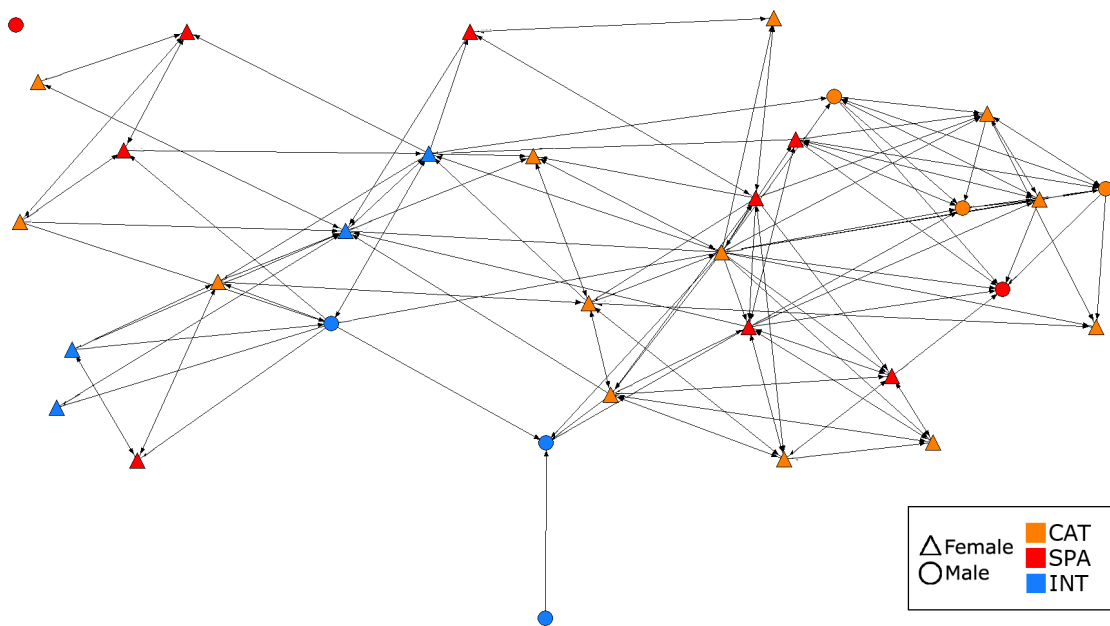


Figure 5.3 - Visualization of the Intimate network among the 33 respondents to the Contact Generator

Finally, the number of *dyads* - i.e. couples of connected nodes – was calculated; 402 dyads emerged in the Studying network, 250 in the Leisure networks, and 106 in the

Intimate one. As the three networks were directed, *dyads reciprocity* was also taken into account and around 50% of the ties were reciprocated. These results point to high inconsistency between self-reported partners and other's nominations. However, direction of ties was not further taken into account in the analysis as it falls beyond the scope of the present research. Thus, for subsequent analyses, two students were considered partners or friends even if just one of them reported the existence of the relationship – that is, the self-reported network was considered as the student's network.

In sum, at a general structural level, data show that the more the relationship is intimate, the fewer partners students will nominate and, thus, the network will be smaller and less dense. Accordingly, relationships will have a more individual focus and the speed of circulation of information will be slower. Also, the analyses reveal that there are some students that are more central than others.

5.1.3 Ingroup and outgroup friendships and their impact on Transcultural Competence

In order to further explore students' tendency to ingroup or outgroup ties, as well as its link with students' degree of Transcultural Competence, the 33 participants who completed the Contact Generator were divided into three groups: Catalans (CAT), Spaniards (SPA), and Internationals (INT). As explained in Methodology (Section 3.2), this division takes into account two crucial aspects in a social interactionist approach, namely the students' context of schooling and their linguistic proficiency. Indeed, schools may be considered as primary sites for interaction and socialization, allowing for friendships to be formed. Similarly, command of a language is crucial for such friendships to further develop.

Firstly, the frequency of ingroup and outgroup ties for each of the three networks was calculated by means of the *E-I function* in Ucinet. As shown in Table 5.4, outgroup ties account for 58% of all ties in the Studying network. This percentage decreases to 51.2% in the Leisure network and even more in the case of the Intimate one (48.1%). Thus, while students tend to diversify their partners for academic purposes, there seems to be a slight

tendency to form closer relationships with classmates perceived to be from the same group.

	<i>Ingroup ties</i>	<i>Outgroup ties</i>
Studying network	42%	58%
Leisure network	48.8%	51.2%
Intimate network	51.9%	48.1%

Table 5.4 - Percentage of ingroup and outgroup ties for the Studying, Leisure, and Intimate networks

Hence, to verify if, and to what extent, such a tendency was significant, network homophily was calculated. Homophily refers precisely to the tendency of forming ties with actors from the same group (i.e. sharing an attribute), and it can be expressed by the *E-I index*; the index ranges from -1, pointing to high homophily, to +1, meaning that all ties are external. Results of the E-I index for each of the three networks are presented in Table 5.5.

	<i>E-I index</i>	<i>Rescaled E-I index</i>	<i>p-value</i>
Studying network	0.159	-0.302	0.187
Leisure network	0.024	-0.146	0.007*
Intimate network	-0.038	-0.038	0.024*

Table 5.5 - Homophily: E-I index, rescaled E-I index, and p-value for the Studying, Leisure, and Intimate networks

As concerns the studying network, the E-I index seems to indicate slight heterophily (0.159). However, when rescaled – i.e. adjusted to the -1/+1 range –, the index suggests an entirely different picture pointing to homophily (-0.302). Nonetheless, as the p-value is above the significance level, we can affirm that there is no significant tendency to select studying partners among classmates from the same group.

On the contrary, in both the Leisure and Intimate networks, the tendency to form homophilic relationships resulted to be significant. Although in the Leisure network the E-I index is close to 0, hinting to no process in place, the rescaled index (-0.146) indicates

a tendency to homophily, proved to be highly statistically significant by the p-value ($p\text{-value} < 0.01$). As for the Intimate network, a slight tendency to homophilic ties is shown by both the E-I index and the rescaled one (-0.038) and confirmed to be significant by the p-value ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$). Thus, students display a tendency to form relationships having an instrumental and personal focus with classmates perceived to belong to their same group.

Also, it is possible to detect specific tendencies at both group and individual level, as shown by Table 5.6 in which each color stands for one of the three groups of students. For instance, Catalans – CAT, in orange – display a high tendency to ingroup ties in all their networks, while Spaniards – SPA, in red – situate at the bottom of the tables, as they reported having more outgroup partners than ingroup in all the three networks under analysis. Instead, Internationals – INT, in blue – exhibit a more variable behavior, with two of them always at the top of the list – i.e. who only reported ingroup ties – and several others displaying a tendency to form more ingroup or outgroup ties depending on the degree of intimacy of the relationship.

Furthermore, as the present research aims to investigate the impact of in-class intercultural interactions on students' transcultural orientation, these results – obtained by means of the Contact Generator – were correlated with participant self-reported Transcultural Competence. For each of the three networks, the percentage of outgroup ties was calculated at a student level. Hence, regression analysis was performed with the mean values of each of the three questionnaires – International Posture, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Global Identity – both at the beginning and the end of the academic year.

It should be noted that the percentage of outgroup ties reflect the composition of students' networks at the end of the academic year since the Contact Generator was administered at that time (Section 3.4.3). Accordingly, correlating this value with the mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires in T1 – i.e. at the beginning of the academic year – is different from correlating it with the results obtained in T2. Indeed, in the former case, we are investigating the predisposition of students to form outgroup ties relying on their initial transcultural orientation – in essence, we are trying to answer the question: if a student displays high degree of Transcultural Competence at the beginning

Studying Network			
Student	Group	Ingroup	Outgroup
Tamar	INT	100%	-
Abdoul	INT	100%	-
Maribel	CAT	66.7%	33.3%
Judith	CAT	62.5%	37.5%
Jofre	CAT	57.1%	42.9%
Leah	INT	57.1%	42.9%
Antonio	CAT	56.7%	43.3%
Alicia	CAT	56.7%	43.3%
Beatriu	CAT	56.3%	43.7%
Rosa	CAT	56.3%	43.7%
Marina	CAT	55.6%	44.4%
Eva	CAT	50%	50%
Yanhong	CAT	45.5%	54.5%
João	INT	31.3%	68.7%
Daisy	INT	23.8%	76.2%
Yunus	INT	22.2%	77.8%
Marta	SPA	19.4%	80.6%
Laura	SPA	18.7%	81.3%
Ibai	SPA	15%	85%
Victor	SPA	14.3%	85.7%
Sara	SPA	11.1%	88.9%
Myung	INT	-	100%
Alba	SPA	-	100%

Leisure Network			
Student	Group	Ingroup	Outgroup
Tamar	INT	100%	-
Abdoul	INT	100%	-
Leah	INT	71.4%	28.6%
Maribel	CAT	66.7%	33.3%
Jofre	CAT	66.7%	33.3%
Antonio	CAT	66.7%	33.3%
Marina	CAT	66.7%	33.3%
Yanhong	CAT	62.5%	37.5%
Beatriu	CAT	60.7%	39.3%
Alicia	CAT	55%	45%
Eva	CAT	52.6%	47.4%
Rosa	CAT	50%	50%
Yunus	INT	50%	50%
Myung	INT	42.9%	57.1%
João	INT	35.7%	64.3%
Daisy	INT	27.8%	72.2%
Ibai	SPA	25%	75%
Sara	SPA	23.1%	76.9%
Laura	SPA	20%	80%
Marta	SPA	15%	85%
Judith	CAT	-	100%
Victor	SPA	-	100%
Alba	SPA	-	100%

Intimate Network			
Student	Group	Ingroup	Outgroup
Tamar	INT	100%	-
Abdoul	INT	100%	-
Leah	INT	75%	25%
Antonio	CAT	71.4%	28.6%
Jofre	CAT	66.7%	33.3%
Yanhong	CAT	66.7%	33.3%
Eva	CAT	66.7%	33.3%
Beatriu	CAT	60%	40%
Maribel	CAT	50%	50%
Marina	CAT	50%	50%
Alicia	CAT	50%	50%
Rosa	CAT	50%	50%
Myung	INT	50%	50%
João	INT	50%	50%
Judith	CAT	50%	50%
Sara	SPA	40%	60%
Marta	SPA	30%	70%
Daisy	INT	28.6%	71.4%
Laura	SPA	25%	75%
Alba	SPA	-	100%
Yunus	INT	-	-
Ibai	SPA	-	-
Victor	SPA	-	-

Table 5.6 -
Percentage of ingroup and outgroup ties for each interviewed student, with a distinct color for each group; sorted by decreasing ingroup and increasing outgroup ties

■ CAT
■ SPA
■ INT

of the academic year, will they form more outgroup relationships? On the other hand, when correlating the percentage of outgroup ties with the mean values scored by students at the end of the academic year, we are focusing on the question: are students with higher percentage of outgroup relationships in their networks also the ones displaying higher degree of Transcultural Competence?

Table 5.7, 5.8, and 5.9 summarize the results of the regression analysis performed between the percentage of outgroup ties of each student and the mean value of each of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires collected in Time 1.

As regards the Studying network (Table 5.7), data show a negative correlation between the percentage of outgroup’s studying partners students have in their network and the mean values of the three questionnaires. Nevertheless, none of these correlations is significant ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$). Thus, students who self-reported a high degree of Transcultural Competence at the beginning of the academic year – in the three dimensions of the construct – do not show a tendency to select more outgroup classmates as studying partner during the academic year.

	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>t value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
International Posture	-0.002325	0.002345	-0.991	0.329
Intercultural Sensitivity	-0.001742	0.002337	-0.745	0.462
Global Identity	-0.000507	0.003523	-0.144	0.887

Table 5.7 - Studying network in T1: Regression analysis between percentage of outgroup ties and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires

As for the Leisure network (Table 5.8), again, students’ initial Intercultural Sensitivity is negatively correlated with the percentage of outgroup leisure partners they have in their networks. On the contrary, both students’ international attitudes – i.e. International Posture questionnaire – and global identity affiliation – i.e. Global Identity questionnaire – are positively correlated. However, none of these correlations resulted to be significant ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$).

	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>t value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
International Posture	0.0002159	0.0022008	0.098	0.922
Intercultural Sensitivity	-0.0007575	0.0021748	-0.348	0.73
Global Identity	0.0005427	0.0032552	0.167	0.869

Table 5.8 - Leisure network in T1: Regression analysis between percentage of outgroup ties and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires

Lastly, for what concerns the Intimate network (Table 5.9), the mean values of all the three questionnaires proved to be positively correlated with students' percentage of outgroup intimate friends. Although the p-value is above the significance level in all the three cases, we may notice a decrease of these values when comparing these results with the ones of the two previous networks. Also, for the Global Identity questionnaire, the p-value is marginally significant (p-value=0.1).

	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>t value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
International Posture	0.002089	0.001971	1.06	0.297
Intercultural Sensitivity	0.002327	0.001941	1.199	0.24
Global Identity	0.004776	0.002841	1.681	0.103

Table 5.9 - Intimate network in T1: Regression analysis between percentage of outgroup ties and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires

Indeed, as can be seen in Figure 5.4, the regression line is pointing upward in all the three graphs, and even quite notably in the case of the Global Identity questionnaire. Hence, students reporting more interest in international news and affairs, overall involvement in intercultural interactions, cultural openness, and a more global identity affiliation at the beginning of the year may tend to form more intimate friendships with classmates not belonging to their same group.

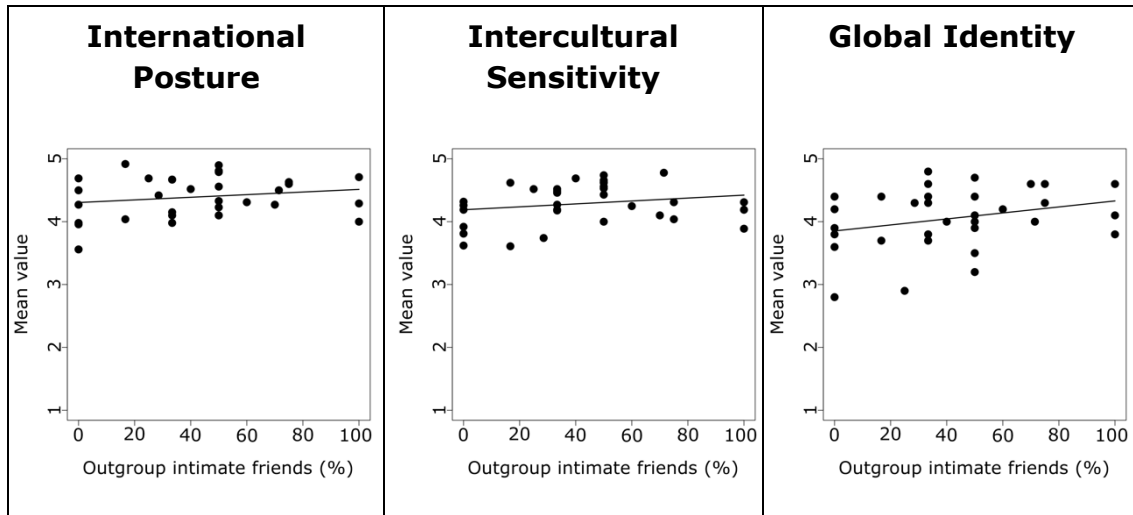


Figure 5.4 - Intimate network in T1: Regression analysis between percentage of outgroup ties and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires

Now, if we take into account the results of the Transcultural Competence questionnaires collected by the end of the academic year (T2), we may appreciate some changes in the correlation between students' final Transcultural Competence and the outgroup ties they formed throughout the year. As for the Studying network (Table 5.10), again, no significant correlation was found ($p\text{-value} > 0.05$). Accordingly, studying with members of the outgroup is not associated with students' larger interest in global affairs and news, nor with more openness to cultural differences and engagement in the intercultural interaction.

	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>t value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
International Posture	-0.002317	0.002712	-0.854	0.4
Intercultural Sensitivity	-9.857e-05	2.761e-03	-0.036	0.972
Global Identity	0.001374	0.003833	0.359	0.722

Table 5.10 - Studying network in T2: Regression analysis between percentage of outgroup ties and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires

In the Leisure network (Table 5.11), the mean values of all the three questionnaires proved to be positively correlated with students' percentage of outgroup ties, suggesting that the more students have outgroup leisure partners, the more they will feel engaged,

confident, and attentive in the interaction, as well as displaying a more global identity. However, none of these correlations resulted to be significant.

	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>t value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
International Posture	0.0009899	0.0025294	0.391	0.698
Intercultural Sensitivity	0.002565	0.002509	1.022	0.315
Global Identity	0.004924	0.003437	1.433	0.162

Table 5.11 - Leisure network in T2: Regression analysis between percentage of outgroup ties and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires

Finally, for what concerns the Intimate network (Table 5.12), again the percentage of outgroup friends in each students' network is positively correlated with their degree of Transcultural Competence – i.e. the mean values of the three questionnaires. Moreover, in the cases of the Intercultural Sensitivity and the Global Identity questionnaires, the correlation proved to be highly statistically significant ($p\text{-value} < 0.05$). These results show that the more students have formed intimate friendships with classmates from the outgroup throughout the academic year, the more they will display confidence, attentiveness, and enjoyment in the interaction, respect of cultural differences, non-nationalism, and a global identity affiliation.

	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>Std. Error</i>	<i>t value</i>	<i>p-value</i>
International Posture	0.003162	0.002240	1.412	0.168
Intercultural Sensitivity	0.005218	0.002128	2.452	0.02*
Global Identity	0.009166	0.002785	3.292	0.00249*

Table 5.12 - Intimate network in T2: Regression analysis between percentage of outgroup ties and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires

The three regression graphs in Figure 5.5 further illustrate these positive correlations. As we can see, the regression line is pointing upward and, even though there is the presence of some outliers, the majority of the students distribute around the line. Moreover, if we compare these three graphs (Figure 5.5) with the ones in Figure 5.4, referring to students' degree of Transcultural Competence self-reported at the beginning of the academic year

(T1), some differences may be noted. Indeed, for all the three questionnaires, the regression line is much flatter in Time 1 than in Time 2.

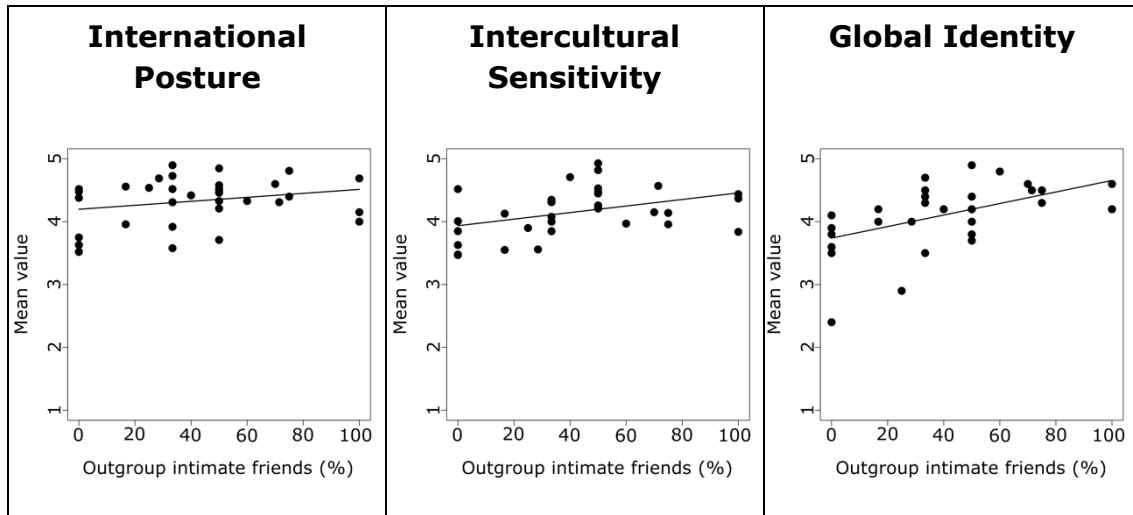


Figure 5.5 - Intimate network in T2: Regression analysis between percentage of outgroup ties and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires

In sum, for both the Studying network and the Leisure network, in both T1 and T2, there is no significant correlation between the percentage of outgroup ties in each student's network and the mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires. On the other hand, for the Intimate network, a positive correlation was found in both timings. Moreover, by the end of the academic year (T2), this correlation proved to be statistically significant in the case of the Intercultural Sensitivity questionnaire and the Global Identity one. The International Posture questionnaire – accounting for students' international attitudes – emerged as the less correlated with students' networks composition, while the Global Identity one – investigating students' affiliation to a cosmopolitan identity – as the most. Interestingly, for all the three networks a difference may be appreciated between T1 and T2. This means that students with higher self-reported Transcultural Competence at the beginning of the academic year do not show a tendency to form more outgroup ties. However, by the end of the year, students who formed more intimate relationships with outgroup classmates are the ones displaying a higher of Transcultural Competence.

In conclusion, even if there is a tendency to form closer relationships with classmates from the same group, the more a student's Intimate network is diversified at the end of the year, the more they will tend to exhibit openness and enjoyment in the interaction, respect for cultural differences, and a global identity affiliation. On the contrary, initial degree of Transcultural Competence is not a reliable indicator of students' predisposition to form outgroup relationships throughout the academic year. These quantitative results will be further investigated in the following section, exploring students' personal experiences in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom as reported in the semi-structured interviews.

5.2 Transcultural Competence and trajectories of ingroup/outgroup ties as reported in students' interviews: Five patterns

This section will focus on the qualitative results of the present research, reporting data from the semi-structured interviews that were conducted with the 23 volunteering students of the bachelor's degree in Global Studies. The main aim here is to find an explanation for the results of the quantitative analysis described in the previous sections (Section 4.1.2 to 4.1.5 and Section 5.1) by means of a thematic qualitative analysis of students' personal trajectories in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom. Therefore, the focus will be on students' intercultural interactions in the classroom, as well as on their self-reported transcultural orientation. In essence, in this section, I will explore how students articulate their Transcultural Competence and if, and to what extent, it is influenced by their tendency to form ingroup or outgroup relationships with their classmates or what other aspects should be taken into account.

The analysis of the interviews will take a case-study form. At this respect, the 23 interviewed students were divided into five case-study groups according to two quantitative parameters emerged from previous analyses, as explained in the Methodology chapter (Section 3.7.3):

- (1) *Percentage of ingroup and outgroup ties in each student's network*, as the mean among the percentage of ties in each of the three networks. Students presenting more than 50% of outgroup ties have been considered as having an *outgroup tendency*; on the contrary, a percentage under 50% was considered as an *ingroup tendency*. It has to be noted that only the ties among the 33 respondents to the Contact Generator were taken into account, as no data on the ties of the students who did not answer to it were available and percentages would not have been accurate.
- (2) *Transcultural Competence global value*, understood as the mean value of the three questionnaires (i.e. IP, IS, and GI), calculated in both T1 and T2. In this case, as all students self-reported from a high to a very high degree of Transcultural Competence (mean value above 4 on a 5-points Likert-type scale; Section 4.1), the mean value of the whole group was set as threshold to divide students into two groups: the ones presenting a Transcultural Competence value above the classroom mean value and the ones presenting a lower value. In T1, the mean value was 4.23; in T2, 4.20.

The intersection of these two parameters lead to the emergence of five different groups consisting of two to seven students:

- (1) Students presenting a global Transcultural Competence above the classroom's mean value and a tendency to form outgroup ties (n=7).
- (2) Students presenting a global Transcultural Competence above the classroom's mean value and a tendency to form ingroup ties (n=5).
- (3) Students presenting a global Transcultural Competence under the classroom's mean value and a tendency to form ingroup ties (n=5).
- (4) Students presenting a global Transcultural Competence under the classroom's mean value and a tendency to form outgroup ties (n=4).
- (5) Students who formed only ingroup ties (n=2).

Consequently, each of the next sections (from 5.2.1 to 5.2.5) will explore one of these five case-study groups, looking for similarities and differences among students as regards their transcultural orientation and in-class socialization tendencies. Moreover, Appendix C includes a list of the 23 interviewed students, reporting the mean values for each of the

three Transcultural Competence questionnaires, as well as the global Transcultural Competence value, in T1 and T2, and the percentage of outgroup and ingroup ties in each student's Studying, Leisure and Intimate in-class networks.

5.2.1 Students with Transcultural Competence above the mean value and with tendency to outgroup ties

“I feel that Global Studies really teaches that... teaches
how to improve yourself towards people”
João

The first group that emerged from the data is formed by seven students – Laura, Marta, Sara, Daisy, Myung, João, and Judith – who presented a global Transcultural Competence value above the classroom's mean value at both the beginning and the end of the academic year and a tendency to form ties with classmates from the outgroup (group mean=71.2%), as reported in Table 5.13. At a general group-level, we may observe a tendency to increase the questionnaires' mean values from T1 to T2; indeed, the group's Transcultural Competence mean value at the beginning of the academic year was 4.32, and it increased to 4.41 by the end of the same year.

However, at a closer look, several differences may be noted among these students, and two students reported a decrease in Transcultural Competence. In fact, Myung presented a value under the threshold in T2 (i.e. 4.15) but was grouped here because she fits in all the other parameters and, most importantly, shares ideas and views with the other classmates in this group. On the other hand, Laura presented a very high transcultural orientation in both timings; however, she experienced the major decrease (from 4.41 in T1 to 4.28 in T2) and may be considered an exception in the group, presenting individual specificities as we will see.

Except for one student, this group is formed by students who were schooled outside of Catalonia, either in other Autonomous Communities in Spain or in a foreign country. Interestingly, Judith – the only Catalan student in the group – is the one presenting the major increase in Transcultural Competence, from 4.34 in T1 to 4.73 in T2. Such an increase may be explained by the way she relates with both the classroom environment

and her classmates. Indeed, in the interview, she stated that she is experiencing the degree “as an international experience” and refers to her classmates as “very open-minded since they have lived in a lot of places”. Moreover, Judith formed the closest relationships with classmates coming from abroad, explaining: “I get along better with internationals [...] I really like, like getting along with people from abroad since I think it’s like a very good opportunity to know people from all over the world”. As a matter of fact, previous regression analysis suggested a positive significant correlation between students’ Transcultural Competence mean values and percentage of outgroup ties in the intimate network (Section 5.1.3). Consequently, Judith’s experience is emblematic and illustrative of several of her classmates, as it confirms and reinforces these results.

Student	Group	TC global value in T1	TC global value in T2	Percentage of ingroup ties (mean of the three networks)	Percentage of outgroup ties (mean of the three networks)
Judith	CAT	4.34	4.73	37.5%	62.5%
Sara	SPA	4.25	4.37	24.7%	75.3%
Laura	SPA	4.41	4.28	21.2%	78.8%
Marta	SPA	4.32	4.45	21.4%	78.6%
João	INT	4.25	4.42	39%	61%
Daisy	INT	4.43	4.46	26.7%	73.3%
Myung	INT	4.26	4.15	30.9%	69.1%
<i>Mean value</i>		<i>4.32</i>	<i>4.41</i>	<i>28.8%</i>	<i>71.2%</i>

Table 5.13 - Interviewed students presenting a Transcultural Competence global value above the classroom mean value and a tendency to form outgroup ties

Apart from Judith’s specificity, all students in this group – including herself – share three main characteristics:

- (1) in their narratives, there was the recurring idea of learning from classmates and people with different backgrounds, with emphasis on concepts such as “understanding”, “cooperation”, and “communication”;
- (2) they exhibit a *glocal* identity – i.e. a sense of belonging to the local, perceived as the small community they grew up into, such as the city or the island, as well as a more broad, global perspective; and

- (3) they recognize the existence of cultural and individual differences and perceive the classroom as divided into groups. In fact, several students pointed to a strong Catalan-speaking one.

These three main aspects may explain why students in this group present a Transcultural Competence above the classroom's mean value, as well as a tendency to form outgroup ties. Indeed, even though they identify themselves with the local community they were raised up into, they do not limit their identity ascription and may relate with a more global community. Equally, they perceive the classmates as distinct people offering affordances, and they are willing to interact with them in order to understand different points of view and learn from them. In the subsections below, I will explore each of the three above-mentioned major themes that emerged in the narratives of this group of students by analyzing extracts from the interviews held with students in this group.

- *Social interactions and classmates as affordances*

All the students in this group expressed their happiness with the degree and the in-class environment, from both the academic point of view and, especially, the social one. As Marta explains, the “social aspect” is what makes the Global Studies degree “special”, a belief that is not just hers, but also shared by other students and professors:

“I’m really happy with the degree, I’m really happy with the people; this is something that I’ve been hearing a lot from the professors and from the students... other students, saying “yeah, the people are the thing that makes Global Studies special”, and I don’t know how true that is but I think that I’m... that all of us have a lot of things in common, we... I don’t know, I think that we really get along quite well, you can’t get along with everyone at the same level but I mean, you can talk to everyone, everyone is super nice, and I really enjoy that, like from the more social aspect [...]” (Extract 1, Marta)

Specifically, these students enjoy the degree as it offers the possibility to interact or – as João believes – “connect... interconnect with people worldwide, not only from here”. Thus, the added value to the contents and topics of the courses is given by the presence of people with diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, who contribute to the learning

experience as a whole, as Myung perfectly explains: “I feel like I’m learning something, not just from the courses but like from other people too”.

Hence, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom becomes – in Judith’s words – a “very enriching” experience. On the one hand, it is the ideal space in which Judith and her classmates can “learn a lot of things we haven’t learned before”; on the other hand, this environment allows them to “discuss it with like classmates, and because they are from all over the world, we have very different views, or opinions on that, and we share that”. It is precisely the possibility to face different points of view and perspectives, as well as discussing them, that these students enjoy the most. Along the lines of Judith, Sara believes that “it’s really important to have so many people from abroad, it just makes it a lot more... better”. Again, the presence of both students and teachers with diverse backgrounds, each one with its own thoughts and ideas, permits for a more comprehensive experience, “because at the end of the day that’s what gives you more knowledge, not just knowing about one perspective”. At the same time, as each topic may be approached from a plurality of points of view, students like João feel allowed to contribute with their own localized perspective: “I can bring my experience as a Brazilian” into the classroom.

As already conveyed in Marta’s quote, thanks to in-class interaction and discussion, these students realize that – in contemporary society – they have more in common with their classmates than they would think, regardless of their cultural and linguistic backgrounds:

“Maybe I believe that, at the end of the day, in the world, we all have the same type of problems and... we just think how we think because what has been taught to us but, like... I think we [have] more in common that we think, and basically the problems are in the world right now, as it explains Global Studies, basically effect everyone and it cannot be solved by country, or one continent, has to be everyone [...].” (Extract 2, Sara)

Here, Sara is suggesting that one’s own perspective and way of thinking are a result of the environment one grew up into, an idea also shared by several of her classmates, such as Laura, Daisy, João, Judith, and Myung. Indeed, Laura explains that when interacting with some of her “classmates from middle-east”, she may disagree with their point of

view but “then I think if I was born there I would probably think the same as him or her”. Yet, while believing that one’s own perspective is strongly related with the culture it was raised in, Laura goes on to say “it’s just culture and it’s just cultural shocks that we have to understand and we have to... *tener empatia*... have empathy, to really get to know each other and to stop having so many conflicts that could be avoided so easily”.

As we see, both Sara and Laura acknowledge the existence of cultural and individual differences. In Judith’s words, everyone is “unique and different in their own way”, a view shared by all the students in this group. Nevertheless, they believe that, given that in the globalized world we have to face the same problems and issues, there is a need for understanding others’ point of view. Indeed, Marta expresses the desire “to cooperate with other people and understand other people” because “we’re like under the same umbrella”.

In these students’ view, the key for overcoming conflicts is by building understanding among people, in order to recognize that – quoting Sara – “there’s no barrier between you and another person from another culture [...] yeah, I don’t think there’s any type of barrier between me and a person from Pamplona, and also from a person in China”. Thus, the development of transcultural competences and, specifically, intercultural sensitivity would smooth down – or even abolish – cultural barriers.

Interestingly, Sara also believes that to build understanding and to cooperate there is no need to travel: “you can be in Barcelona and meeting people from other cultures, you don’t have to move”. What is crucial is to “not being just like... superficially asking about things, like ‘oh you don’t eat pork or whatever’, but just trying to understand actually where the differences come from”. Accordingly, in order to have meaningful interactions and truly understand differences, João – like all his classmates – believes that an international, shared language is necessary:

“[...] I think we need, at least, a global language – we are living on this, now geography doesn’t matter right and it’s all a matter of technology, so... we need a global language, we’re all interconnected.” (Extract 3, João)

Thus, even though “language is an issue” – as João remarks – and – in Marta’s opinion – “language is related to culture” and we have a meaningful “emotional link” with our first language, a common language would make communication among people “really easier”. Otherwise, language may become a barrier to the ultimate aim of building understanding.

Consequently, as in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom students share a common language – i.e. English –, it becomes the ideal context in which to learn from classmates or reconsider one’s own point of view. Judith, for instance, had the opportunity to confront with first-hand experiences of other cultures, and learn that she “really do[es]n’t know anything about their countries” since she has not “been there and like we have a lot of stereotypes about them that aren’t true”. Similarly, Daisy believes that “just like exposition [sic], hearing about what people have to say where they come from” gave her the possibility to learn “a lot about other people’s cultures”, which she considers to be the first step to build more intimate relationships: “that makes you closer to them if you understand more where they come from”.

Moreover, apart from “learning about what happened and what is happening in other places of the world”, Sara also thinks that, after one year in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom, she “might be able to better understand how to... ask things about cultures for example, or how just think about the different cultures”. Her words show an increased awareness on how to behave transculturally competently, suggesting a remarkably shift: the point is not just learning contents and facts about other cultures, rather to change perspective and the way of relating with them. The same transition may be observed in Myung’s experience: “I’m really learning something, not just studying for the exams, I can feel that my mind is changing, like my thoughts are becoming more wide”.

Additionally, the classroom environment may offer the opportunity to put into practice competences and skills that students thought they had but never had the chance to experience, as in the case of Laura:

“Especially with my sister, I – we were always talking like ‘we have to understand that people come from different contexts and everything’ and it’s something that

I've learnt during my childhood, but I think that now I'm putting it into practice [...]” (Extract 4, Laura)

In sum, these seven students perceive intercultural interactions as the key to build understanding among cultures, in what seems to be a cyclic process: through interacting you become more understanding, and thus you are willing to interact more. As reported in their narratives, they engage in this process themselves perceiving classmates as affordances, each one carrying their experiences and knowledge; thus, daily contact in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom fostered their respect towards cultures and awareness of cultural differences, as well as their engagement in intercultural interactions – in essence, their intercultural sensitivity. Ultimately, as João perfectly explains, students in this group believe that “besides from the academic part of the course, [...] Global Studies really teaches that... teaches how to improve yourself towards people”.

- ***Belonging to the local with a global perspective***

At first, when asked if they felt part of some community or with what kind of group they would best identify themselves with, students in this group exhibited a localist or particularist identity adscription. Indeed, they define themselves as being part of the community they were born into or grew up in, may it be the country, the city, the island or even the family. Marta, for instance, says that when someone asks her where she is from, she is “obviously saying I'm from [*town from Navarra*] [...] I would say, I usually define myself as Navarra, which is like the region that I'm from [...]”. She goes on to explain that her connection with [*town from Navarra*] and its region – Navarra – is related to the fact “that's where my family is from, where I have been grown up and I really like my region and I really like my hometown and everything [...]”. Thus, in Marta's view, her identity affiliation is strongly connected with the people and the places she was surrounded by while growing up. Similarly, João defines himself as “a [*gentilic from a city*], which is someone that is born in [*city*]”, underlining that, as Brazil is “kind of huge”, “we really have this feeling of being from the place you are, not from the all Brazil”. However, he points out that “when we are abroad we feel Brazilians”.

This idea of going abroad as something that may trigger a shift in one's own sense of belonging is also present in Daisy, Myung, and Judith's narratives. In fact, even though Judith does not "really feel from anywhere", she also "really like identify with Spanish culture"; yet, she relates her current perception with the fact that she has never lived abroad, suggesting that such an experience may produce a readjustment of her identity. This is precisely why Myung – who had already lived in several countries for family and studying reasons – prefers to say: "I was born in [*South-East Asian country*]" or "My origin is [*South-East Asian country*]" instead of "I'm from [*South-East Asian country*]", in order to underline the fact that she did not "came to Barcelona straight away". Still, in both Judith's and Myung's narratives, identity adscription is associated with their birthplace, as – in João's words – "we are connected to places we're born, and this is something like is just like that".

In some cases, students overtly rejected the possibility of identifying themselves with the country and opt for an even more localist identity affiliation, as Sara illustrates:

"I would say I'm from [*one of the Balearic islands*], I don't say I'm from Spain and either from Catalonia, and not from Balearic Islands – because, first of all, I think this has to do because the fact that [*Balearic island*] is an island, but I feel really like... although my family it's not from there so it's not like a super rooted... thing, but I was born there, I grew there, and I basically know about things that go there... like, when I do think of my childhood is there, that's why I identify myself as being from there." (Extract 5, Sara)

Similarly to Sara, Laura – who was also born and raised in one of the Balearic Islands – prefers to say that she is "from [*Balearic island*] rather than from Balearic Islands or from Spain", explaining that "it's the place that I know the most, I've lived 18 years of my life there"; consequently, she really feels "part of the island" and the place she relates the most with. Moreover, this identity affiliation rooted in the place-of-birth is exaggerated in Daisy's discourse: she does not "really feel like American American", and, even though she would describe herself as "[*American state*] [...] or Southern [*American state*]", she would ultimately define herself as "part of my family". Once again, these students exhibit an identity rooted in the local.

Nonetheless, when digging deeper into their identity adscription, all but one student in this group – namely, Laura – manifested a strong connection with a broader community, could it be Europe, the world, or the Earth. Once more, this connection with the global is grounded in the belief that today’s world problems transcend borders and affect any “citizen of the earth” equally, as Myung explains:

“Even though there’s borders anywhere, nations everywhere divided and separated, I feel we’re still like citizens of the earth, if that makes sense, like world, earth; so like global issue, like environment, it’s not just my problem [...]”
(Extract 6, Myung)

On a similar line, Marta, after defining herself “from [*town from Navarra*], Navarra” goes on to say: “[...] yes, I would say then European [...] it’s also something that consider myself as, like a citizen of earth [...]”. Even though being European is something that cannot be made explicit at an institutional level – “like in a passport” – she shares European values and “alive” herself on those. Her local identity adscription, thus, is enriched by the desire to “cooperate” with people with diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

In fact, as already discussed above, these students believe that they have many things in common with their classmates and, so, they may share values and ideas with the global community. Indeed, Sara states: “I would not think that I’m from [*Balearic island*], because I don’t share my thoughts with people from there”; instead, she feels that she has “more in common with many people from the world, which are not from [*Balearic island*]”. Hence, although she identifies herself with the island she grew up in, Sara – like her classmates – cannot limit her identity adscription to that. The reason may be found in João’s words: “I think that my generation, I’m from [*year of birth*], and... we are way more connected to everywhere, you know... I can be connected at the same time with someone from Tokyo and from here”. This connection overcomes national borders and allows youths to “think more globally”.

Interestingly, this connection with the global does not exclude the more localist affiliation, and students experience their identity as multi-layered. Consequently, they can be “three things at once”, as in the case of Marta, who feels Navarra, Spanish, and

European depending on the context and situation she finds herself in. Similarly, João believes that he is “a [*gentilic a Brazilian city*] that is a Barcelonian by chance too”, specifying that he feels “within both” but “this doesn’t make [him] feel outside of both at the same time”.

Therefore, students in this group exhibit an identity adscription rooted in the local, perceiving the community they were born or raised into as a robust defining trait. At the same time, they feel connected with a more global community, with which they share perspectives and values, as well as the desire to interact and cooperate. Yet, these two aspects are not in a struggle, as students can be more things at the same time without losing any of their specificities and, ultimately, their integrity as people. Identity is perceived as additive and flexible, and specific intercultural experiences – such as going abroad, or also the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom – may produce a change in one’s own sense of belonging.

Indeed, in some cases, it is precisely the in-class journey that triggered a broader perspective and produced a shift in these students’ identity adscription. Judith, for instance, explains that she “hadn’t really had like an international experience”. However, after one year in the multi-internationalized classroom, she realized that “I’m also like this... like global citizen that I didn’t think I was before [...] since I really feel that we have a lot of things in common with other people from different, other countries”.

On the contrary, Laura became aware that she “really like[s] [*Balearic island*]” and “feel[s] part of the island”, something that she admits not having noticed until she moved to Barcelona for the degree. In essence, the encounter with the multilingual and multicultural environment reinforced her localist identity adscription.

- ***Perceiving the class as divided into groups***

In line with the fact that they understand people as unique individuals carrying their own cultural and personal traits, all the students in this group perceived the classroom as divided into groups. At the beginning of the year, this perception was not so clear, but the groups became more well-defined throughout the year, as Marta notices:

“During the first three weeks everyone was together, kind of, or four weeks, three-four weeks everyone was together, there were like two tiny groups, that are still... those groups [...] they were like those two groups, but the rest, we were all mixing and talking [...] but they have changed a bit, but more groups have been created.”
(Extract 7, Marta)

Students believe that, during the first month of the academic year, they “were all mixing and talking”. However, as time passed by, several in-class groups emerged, and now some are – in Daisy’s words – “really defined”.

Accordingly, by the end of the year, several students pointed to the existence of a strong group of Catalans, often as opposed to the group of international students:

“I feel like there is Catalan people, that really like are together, and then like internationals and some people that are from here, like... kind of get along better, so I also think there is this like division between them and internationals [...]”
(Extract 8, Judith)

Judith’s words are a clear example of how students perceive the in-class grouping. She further elaborates on this division, stating that: “there’s like three groups actually, there’s like the Catalans, the kind-of Spanish and the internationals”. Hence, in some cases, they added a third, more variable group.

When asked about the motives of such a division, students suggested several reasons. João, for instance, believes that “it’s really tight and linked with ideology”. Ideology seems to be a strong argument also in Myung’s opinion; indeed, when asked about the in-class grouping she said that there are “not international and locals, but like there’s independence, there’s Spanish, there’s international students”. With “independence” she is clearly referring to her local classmates supporting the Catalan pro-independence movement, who are “really strong together”. Thus, Myung thinks her classmates do not group according to their Autonomous Community of birth – i.e. Catalonia and rest of Spain –, rather she believes that political ideology plays a relevant role. However, she remarks that “that’s a good thing”.

Among other possible explanations to the in-class grouping, there are shared activities and how classes and seminars are structured; indeed, Laura notices that “sometimes in some seminars groups are pre-made so we can’t choose them”. Also, Daisy mentions language as a cut-off motive, as she believes that, in the case of “Turkish people or something like that, would be like more comfortable for them to speak with each other”. Lastly, Sara hypothesizes that the division between local and international students is triggered by the fact that these two groups are “going through different type of things”, thus hinting to the differences in lifestyle and socialization they may experience. Indeed, Laura acknowledges the role of pre-existing social networks and suggests that “people from Catalonia were close because they knew someone who knew someone”.

Nevertheless, the in-class grouping is considered – in Laura’s words – as “something natural that happens, especially when there are 80 people or more”. In such a big group of students, it is not possible to have the same kind of intimate relationship with all the classmates; yet, Marta does not feel that “it is a closed thing”, as “between breaks, between classes people talk with each other”. Thus, this division is not perceived as a limitation for interacting.

Finally, the response each of these students give to the in-class grouping is different: they can belong to different groups, such as João – who defines himself as “a really sociable person” – or Daisy – who “just have friends in a bunch of different groups”, on the supposition that it may be because “everyone like communicate” with her; or they can choose just one group like Judith, who “get[s] along better with internationals”, or Sara, who admits not being “best friend with them [international students]” and, thus, prefers more local friendships. Moreover, as these students perceive their classmates as affordances, they may also recognize a missed opportunity and regret they have not formed any close relationships with international classmates, as Laura perfectly exemplifies: “I think we have an opportunity that we are not *aprovechando* [taking advantage of]”.

5.2.2 Students with Transcultural Competence above the mean value and with tendency to ingroup ties

“Maybe I do feel more belonging to this global generation
that it’s like the first one to really was born and lives
in this fully interconnected world”

Jofre

The second group that emerged from the data is formed by five students – Beatriu, Eva, Marina, Jofre, and Rosa – who presented a global Transcultural Competence value above the classroom’s mean value at both the beginning and the end of the academic year and a slight tendency to form ties with classmates from the ingroup, as reported in Table 5.14. Students in this group all display a very high Transcultural Competence; indeed, when compared to the other four groups, this one presents the highest mean value in both timings. Nevertheless, students’ Transcultural Competence did not change throughout the academic year – i.e. the group’s mean value was 4.45 in T1 and 4.44 in T2. Although several differences may be noted, as some students increased their mean value while others decreased it, it seems that the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom did not have a major impact on their transcultural orientation. Moreover, the tendency to form ingroup ties is relatively small if compared to the other groups (group mean = 57.7%), suggesting a more balanced in-class network. Consequently, an explanation for the high Transcultural Competence reported by these students should be found in other factors rather than the classroom’s multi-dimensionally internationalized environment and the in-class interactions.

Student	Group	TC global value in T1	TC global value in T2	Percentage of ingroup ties (mean of the three networks)	Percentage of outgroup ties (mean of the three networks)
Beatriu	CAT	4.40	4.44	59%	41%
Eva	CAT	4.40	4.45	56.4%	43.6%
Marina	CAT	4.36	4.37	57.4%	42.6%
Jofre	CAT	4.51	4.44	63.5%	36.5%
Rosa	CAT	4.57	4.48	52.1%	47.9%
<i>Mean value</i>		<i>4.45</i>	<i>4.44</i>	<i>57.7%</i>	<i>42.3%</i>

Table 5.14 - Interviewed students presenting a Transcultural Competence global value above the classroom mean value and a tendency to form ingroup ties

Interestingly, all students in this group were schooled in Catalonia. However, four out of five students in the group – namely, Eva, Marina, Jofre, and Rosa – reported having had contact with other languages or experienced other cultures previously to starting the Global Studies degree, either at home or at school. Also, they all stressed the role of such contact experiences and interactions in the development of their cultural awareness and sensibility, as well as the influence these encounters had in forging their identity and making them who they are now. Beatriu did not have gone through such experiences, yet in her narrative, the same topics and points of views appeared as for the other four students, pointing to a shared perspective. An explanation may be found in an international summer camp in a Mediterranean African country she had experienced in the past during which she made several international friends and with whom she is still in contact.

Students in this group emerged as very cohesive with respect to their views and perceptions, showing high linguistic, cultural, and identity flexibility. Specifically, three main shared aspects were conveyed in their narratives:

- (1) they present complex, multi-faced identities, struggling to define themselves as uniquely belonging to one specific group or community;
- (2) while recognizing the need of an international language to facilitate communication, they problematize the role of EIL, retrieve Esperanto as a possibility, and put emphasis on local languages; and
- (3) they recognize the value of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom as a space in which deal with other points of view and share experiences; however, they also admit to tend to form closer relationships with classmates who were schooled in Catalonia like them, with whom they feel more comfortable.

Therefore, the very high degree of Transcultural Competence displayed by these students may be explained by the environment they experienced before the enrollment at the university, may it be in the family, at school, or due to intercultural experiences abroad. These previous experiences made them enter the degree already having a problematized view of themselves, as well as acknowledging the value of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom. In this sense, Beatriu presents an interesting exception, as she developed the same perspective without accounting for earlier in-depth intercultural

experiences. Besides, the small – yet overt – tendency to ingroup relationships in the classroom would also justify the absence of change in Transcultural Competence values between the beginning and the end of the academic year.

Below, I will first give more details on students' previous contact with plurilingualism and other cultures and the impact it had on their intercultural sensibility and identity. Subsequently, I will focus on the three main themes emerged in the interviews mentioned above – namely, students' flexible identity adscription, the controversial role of English as an International Language, and students' experience in the multi-internationalized classroom.

- ***The role of family and previous intercultural experiences***

As already discussed, students in this group reported very high Transcultural Competence values at the beginning of the academic year. Moreover, as a group, they did not present a major change in the questionnaires mean values between T1 and T2. A possible explanation may be found in the specificities of the environment they were born and raised into, characterized by contact with plurilingualism and multiculturalism. As Beatriu did not report such experiences, her narrative will not be included here.

In fact, both Jofre and Rosa completed a dual French *Baccalauréat*/Catalan *Batxillerat* secondary school program, which implies an in-depth knowledge of French language and culture along with the Catalan and Spanish ones. Also, they experienced a plurilingual family environment. Rosa, for instance, code-switches “all the time” at home among Catalan, Spanish, English, and another Germanic language since her mother's boyfriend is from such another European country and has not full proficiency in the two local official languages. As for Jofre, he describes both his parents as competent plurilingual and explains that “sometimes with my mother we practice our French, because we have both a little bit of problems with it”.

Likewise, Marina was born in an Eastern European country and adopted by a local Spanish-speaking family at the age of two. Moreover, she attended a local French school from kindergarten to graduation, in which she experienced a highly multicultural environment as she had classmates coming from France and Canada, as well as the United

States. She refers to her home as a “really open environment” and to her parents as “really understanding”; indeed, they “never really tried to hide” her Eastern European origin and sometimes make jokes about it.

Lastly, Eva was raised in a fully trilingual environment, as her mother is from a Northern-European country. Indeed, when she was a child, she was regularly exposed to her mother’s first language since she “only knew [her first language], she didn’t know Spanish”. Moreover, Eva attended one year of high school in the United States and reveals to take advantage of the plurilingual family context to practice her English: “with my mother we put some English words sometime, because she’s good at English too – so when a word doesn’t come up in Spanish or Catalan, we say it in English”.

As a matter of fact, these four students recognize the role that both their previous intercultural experiences and the open and flexible family environment played in the development of their cultural awareness and sensibility, as well as in how they articulate their sense of belonging. For instance, Eva believes that her nine-months exchange in the United States “really opened [her] mind to different things”. Similarly, Rosa admits that she had already thought about her identity because of her previous exchanges. She develops this idea recounting a concrete volunteering experience in Africa and explaining that: “it made me rethink the way we think about life [...] also it changed my perspective in social media, and technology, and how unnecessary they really are... also like, we take a lot of things for granted [...]”. In sum, these students started their journey in the Global Studies degree having already a solid intercultural background and giving it considerable value.

- *My identity cannot be limited to a single country*

In part due to their personal background – including the family environment they grew up in and their previous educational experiences –, all students in this group exhibit complex, multi-faced identities. They overtly expressed difficulties in defining themselves as belonging to one single country or community, or even rejected the idea of defining, as exemplified by Marina:

“The thing is I don’t like defining, because I think it’s limiting... one, self person so... I don’t know, I feel from... everywhere, I mean [...] I actually do feel like I’m Spanish-[*Eastern-European country of birth*] and a little bit of French, because I know more about the French culture than from the Spanish sometimes, so... [...] ... I’ve never felt... Spanish, or Catalan, nor French, nor [*Eastern-European country of birth*] entirely.” (Extract 9, Marina)

Marina does not like “the word *defining*”, as she feels this would put boundaries to her sense of self, something she would prefer not to do. She partially identifies herself with each and every culture she has experienced in her life, emphasizing the value of both her heritage culture – i.e. her Eastern-European background – and her previous schooling experience in a French environment.

Similarly, Eva – who, as mentioned, was born and raised in a fully trilingual and tricultural environment – reveals that she has “never felt fully from here”, since at home she experienced at the same time the Catalan, Spanish, and her mother’s Northern-European traditions and cuisine. Indeed, when she was a child, she preferred to say that she was from [*Northern-European country*], as she “really love” her mother’s country and “always feel it’s a part of [her]”. Nowadays, Eva “just feel[s] somewhere in between”, struggling – like Marina – in finding a word to define herself. Eventually, she would describe herself as “maybe international”; yet, she feels “that’s too broad maybe”.

Both Rosa and Beatriu carry forward this argument and define themselves explicitly as “world citizen” or “citizen of the world”. Nevertheless, Beatriu goes on clarifying that she also feels Catalan, because of language and traditions:

“I kind of define myself as a citizen of the world, but also I am Catalan because I’ve been really rooted here, I mean, all my family is Catalan so... I also have this part of the... of identity with me, like the Catalan language [...] it’s part of who I am and how I grew up, and also kind of traditions, I really like to, I don’t know, keep my traditions [...]” (Extract 10, Beatriu)

Equally, Jofre expresses his appreciation for his “cultural background and everything”. However, he also thinks that he “may be more critical with [his] own culture than with

others”, manifesting a willingness to question his own identity and culture. Interestingly, when directly asked about his identity adscription – even though he “feel very strongly about Europe” and “have some attachment to the idea” – he stated: “I would say that now mainly in my life I’m a student, and I think that this is like the most important part of my identity right now”.

In essence, these students feel rooted in their cultural and family background, but they also manifest the desire not to limit their sense of belonging to a single country or community. Thus, they find new and diverse ways to construct their identities, integrating various aspects and experiences of their lives. Jofre believes that the fact that him and his fellow citizens grew up in Catalonia – “we are European, at the same time Mediterranean” – made them develop “a very prismatic identity ourselves”. In this sense, he explains that “I really learned from very early to manage different identities and to cultivate them and maybe to match them into something new that in fact it’s me”.

Accordingly, in these students’ narratives, identity is perceived as flexible and in constant evolution, as Eva perfectly summarizes: “it is a progress or process that keeps going, it doesn’t stop”. She also explains that “someone who has lived his whole life here would feel of having only one culture”; instead, people who have “experienced some other people” – i.e. coming from a distinct cultural and linguistic backgrounds – may have “change[d] that vision”. The idea that Eva is conveying here is that contact with individuals having a different background may trigger a broader view and a reconsideration of one’s sense of belonging. For instance, Marina recalls her experience in high school, in which her classmates knew she was born in Eastern Europe and adopted but “if the subject appeared in a conversation, there was ‘oh no, you’re from here, you’ve been your whole life here, you’re Spanish and that’s it’”. She felt like her high school peers “like limited [her] self, identity”. Conversely, in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom, she has the opportunity “to know a person that was born here, studied there, work in the other way, of the world” and, thus, she feels legitimized to do not ascribe herself to a single country: “yeah, you can be from five different countries, it’s ok”.

The point is not that these students do not recognize the existence of cultural and individual differences; indeed, Beatriu sees as a positive thing that “everyone has cultural

diversity, so that we don't become the same, all over the world". Rather, she – like her classmates in this group – expresses her willingness to “try to understand more globally”, in order to “understand each other more” and avoid identity-related conflicts. Therefore, these students believe that the key to build understanding lies precisely in not limiting themselves and their identity or, in other words, in developing a more “global identity” that – in Eva's opinion – “makes you more open-minded, more open to meeting new people, more open to understand other cultures as well”.

Furthermore, similarly to the first case-study group – even though these ideas were not in-depth discussed in these students' narratives as in the other case –, students in this group perceive intercultural interactions as a mean to smooth out differences and, so, realize to have similarities with other people in the world, regardless their cultural background. However – differently to the first case-study group –, they also stress the role of having a flexible identity in this process, such as Rosa explains:

“Having like a restricted nationality or point of view makes you... feel, or think about the others as others, and not as people who can have similarities to you, because sometimes people who are, who came from, who come from very far away, or whose speak a very different language can have a lot much more in common than... your neighbor, someone that you've shared your life with.”
(Extract 11, Rosa)

Ultimately, thanks to cultural openness and in-class interactions, students like Jofre realize that they live in a “globalized world” in which they may “be more different from my parents than from some guy in Nigeria of [his] age”. Hence, he feels “more belonging to this global generation that it's like the first one to really was born and lives in this fully interconnected world”; a global generation that encompasses the entire world and shares problems and a way of life: “people that have lived all their life with mobile phones in their hand and that uses internet for everything and that really look to climate change as something real”.

In conclusion, students in this group manifest great cultural openness and a very flexible identity adscription. Indeed, they struggle in identifying themselves with a specific community or country and express their willingness to belong to the global community.

Yet, they also display an attachment to their heritage culture and traditions. In essence, identity is perceived as a process, made of different parts that can be “matched” together. This view is rooted in their cultural and linguistic background and further nurtured by contact with people coming from different background, in-class or outside. The ultimate goal would be – in Jofre’s words – to “find a way to consolidate these two things, I mean, to be part of this global society while keeping some of our own roots”.

- ***It is not fair to choose English as an international language***

Consistent with the idea of not limiting one’s own identity nor ascribing to one single culture, students in this group believe that an international language is needed to communicate and interact with other people in the world. As Jofre explains, “the fact that there is a shared language, I mean... makes everything so much easier”. Thus, knowing English is seen as “very valuable” since it gives access to mutual understanding.

However, even though these students all speak good English and are “ok” with it, they problematize the role of English as an International Language. Indeed, they think that it is not fair to choose English as international for several reasons. In Jofre’s opinion, choosing English as the common language is “not the best idea because it damages other languages”. Also, Beatriu believes that English is a difficult language to learn “because there’re lots of exceptions and things like that”; consequently, elder citizens – “most of grandpas and old people” – who did not study English at school do not have a command of it nor are willing to acquire it, not just “here” in Catalonia but “in other like places too”. Moreover, the role of English as an international language is perceived by Rosa as an imposition of the Anglo-American “system”:

“For me it’s ok right now because I know English, I don’t want to change, but it’s true that it’s not fair because... like the American people, and the English from England, they don’t have, it’s very easy for them, it’s like we’re all... trying to... be part of this... their system and they don’t have to adapt to anything, it’s like they can... spread their language.” (Extract 12, Rosa)

Students’ problematization of the role of EIL may be seen as an additional manifestation of their high identity and cultural flexibility. Indeed, they believe that other languages

could be chosen and assume such an international role. For instance, Rosa, Jofre, and Beatriu suggested Esperanto as the best option for an international language:

“There was Esperanto [...] if everyone could just speak one language and everyone could understand, if it was not English because I think Esperanto has no exceptions, and it was, I think it was... easier than English, that’s what I heard... it would be nice [...] everyone would have to learn the language, because English people don’t learn any language [...]” (Extract 13, Beatriu)

Here, Beatriu is pointing at two characteristics that would make Esperanto the ideal international language: it has no exceptions nor native speakers. Hence, it would be a more “fair” choice as, for her, it is easier than English and – most importantly – everyone should learn it. She goes on explaining that, in her opinion, “the whole world trying to learn a new language to understand with each other and not using your own” is a matter of “consciousness”. Similarly, Jofre enjoys the idea of “mak[ing] up a language, made from other languages, to communicate between people”.

Again, these students express their willingness to interact with people coming from distinct backgrounds building on the common, equal ground that Esperanto can offer. Nevertheless, they admit that it is difficult to change the actual situation and promote Esperanto as a new international language, it is something that – in Jofre’s words – “politically and historically it was never going to happen”.

Students are also open to other options, holding the belief that an international language would ease and promote interaction. For instance, Rosa underlines that “it’s not important which language it is” and expresses her willingness to learn German or any other language if required. Most importantly, in these students’ view, the international language could not be the same for everyone, nor should it be learned at the expense of any other language, as Marina perfectly explains:

“I don’t think we should forget our language and get an international one, I mean... and I certainly don’t think we should all choose English instead of any other language, I mean... but I do think that people should learn their own

language and another language that may allow them to... speak with their neighbors...” (Extract 14, Marina)

She goes on suggesting that – in Southeast Asia– people who are from “Malaysia or Australia” could “learn some... some sentences, some things” in Chinese in order “to communicate with [their] neighbors”. Still, the idea is to be able to communicate with other people in the world without losing one’s native language since, in Beatriu’s words: “this is really rich [...] it’s kind of your identity too to speak in your own language”.

In some cases, an international language may not even be necessary. Eva, for instance, recalls when her parents first met: “my mum spoke [Northern-European language], my dad spoke Spanish and they somehow communicated”. She experiences an analogous situation when interacting with an Italian friend of hers: “if I speak Spanish to her and she speaks Italian to me we would understand each other, so there is not really a necessity of having an international third language”.

All in all, these students recognize the advantages of having an international language and accept to use English to interact with people coming from different cultures and speaking other first languages. However, they highly problematize the role of EIL: it is difficult, elders do not speak it, and it could be perceived as an imposition of the American system. Students propose several alternative international languages; yet, above all, they think that English should not substitute local and native languages and express the need to keep our own language(s) while learning another one for international interactions. Once again, they are manifesting high linguistic and cultural openness and flexibility.

- ***Preferring ingroup relationships in the valuable internationalized classroom***

Not surprisingly, students in this group recognize the added value the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom gives to their learning journey. As they are all from Catalonia, they define the degree as an authentic at-home international experience, such as Jofre explains:

“In my degree, I mean there is like a part of the class, the national ones that maybe they, as myself, they don’t have so much international exposure or experience but, in fact, I think that people that join this degree from here is very open and has a

lot of interests in international issue so maybe they haven't experience it in their own flash but they have an interest in it and there are like have all the class has a huge international experience, apart from different parts of the world they have lived in many places so I think it's great." (Extract 15, Jofre)

Thus, the Global Studies degree allows local students – who have not had the chance to live abroad or face other international environments – to engage first-hand in an international experience. Indeed, Eva believes that “it's really amazing” that they “don't have to really go to another country to meet all these people”; instead, she is just “an hour away from home”.

Apart from receiving new and more complete information on global issues and topics, students appreciate the social aspect of the degree, on Jofre's belief that “the human part of it it's very important”. Precisely, they enjoy the in-class environment because – in Eva's words – “everyone has so many experiences to explain and to share”, giving them the possibility to learn more than just the academic contents. For instance, Marina defines her experience as “interesting” since she was faced with new aspects such as: “small things that I didn't realize before, we used to do as Spanish culture and I've seen... in other cultures they do different things [...]”.

What is of interest for these students is that the classroom creates the circumstances to deal with different ways of doing and thinking. Essentially, classmates offer them the opportunity to observe different points of view and becoming aware of the variety of existing opinions and perspectives. For instance, Rosa appreciates “some lessons” in which her international classmates or visiting professors “make contributions from their own perspective or talking about their country”.

Beatriu develops this idea further, stating that when you have always lived in one place – like it is the case of these students –, you “kind of see the things in one way, I mean, you can question it but you're rooted in a society that thinks kind of one way”. Consequently, the best way to overcome one's cultural-specific perspective is to interact with people coming from other and different backgrounds:

“The more cultures you have, like people from around the world you have around you, the more aware you are that... people can see things different from what you see them, and... I don’t know, you learn to be more respectful, and thoughtful about the things you say, so that you don’t offend the other person, for example.”
(Extract 16, Beatriu)

Thus, thanks to discussing and debating with classmates, students may become aware of others’ points of view and “start to question, that’s the point”. In this way, you have the opportunity to “make your own [point of view], which I think is great, and you make it yourself not the society you live in”.

On a similar line, Jofre recounts that – before starting the degree – he “had very strong opinions on such international topics”. However, in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom, he had “to learn to coexist [...] and to negotiate” with other perspectives and opinions. He underlines that it is not a matter of accepting the other’s point of view; instead, the point is to understand that people having a “very different cultural background” may “express ideas that you won’t even think about, like a possibility”. Even though this process may be “shocking at first”, Jofre acknowledges its “rightness”, proving deep cultural awareness and sensibility.

Although this group of students perceives in-class interactions as an enriching experience, they also admit having built the closest relationships with classmates who were schooled in Catalonia like them. Indeed, Jofre remarks that his inner circle is formed by “Catalan speakers”, who were born and raised in Catalonia or the Balearic Islands. Likewise, Beatriu affirms that she “talk[s] more with people from here, like Catalan people”.

Moreover, when asked directly about their relationship with the classmates coming from abroad, both Marina and Eva reveal that they are “not close with any of them”. Specifically, Eva recognizes that, while at the beginning of the academic year she was “talking to many people, like getting to know everyone and stuff”, now she prefers to interact with the people she “feels more comfortable” with – namely, her four Catalan best friends in the classroom. Equally, Rosa admits that – even if in the seminar she is sometimes forced to pair with different classmates – if she has the opportunity, she “always tend[s] to go in the group with my friends I always go out with”.

Basically, these students feel more comfortable interacting with their local classmates for two main reasons: shared first language and shared experiences, as Beatriu underlines:

“Catalans usually, I think that associate with Catalan people so they can speak a local language and because international students have to speak in English, they all like get on with the other one and they are kind of experiencing the same, like moving from one city to another and I think, this maybe brings closer the international students.” (Extract 17, Beatriu)

Local Catalan students would tend to interact among them because they can use their native language, while international students would talk in English. However, the issue is not just between feeling more comfortable speaking in Catalan or in English. Indeed, Rosa also states that she feels “more, more like confident” interacting in Catalan than in Spanish; thus – relying on her own experience – she believes that, when she is used to speaking in Catalan with someone, “having a Spanish person [in the conversation] is difficult and you have to speak Spanish and you’re used to speak in Catalan with that person”. Moreover, Marina – who supposes that her shyness is the main reason for her local friendships – also points to

“the fact that when you’re abroad in the... especially the first year that you don’t know that well the area, and you don’t know the people, the language, the... you tend to get more close to the things and the people you know, and the language you know, than to... explore.” (Extract 18, Marina)

It seems that both Rosa and Marina are expressing a preference for not stepping out from their comfort zone. Nevertheless, some students manifested their regret for not interacting and building more intimate relationships with classmates belonging to other groups, such as Eva who wishes she “had more close relationships with some of them [international classmates]” as she thinks “they would bring so much to [her]”. Similarly, Marina believes that, since they are enrolled in an “international course talking about global issues, the least [they] could do was to mix”.

In sum, students in this group consider the multi-dimensionally internationalized environment of the classroom an added value to their learning experience, as it offers

them the possibility to face different points of view and question one's perspective and opinions. However, they also admit having an in-class inner circle formed by classmates from the ingroup – i.e. born and grew up in Catalonia like them. The reason for such a preference may be found in the fact that students feel more comfortable in interacting with other local students, because of shared native language, shyness, or similar experiences.

5.2.3 Students with Transcultural Competence under the mean value and with tendency to ingroup ties

“To me, there's always the, this idea of
the need of belonging to a group”
Antonio

This third group is formed by five students – Antonio, Maribel, Alicia, Yanhong, and Leah – who presented a global Transcultural Competence value under the classroom mean value at both the beginning and the end of the academic year, as well as a tendency to form ingroup relationships in the classroom (group mean = 61.2%), as reported in Table 5.15. Overall, at a group level, there is a tendency to decrease the Transcultural Competence mean value throughout the academic year; indeed, the group's mean value was 4.12 in T1 and 4.05 in T2. Nevertheless, several differences may be noted, as one student largely increased her Transcultural Competence global value. In fact, Alicia scored 4.07 in T1, and increased her value to 4.20 by the end of the academic year – the mean value in T2 being equal to the classroom's mean value, set as the threshold. Also, she reports the smallest tendency to ingroup relationships when compared to her classmates – i.e. ingroup = 53.9%, outgroup = 46.1%. As we will see, Alicia may be considered an exception in this group, presenting views and beliefs more similar to the ones manifested by students in the first and second case-study groups (Section 5.2.1 and 5.2.2).

Student	Group	TC global value in T1	TC global value in T2	Percentage of ingroup ties (mean of the three networks)	Percentage of outgroup ties (mean of the three networks)
Yanhong	CAT	4.21	4.00	58.2%	41.8%
Antonio	CAT	4.15	4.08	64.9%	35.1%
Maribel	CAT	4.14	4.17	61.1%	38.9%
Alicia	CAT	4.07	4.20	53.9%	46.1%
Leah	INT	4.03	3.78	67.9%	32.1%
<i>Mean value</i>		<i>4.12</i>	<i>4.05</i>	<i>61.2%</i>	<i>38.8%</i>

Table 5.15 - Interviewed students presenting a Transcultural Competence global value under the classroom mean value and a tendency to form ingroup ties

Four students in this group were schooled in Catalonia – specifically, in the Barcelona metropolitan area –, while Leah is an international student who was born and raised in Israel. Interestingly, they all perceive the degree as their first real international experience, to which they were not used and, thus, they had to become acquainted with. Nevertheless, while for the Catalan students the encounter with the “international atmosphere” was surprising and allowed them to discover things they did not know, in the case of Leah, the degree did not completely fulfill her expectations. Moreover, although Alicia also is facing an international environment for the first time, her narrative differs consistently from the ones of Adrian, Leah, Yanhong, and Maribel. As a matter of fact, these four latter students share three main characteristics:

- (1) they are critical towards the role of English as an international language and give great value to heritage and local languages, perceived as threatened and strictly connected with culture;
- (2) accordingly, they exhibit a localist identity adscription, linked with the community they were born into as well as its customs and habits, and manifest the need of belonging to some kind of group or community as a prerequisite to share and connect; and
- (3) they describe the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom as an “open-minded” environment, yet they partially perceive their classmates as affordances and express a preference for interacting with people belonging to their same group with whom they feel more confident.

Overall, it seems that, at the beginning of the year, these four students were open and attracted to the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom environment and, thus, they enrolled in the degree. However, they manifest a strong connection with their heritage language and culture and express the need of common ground and shared values to connect and build intimate relationships; so, they tend to interact within the ingroup. At the same time, the in-class experience reinforced their local connection and made them less confident and willing to interact. This may explain the general tendency to decrease the Transcultural Competence mean values by the end of the academic year; indeed, the overall major decrease was in the Intercultural Sensitivity questionnaire – namely, from 4.17 in T1 to 3.99 in T2.

As mentioned before, Alicia’s narrative conveys dissimilar views and beliefs, as well as a different in-class experience. She shares with her fellow classmates a critical view of English as an international language, giving value to heritage and local languages. However, she also shows a broader conceptualization of culture as not strictly connected with the country and feels strongly identified with the “international” community, with which she shares values and “culture”. Moreover, Alicia genuinely enjoys the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom, judging it an enriching experience. Indeed, she perceives her international classmates as affordances to learn and reports to be good friend with several of them. Accordingly, her Transcultural Competence values largely increased throughout the academic year, while being the student with the smallest tendency to ingroup relationships in this group.

In the subsequent sections, I will firstly give more details on students’ view of the Global Studies degree as their first international experience. Then, I will present the three main topics emerged from the interviews, namely, the value given to heritage and local languages, students’ adscription to a localist identity, and the tendency to form intimate ingroup relationships. Alicia’s views and ideas will be presented along with the ones of the other students in the group, emphasizing similarities and differences for each theme.

- ***The Global Studies degree as the first international experience***

All five students in this group describe their journey in the Global Studies degree as their first international experience, something they were not used to nor had never experienced

before. Indeed, Alicia explains that she enrolled in the degree precisely because she felt “this attraction for international stuff all [her] life”, even though she had “never had the chance to do that”. Equally, Antonio states that he “wasn’t used to” the multicultural and multicultural environment the class offers, remarking that he needed time to open himself to the international atmosphere. Also, Yanhong believes that the degree itself is a very “unusual, and interesting” new experience and she feels like “it’s like going abroad but without really moving, like you have people from different places”.

On account of the fact that these students are facing an international environment for the first time, they also confess that they are quite afraid to deal with the compulsory stay abroad during the third year of the degree, as Alicia explains:

“I was afraid of that, because I have never been abroad and I’ve never lived in another country and I think that my first experience going to China for 6 months it’s gonna be too hard for me, maybe the cultural shock and the differences would be too much.” (Extract 19, Alicia)

Equally, Maribel believes that going abroad on degree mobility “would be a little hard [...] kind of a shock” since she has never lived abroad like her friends may have done. However, she also remarks that it “would be an enriching experience”, acknowledging the advantages of intercultural contact and experiences. Hence, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom is perceived by these students as a new experience in which they have the opportunity to increase their cultural awareness and reevaluate their attitudes.

In fact, the encounter with the “international atmosphere” of the classroom becomes – in Maribel’s words – “surprising”:

“It was surprising to me to see that things that are relevant here do not matter that much elsewhere... and because we are like thinking, like people, the society is telling us all the time, the system, you are the main focus, you know... and maybe you go elsewhere and their problems, or their focus is another one, so [...]” (Extract 20, Maribel)

What Maribel is pointing to is the idea that the context you grow up in influences your way of seeing the world. Precisely, as she – like her Catalan classmates in this group – has lived all her life in the specific context of Barcelona, her opinions and point of view depend on that. Yanhong also remarks that “you can’t really find like in schools [in Barcelona] so many, like such much diversity”. On the contrary, in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom, students have the occasion to face a variety of unfamiliar perspectives, becoming more conscious about other points of view and, ultimately, – Yanhong believes – “get more and more open minded”. Moreover, they may discover things they did not know. For instance, Antonio recalls that “this year I’ve discovered the ‘eurocentrism’”, a concept he admits he “had no idea” of until entering the degree. Similar to Maribel, Antonio believes that his way of perceiving things was linked to the fact that he had always lived in the same place. Now, he acknowledges that things “can be the other way around”.

Israeli Leah also – like her Catalan classmates – is experiencing the internationalized environment for the first time. However, she states that the degree did not completely fulfill her expectations: “I expected to see I think a higher English level, I think that’s part of the things that made me come abroad”. Moreover, she is “happy that there are people from different, other places” as she is offered the chance to observe different perspectives on several general topics; yet she expresses the desire to be “surrounded with people that understand” her when debating other issues that are closer to her, such as the Israelian-Palestinian conflict.

- ***Giving value to heritage and local languages***

Perhaps because they had never lived outside the place they were born into, these students display a view on language and culture oriented to the family – that is, to the local languages or the family linguistic heritage. Indeed, they are quite critical about the role of English as an International Language. While admitting that an international language is – in Yanhong’s words – “very useful to... like to speak with other people” coming from different linguistic and cultural background, they also believe that, right now, English may represent a threat for local and heritage languages, as Antonio properly explains:

“Of course it’s very useful to have English as international [...] but... you know, the dissent of switching always to English it like, the... actually, the local languages are losing in this aspect... because, you know, there’s always, no, the imagina... the idealizing of English which is... yeah, it will open a lot of doors, of course it will [...] but it is a threat, for me it is a threat for local languages, not for Spanish, because for Spanish... other people speak Spanish but for example to Catalan it’s like [...].” (Extract 21, Antonio)

Antonio’s problematized view of EIL is also shared by Alicia, who – on this topic – is in agreement with her classmates. Indeed, she believes that her “generation grew with a lot of Anglo-American background”, so they were left with no other option than to learn English “to understand what was going on”. However, she also feels that – due to this “kind of hegemony trying to impose English” – “many minoritarian languages or regional languages are being falling apart”. In essence, these students express their willingness to learn and preserve local and heritage languages, as they are strictly connected with culture and, ultimately, “a part of our identity”.

Consequently, Catalan students in this group highlight that if they were international students, they would learn the local language(s) or, if native speakers of English, they would learn other languages. For instance, Maribel states that: “if I was them [international students], I would try to learn the language, like both Spanish and Catalan”. She goes on explaining that Spanish would allow for interaction with a vast number of people worldwide, as it is “the third most spoken language in the world”, while Catalan should be learned “because it’s... kind of exotic and it’s also the language, like our language”. Indeed, when talking about a classmate coming from another Autonomous Community in Spain, she remarks that “she... knows that being in Catalonia, she needs to learn Catalan”. This link between language and culture – strictly embedded in a physical space – is further discussed by Alicia, who perceives as “a mistake” that some people “would their children to learn English rather than Catalan”. Instead, she believes that, as they are living in Catalonia, people should learn Catalan, as “it is our culture and I think we have to appreciate it and embrace it”.

Exhibiting the same view on local languages, the only international student in the group, Leah, studied both Spanish and Catalan during the year, manifesting high satisfaction

with her new acquired linguistic proficiency. She points out that mostly Catalan offered her a way to interact with the local culture:

“I’m happy I took Catalan because this is the culture here and I can intervene in the culture and be part of it so it’s good, like I feel that people, like they respect it if you know a bit of Catalan, even if not everything, just a bit [...] and also I wanted to learn it because it’s special, I mean a lot of people speak Spanish not a lot speak Catalan.” (Extract 22, Leah)

Differently, but pointing to the same direction, Yanhong has always had contact with her heritage language – namely, Chinese Mandarin – using it to interact with her family and attending a language academy on weekends. However, it is precisely the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom that gives her the opportunity to retrieve her heritage language and use it daily:

“I now have more Chinese friends so I kind of can practice my Mandarin, which before I didn’t have, when I was little, like there was not that much Chinese people in my class, so maybe I was not that fluent, like I couldn’t use it everyday.” (Extract 23, Yanhong)

To sum up, students in this group share a critical view of English as an International Language: even though it may be useful for interacting with people coming from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, they also underline that the hegemony of English may be a threat for local and heritage languages. Perceiving a strong link between language and culture, these students express their willingness to learn local languages when abroad – as exemplified by Leah’s studying of both Spanish and Catalan –, as well as to retrieve and keep alive heritage languages – as it is the case of Yanhong.

- ***Oriented towards a localist identity***

Consistent with the value these students give to local and heritage languages, as well as the strict connection they establish between language and culture, Maribel, Yanhong, Antonio, and Leah also show an understanding of culture as deeply rooted in common traits, shared language(s), and, ultimately, nationality. In this case, Alicia’s point of view differs from the one of her classmates and will, thus, be reported at the end of the section.

For instance, expanding the idea that “language is a mirror of culture”, Antonio defines culture as “the way of seeing certain events which is shared by a community [...] of people”, such as “common features, for example languages or... more or less the same background” that allows you to feel identified with that specific culture. He goes on explaining that culture is “very open”, so one may not always agree with the characteristics shared by the community they were born into. Nevertheless, he believes that “there is always the possibility, the need to feel to a certain group”; in other words, belonging to a group is “essential for people”.

Leah further develops this interpretation of culture as shared features, establishing a direct link between culture and nation, or nationality:

“For me culture is immediately connected to nation, nationality, [...] I feel like my nationality, my religion, my language.... I think culture is my stuff that connects me to my community, that places my community somewhere in the map of the international communities and in this map, “the international community culture map”, my culture would be located close to other cultures which are similar to it and far from culture which are not [...].” (Extract 24, Leah)

She believes that you may “switch culture [...] but you know there is always a connection”. However, she also remarks that if you want to “intervene in other cultures, you need to lose some of your own culture”. Thus, in both Leah’s and Antonio’s interpretation, culture is not perceived as an accumulative process; instead, it is the sum of the common traits shared by a community of people, that allows to identify and describe different cultures.

Accordingly, in this students’ view, you can connect more easily with people belonging to your same “cultural group”. For instance, Yanhong believes that people with Chinese background “get along quite easily” because they feel to be “part of a community or something like” that create the ground for building a deeper relationship. Similarly, Leah admits that: “if there was Israeli people in the class, yes, I would feel more connected to them”. Then, she recounts an anecdote: she was on the metro, talking on the phone in Hebrew, when two girls started laughing because they felt “so excited” to hear someone speaking their own language and, thus, creating a connection.

Therefore, these four students express the need of belonging to some kind of community or group – i.e. a “culture”, in their words – to be able to share and connect, as well as to identify themselves. Indeed, they exhibit an identity ascription grounded in the community they were born and raised into, and with which they share features – such as customs and habits – and ways of seeing the world. Maribel, for instance, when asked how she would define herself, explained:

“I would say Catalan - and maybe European? but... I don't feel Spanish at all... so, Catalan, I feel Catalan... and European... [...] yeah, like I feel obviously much more Catalan than European but I feel those two things [...] like all the traditions and cultural things I like are Catalan, so it's like why don't you feel... Swedish? well because I don't share anything.” (Extract 25, Maribel)

Here, Maribel is overtly rejecting the possibility to identify herself with a community she does not share features with, such as the Swedish or even the Spanish one. Likewise, Leah admits that “I don't consider myself [*two European countries*] even though my relatives are from there and my grandma... and I have passport”; even though she has been in those places, she “cannot feel connected” with them. Instead, she prefers to define herself as “51% Jewish and 49% Israeli”, showing an identity rooted in the local.

Antonio also exhibits an identity ascription linked with the geographical area he was born into, stating that he is “from Barcelona, Spain”. He further develops this topic, explaining that “I gotta say I have that Hispanic spirit” that makes him feel connected with the broader Southern European community. However, he remarks that he identifies himself with Southern Europe because he shares characteristics and ways of living with people in that area, such as “the climate”, “cheerfulness”, and “seeing life in a relaxing way”.

The case of Yanhong is slightly different, as her family is of Chinese origin, but she was born and raised in Barcelona. When asked, she usually says: “I'm Chinese but born in Barcelona”. Essentially, she feels in-between the two cultures, the Chinese one and the Catalan/Spanish one:

“I don’t know, I think I’m in-between because I feel sometimes like physically I’m more Chinese, that’s the first thing that people... get noticed to, like when they see me so... I think I’m quite connected because of my appearance and of my, like home, like traditions or... because we eat a lot of rice sometimes, like... and we use like chopsticks, that’s like my customs... and things that I have at home that it’s like more Chinese... but then, outside, I can make friends with Spanish people, Catalan people so... it’s not a difference, like it’s not a barrier for me to not, I’m quite easy to get... to be in between I think [...]” (Extract 26, Yanhong)

Yanhong does not perceive her being in-between as an obstacle for her sense of self. However, she also admits that being Chinese is a great part of her identity – “we are still Chinese”–, manifesting a strong connection with her heritage language and culture, because of her family and home traditions and customs, as well as due to the Chinese friends she met at school and with whom she does Chinese activities that made her feel “more and more connected”. Thus, Yanhong identifies herself as being primarily Chinese, but with Spanish nationality and friends.

Interestingly, during the interviews, students in this group did not mention the “global identity” at all and, when asked if they felt some connection with the global community, some of them – such as Maribel – overtly stated not to feel identified with it:

“[...] the world is very big and, sadly, in Europe I would say we are very homogenous whilst in the world we aren’t so I cannot really say that I am a citizen of the world if I do not know the world.” (Extract 27, Maribel)

Identity is rooted in what is familiar to them, such as the place they were born into and the habits and values they grew up with. In the case of Leah, she also believes that talking about global identity is a “hard question” because of the place she is from, namely, Israel.

To summarize, Maribel, Yanhong, Leah, and Antonio conceptualize culture as the totality of common traits shared by a community of people and manifested the need of belonging to some kind of “culture” as a prerequisite to share and connect. Consequently, they show a localist identity, rooted in the community they were born into, as well as its language,

customs, and habits. Moreover, in the interviews, they stated not to feel identified with the global community, or they did not mention it at all.

On the contrary, Alicia shows a broader understanding of culture, as something that “goes beyond” the borders of the country or nation. Instead, she believes that she “may share a culture” with people coming from other parts of the world – including her classmates – because of shared cultural references: “we all share them and in the end that’s culture for us, we share music, we share Instagram, we share a lot of things, literature maybe”. Indeed, when it comes to identity adscription, she struggles in finding a way to define herself:

“I don’t feel myself neither Spanish nor Catalan, I feel like a mix of everything. I don’t know I would say ‘citizen of the world’, but I don’t like that expression. I feel it is really mainstream and people say ‘oh, I’m a citizen of the world’...”

(Extract 28, Alicia)

She goes on saying that “placeless” would be a potential good word, as it may encompass all the influences she had from different cultures and languages. In essence, in Alicia’s view, identity is a sum of all the experiences and interactions one may face and, thus, it can evolve through time.

- ***Being afraid to interact with the outgroup***

When asked about the in-class atmosphere, Yanhong, Antonio, and Maribel described the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom as an “open-minded” environment. Antonio, for instance, comments that “it’s not like... a closed atmosphere” because he has the opportunity to interact with “people from very different contexts”. Thus, he feels legitimized to express himself – “as I am” – and to give his opinion on the topics they may discuss in class. Yanhong remarks that it is precisely because they are enrolled in the Global Studies degree that people “are all quite open-minded” and, so, “interested in other cultures”, manifesting her appreciation for the multicultural and multilingual educational context.

Also, even though these three students acknowledge the existence of some in-class grouping, they perceive it as – in Yanhong’s word – “normal [...] because maybe the

projects or anything like that makes them closer, so maybe you can see some little groups”. Thus, academic tasks and projects may facilitate interaction among students, as they have to work in small groups. Indeed, Yanhong believes that it is precisely thanks to these activities that they “get like more and more like... integrated” and in-class groups became neither “that big” nor “too separate”. Moreover, in Maribel’s opinion, in-class grouping does not represent a distinct trait of the Global Studies degree: it “happens everywhere” and, so, it cannot be attributed to the fact that there are national and international students. Lastly, the presence of different groups is not perceived as a limitation for casual interactions, because – as Antonio states – “basically everyone is very open-minded and you can speak to anybody”.

Leah’s in-class experience is slightly different from her other three classmates as she feels a victim of prejudices connected to the place she was born in and the circulating ideologies:

“I feel that as I am coming from Israel, there are a lot, a lot of people that they like have a stigma on me because I come from Israel and they’re like pro-Palestine and whatever. But I never actually said my opinion, like no one ever asked me like they’re afraid ‘cause I was in the army and stuff like that.” (Extract 29, Leah)

Actually, she notices that sometimes her local classmates identify her persona with her country of birth – “because Leah is Israel”. Thus, as mentioned before, she does not feel comfortable discussing specific topics with her classmates, whose positioning she defines as being “radical” and “straightforward”. As the year passed by, Leah was able to manage these conflicts better, and now she tells that: “I feel I am friend with everyone, so I speak with everyone”.

Nevertheless, although these four students interact with everyone in the classroom, they also recognize to have an intimate network made of classmates from the ingroup. Antonio, for instance, admits that his best friends “are people from here, from Catalonia”. Similarly, Yanhong formed an intimate relationship with two local classmates – whom she refers to as the “more familiar ones” –, while having the chance to build new Chinese friendships and nurture the connection with her heritage language and culture. Also, Maribel acknowledges that she does not interact much with her international classmates,

explaining that she does not “have any problem”, but she feels not to “get very along with them”. She goes on picking up again the idea of belonging to a group:

“You have your group and it’s closed, and yeah, you may talk to some people outside of it but it’s mostly your group, and I think that that perpetuates the fact that you cannot... like, not cannot speak, but you don’t speak with people outside of your group [...]” (Extract 30, Maribel)

In Maribel’s opinion, in-class groups are closed: you may talk with other classmates, but these interactions seem to be kept at a superficial level. However, she expresses regret for not interacting with both “international students” and “national students” outside of her group.

The case of Leah is slightly different, as she is the only foreign student in the group. Still, when talking about her closest in-class relationships, she recalls another international student like her: a girl from the United States she was best friend with at the beginning of the year, but who has now left the degree. Currently, her inner circle is formed by “some Catalan names, but mainly international people”. She explains that she tends to interact within her ingroup since “they are older”, as well as because she feels more confident to express herself without being judged for where she comes from.

Not differently, Antonio, Maribel, and Yanhong have a tendency to form closer relationships with the ingroup because they feel more confident and comfortable in those interactions. Antonio, for instance, feels “dumb” when interacting in English:

“When there is internationals, I have some times the possibility, I have some times the thought I’m dumb, because I... you know, when they speak they are natives so I’m very... you know, shy [...] from the beginning of the course which I, for example when there are internationals like I feel more shy and more close to that, because of course with English I feel kind of comfortable but it’s not the same...” (Extract 31, Antonio)

He perceives the high proficiency that his international classmates have in English as “native” – even if their mother tongue is not English – and, thus, feels insecure about expressing himself. In some ways, although defining the classroom atmosphere as open-

minded, it seems that Antonio is afraid to be judged by his classmates. Likewise, Maribel believes that she has “always been an introverted person”; however, the “open and... talkative” attitude of her classmates is motivating her “to talk to people and be more open”.

In sum, although several differences may be noted, Antonio, Maribel, Yanhong, and Leah describe the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom as an “open-minded” environment, in which everyone is allowed to express its point of view, and, thus, they do not consider the in-class grouping as a limitation for interaction. However, these four students do not seem to perceive classmates as affordances and express a preference for building closer relationships within the ingroup, as they feel more comfortable and less judged.

Alicia’s socialization experience in the classroom differs consistently from the ones of her fellow classmates just reported. Indeed, she describes her first year in the Global Studies degree as “the best year of [her] life, totally” because of the people she met, explaining that she was not expecting that she would form and nurture such “beautiful” relationships. She truly enjoys the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom, perceiving it as an enriching experience:

“I think it enriches you a lot as a person, because you grow a lot, you know many things you maybe didn’t know because you didn’t have the chance to know; and I think that’s what makes us like better, to understand the others.” (Extract 32, Alicia)

Accordingly, classmates offer affordances to learn new things, face different perspectives, and become more understanding, as well as an opportunity to practice languages. Indeed, during the academic year, Alicia had become a good friend with two of her Brazilian classmates with whom she has the chance to practice her Portuguese. Moreover, thanks to interaction with her international classmates, she may become aware of similarities that transcend national borders:

“There is no differences when it comes to friends, either if I’m Spanish and the other one is from [*South-East Asian country*] and the other one is from Brazil

there's no difference because we're friends in the end, we understand and we can communicate without problems.” (Extract 33, Alicia)

Thus, in Alicia's opinion, not taking advantage of the multi-dimensionally internationalized environment would mean missing the “chance of meeting people from all around the world [...] that speak so many different languages and have so many different things to tell you”. For this reason, she overtly criticizes her classmates who prefer to interact within their ingroup – “people that you already know” –, believing that it would be “a waste of time actually”.

5.2.4 Students with Transcultural Competence under the mean value and with tendency to outgroup ties

“I've been more conscious of who I am
once I've been here [in Barcelona]”

Yunus

This fourth group is formed by four students – Víctor, Ibai, Yunus, and Alba – who reported a global Transcultural Competence global value under the classroom mean value at both the beginning and the end of the academic year, as well as a large tendency to form outgroup relationships (mean value = 84.2%), as reported in Table 5.16. Nevertheless, the percentage of ingroup and outgroup ties across the three networks – i.e. studying partners, leisure partners, and intimate friends – differs consistently for each of the four students. Moreover, Víctor, Ibai, and Yunus reported not to have any intimate friends in the classroom. As regards students' Transcultural Competence, we may observe an overall slight decrease in the group's mean value: from 3.90 by the beginning of the academic year to 3.78 by the end. Alba was the only student in the group who increased her mean value, from 3.90 in T1 to 4.06 in T2. Interestingly, she is also the one who reported the highest percentage of outgroup ties in the class, as well as the only student in the group who formed intimate friendships in the classroom. At this respect, it is worth mentioning again that the in-class intimate network resulted to be the most significantly correlated with students' Transcultural Competence mean values (see Section 5.1.3).

Student	Group	TC value in T1	TC value in T2	Percentage of ingroup ties (mean of the three networks)	Percentage of outgroup ties (mean of the three networks)
Ibai	SPA	4.23	4.07	20%*	80%*
Victor	SPA	3.90	3.66	7.1%*	92.9%*
Alba	SPA	3.90	4.06	-	100%
Yunus	INT	3.56	3.31	36.1%*	63.9%*
<i>Mean value</i>		<i>3.90</i>	<i>3.78</i>	<i>15.81%</i>	<i>84.19%</i>

*These students reported not to have any intimate friends in the classroom. Thus, percentages were calculated considering only the partners reported in the Studying network and the Leisure network.

Table 5.16 - Interviewed students presenting a Transcultural Competence global value under the classroom mean value and a tendency to form outgroup ties

Students in this group were all born outside of Catalonia. Indeed, Alba, Ibai, and Adrian were born in Autonomous Communities in Spain other than Catalonia, while Yunus is an international student coming from a Sub-Saharan African country. However, they reported different schooling experiences entailing earlier contact with other languages and multilingual practices. In fact, they were all either raised in bi/multilingual contexts or exposed to languages other than their mother tongue while growing up: Ibai was born and schooled in the Basque Country and defines himself as a Euskara native speaker; Víctor was born and schooled in the Valencian Autonomous Community, which is officially bilingual in Spanish and Valencian (i.e. Catalan), even though he reports not to speak this language fluently; Yunus has several members of his family living in another city in Spain and attended there several years of primary education in a British school. Lastly, Alba also was born in the Valencian Autonomous Community, yet her father is from another European country and she attended high school in the United States where she moved due to her mother's job; indeed, she defines herself as "kind of a foreigner" in Spain.

This group emerged as the less consistent one, being that the four students in it experienced their first year in the Global Studies degree quite differently and presented individual perspectives and points of view. Nevertheless, three main common topics may be identified in their narratives:

- (1) it seems that for all of them to move to Barcelona – or moving in general –, more than the degree itself, had an impact on their cultural awareness and sensibility, as well as on their identity affiliation;
- (2) except for Adrian, they are all strongly humanities-oriented, manifesting an interest in people and interaction, and recognizing the value of multilingualism and plurilingual practices; and
- (3) accordingly, they reported not having any problems in interacting with everyone in the classroom, yet they revealed to not have built very close relationships – or very few, as it is the case of Alba.

Therefore, the high percentage of outgroup ties these students formed throughout the year may be explained by their orientation towards Humanities. However, as they mainly perceive the Global Studies degree as an academic space and did not form any intimate friendships in the classroom, they showed a tendency to decrease their Transcultural Competence mean values by the end of the academic year. Indeed, reporting both close in-class friends and the largest tendency to outgroup ties, Alba was the only student in the group who increased her Transcultural Competence global value. Thus, in the following sections, I will report the experiences of these four students according to the three above-mentioned themes, emphasizing similarities and differences among them.

- *Moving as a triggering experience*

Students in this group all acknowledge the value of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom as a space in which seeing different perspectives. Indeed, Yunus remarks that the multicultural makeup of the class allows students to “learn more than the course gives you the permission to learn”. However, they also believe that moving, more than the degree itself, had an impact on their attitudes and sensitivity, as well as on their identity. Consequently, in their narratives, there is no in-depth discussion on what they learned from their classmates.

Ibai, for instance, points out that especially the international classmates’ participation in the in-class discussions is interesting and may be considered an added value to the learning experience; yet he remarks that it is not because they are “foreigners”, but because they are more experienced: “they have lived more... there is people that have

gone to different countries, have two or three years more”. Accordingly, he believes that the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom environment would not trigger any change in his understanding of identity and culture:

“In case [*my understanding of identity and culture*] had changed somehow, it would be much more because I have arrived to a different country or region than the fact that I am in a degree with foreign people.” (Extract 34, Ibai)

As Ibai remarks, he had already the chance to interact with people “from foreign countries in other contexts and times”, who made him reflect on such topics. Thus, it seems that the in-class environment did not have an impact on his identity nor sensitivity towards a more global orientation. More so, he states that the degree was helpful to become “more conscious that the local level is even more important”, switching from a global to a more local perspective.

Similarly, although going through remarkably different paths, both Alba and Yunus put emphasis on coming back to Spain after having spent several years abroad as a triggering experience for their sense of belonging, making them feel more connected to the place they were born into. For Yunus, coming back to Spain – after experiencing the culture of his family’s Sub-Saharan African country of origin where he finished primary schooling and attended secondary school – was useful to compare, reevaluate his values and become more conscious of who he is. In fact, Yunus attended several years of primary school in another big city in Spain, where part of his family still lives; yet he remarks that he was enrolled in a British school in which “everyone was kind of the same”. Hence, he recounts that, when returning to his country of origin, he “had still the idea that like everyone is the same in the world”. It is precisely the new migration experience in Barcelona that made him gain a new perspective and realize that “the world is really different”:

“[...] when you come back and when I came back I realize that no, the world is not the same, equality sometimes is bullshit and the world is really different, we haven’t proved it yet but you get more conscious of who you actually are, like how society paints you and the challenges of being yourself, like the challenges of trying to express yourself, of much realizing yourself [...] but this consciousness, what I’ve learnt like by coming back again to... now to Barcelona

specifically [...] I've been more conscious of who I am once I've been here. It's important for me.” (Extract 35, Yunus)

Moreover, exhibiting great cultural awareness, Yunus remarks that he “always love[d] difference”, underling that the differences he is experiencing are important as they give him the opportunity to “see another perspective” and, consequently, become “more understanding with the world, like with more people”. In his perspective, the point is to travel and experience different people and culture to become more understanding and, ultimately, bring this newly acquired knowledge and openness back home. Indeed, thanks to his experience in Barcelona, Yunus realized that he “feel[s] more black now”, manifesting a strong attachment to his ethnicity and home country – i.e. a Sub-Saharan African country – and the willingness to “go back, after studying, after gaining all the knowledge, after having the privilege to be here and learn from other societies”.

On her behalf, Alba underlines that coming back to Spain was hard because she spent several years in the United States with her mother and, so, she “feel[s] like a lot of my Spanishness... left, or like hidden”. Now, she is learning again “how to function here”, yet she perceives having an earlier background in the country as a great advantage in her adaptation process. Moreover, Alba acknowledges that both her family mixed background and her living experience in the United States had an impact on her identity:

“When I was little, if you asked me where I was from, I would say ‘I'm half Spanish, I'm half [*father's country of origin*]’, it was very like engrain me but when I moved to the States, you know, I guess I would had just to lose one, so I stacked with Spanish, maybe because living with my mom or maybe because I did know the language better so.... And I do feel very Spanish, just not as Spanish as other Spanish people [...]” (Extract 36, Alba)

Even though she decided to “stack with” the Spanish-part of her identity and do feel “Spanish”, Alba also admits that her friends tell her that she is “more American sometimes, more [*father's country of origin*] sometimes”. All in all, all her moving and contact experiences contributed to who she is now.

Lastly, Víctor – who had always lived in a small village in the Valencian Autonomous Community – reveals that stepping out from his comfort zone and going to live in a different and bigger city gave him the opportunity to become more open-minded. Indeed, having the chance to face a more multicultural environment, he has gained new interest in global issues and debating:

“[...] I didn’t talk a lot in my village, I didn’t discuss a lot but then this Holy week, this... this Easter week, I returned to my village and I started discussing with my friends about the... national elections, about my point of view on some things, like... animal rights, feminism or... environment, so yeah... I noted a... a bit of change.” (Extract 37, Víctor)

However, he also admits not to being “a good discussor” and, thus, he feels more comfortable interacting in his village, to which he is very connected.

In sum, even if with several differences, these four students perceive the migration process as a triggering experience. They underline the importance of travelling and facing different contexts in the construction of their attitudes and sense of belonging. On the contrary, the impact of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom environment was not in-depth discussed in their narratives.

- ***Interested in people, interactions, and plurilingualism***

In the interviews, Yunus, Ibai, and Alba displayed a strong orientation for Humanities – the “lovely humanities”, in Ibai’s words –, conveying an overt interest in people, interactions, and plurilingual practices; for this motive, they enrolled in the Global Studies degree offered by the Faculty of Humanities in the first place. Accordingly, they conceptualize cultures in terms of individuals and the relations among them, rather than as properties or features shared by a specific group or country.

Yunus, for instance, explains that he prefers to “identify” and “treat” people according to their individual behavior, without generalizing those characteristics to all the persons coming from the same country:

“[...] what is being Spanish or what is being Nigerian or what is being German or, what does that mean? [...] I don't use the idea you're from this country this is how I identify everyone else from this country but I use the idea you are this person, this is your name, and this is how you behave so I treat you as your own culture and not as representation of a wider culture.” (Extract 38, Yunus)

He further develops this topic pointing out that, even though “cultures help because they shape people”, understanding has to be built among individuals; in essence, “people should understand people, you shouldn't understand culture”. Thus, in Yunus's view, each one carries its own personal culture, which has to be acknowledged and understood in the interaction. Likewise, Alba defines culture precisely as “interaction”:

“There's many different cultures and I would say... different countries, you know... I would just say it's interaction with people, that's the culture, how you interact, how you... think of things.” (Extract 39, Alba)

She explains that she is “not that passionate about politics or economics” and, thus, enrolled in the degree mainly for its “cultural things”. Indeed, she hopes such learning experience would allow her “to go to different, you know, countries and learn more about their ways of life”, in order to “just interacting with people from different cultures”.

Ibai also manifests a strong interest for individualities, explaining that he likes to learn languages in order to interact with different people and become more conscious about their ways of seeing the world:

“I like to learn languages because it is the tool to communicate with people, and since I'm really interested in people; it's a way I can get to others, make friends, learn from some people which want to speak in other languages to have some ideas about that specific culture which will be transmitted in that particular language.” (Extract 40, Ibai)

Thus, being able to speak different languages – i.e. plurilingualism – gives access to meaningful interactions and communication with different individuals. Indeed, Ibai studied Catalan before moving to Barcelona and practiced it intensely throughout the year, achieving an excellent proficiency in it. Alba and Yunus also showed an interest in

local languages as a way to interact with the local culture: Alba took a Catalan course, while Yunus expressed his willingness to study the local language; even though he had not enough time to enroll in a course during the year, he remarks that: “it’s another culture and the least you can do is respect their language”.

Along the same lines, Yunus underlines that he “feel[s] lucky to still have [his] Spanish” as it allowed him to interact with the out-class environment. Likewise, recognizing local languages as a part of one’s identity, he reports that in his country of origin he prefers “to speak pidgin than English”, explaining that “English is not our own, it’s not ours”.

Not surprisingly, these students give great value to multilingualism, as well as to plurilingual practices. Indeed, when asked about the role of English as an international language, they acknowledge that it may be “useful” for international communication, yet they believe it should be added to one’s linguistic repertoire without substituting “the rest of local languages”, as Ibai points out:

“I think it’s [EIL] useful on it accomplishes an aim, an objective, which is to allow communication and at the same time we must be aware that it shouldn’t be an excuse to eliminate the rest of the local languages in different part of the world because they are also valuable, probably not in the economic sense or in the [...] profit from those languages, but in a much more cultural or personal value, as well as the how they frame our minds to talk different languages [...] so that’s why English shouldn’t be used to counter other languages but to add.” (Extract 41, Ibai)

For Yunus, local languages may not offer an economic advantage, but they have a strong personal value whose importance cannot be diminished. Similarly, he “also feel[s] like you should learn other languages” apart from English, on the belief that “there’re more people, the world is bigger than English”. Lastly, Alba put emphasis on plurilingual practices and translanguaging as a way to overcome possible limitations when communicating. Indeed, manifesting high linguistic flexibility, she explains that she was able to build a closer relationship with her friends because “we keep switching languages and a way that we can still... say what we want to say, it may not be in one language but all of us can understand it”.

To sum up, Alba, Yunus, and Ibai enrolled in the Global Studies degree because of their orientation towards the humanities' field. Indeed, they show a great interest in people and manifest their willingness to interact with individuals worldwide. Accordingly, they give value to local languages and plurilingualism, on the belief that they allow for communication among people.

- *I have no problems in interacting with my classmates, but...*

When reflecting on their socialization experience in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom, all four students in this group stated that they enjoyed the in-class environment and have no problems in interacting with any of their classmates. However, Víctor, Yunus, and Ibai also revealed that they did not form any intimate relationships in the classroom, while Alba reported having a small in-class intimate friends' network. Thus, their narratives confirm the picture emerged from the data collected by means of the Contact Generator.

Víctor, for instance, states “I don't have a problem with any, I think... I don't have a problem with any of my classmates”, explaining that if they ask him “about something”, he is willing to offer them help. However, he also admits that, throughout the academic year, he has not “talk[ed] to some people”. Regarding his closest relationships in the classrooms, Víctor reports interacting mainly within a small group he has formed with several of his classmates, yet he does not define them as being “friends”: “there are some students that are between... studying mates and friends, they are in-between”. In fact, he remarks that he is still very connected to his village, maintaining regular contact with the friends he had – and keeps having – there.

Likewise, Yunus tells that, in the classroom, he does not “have enemies, that's one”. He has frequent interactions with several of his classmates and belongs to an in-class “group”; yet he describes this group as being formed by “friends not as close as other friends”. As a matter of fact, Yunus believes that he has not formed intimate relationships in the classroom because he “like[s] social interactions, but [...] not too much social interactions”; accordingly, he often rejects invitations to after-class activities and events.

Ibai also affirms that he “talk[s] to a lot of people in class”. Accordingly, he believes not to belong to any specific in-class group:

“My particular case it’s a bit different from the rest because I know people from different groups and backgrounds, so I have the chance to introduce... the opportunity to join different ones.” (Extract 42, Ibai)

Nevertheless, he admits not having “engaged” with his international classmates very much, “compared to friends [he has] made with local one, with Catalans particularly.” He goes on explaining that he feels “quite closer to Catalan people than to the Spanish people, because of the values we have”. Thus, to some extent, he perceives his Catalan classmates as ingroup, rather than outgroup. It is worth mentioning again that Ibai is a Euskara native speaker and he was born and schooled in the Basque Country, an Autonomous Community in Spain characterized by a strong nationalist feeling often opposed to the Spanish one, while sharing some features with the Catalan pro-independence movement. Indeed, he further discusses this topic, pointing out that he feels “more similar” to his Catalan classmates for two main reasons: social class and ideology, on the tenet that “we tend to associate with people that have the same social situation”. Indeed, he believes that international students come from a different social class than him – “from a higher social class” – and such a difference represents a constraint for interaction. Moreover, even though “ideology doesn’t have to do with class”, he also expresses a preference to “associate with people that have the same ideology” as him. In this case, he declares not having found international – nor Spanish – classmates who share his “ideology”, or not having cultivated those relationships.

Lastly, reporting a similar in-class experience, Alba explains that she interacts with everyone in the classroom:

“Basically there’s no a person we don’t talk to in our degree, like we... communicate, we have a group chat, so... we’re constantly all in contact.” (Extract 43, Alba)

However, she also remarks that her “close net, group” is formed by two of her classmates with whom she feels sharing a similar problematized view of her sense of belonging:

“they’re equally as confused as many of us are, in the sense of where we came from and stuff”. The rest of her classmates are mainly perceived as studying partners.

In short, these four students enjoy the in-class social environment and declare not having any problems in interacting with their classmates; still, they perceive these relationships has having primarily academic and/or leisure purposes. Accordingly, they report not having intimate friends in the classroom, or a very small network, for several motives: strong connection with friends from the past, unwillingness to take part in socialization activities, or need of shared perspectives and “ideologies” in order to build in-depth relationships.

5.2.5 Students who formed only ingroup ties: two atypical cases

“I met the exact people that I wanted to meet, I love the diversity of people”

Tamar

“the kind of interactions that I have with my classmates, kind of made me scared to wanna interact”

Abdoul

The last group resulting from the network analysis is formed by only two students, Tamar and Abdoul, who reported an in-class network entirely composed by ingroup ties, whether for studying, leisure, or intimate purposes – as shown in Table 5.17. Given that both students are international students on degree mobility, these results imply that they formed ties exclusively with other international peers in the classroom. Indeed, they both reported feeling more comfortable in interacting with their international classmates, regardless of their cultural and linguistic background, explaining their tendency to form only ingroup ties.

As regards their Transcultural Competence values, Tamar and Abdoul present two slightly different pictures. Although they both reported a decrease in the questionnaires’ mean values between the beginning and the end of the academic year, such a decrease is quite large in the case of Abdoul – from 4.32 in T1 to 3.98 in T2. In fact, by the end of the academic year, his Transcultural Competence global mean value was under the threshold – i.e. the classroom’s mean value (4.20).

Student	Group	TC global value in T1	TC global value in T2	Percentage of ingroup ties (mean of the three networks)	Percentage of outgroup ties (mean of the three networks)
Tamar	INT	4.33	4.28	100%	-
Abdoul	INT	4.32	3.98	100%	-
<i>Mean value</i>		<i>4.33</i>	<i>4.13</i>	<i>100%</i>	<i>-</i>

Table 5.17 - Interviewed students reporting only ingroup ties

According to their narratives, these two students present some shared characteristics, still they report two profoundly different experiences in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom. In fact, Tamar and Abdoul have a similar personal and linguistic background, being among the oldest students enrolled in the Global Studies degree and having previous working experience in multicultural environments; besides, they also report having English and a non-European language (i.e. Hebrew and Wolof, respectively) as their first languages. Moreover, they both manifest an identity adscription rooted in the country they were born into, but they also show a connection with the global community. The in-class experience is where their narratives diverge: Tamar describes her first academic year in the Global Studies degree as an “amazing” experience, in which she found friends that “are now family” and did not experience the prejudices she was expecting; in contrast, Abdoul felt a victim of prejudices by his classmates and the interactions he had throughout the year made him afraid of “making friends”.

Thus, in the following sections, I will explore the experiences of these two students, highlighting similarities and differences along with three main themes: (1) their personal and linguistic background; (2) their understanding of culture and resulting identity affiliation; and (3) their contrasting socialization experiences in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom.

- ***Similar personal and linguistic background***

Interestingly, Tamar and Abdoul share a similar personal and linguistic background. In fact, they are among the oldest students enrolled in the degree in the year of data collection – over 23 years old at the time of the interview. Moreover, they both report earlier working experiences entailing contact with global issues and international affairs and/or exposure to people coming from distinct cultural backgrounds. Indeed, Tamar was

enrolled in the military service in Israel and then worked two years as a flight attendant based in one of the main Israeli cities; besides, she took part in several international summer camps when she was a teenager. Abdoul was born in Catalonia, where his mother is still living and working, but moved back to his Sub-Saharan African country of origin with his father at the age of 5 to return to Barcelona a few months before the start of the academic year. Abdoul is a journalist, and he worked several years with international companies in his country of origin. Thus, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom was not the first international environment these students had the opportunity to meet. However, they also remark that going on degree mobility is their first comprehensive experience in such a diverse context.

Furthermore, Tamar and Abdoul share a similar linguistic background, as they both have English and a non-European language as their main languages. However, they experience their bilingualism in two different ways. Tamar is a native speaker of Hebrew but has a remarkably high level of English. She recounts having put a lot of effort in learning this language, as she “always had the stream of getting up and leave” and believed English was essential to do so. On top of that, she explains that sometimes she feels more comfortable speaking English than Hebrew:

“I sometimes I feel that I express myself better in English... which is weird, I mean, I express myself just as well in Hebrew but I don't know, like once I, I'm speaking English all day as it is and... and I feel... [...] I can think that if you don't speak Hebrew and you're in a group, with a group of people who do speak it it's just uncomfortable, so I prefer... speak a language, English for me is the same level as Hebrew, I don't have to work hard to speak English, it comes to me naturally, so for me it's the same to talk to someone in English even though they can speak Hebrew to me.” (Extract 44, Tamar)

As Hebrew is a “very difficult language” and she believes having the same proficiency in both English and Hebrew, Tamar prefers to speak English in specific contexts in order not to make anyone feel excluded from the conversation. Thus, she shows appreciation and use of language as a tool for inclusion.

On the other hand, Abdoul suggests a noteworthy difference among “first language”, “native language”, and “mother tongue”. He believes that English is his first language since it is the one he mainly uses in interaction. However, he also considers “Spanish, I may be say Catalan” as his mother tongues because he learned them when he was a child living in Catalonia, even if he does not “remember anything now”. Thus, right now, Abdoul’s first language is “English, the official”. Nevertheless, interestingly, when asked, he explained not feeling a native speaker of English:

“No, I don’t. Because just... I just feel that way, it’s like a language that... I don’t think I’ll ever be a native speaker of English, maybe... reach the level but I, if you ask me the question, I’ll always answer ‘I’m not a native speaker’, ‘cause I believe, English... some XXX if I want to speak English at the level of a native, you should be called like a native speaker, but in my case I believe it’s different.”
(Extract 45, Abdoul)

Hence, he does not feel a native speaker of English. Instead, Abdoul believes that he is a native speaker of Wolof, which he defines as: “it’s a local language on in West-Africa and it’s [...] generally like the language, the *lingua franca* in the Gambia and Senegal”. He explains that Wolof is needed for interacting in those countries, ultimately affirming: “I would also consider that to be my mother tongue”.

- ***Constructing identity: through comparison or adaptation?***

Overall, when asked about the community or group they would most feel identified with, both Tamar and Abdoul revealed to feel connected with the place they were born into. At the same time, they also explain that they can easily relate to the global community and, accordingly, feel comfortable in an international environment. Nevertheless, the way they articulate their sense of belonging is linked with their understanding and conceptualization of culture and, thus, presents several differences.

On the one hand, Tamar considers each culture as “defined in comparison to other cultures”. She believes that intercultural contact experiences are indispensable to understand one own’s culture and gain a deeper awareness of the features and

perspectives rooted in it. This self-reflective process represents a preliminary step to understand and relate with other cultures more easily:

“I think your culture is defined in comparison to other cultures, so if, for example if I lived in the whole world but Israel I would not know what my culture is so I, I know, I understand Israel culture when I look at other cultures, so it takes small difference like... [...] you grow up in an environment that makes you think this is obvious but... but... eventually if you, if you are to grow up and question everything and say “ok, nothing is obvious”, like people could do, a different culture could do the exact opposite and it would not mean that it’s not ok [...] I think once you are able to get this perspective and it really helps to understand it more [...]” (Extract 46, Tamar)

Accordingly, Tamar explains that thanks to her previous intercultural experiences and interaction, she learned “how to put my perspective out of my own culture”. Indeed, even before moving to Barcelona, she “feel[s] very comfortable in international environment”, remarking that: “a very big part of me is, is ok and even prefers to be in somewhere that is not Israeli, like hearing languages that are not Hebrew”. However, Tamar also admits being strongly connected to her home country – i.e. Israel, where her family lives – and would define herself as “Israeli, definitely”. In sum, she is displaying a *glocal* identity.

On the other hand, Abdoul understands culture as “an adaptation”. Switching his view towards a more global perspective, he now believes that no matter where a person comes from, living in a multicultural environment – such as Barcelona – they will adapt to the shared lifestyle of the city:

“[...] since I came here, if you ask me also, somebody had asked me in [*Sub-Saharan African country of origin*] ‘what culture is’, I would tell you ‘the all of Africa is culture’... that was the answer I would have given you, but since I came here, I realized that the definition of culture would be a little more wider than that... why? Because, here, I see a lot of different people and what I mean different people, I mean people from, especially in Barcelona, people from different kinds of countries, and you see them behaving in the same way, adapting to the culture

of this place. Would you call a culture? No, that is not culture, that is something shared, is like a shared meaning... [...]" (Extract 47, Abdoul)

In line with this vision, Abdoul displays a more changing and context-dependent identity adscription. For instance, he recounts that, when still in his country of origin, although being born in Spain, he would define himself as "[*Sub-Saharan African*]" because he was physically living there. However, after arriving in Barcelona, he started introducing himself as a "black Catalan" to his local classmates, as he believed that to be born in Catalonia like them "could be something to bring [them] closer".

Abdoul's sense of belonging further evolved throughout the year and, at the time of the interview, he explains that he opts for defining himself depending on the situation he finds himself in and the people by whom he is surrounded; still, his preferred narrative is: "Spanish-[*Sub-Saharan African*] [...] so that you know that I come from different cultures and it doesn't make any difference". Being able to convey all his cultural influences in his sense of belonging is what Abdoul aims to. Indeed, he remarks that, after one academic year in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom, he now feels more a "global person", who does not want to confine his self to a single community and could "fit into any kind of society":

"[...] when I came here I interacting with different kind of people, from different countries around the world in my class, I think there are about 10 or more than 10 of them, nationalities from different countries, so this interaction gave me the, you know... the sense of "oh, I should not just confine myself to one single community, in west Africa or something like that, I should be a global person [...]" (Extract 48, Abdoul)

- ***Two opposite in-class socialization experiences***

Both students in this group recognize the added value of the multi-dimensionally classroom by giving them the opportunity to interact with people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds and face a variety of perspectives. Moreover, Tamar points to the fact that they have to study and communicate solely in English, which is no one first language, as a key aspect of the degree. Indeed, she believes that "we're all kind of out

of our comfort zone” and this may “force us [...] to make connections, regardless of our background and where we come from.” Nevertheless, both Tamar and Abdoul report feeling more comfortable in interacting with other international classmates, rather than with the local ones. Except for these common aspects, their narratives show two completely different socialization experiences in the classroom, one being positive and the other a negative one: Tamar describes her classmates as “family”, and the in-class environment completely fulfilled her expectations; Abdoul’s hopes were strongly demolished and his experience in the classroom made him afraid of interactions.

As to Tamar, she manifests great enjoyment of the classroom atmosphere and the in-class interactions: “I love it very much, I met the exact people that I wanted to meet, I love the diversity of people”. She goes on explaining that her in-class friends “are now family” to her and these relationships give her more confidence and “security” in dealing with the whole experience abroad, in such aspects as bureaucracy and adapting. She especially mentions a Brazilian classmate she became best friend with and with whom she shares several activities, in-class as well as outside the university context. Moreover, she did not experience the prejudices she would have expected coming from Israel:

“[...] the fear is always getting to a new place and having to say that you’re Israeli and having people like reacting badly or not liking you because of this and I think that being here made me look at myself as Israeli so, so different because I constantly get the feedback of, of other people hearing that I’m from Israel, there are so many different reactions, and so many... like I’m so surprised [...], like people don’t automatically react negatively just because this country is controversial, it’s something that was not obvious to me because... when you’re in Israel people always tell you ‘be careful, be careful’ [...]” (Extract 49, Tamar)

As a matter of fact, she expressed great surprise in finding out that people were interested in her country and asked questions about it, rather than reacting negatively. At this respect, Tamar feels that her classmates’ interest in both Hebrew language and Israel’s culture and sociopolitical situation is “amazing” and describes them as “so open [...] so... curious and interested”. Furthermore, she reveals that the aspect she enjoys the most of such an experience is being “surrounded by different languages”:

“[...] my favorite part is that I get to study in English and communicate in English but I always have the Spanish on the side, like I hear like... I hear conversations in Spanish and my friends are speaking Spanish to me sometimes and I may not be able always to answer properly but I'd always understand what they're telling me so... it's a very good experience for me.” (Extract 50, Tamar)

As for her in-class networks, she reports being part of a group mainly formed by Spanish-speakers and explains that “I don't ask them to change the language”. Apart from having the chance to be constantly exposed to both English and Spanish, Tamar is also learning Portuguese with her already-mentioned Brazilian best friend while she is teaching her Hebrew. In essence, classmates offer her affordances to practice and learn languages. Moreover, as previously discussed, she perceives language as a tool for inclusion; hence, she expresses her willingness to interact in English also with her Hebrew-speaking classmates: “once I got into the mode of English and... try not to exclude anyone else then I stay in the English”.

In line with this view, Tamar does not feel that “at any point the language was a barrier” in the process of bonding with her classmates. However, she points at two other aspects relevant in building intimate relationships: time and age. Indeed, she mentions being “relatively older than... than [her] classmates” and declares to “hang out more” with the older students in the classroom – i.e. other international students –, as she “feel[s] it was naturally more connection”. Moreover, she believes that it took her time to find the “right people”, as well as for these friendships to evolve and consolidate. In sum, the first year in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom completely fulfilled Tamar's expectations.

Similarly, Abdoul had high expectations on the in-class social experience, believing he is a “very interactive person” who enjoys learning about others' background:

“[...] I'm a very interactive person and I like to listen to people, to interact with people... notwithstanding your background, your nationality, your creed, your religion, your gender or, you know, the way you think... I just like to interact with people, like to learn about cultures, all the people [...] Barcelona is a great city

and I expected to make a lot of friends, in my classmates first before outside [...]"
(Extract 51, Abdoul)

Consequently, before entering the degree, he expected to meet people with whom "venture the beautiful environment of Barcelona together". However, he states that in the class, he experienced the same prejudices he was a victim of outside. Abdoul goes on explaining that "if I go outside and feel like I'm prejudiced and so, there're been prejudices and all, discriminating or something" but in the classroom he could appreciate a more inclusive and comfortable environment, it would not be a problem. Instead, he remarks that "the same environment in class it's what [he] found outside". Thus, the in-class experience did not fulfill his expectations: "I was hoping that I would have better experience as classmates just as I used to have in [*Sub-Saharan African country*]" ; instead, the interactions he wanted did "not started happen". More so, the interactions he had throughout the year with his classmates made him scared of interacting:

"The kind of behavior or... the kind of interactions that I have with my classmates, kind of made me scared to wanna interact with... like, if I would be treated in this way outside, like inside is enough [...] I feel like I complete the degree right now just so I could free myself from the classroom that I have, 'cause I'm not having the interactions that I need [...]" (Extract 52, Abdoul)

Hence, Abdoul feels isolated in the classroom, confessing that now "making friends is something that I'm scared". Indeed, his overall major decrease was in the Intercultural Sensitivity questionnaire, from 4.26 in T1 to 3.47 in T2.

As he is "the kind of person who likes to ask questions", he manifests willingness to understand why he found himself in this situation. Among the possible reasons, he mentions the fact that he joined the degree one month after the beginning of the academic year and, thus, "people consider [him] a stranger". However, after the entire year, he recognizes that there are several classmates he has never interacted with yet. Abdoul believes that also language may have played a role in making him feel isolated. Indeed, he feels that his classmates "want not to communicate in Spanish not in English", preferring to "mostly communicate in Catalan". Thus, as he "do[es] not speak the Catalan up to that level", he is excluded from most of the conversations. On the contrary, he

rejects that age may have contributed to his situation, believing that “university is not made for age groups.”

Overall, Abdoul reports an extremely unexpected and unpleasant in-class socialization experience. Nevertheless, in the interview, he also expressed hope for things to go better the following academic year – perceived “like a first year for me in my class” – and stated he would put effort into changing his situation.

Chapter 6 - DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter, I will discuss the results of the present study in order to answer its research questions. Specifically, in Section 6.1, I will focus on, first, the development of Transcultural Competence in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom along the first year of study in the higher education context (RQ1) and, second, if, and to what extent, such development differs from that of students in lesser internationalized classrooms (RQ2). Subsequently, Section 6.2 will be devoted to the relationship between that development and the in-class intercultural social networks formed in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom (RQ3). Then, I will provide some recommendations for maximizing the benefits of students' diversity in higher education in the light of the results of the present study (Section 6.3). Finally, venues for future research will be presented (Section 6.4), and some final conclusions will be drawn (Section 6.5).

6.1 The development of Transcultural Competence in first-year university students

In this section, I will answer Research Question 1 and Research Question 2 reported here:

RQ1. In the context of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom, does undergraduates' Transcultural Competence increase during the first year at university? If so, to what extent?

RQ2. As regards their degree of Transcultural Competence, do undergraduates from the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom differ from those from lesser internationalized ones? If so, to what extent?

Thus, each of the following subsections will focus on one of these research questions.

6.1.1 Changes in students' Transcultural Competence in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom (RQ1)

As quantitative results have shown (Section 4.1.2), students of the Global Studies undergraduate degree – i.e. the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom – reported high Transcultural Competence at the beginning of their first academic year at university. Indeed, all the three components of the construct under analysis – i.e. International Posture, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Global Identity – scored a mean value above 4, pointing to positive attitudes towards global topics and issues, interest, engagement, and enjoyment in intercultural interactions, respect for cultural differences, and a connection with or feeling of belonging to the global community. This does not come as a surprise, partially confirming our first research hypothesis (Section 2.4.3), since students voluntarily enrolled in a degree focused on global issues and with a multilingual and multicultural outlook: like students going on study abroad (Engle & Engle, 2004), they show previous predisposition and interest towards interculturality and interactions, demonstrating those qualities needed to truly take advantage of the multi-dimensionally internationalized environment.

Moreover, the majority of Global Studies students (i.e. 86% of respondents) reported having already at least one *international friend*, defined as an individual who was born or whose parents were born in a different country from one's own. This denotes that, along with previous interest and predisposition, these students also had the opportunity to experience intercultural interactions before entering the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom. Not surprisingly, students who reported prior international friendships were also the ones showing significantly higher values in the Intercultural Sensitivity questionnaire (Section 4.1.5). Such a result is highly relevant as it confirms that intercultural interactions have a large impact on the affective component of Transcultural Competence, allowing individuals to enhance their respect for cultural differences, as well as their engagement, confidence, attentiveness, and enjoyment in the interaction itself (Aksoy & Akkoç, 2019; de Santos-Velasco, 2018; Meydanlioglu et al., 2015; Ruiz-Bernardo, 2012; Del Villar, 2018; Vilà-Baños, 2006). It seems that, as suggested by Jon (2013), the relationship between intercultural interactions and intercultural competences has a bidirectional nature: the more you interact, the more you

develop your awareness and sensitivity and, consequently, you are more willing to interact. On the contrary, from a quantitative point of view, international attitudes – i.e. International Posture – and global identity affiliation – i.e. Global Identity – seem not to be significantly correlated with having or not having experienced intercultural interactions; still, qualitative data will present a more nuanced picture (Section 6.2.4 and 6.2.5).

Unexpectedly, after one academic year in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom in which all participants formed at least one international friendship, Global Studies students reported lower mean values in all the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires (Section 4.1.3). Although all mean values were still above 4, such a decrease seems to suggest that the first-hand, repeated intercultural experience may have a negative impact on Transcultural Competence, confirming previous studies on the negative effects that may arise from intergroup contact (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011; Pettigrew et al. 2011). As a matter of fact, the intercultural encounter may not always be a success, as already suggested by Jackson's (2008, 2011, 2015) set of studies on Hong King students undertaking a short-term study abroad experience in the United Kingdom.

Nonetheless, in regard to the attitudinal and identity dimensions of our Transcultural Competence construct, participants' mean values only experienced a small drop. Hence, students' interest in foreign affairs and news, their attitudes towards the international community, and their identity adscription seem not to have been significantly affected by the multi-dimensionally internationalized environment, in either positive or in negative terms. Actually, the only significant decrease turned out to be in the Intercultural Sensitivity questionnaire, the one explicitly tackling students' involvement in intercultural interactions (Section 4.1.4). Although unexpected, this result endorses previous findings suggesting that actual intercultural contact may foster the development of more ethnocentric attitudes and make individuals lose willingness to interact interculturally (e.g. Isabelli-García, 2006; Jackson, 2008, 2015; Kinginger, 2008, 2010; Pogorelova, 2016). At this respect, it would be interesting to analyze each of the five dimensions of the Intercultural Sensitivity questionnaire (Section 3.4.2), to explore which ones were largely affected and to what extent. In fact, empirical studies (Engle & Engle, 2004; Medina-López-Portillo, 2004) reporting a positive impact of the study abroad (i.e.

intercultural) experience on overall students' intercultural sensitivity – i.e. empathy, respect and awareness of cultural difference, and intercultural interactions – mostly measured the construct with Bennet's (1986) IDI; on the contrary, research adopting Chen and Starosta's (2000) scale – i.e. the one used here – detected no differences in intercultural sensitivity after the experience abroad (Gordon & Mwavita, 2018) or only in some of the dimensions of the scale (Lee & Song, 2019; Pogorelova, 2016).

Yet, students showed less consistency in their responses by the end of the academic year in each of the three Transcultural Competence dimensions under analysis (Section 4.1.4). Such an increase in standard deviation – albeit small – points to the fact that the in-class experience may have very different outcomes, emphasizing the relevance of individual and personal trajectories in the intercultural experience (Krajewski, 2011), as each individual may go through a different path. In this sense, some students may have developed their awareness and sensitivity towards cultural differences and/or redefined their identity in a more global perspective, while others may have reinforced their national identity and/or previous stereotypes, as we will see when discussing students' interviews and specifically the five case-study groups emerged (Section 6.2.5).

Therefore, relying on such results, it may be affirmed that Intercultural Sensitivity is the variable most influenced by the transcultural experience, more so if entailing repeated and close intercultural interactions. As a matter of fact, the affective component of our Transcultural Competence construct was higher in students who had established intercultural friendships before enrolling in the degree, but also the only one experiencing a significant decrease when actual daily contact was in place. These results bring further evidence on the crucial role played by the affective domain in how individuals experience and are affected by intercultural contact (Davies et al., 2011; Lee & Song, 2019).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the Global Identity questionnaire was the one showing the most ambiguous results, scoring the lowest mean value and the largest standard deviation at both the beginning and the end of the academic year. On the tenet that, in the interconnected transcultural society, individuals are required to build flexible and flowing identities to become able to cross cultural boundaries and build understanding (Jacob, 2013; Meyer, 1991; Ting-Toomey, 1999; Welsch, 1999), such a questionnaire was included in the study to account for the identity component of the wider Transcultural

Competence construct. Specifically, the Global Identity scale (Türken & Rudmin, 2013) aimed to measure students' degree of affiliation to what has been called a *cosmopolitan* or *global* identity, consisting of the ability to transcend borders, decentering, and a feeling of belonging to the international community. However, such an identity ascription should not be seen as being in opposition to a more local one: personal and cultural roots and a more cosmopolitan stance may coexist and be integrated into one's own identity – that is, a *glocal identity* (Robertson, 1995; Sung, 2014).

The point is that the Global Identity scale included two components – i.e. Cultural Openness and Non-Nationalism – that may not clearly tackle this option, drawing a cut-off line between *national* and *global* identity. Consequently, a low value may not necessarily stand for an ethnocentric stance, rather it may indicate a strong attachment of an individual to their own local roots without rejecting the possibility of relating and identifying with the international community. As a matter of fact, Plews' (2015) Canadian students demonstrated how a national and a more intercultural identity are not mutually exclusive, more so in multilingual and multicultural contexts in which the two stances can even reinforce each other. It should be kept in mind that the present study has been conducted in Catalonia, a highly multicultural and multilingual environment in which the educational policies foster the use of the local language Catalan – along with Spanish and English – as a means to achieve internationalization and interculturality (Pérez-Vidal, Trenchs Parera & Lorenzo, 2016). Thus, we may expect that students' variability in response reveals precisely such a stance already detected in studies among Catalan secondary school students a decade ago (Newman, et al., 2008; Trenchs-Parera & Newman, 2009): they are ascribing to a *glocal* identity that retains the local while embracing the global (Jacob, 2013). Here, again, it would be interesting for future research to analyze the two components separately to shed further light on these results.

All in all, students enrolled in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom showed high International Posture, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Global Identity even before entering the internationalized higher education context. Such high mean values may explain why they enrolled in the degree in the first place, pointing to previous interest in global issues, predisposition towards cultural diversity and intercultural interactions, and a flexible identity ascription. However, the slight decrease in the values – yet

significant in the case of the Intercultural Sensitivity questionnaire –, as well as the higher standard deviation detected by the end of the academic year, seem to suggest that the actual transcultural experience is not free of complexities and that each individual may experience it differently. Thus, even when all the conditions are favorable, the first-hand encounter with interculturality may negatively affect the development of Transcultural Competence.

6.1.2 Differences between the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom and lesser internationalized ones as regards students' Transcultural Competence (RQ2)

The second objective of the present study was to explore the specificities of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom as concerns students' degree of Transcultural Competence when compared to more ordinary university classrooms – that is, lesser internationalized classrooms that may have a multilingual and multicultural makeup but lacking a high percentage of international students on degree mobility, with a much lesser internationalized curriculum, and with no or residual EMI. Consequently, the same Transcultural Competence questionnaire was administered to a control group formed by students enrolled in the first year of other degrees at the same university (Section 3.2).

As concerns their linguistic, cultural, and educational background (Section 4.2.1), the profile of this group of students represents the general population enrolled in first-year university classrooms at the UPF well, but also undergraduate population in both Catalonia and Europe (Eurostat, 2017): there is a higher percentage of females than males; students are between 17 and 19 years old when entering university; they are mainly born and schooled locally; and they report speaking the local language(s) along with the most studied ones (i.e. English predominantly, but also often French and German).

At the beginning of the academic year, participants from the Control group scored quite high in all the three dimensions of the Transcultural Competence questionnaires, yet with slight differences (Section 4.2.2). Actually, the only mean value above 4 was reported in the Intercultural Sensitivity scale (mean value = 4.01). Such a result may find an

explanation in the fact that the majority of these students were schooled in Catalonia, a multicultural and multilingual environment in which they may have experienced previous contact with people coming from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds – such as in primary and secondary school classrooms, or in (tele)collaboration projects – developing, thus, a favorable predisposition towards intercultural interactions. As a matter of fact, two-thirds of the participants reported to have at least one international friend before starting university, confirming William's (2015) finding that “exposure to various cultures” is one of the best predictors of intercultural sensitivity.

Furthermore, Control group students reported quite a high interest in global issues and positive attitudes towards the international community – i.e. International Posture questionnaire (mean value = 3.89) –, and a moderate global identity adscription – i.e. Global Identity questionnaire (mean value = 3.74). However, it should be noted that, in all the three questionnaires under analysis, the standard deviation is quite high, pointing to large inconsistency in the responses among participants. This comes not as a surprise if we consider that students from the Control group were enrolled in a range of different degrees – such as Medicine, Law, Engineering, and Applied Languages. Such a variety of academic domains reflects students' different interests, trajectories, and future goals that may or may not include interculturality, global issues, and an international orientation.

What is noteworthy is that students' International Posture, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Global Identity did not experience any changes by the end of their first academic year at university (Section 4.2.3 and 4.2.4). Likewise, students reported almost the same number of international friends. Such results seem to suggest that the higher education context per se – even if highly internationalized as the UPF is – does not have an impact on students' Transcultural Competence, nor it fosters the formation of intercultural friendships. This is fully in line with theoretical and empirical studies underlining the relevance and benefit of implementing interventions and specific actions aiming to both foster students' intercultural learning and enhance interaction between local and international students at university (e.g. Burdett, 2014; Leask, 2009; Oguro & Jackson, 2018; UNESCO, 2006; Williams, 2005). Moreover, in consonance with previous research (e.g. Campbell, 2012; Jon, 2013; Krajewski, 2011; Nesdale & Todd, 2000), intercultural

interactions and intercultural competences emerge as two highly intertwined factors; indeed, both at the beginning and the end of the academic year, participants who reported to have at least one international friend were also the ones showing significantly higher Transcultural Competence, in the attitudinal, affective, and identity dimensions of the construct (Section 4.2.5).

It is worth remarking that, as for the Global Studies participants, the Global Identity questionnaire presented the lowest mean value and the higher standard deviation in both timings, pointing at the controversies of the construct and the questionnaire itself. As mentioned, the Control group was mainly formed by students born and schooled in Catalonia; although being a multilingual and multicultural environment, this region is characterized by a strong attachment to the local language and culture and the presence of a long-standing pro-independence movement. However, as remarked by previous research in this area (e.g. Lasagabaster, 2017; Newman, et al., 2008; Pérez-Vidal et al., 2020; Trenchs-Parera & Newman, 2009), Catalan youths make use of their linguistic and cultural roots to build a cosmopolitan stance, being the perfect example of that *glocal* identity that the questionnaire adopted may not capture adequately.

At this point, if we compare the results of the Transcultural Competence questionnaires between students enrolled in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom – i.e. the Global Studies degree – and those in classrooms with a lesser degree of internationalization – i.e. the Control group –, all the specificities of such new educational environment arise (Section 4.3). As expected, Global Studies students scored higher mean values in the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires, and reported a larger number of international friendships, both at the beginning and the end of the academic year. Moreover, the lower values of standard deviation point to more consistency in the responses than in those of their fellow students from other degrees. This result confirms the research hypothesis that students enrolled in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom tend to have higher Transcultural Competence, in the attitudinal, affective, and identity dimensions of the construct (Section 2.4.3). As a matter of fact, they voluntarily enrolled in a degree characterized by a focus on global issues and the presence of both international and local students, revealing to be a quite homogeneous group with previous interest and sensitivity towards interculturality.

Nevertheless, at a closer look, we find out that only the difference in the mean values of International Posture and Global Identity between the two groups is significant in both timings (Section 4.3.1 and 4.3.3). Interestingly, by the end of the academic year, Global Studies participants did not report a significantly higher degree of Intercultural Sensitivity than the students enrolled in other degrees at the university (Section 4.3.2). Indeed, as discussed, students from the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom presented a decrease in sensitivity after their first academic year in such a context. Thus, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom's students showed significantly larger interest in international and global topics, favorable attitudes towards the international community, and a more global identity adscription than their fellow students' even before entering university. However, while maintaining that orientation throughout the academic year, they also lost enjoyment, engagement, and confidence in intercultural interactions precisely when experiencing them.

In fact, these results need to be further investigated. For instance, it would be worthwhile to take into account the different components of the Intercultural Sensitivity construct (Chen & Starosta, 2000) separately, as previous studies have detected several differences among them (Pastena, Sesé & Trenchs-Parera, in press). Also, it would be interesting to focus solely on local students since Nesdale and Todd's (2000) study suggests that international students may start from an already higher intercultural basis, while Gordon and Mwavita (2018) did not find any difference in Intercultural Sensitivity between a group of local students taking an "international" course at their home university and those who did not.

In sum, students from classrooms with a lesser degree of internationalization showed a moderate degree of Transcultural Competence both at the beginning and the end of the academic year, although no changes in time were detected. However, they reported significantly lower values than students enrolled in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom, at least for the attitudinal and identity dimensions of the construct. Also, the latter group presented more consistency in the responses, demonstrating common interests, orientation, and attitudes, whereas students from the Control group may have a variety of diverse interests and goals, as revealed by the fact that they enrolled in a range of different degrees.

All in all, it seems that the internationalized higher education environment per se does not foster the development of Transcultural Competence nor the formation of significant intercultural friendships. Thus, results of this study bring further evidence to the widespread call for interventions and the implementation of programs and actions specifically aiming to foster intercultural learning. More notably, when intercultural contact and reflection on global and transcultural topics occur daily and in a controlled environment – i.e. the university classroom –, they seem to negatively impact students' Intercultural Sensitivity. However, the interface between intercultural interactions and the development of transcultural competences is much more fluid and multi-layered than shown by quantitative data. Also, it may be experienced differently by each individual or group of individuals, as the following discussion on the results of the Contact Generator and students' interviews will reveal.

6.2 Intercultural interactions and Transcultural Competence in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom (RQ3)

In this section, I will answer Research Question 3 reported here:

RQ3. In the context of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom, to what extent is students' degree of Transcultural Competence influenced by their intercultural in-class social networks?

To better answer such a question, results will be discussed along five main themes. Firstly, the advantages and specificities of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom as a context to study intercultural interactions and the development of Transcultural Competence will be presented (Section 6.2.1). Then, the social networks formed by students during their first academic year will be addressed, considering the tendency to homophilic or heterophilic interactions (Section 6.2.2), and the enablers and blockers perceived to operate in the development of cross-cultural friendships will be discussed (Section 6.2.3). Subsequently, the focus will be on the impact of in-class intercultural interactions on students' Transcultural Competence at the general classroom level (Section 6.2.4). Finally, the five case-study groups emerged from quantitative data

will be discussed as five possible patterns of the interaction between intercultural relationships and the development of Transcultural Competence (Section 6.2.5).

6.2.1 The benefits of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom for exploring intercultural interactions and Transcultural Competence

As mentioned, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom is quite a new phenomenon and, to date, few research has been conducted on such a context, far less with an interactionist perspective. Several of its aspects and characteristics deserve to be investigated, such as students' previous predisposition, motivations, and expectations in joining such a classroom, and the role of the internationalized curriculum, comprising contents and activities focused on global issues and actively enhancing a broader perspective, self-reflection, and the re-evaluation of previous knowledge and stereotypes. Nevertheless, the present study demonstrates that the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom is a fertile context for studying spontaneous intercultural interactions and the not-intervention-driven development of Transcultural Competence, as well as the interaction between these two factors. This is so for two main reasons.

On the one hand, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom responds to all four conditions posited by Allport's (1954) Intergroup Contact Theory for optimal contact to occur (Section 2.2.2): the groups involved have equal status, as both international and local peers are university students belonging to the same generation; they share the common goal of learning and succeed academically; accordingly, they are not in competition, rather they tend to adopt cooperative strategies, also fostered by seminars' group-work and other collaborative tasks; and the contact is "supported by authorities" since students are enrolled in an official degree offered by public university with the explicit aim of mixing local and international students. Moreover, students also comply with the fifth condition proposed by Pettigrew (1998), as they have "friendship potential": the classroom environment, the shared interests, and the belonging to the same generation allow for frequent and repeated contact, close interactions, and self-disclosure. Although several studies have proved that these conditions are not a *conditio-sine-qua-non*

(Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), it is also true that, whenever they occur, meaningful interactions are more likely to take place and their outcomes are usually more positive. Actually, the picture appearing in the present study is more layered. Quantitative data discussed above (Section 6.1.1) seem to suggest that the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom has a negative impact on students' transcultural competences. Still, as we have seen from the analysis of students' interviews (Section 5.2) and will further discuss shortly (Section 6.2.3 to 6.2.5), qualitative data offer a more detailed and heterogeneous perspective on how individuals experience and are affected by intergroup contact.

On the other hand, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom offers the opportunity to study local and international students together under the same parameters and conditions. Such a standpoint is almost missing in previous research, which usually adopts a unilateral approach (Volet & Jones, 2012; see also Section 2.3) or, when taking into account the two groups together, embraces a comparative perspective – such as comparing the linguistic and intercultural gains of students undertaking a study abroad experience with the ones of students staying at-home (e.g. Lee & Song, 2019; Williams, 2005), or looking at how differently local and international students experience cooperative group-work and other types of interventions seeking to enhance contact (e.g. Burdett, 2014; Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Volet & Ang, 1998/2012). Results of the present study reveal that local and international students may share comparable experiences and/or adopt similar behaviors in the classroom, regardless of their “label” as regards origin (Teichler, 2015); for this reason, they should not be studied independently nor in opposition to one another. Also, in both groups, students exhibit individual differences. The perspective adopted in the present research, thus, is consistent with those scholars calling for more studies investigating the host community's perspective (Kinginger, 2009, 2013) and individual differences (Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018; Krajewski, 2011; Ujitani & Volet, 2008; Volet & Jones, 2012), in order to really take into account “the reciprocity of transformative opportunities” (Kudo et al., 2017, 2019; Volet & Jones, 2012;).

In fact, several local students claim the Global Studies degree to be a real and comprehensive “international experience”; in some cases, even the first one they have really experienced. Therefore, in line with this view, it would not be indispensable for

everyone to go abroad to face the international and deal with the encounter with the culturally and linguistically different if in schools support to policies and actions calling for widespread intercultural education (CEFR Companion, 2018, 2020; Spencer-Oatey & Franklin, 2009; UNESCO, 2006) is provided. Accordingly, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom appears as an excellent opportunity to explore intercultural interactions at university and the development of Transcultural Competence.

Such a classroom reveals itself as a *community of practice* (Wenger, 1998), in which students share experiences and interact, allowing for similarities to be acknowledged beyond borders, regardless of their linguistic and cultural background. Thus, students' social activity becomes an integral part of their learning experience (e.g. Coleman, 2013, 2015; de Federico de la Rúa, 2002, 2003; Isabelli-Garcia et al., 2018). As a matter of fact, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom does not only grant academic and content learning, but also, thanks to everyday intercultural interactions, provides students with the opportunity of gathering new knowledge, widening their point of view, increasing their intercultural awareness and sensitivity, and learning to be global citizens; in essence, to become transculturally competent.

Accordingly, classmates become affordances for deeper and first-hand learning (Krajewski, 2011), though to various extents. Nonetheless, remarkably, all participants in the present study acknowledge the value of intercultural interactions, even if not developing them further and maintaining the relationship at a functional level (i.e. studying or doing academic tasks together). As a matter of fact, several local students who revealed a tendency to ingroup interactions – such as Eva, Marina, and Laura –, also expressed regret for not having formed closer friendships with their international classmates, believing they would be more enriching. This is actually in contrast with the findings of previous studies reporting that local students do not perceive the benefits of interacting with international peers (Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2017) or that they report those interactions as being exclusively pragmatically motivated (Dunne, 2013; Peacock & Harrison, 2009).

Hence, unlike Halualani's (2008, 2010) students, participants in our research do not take intercultural interactions for granted. Likewise, they do not consider carrying them out just for being in an internationalized classroom or university, nor do they consider as

“intercultural interactions” just those happening outside their close social network. By contrast, students in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom all recognize the relevance of first-hand experiences in the construction of their selves and the development of intercultural and transcultural competences. Overall, thus, it can be affirmed that, although students may perceive intercultural engagement as “more demanding”, it will undoubtedly not be “less rewarding” for them, contrary to what suggested by Dunne (2009).

6.2.2 In-class social networks and the process of homophily

To begin with, it should be remarked that empirical studies on university students’ social networks have rarely taken into account different degrees of intimacy of the relationship at the same time; instead, they tend to investigate either academic or intimate ties (Shu et al., 2020). Specifically, studies focus on either the interactions carried out by students for studying purposes (i.e. group work) or the development of close friendship. Such an approach found in previous literature, considering a single quality of ties at a time, makes it hard to consider students’ social experience exhaustively. Thus, in the present study, the relationships among participants are explored along three different degrees of intimacy – i.e. academic, leisure, and intimate ties –, out of the belief that an individual’s social life is composed of several levels of interaction, each one of them performing a specific function and all contributing to one’s own experiences and identity construction.

On the contrary, a variable often investigated in previous studies, yet not considered here, is time spent with friends and/or other kinds of interactors (Davies et al., 2011). Although such a factor has not been taken into account in the present study, it may be assumed that two students reporting to be intimate friends will also spend more time together than if they were studying partners, as a larger amount of time is required to develop meaningful and trusting relationships.

As concerns the size of students’ in-class social network, data predictably showed that the more intimate the relationship, the less dense the student’s network will be (Section 5.1.1 and 5.1.2). This indicates that students nominated a large number of classmates as studying partners, but just a few of them – or even no one in three cases – as intimate

friends. Such a result does not come as a surprise if we look at our own social networks: we all tend to form and maintain several relationships for work or study purposes, whereas we can often count the number of close friends on just one hand. As predicted by Dunbar's circles of friendship (2010), going from close friends to acquaintances, "each layer is three times the size of the layer directly preceding it", as individuals are only able to maintain a certain number of close relationships at once.

Nevertheless, interestingly, high inconsistency was found here between the number of self-reported partners and the one of nominations received (Section 5.1.2). This means that half of the times when a student nominated, for example, a studying partner, such a tie was not reciprocated; or vice versa, a student was selected as studying partner by a classmate while not accounting themselves for that tie. A possible explanation may be found in how students interpreted the definitions of what I have labelled as *studying partner*, *leisure partners*, and *intimate friends*. For instance, some participants may have selected only the most frequent studying and/or leisure partners, while others may have also included classmates with whom they just did one activity or went once to a party together.

However, the definition provided for an *intimate friend* – i.e. someone "who would you contact if you have a personal problem or talk to about intimate/private things: for instance, you are ill and need to go to the doctor, you are suffering a love breakdown, you miss your family" – was more specific and unambiguous. Thus, with respect to the intimate network, such a lack of reciprocity in students' nominations seems odd and would need to be further investigated. Also, it should be remarked that the Contact Generator was a self-report instrument explicitly designed for this study, requiring revision and improvement for future research in order to overcome possible controversial results. For instance, definitions could be enriched by adding more examples or including the frequency of contact. Also, a recall name generator would prove useful in detecting more meaningful relationships, as participants would be required to freely write the names of their partners rather than selecting them from a pre-made list.

As explained in the Methodology chapter (Section 3.2), in order to examine more specifically intercultural interactions among university students the 33 participants from the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom were not divided explicitly into

locals and *internationals*; instead, they were distributed in three groups – i.e. Catalans, Spaniards, and Internationals – according to their context of schooling and origin. Actually, such a grouping may overlap with the division found in the existing literature; still, it also allows to take into account students' different trajectories and previous experiences in greater detail. As a matter of fact, even though previous research has highlighted a lack of contact between local and international peers or the formation of superficial, task-oriented relationships (e.g. McFaul, 2016; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Nesdale et al., 1995; Neri & Ville, 2008; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Sánchez, 2004; Volet & Ang 1998/2012; see also Section 2.3.2), results of the present study seem to point to a slightly different and more nuanced picture.

As a matter of fact, when the interaction has a functional focus (Kudo et al., 2019) – that is, for studying purposes – students of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom show a tendency to outgroup relationships (Section 5.1.3); that is, they tend to study for academic tasks and activities with classmates from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In this respect, it is worth mentioning again that the UPF adopts a teaching methodology strongly based on group work and collaborative learning in all its degrees. However, such a result may be explained by the fact that seminar groups are often pre-organized by the faculty but change across subjects – as mentioned by Laura (Section 5.2.1, p. 13) –, and sometimes instructors may require students to select different classmates for each activity – as pointed out by Rosa (Section 5.2.2, p. 26). Indeed, seminars typically present a more student-centered environment; in such contexts, as also underlined by Rienties, Hernández, et al. (2013), students were usually forced to work in pairs or small groups and, thus, intercultural interactions were more likely to occur.

As for leisure activities and close friendships, data reveal the process of *homophily* – i.e. tendency to form relationships among individuals sharing a certain characteristic – to be in action. Hence, when the interaction has a more “instrumental” or personal focus (cfr. Kudo et al., 2019), our participants will tend to choose a partner with a comparable cultural background or in a similar schooling and linguistic condition, though not to a very large extent. Actually, the more intimate the relationship is, the more often students will select “similar” partners. Indeed, cultural homophily has been identified as a determining factor for close friendship development in several previous studies (e.g.

Gareis, 2000; Kudo and Smikin, 2003). Overall, it may be assumed that students get to know each other because they take part in some in-class activities together and then, building on shared background, similar experiences and common interests, they become closer friends. In this sense, interaction and friendship formation would represent an additive process (Coleman, 2013). Still, more research is needed in such a direction.

When examining the tendency to ingroup-outgroup ties at group level, data reveal that Catalan students – i.e. *locals*, conforming to prevailing literature – tend to select ingroup partners regardless of the purposes of the relationship. Such a result confirms our research hypothesis that local students will less likely engage in intercultural relationships, preferring to interact among each other, as already stressed by previous studies (Dunne, 2013; Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Peacock & Harrison, 2009). However, both Spaniards and Internationals present a slightly different behavior than expected. In fact, students schooled in other Autonomous Communities in Spain report a tendency to outgroup relationships in any case. A possible explanation may be found in the fact that these students voluntarily decided to move to Catalonia to study their degree. As mentioned, such a context is characterized by a pro-independence movement and a strong local cultural and linguistic identity and, thus, these students may have a larger previous predisposition towards diversity. Byram (2020) remarks that, even within the same national borders, different sub-cultures may coexist with the dominant one. Indeed, in a previous study of the TRANSLINGUAM-UNI project, students coming from other parts of Spain showed statistically higher Intercultural Sensitivity than the Catalan ones (Pastena et al., in press). As for International students, they report a more variable social behavior in the classroom, both individually and with respect to the purpose of the relationship. Hence, this finding is partially in contrast with previous studies reporting that international students abroad will tend to interact in closed international networks (e.g. de Federico de la Rúa, 2002, 2003; Mitchell et al., 2017; Montgomery, 2010; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Neri & Ville, 2008; Papatsiba, 2006).

During the interviews, most students corroborated the tendencies emerged from the quantitative analysis, stating that they perceived a division between locals and internationals in the classroom or, more generally, into different groups. However, participants also declared not having problems in interacting with classmates regardless

of their background and, even if mainly at a functional level, they did so, as was confirmed by my study of their social networks. As a matter of fact, students experience the classroom as a community of practice, in which grouping is perceived as natural and in no case as a limitation for interaction. Moreover, as already discussed (Section 6.2.1), all students in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom give great value to intercultural interactions. Thus, contrarily to what was remarked by De Vita (2005), intercultural interactions may happen naturally among students from diverse backgrounds, at least to some extent.

6.2.3 Enablers and blockers in intercultural friendship development

As we have seen, although being quite a unique context, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom seems to foster spontaneous contact among members of different groups. Nevertheless, as already pointed out by previous theoretical and empirical research (e.g. Gareis, 1995, 2000; Jon, 2013; Kudo & Smikin, 2003; Kudo et al., 2017), intercultural interactions and friendship development depend on several factors in intersectionality. Accordingly, a set of empirical studies has focused on both the personal and contextual characteristics that may enable or block the formation and development of intercultural relationships, becoming evident also in the present study.

Firstly, intercultural friendship is believed to develop especially when there are environmental affordances for successful and meaningful interactions to occur (Kudo et al., 2017), such as the ones provided by the classroom context (McFaul, 2016). As a matter of fact, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom offers such affordances since students share common objectives, goals, and activities, and the contact is frequent. Moreover, several local students remarked that in primary and secondary schools' classrooms there was no such diversity and, also, that the experience in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom is like being abroad without moving. Thus, if we take the Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998) into account, such a context provides the conditions not only for intercultural interactions to occur but also for the emergence of positive relationships.

Another determining factor detected in previous literature is personal skills and agency (Jackson, 2011; Kudo et al., 2017). As discussed above, before enrolling in the degree, Global Studies students are already significantly more transculturally competent than other students at the university, exhibiting those skills and competences required to establish meaningful and successful interactions. The high value scored in the Intercultural Sensitivity questionnaire precisely points to students' readiness to engage interculturally and may, thus, be interpreted as willingness to enact agency to initiate and develop intercultural interactions.

Strictly connected to personal skills, also interest and curiosity in others' cultures are believed to act as enablers for successful intercultural interactions to occur (Gareis, 1995, 2000; Jon, 2013; Krajewski, 2011; Kudo & Smikin, 2003). Actually, attraction towards different cultures is one aspect of the attitudinal component of Transcultural Competence as conceptualized in the present study – that is, International Posture. Once again, Global Studies students scored high values in that questionnaire, standing for their interest in global topics and curiosity towards diverse cultural backgrounds. Even when the other's culture may have numerous negative stereotypes attached to it, as it is the case of Israeli Tamar (Extract 49, p.59), students exhibited interest in her cultural background.

Furthermore, a good ground for intercultural relationships to be formed is offered by shared previous experiences, family background, or perceived similarities (Jon, 2013; Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Kudo & Smikin, 2003; Peacock & Harrison, 2009;). Although quantitative results seem to suggest that students tend to select their intimate friendships among classmates with a comparable educational and linguistic background, similarities may also be of another nature. For instance, this is well exemplified by Alba, who reports becoming best friend with two of her mixed-background classmates because they share the same confusion on “where they came from” (Section 5.2.4, p. 52). Also, students may become aware of similarities that transcend cultural and linguistic borders, as explained by Alicia who, although displaying a slight tendency to ingroup relationships, believes that there are no cultural differences when it comes to friends since they can communicate and understand each other (Section 5.2.2, Extract 33, p. 42).

The last enabler for intercultural interactions to develop that is worth mentioning is having English as a shared language. Indeed, proficiency in a common language is

believed to be crucial for the success of the intercultural socialization experience (Krajewski, 2011; Kudo & Smikin, 2003; Medina-López-Portillo, 2004; Mitchell et al., 2017; Pogorelova, 2016; Pogorelova & Trenchs-Parera, 2018). This aspect becomes highly relevant if we consider that the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom under investigation is settled in a non-English speaking context. In fact, previous research in this respect has mainly been conducted in English-speaking countries or on English-speaking students abroad and, thus, English was the main language on focus. Still, results of the present study corroborate the use of English as the unmarked choice in intercultural interactions, the *lingua franca* that may be spoken in any kind of context for successful communication (Dervin, 2013; Kinginger, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2017). Also, my participants make no exception to the correlation that has been found between willingness to communicate in English and the degree of International Posture (Lee, 2008; Yashima & Zenuk-Nishide, 2008; Yashima et al., 2004) or, similarly, between enrolling in an EMI course and willingness to access the international community (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2018; Henry & Goddard, 2015).

All in all, the context of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom provides students with the affordances for successful interactions to occur. Moreover, since students show previous interest in global issues and curiosity towards other cultures and, also, have English as a *lingua franca* and the willingness to interact in such a language, they can build meaningful and more intimate relationships. However, as suggested by previous literature, also several blockers may be detected in the formation and development of intercultural friendship at university.

As for personal characteristics, age (Kudo & Smikin, 2003; Kudo et al., 2017) seems to emerge as a blocker, especially for international students. Both Tamar and Leah report a preference for establishing closer relationships with other international students like them, stressing the fact that students coming from outside of Spain are usually older than Catalan and Spanish students and, thus, have more in common.

Also, economic status and social class (Kudo et al., 2017), as well as ideology, seem to be relevant for the formation of intercultural relationships. For instance, both João and Myung believe that in-class grouping is based on ideology, whereas Ibai explicitly claims a preference for “associating” – in his words – with people who share the same social

situation and ideology. Believing that his international classmates are from a “higher social class” (Section 5.2.4, p. 51-52), Ibai perceives this feature as a constraint for developing close relationships with them. On the contrary, although being a Euskara native speaker from the Basque country, he feels more similar to his Catalan classmates than to students from other parts of Spain due to a shared political ideology and thus, interestingly, perceiving them as ingroup.

Perceived prejudices are also reported to have a crucial role in friendship development, both for local and international students (Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Jackson, 2008; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Volet & Ang, 1998/2012). In the present research, international students are the ones mainly dealing with such a blocker. For instance, Leah believes that her local classmates tend to associate her with her country of origin – i.e. Israel –, suffering the prejudices attached to it and preferring to interact with her international classmates, from whom she does not feel judged (Section 5.2.3, Extract 29, p. 39). Similarly, Abdoul – coming from a Sub-Saharan African country – declares that, in the classroom, he had to deal with the same prejudices he was a victim of outside, preventing him from forming close relationships with his classmates (Section 5.2.5, p. 60-61).

Language proficiency appears once again as a determining factor in the success of the intercultural experience. Specifically, previous studies report that local students struggle in communicating with international peers due to the fact that the latter have low or no proficiency in the local language (e.g. Burdett, 2014; Dunne, 2009; Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Krajewski, 2011; Kudo & Simkin, 2003; Montgomery & McDowell 2009; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Rienties et al. 2012; Spencer-Oatey & Dauber, 2017; Volet & Ang, 1998/2012). However, since the Global Studies degree has full-EMI teaching, here the emerging constraint for intercultural interactions was proficiency in English rather than in Spanish or Catalan. As a matter of fact, local students may not feel competent enough in English, which is precisely what inhibits them in establishing more intimate relationships with international classmates, as well exemplified by Antonio’s case (Section 5.2.3, Extract 31, p. 41). In line with previous studies (Borghetti & Beaven, 2017; Dervin, 2013; Friedrich, 2000; Li, 2009), they may consider their English as *broken English*, implicitly supporting the primacy of the Native-Speaker Model. Similarly, some

international students expressed complaints about local students' level of English. Also, although voluntarily enrolling in a full EMI degree, some students – such as Catalan Rosa, Marina, and Beatriu – manifested an explicit preference for interacting in their first language – being it either Spanish or Catalan – and stated it allowed them to better express themselves (Mitchell & Güvendir, 2021). They were, thus, revealing fear to step out of their comfort zone.

Moreover, the fact that local and international students may be going through two different kinds of experiences may also be conceived as a blocker (e.g. McFaul, 2016; Kimmel & Volet, 2012), as pointed out by Sara (Section 5.2.1, p. 13) and Beatriu (Section 5.2.2, Extract 17, p. 26-27). Such a constraint is further exacerbated by pre-existing social networks among local students (e.g. Hendrickson et al. 2011; Rienties, Beausaert et al. 2012; Rienties, Grohnert et al., 2011), as well as their tendency to become friends with friends of their friends (e.g. Dunne, 2009), as exposed by Laura (Section 5.2.1, p. 13). In this respect, the social experience of students coming from other Autonomous Communities in Spain may be better equated to the one of international students, as members of both groups find themselves in a new environment where they rarely have already formed stable social networks.

Finally, institutional involvement and the structure of courses and classes come up as decisive as well, as already suggested by previous research. Indeed, several studies remark the relevance of how classes are designed and the role of teachers and instructors in fostering intercultural relationships and call for specific interventions in this regard (e.g. Burdett, 2014; de Hei et al., 2020; Harrison & Peacock, 2009; Jon, 2013; Ujitani & Volet, 2008; Volet & Ang, 1998/2012). Here, for instance, students point out that the fact that sometimes groups for collaborative activities are pre-made does not allow them to work with each one of their classmates.

Nonetheless, although all the above-mentioned blockers do emerge in the context of our multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom, it should also be remarked that, in practice, most participants are satisfied with their in-class social experience and established relationships.

Previous research on university students' social networks reports that international students abroad wish to establish more numerous and intimate relationships with local peers (e.g. Beaven, 2012; Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013; Jackson, 2008). However, students' expectations on the in-class social experience may be of different kinds that have not been tackled in former studies. Local students, for instance, may also wish to build intimate relationships with international classmates; conversely, students coming from foreign countries may not necessarily want to form close local friendships. As a matter of fact, most participants in this study – either locals or internationals – claimed their expectations on in-class social networks to be met, like Israeli Tamar who “met the exact people she wanted to meet” (Section 5.2.5, p. 59), or even go beyond their expectations, like Catalan Alicia who was not foreseeing the “beautiful relationships” she was able to establish in the classroom (Section 5.2.3, p.41).

Nevertheless, it should be acknowledged that expectations may also not be met, as exemplified by Abdoul's experience (Section 5.2.5). As students in Hotta and Ting-Toomey's (2013) study, he felt ignored, excluded, and discriminated; ultimately, feeling “like an alien”. Abdoul's case confirms those studies on the difficulties that international students may encounter in interacting with local peers (e.g. Beaven, 2012; Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013; Jackson, 2008). Still, although being scared of interactions, Abdoul was hoping for better relationships to be formed in subsequent academic years and manifested his willingness to actively engage in such a task.

Therefore, as suggested by Kudo and colleagues (2017, 2019), the development of intercultural relationships is influenced by both individual and environmental factors, as well as by the interaction between them. Intercultural interactions may happen spontaneously if the context presents affordances to do so, and students enact their agency; thus, such interactions are perceived as transformative experiences. In fact, the specificities of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom seem to provide the ideal context for such a scenario to occur: undergraduates from diverse backgrounds are enrolled in the same degree, they chose it specifically because of its multilingual and multicultural makeup and internationalized curriculum, while self-reporting a high degree of Intercultural Sensitivity – that is, interest in engaging in intercultural interactions and, thus, willingness to enact their agency interculturally.

Nonetheless, what should be emphasized is that, although quantitative data reveal the process of “cultural” homophily to be in act, different enablers and blockers may emerge in the development of intercultural relationships, and students may show different patterns of social behavior and tendency to ingroup and outgroup ties regardless of their linguistic and cultural background. As we will see (Section 6.2.5), the five case-study groups seem to suggest that the clear-cut division between local and international students is pointless, as members of the two groups may share similar in-class experiences. Also, although some tendencies emerge, differences between and within the case-study groups point to the relevance and uniqueness of individual trajectories in the intercultural experience.

6.2.4 The overall impact of intercultural interactions on Transcultural Competence

Several aspects of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom may contribute to students’ development of Transcultural Competence, such as the internationalized curriculum or the broader university environment, as well as other intercultural encounters that students may experience outside the classroom walls. However, the present research aimed to explore explicitly the impact of in-class intercultural interactions on students’ Transcultural Competence. Indeed, previous research emphasizes social interactions to be an essential part of students’ learning experience as a whole and having a crucial role in intercultural learning (Benson et al., 2013; see also Section 2.2.3). Moreover, as already mentioned, students in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom give high value to the intercultural interactions they may experience in such a context, as perfectly exemplified by Marta’s statement: “the people are what make Global Studies special”.

Actually, the internationalized curriculum and the presence of both local and international students are highly intertwined. Indeed, as remarked by all the interviewed participants, the academic contents and activities foster the reflection on global and cultural issues and topics; in turn, the presence of students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds allows for debating and discussing those issues from different points of view, as well as

counting on first-hand experiences. Also, some degree instructors voluntarily form their seminar groups in such a way that they should trigger interaction among students from diverse backgrounds. Thus, although not being an intervention *per se*, the degree and the classroom context act like one, since the overall experience incorporates “critical reflection and experiential learning in an international setting”, allowing for deeper intercultural learning (Jackson, 2008, 2011).

Again, it should be remarked that, in the present study, both local and international students are believed to undergo some sort of transcultural transformation, joining the interventionist and intercultural education perspective (e.g. Campbell, 2012; Krajewski, 2011; UNESCO, 2006; Williams, 2005) and the study abroad one (e.g. Beaven, 2012; Kim, 2008; Magliacane, Devlin & Iwasaki, 2020; Pogorelova, 2016; Volet & Jones, 2012).

Furthermore, as mentioned, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom responds to all optimal contact conditions for positive outcomes to occur – that is, the reduction of prejudices towards members of the outgroup (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998). Actually, in our context, the reduction of prejudice seems to be just the first step towards a more comprehensive development of those cognitive, affective, identity, and linguistic skills that shape Transcultural Competence (Section 2.1.6). The development of such intercultural and transcultural competences is usually investigated from the perspective of students undertaking a Study Abroad experience (Section 2.3.1). However, the environment of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom and, consequently, the intercultural interactions taking place in it may produce similar effects, supporting Krebs’ (2020) suggestion that integrating global, international, and intercultural (GII) learning into the whole curriculum would enhance students’ transcultural competences.

Quite surprisingly, quantitative results reveal that students’ initial Transcultural Competence is not a significant predictor of their future engagement in outgroup relationships in the classroom, for either studying, leisure, or intimate purposes (Section 5.1.3). Although being true that these students already reported a high degree of Transcultural Competence when enrolling in the degree, such a result seems to be in contrast with previous studies pointing at the importance of previous predisposition,

experiences, and competences in engaging in intercultural contact and learning (Jackson, 2011; Jon, 2013; Kimmel & Volet, 2012; Krajewski, 2011; Kudo & Smikin, 2003; Peacock & Harrison, 2009). Also, it appears to contradict our quantitative finding that students with a least one international friend prior to entering university are the ones presenting significantly higher Intercultural Sensitivity (Section 4.1.5; discussed in Section 6.1.1). For instance, although focusing on high-school students, Yashima and colleagues (2004) found that those showing more International Posture before the departure were also the ones engaging more in intercultural interactions when abroad; however, in the present study, students' initial International Posture is not significantly correlated with the percentage of outgroup ties they formed throughout the academic year. Overall, it seems that having a high degree of Transcultural Competence would not imply that an individual will form intercultural relationships, even if the environment presents affordances to do so.

Nevertheless, what is of more interest is how the picture changes by the end of the academic year and, thus, if and to what extent students' final Transcultural Competence is correlated with the percentage of outgroup ties they have actually formed in the classroom. For each of the three degrees of intimacy under analysis, the correlation between students' percentage of outgroup relationships in their network and their self-reported International Posture, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Global Identity is more positive. Such a result seems to suggest that those intercultural relationships did have an impact on students' Transcultural Competence.

In fact, a hierarchy among the three questionnaires may be established, regardless of the quality of the relationship. Indeed, the International Posture questionnaire emerged as the less associated with students' networks composition, indicating that students' positive attitudes towards the international community and interest in global topics and affairs are not affected by intercultural interactions. Conversely, the Global Identity questionnaire – investigating students' affiliation to a cosmopolitan identity – resulted to be the most correlated with the percentage of outgroup ties students formed in the classroom.

The intimate friends' network produced the most interesting and significant results. As a matter of fact, data show that students' Intercultural Sensitivity and Global Identity are positively and significantly correlated with the percentage of intimate outgroup

friendships in their in-class networks (Section 5.1.3). Thus, although students tend to prefer to select close friends from the ingroup, it is also true that, the more they have formed intimate relationships with outgroup classmates, the more they will tend to display a significantly higher degree of Intercultural Sensitivity and Global Identity. Such a finding is highly relevant, as it suggests that establishing close friendship with individuals coming from a different background would produce more engagement, enjoyment, and confidence in the interaction, and higher respect for cultural differences, while allowing for the re-evaluation of one's own identity towards a more global perspective. Thus, providing support to Kim's (2001) claim, the more students interact with members of the outgroup(s), the more they will undergo an "intercultural transformation". Also, the fact that specifically intimate relationships – not studying nor leisure ones – display the larger correlation with Transcultural Competence's values confirms Pettigrew's (1998) criterion that individuals should have "friendship potential" for maximizing the positive outcomes of contact.

Moreover, the fact that students' attitudes towards the international community – i.e. International Posture – did not appear to be significantly correlated with their outgroup intimate ties confirms other previous empirical findings. Indeed, Davies and colleagues' (2011) meta-analysis on 135 studies on cross-group friendship suggests that the affective dimension has a stronger impact than the cognitive one in reducing prejudice. Likewise, Lee and Song (2019) remark that the affective domain plays an essential role as, "although knowledge plays a mediating role in diminishing prejudice, simply learning about an outgroup does not necessarily lessen prejudice" (ivi: 190).

Thus, overall, it may be affirmed that the quality – i.e. degree of intimacy – of the relationship is decisive in determining the impact that such interactions may produce on students' Transcultural Competence, more so in the case of the affective and identity dimensions of the construct.

From a qualitative point of view, the picture is slightly different and more nuanced. As a matter of fact, the quantitative assessment of a complex construct such as Intercultural or Transcultural Competence, even if necessary, heavily rely on how it is conceptualized, as well as on the instrument used to measure it (Fantini, 2009; Griffith et al., 2016; Sercu, 2010). In this respect, the present study brings further evidence about the advantages of

qualitative data to obtain a greater understanding of students' intercultural experience (Medina-López-Portillo, 2004; Pogorelova, 2016; Pruegger & Rogers, 1994). Indeed, as we have seen, the analysis of students' interviews and classroom observation (Section 5.2) allows for both group and individual trajectories to be investigated, as well as a more in-depth scrutiny of the specific competences and skills that are developed.

Although several differences emerge among the five case-study groups as regards the interaction between students' in-class intercultural interactions and their degree of Transcultural Competence, an overall development of students' transcultural competences may be observed. Such a development is triggered by the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom environment as a whole and addresses all the dimensions of the construct tackled in the present study: attitudinal, affective, identity, and linguistic (Section 2.1.6).

Firstly, the formation of intercultural networks allows to access multiple sources for gathering information and knowledge mediated by original sources; thus, students learn about both the local culture and other cultures through the first-hand experience of their classmates (de Federico de la Rúa, 2002, 2003; Krajewski, 2011; Lee & Song, 2019; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Papatsiba, 2006). Moreover, thanks to the degree's contents and activities, students increase their interest towards global issues and other cultural topics (Jackson, 2008), while having the opportunity to delve into them from a variety of different perspectives and using a common language – i.e. English. Hence, such a classroom fosters the development of students' interest and positive attitudes towards the international, ultimately, nurturing the feeling of being part of an international community.

Consequently, students experience a rise in awareness of dissimilar cultural behaviors and sensitivity towards cultural differences (Magliacane et al., 2020; Pogorelova, 2016). Illustrative examples of such a development may be Antonio's discovery of *eurocentrism* and the resulting problematization of such a perspective, Judith's re-evaluation of her previous stereotypes on other cultures, and Jofre's learning to "coexist and negotiate" with others' opinions instead of maintaining his strong ones. In essence, students get acquainted with different points of view and perspectives that may or may not be culturally determined. As a matter of fact, they also become conscious that differences

may be of a more personal and individual nature. Most students emphasize the crucial role played by the social, cultural, and linguistic context in which an individual has been raised in the formation of one own's way of seeing the world, but also point to more personal features contributing to such a process. Overall, as exemplified by Beatriu (Section 5.2.2, Extract 16, p. 25-26), students believe that, through interaction with people from different backgrounds, you may become able to question the way society presents information and, thus, form your own's point of view.

Thus, as predicted by the Contact Hypothesis, intercultural contact would affect social categorization (Dovidio et al., 2017): becoming aware of cultural and individual differences, students also start recognizing similarities across and beyond borders, ultimately, re-shaping their individuality towards a more inclusive “we”. This does not mean that differences should not be acknowledged, nor that all students ascribe to a *global* or *cosmopolitan* identity. On the contrary, although with several differences, results from the present study seem to suggest that *local* and *global* are not in opposition, pointing to the emergence of a *glocal* identity, as perfectly exemplified by Jofre's necessity to find a way to be a part of the global society while keeping his own cultural roots (Section 5.2.2, p. 21). Actually, identity emerges as a “multi-layered dynamic process” (Coulmas, 2005, p. 178; Trenchs-Parera & Pastena, 2021) since students may possess more identities at once while constructing and deconstructing their sense(s) of belonging through time and experiences.

Furthermore, students in the present study affiliate to what I have labelled “extended” *linguistic cosmopolitanism* (Section 2.1.5), though to various extents. As a matter of fact, they appreciate the practicality of English as an International Language (i.e. EIL) and are willing to use it in intercultural interactions; still, they also emphasize the crucial role played by local and heritage languages in the construction of their – and others' – identities. Students' use of English has mainly an instrumental role (Dervin, 2013; Kinginger, 2008; Mitchell & GÜvendir, 2021; Mitchell et al., 2017), but it also suggests that even in a non-English-speaking context – in which another language (i.e. Spanish, in our case) could be used as a *lingua franca* – English is largely present in students' repertoires and practices (Behrent, 2007; Dervin, 2013).

However, participants in the present study show complex attitudes towards EIL. Even if several students seem to rely on the NS model, as found in previous studies (Borghetti & Beaven, 2017; Friedrich, 2000; Li, 2009), they all believe that EIL should not substitute local and heritage languages. Indeed, contrarily to previous studies (Mitchell et al., 2017; Mocanu & Llurda, 2019), both international students and those coming from other Autonomous Communities in Spain manifest great interest in the minority local language – i.e. Catalan – and, although not always engaging in its learning, show high respect towards it, believing it to be an important aspect of the local culture (Mitchell & Güvendir, 2021). As for Catalan students, they demonstrate to be extremely in line with policies promoting the use of Catalan as a means to belong to the “local, national and international community” (Pérez-Vidal et al., 2020).

6.2.5 Five patterns of personal trajectories

As discussed in the previous section, the environment of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom as a whole and the opportunities it offers for intercultural contact and interaction seem to have an overall positive effect on students’ international attitudes, intercultural sensitivity and awareness, sense of belonging to the international community, and linguistic cosmopolitan stances. Nevertheless, the relationship between Transcultural Competence and tendency to ingroup-outgroup ties may be further explored by the five case-study groups. Although resulting from quantitative parameters, these groups show some internal consistency as regards students’ experience in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom: they represent five possible different patterns of the interaction between in-class intercultural relationships and the development of Transcultural Competence. The five case-study groups demonstrate that these two factors are highly intertwined and may develop differently in students regardless of their linguistic and cultural background.

These groups seem to be quite predictable as regards students’ background and expected social behavior since, for instance, one group is composed of all local students showing a tendency to ingroup relationships (Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Peacock & Harrison, 2009), while another one is formed by two international students interacting in a closed

international network (Mitchell et al., 2017; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Papatsiba, 2006). However, other case-study groups present a more mixed outlook. Once again, considering *locals* and *internationals* as two homogeneous groups in opposition is proven to be too simplistic, as they may share similar experiences and patterns of behavior. What is more, the differences emerged between and within case-study groups also highlight the relevance of individual experiences in social behavior and intercultural learning.

Also, to my knowledge, no studies have uncovered different patterns of the interaction between these two aspects: the emergence of intercultural relationships and the development of Transcultural Competence, far less explicitly focusing on the “reciprocity of transformative opportunities” (Volet & Jones, 2012). The five case-study groups emerged from my analyses are, thus, highly innovative and represent a new possible approach to the study of this phenomenon. In fact, they are my contribution to a more nuanced and in-depth understanding of the transcultural and interconnected society we all live in.

Therefore, each group will be here presented separately, emphasizing the main themes emerged in students’ narratives and explaining how intercultural interactions and Transcultural Competence operate and interact in that specific group. Also, exceptions to the pattern and individual specificities will be considered.

- ***Intercultural interactions as affordances for increasing Transcultural Competence***

The first pattern emerged is the one best exemplifying the overall results of the present study. Indeed, students in this group are highly mixed as regards their background (i.e. three International students, three Spaniards, and one Catalan). Also, they report quite a large tendency to interact with members of diverse groups that may be explained by two strictly related aspects. On the one hand, they self-report already a high degree of overall Transcultural Competence at the beginning of the academic year, showing, thus, previous predisposition towards the intercultural encounter and experience. On the other hand, they perceive their classmates as affordances to understand and learn from different points of view. These two features together made these seven students actively pursue contact and engage in interaction with members of the outgroup; accordingly, they increased their

positive attitudes towards the international and intercultural sensitivity and awareness, while feeling more connected to the global community.

Although perceiving the existence of some in-class grouping and acknowledging the existence of cultural difference, in the interviews, these students put emphasis on concepts such as “understanding”, “cooperation”, and “communication” as key aspects for successful interactions and intercultural learning in the transcultural society, trying to behave accordingly. Indeed, they remark the opportunity offered by the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom to put into practice their transcultural competences. Thus, this group of students does not perceive grouping nor cultural differences as a barrier to the development of both learning and intimate relationships.

What is more, they call attention on individual differences, allowing for similarities to emerge across countries and borders. Thus, confirming Kudo and Smikin’s (2003) findings, for students in this group “close friendships have an individual focus: they view people as unique individuals rather than as representatives of certain ethnic or cultural groups” (ivi: 101). In this scenario, English plays a crucial role. As a matter of fact, the common language allows these students to engage in interaction with people from different backgrounds, build understanding, and learn from them, ultimately enhancing their intercultural and transcultural competences.

Unsurprisingly, then, they all ascribe to a *glocal* identity free of struggles, in which strong local roots and connection to the global community may coexist and even cooperate in the formation of one’s own sense of belonging (Arnett, 2002; Jacob, 2013; Kim, 2008; Sung, 2014). In this sense, as suggested by Plews (2015), students ascribing to a more intercultural identity would not necessarily reject their national one, more so in multicultural societies – such as Canada – and global cities – such as Barcelona.

Thus, it is explicitly their overall experience and intercultural interactions in the multi-internationalized classroom that allow these seven students to become more transculturally competent. As a matter of fact, in their narratives, they showed a shift from “learning contents and facts” about other cultures to “changing their way of relating” to other cultures, perfectly reflected in their Transcultural Competence values.

Nonetheless, some individual differences may be detected, as both Myung and Laura showed a decrease in Transcultural Competence values by the end of the academic year. In the case of Myung, the slight decrease may be explained by her previous migration and intercultural experiences. As for Laura, as reported in the interview, she acknowledges that the encounter with the multilingual and multicultural environment of both Barcelona and the Global Studies degree made her more conscious of where she came from – i.e. Balearic islands –, ultimately reinforcing her localist identity adscription.

- ***The influence of previous experiences in the development of a glocal, flowing identity***

The second pattern is exemplified by five students who reported the group's highest Transcultural Competence mean value both at the beginning and the end of the academic year, yet no quantitative changes were detected between the two timings. Such a lack of development may be explained by students' tendency to in-class ingroup interactions, small but reported by quantitative data and overtly endorsed in the interviews. Thus, a different explanation should be found for the high degree of Transcultural Competence self-reported by these five students, as the multi-internationalized classroom and subsequent in-class interactions did not seem to have an impact on their international attitudes, intercultural sensitivity, and global identity.

In fact, despite having been schooled in Catalonia, students in this group all accounted for previous experiences – in the family and/or at school – entailing contact and interaction with different languages and cultures, and appreciated the impact that such experiences had on their intercultural awareness and sensitivity and identity construction. Thus, though to various extents, here the role of both the family and the schooling environment emerges as crucial in students' development of Transcultural Competence. As a matter of fact, parents' plurilingualism or the presence of heritage language(s) and culture(s) in the family context foster early sensitivity towards diversity and a broader perspective on cultural differences (e.g. de Santos-Velasco, 2018; Williams, 2005). Likewise, multicultural secondary school classrooms, a bilingual school program (such as the dual French *Baccalauréat*/Catalan *Batxillerat*), or one year abroad have offered students the opportunity of first-hand contact with people from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (e.g. Pastena et al., in press).

Due to their multi-layered background, these students show complex, multi-faced identities and struggle in defining themselves as solely belonging to one group or community – even rejecting the word “defining”, as in the case of Marina. When asked directly about their identity affiliation, they mentioned expressions such as “international”, “citizen of the world”, “European”, and “Mediterranean”. Still, they also acknowledge and give value to their linguistic and cultural roots as a determining factor in their sense of belonging, hinting at a *glocal* identity similar to the one of our first case-study group. However, students in this group approach their identity as a flexible and evolving process, something that may be continuously constructed and deconstructed by integrating the different experiences and encounters in one’s own life (Wenger, 1998). Actually, they acknowledge the existence of cultural and individual differences, appreciating them as an added value; yet they also perceive themselves and the society surrounding them as being in continuous flow and movement and, thus, subject to change.

The identity and cultural openness and flexibility of these students are further exemplified by their problematization of EIL, believed to be difficult to be learned – especially by older people – and a means to impose the Anglo-American system worldwide through language (Rosa, Extract 12, p. 22). Conversely, some of these students retrieve Esperanto as an equal and fair choice for an international language, while others suggest that the common language may not be the same for everyone, rather it could be chosen depending on the people’s communicative needs – e.g. Chinese in Asia. Accordingly, they all give great value to local and native languages, believing that they should be preserved while learning one or more languages for international interactions.

Out of such a background, students in this group recognize the value of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom as a space in which dealing with different ways of doing and thinking and believe in-class intercultural interactions to be an enriching experience without going abroad. However, they also admit not having formed close relationships with classmates from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds, as they feel more comfortable interacting within the ingroup (e.g. Harrison & Peacock, 2010; Peacock & Harrison, 2009).

Therefore, these five students show a high degree of Transcultural Competence even before enrolling in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom thanks to their

family and schooling background. However, their tendency to in-class ingroup intimate interactions may explain the lack of changes in their transcultural orientation after their first year in such a context.

- *Reinforcing a localist perspective during the first international experience*

The third pattern is represented by five students who perceive the Global Studies degree as their first real international experience. They all reported a “low” group’s Transcultural Competence mean value. Indeed, during the interviews, they overtly discussed that the encounter with the international atmosphere of the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom was surprising and something they were not used to, as they had the chance to face different ways of seeing the world. As a matter of fact, for some of these students it took some time to get acquainted with the classroom environment since they believe that their perspective is strongly rooted in and influenced by the context they grew up in.

Accordingly, students in this group manifest a localist identity adscription. Echoing the Social Identity Theory (Tajafel & Turner, 1979), in their view, identifying with a group or community – a “culture” in their words – is believed to be essential for constructing one’s own sense of belonging. Indeed, they did not mention at all any global identity nor connection to a broader community and, when directly asked, even rejected such a stance. Moreover, since groups and communities are understood as having precise features and traits, individuals should share them in order to communicate and create meaningful relationships (Ting-Toomey, 1999).

Furthermore, establishing a strict connection between language and culture, these students are highly critical towards the use of English as an International Language, perceived to be a threat for heritage and local languages (Doiz et al. 2014). Actually, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom offered Leah the opportunity to learn the minority local language – i.e. Catalan – and Yanhong the conditions to retrieve her heritage language – i.e. Mandarin. Accordingly, they express the need for a common ground and shared values to form intimate relationships in which they may feel comfortable and accepted (e.g. Dunne, 2009; Peacock & Harrison, 2009).

Unsurprisingly, then, students in this group also reported a preference for forming ingroup relationships in the classroom. Such a tendency may justify the decrease in the general Transcultural Competence values by the end of the year, more so if we appreciate that the major decrease was in Intercultural Sensitivity, that component precisely tackling into engagement, enjoyment, and confidence in the intercultural interaction. It seems that, although attracted by the degree and the classroom's multicultural makeup, experiencing the international context for the first time, as well as their strong connection with their heritage language and culture, made these students interact mainly within the ingroup. In turn, such kind of interactions reinforced their local connection and made them less confident and willing to interact interculturally (e.g. Isabelli-García, 2006; Jackson, 2008, 2015; Kinginger, 2008, 2010; Pogorelova, 2016).

Nevertheless, one student in this group, Alicia, presented an interesting exception, further supporting the existence of individual trajectories in the intercultural experience. Indeed, she is the only student in the group reporting an increase in her general Transcultural Competence mean value, as well as the smallest tendency to ingroup. As a matter of fact, her views differ consistently from those of the other students in this group, being more in line with the ones of her classmates of the two afore-discussed groups. Although valuing her heritage language and culture – i.e. Catalan –, Alicia defined herself as “placeless”, corroborating her understanding of culture as something that goes beyond the borders of a country or a community (e.g. Nwafor et al., 2016; Türken & Rudmin, 2013). Also, she perceives her classmates as affordances to learn about other points of view, practice foreign languages, and develop her intercultural awareness and sensitivity; overtly criticizing the students who show a preference for forming ingroup relationships in the classroom.

- *The multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom as a mere academic space*

The fourth pattern emerged seems to be in contrast with the overall results of the present study, as the four students in this group presented the lowest values of Transcultural Competence and a decrease in the group's mean value throughout the year, while also reporting a large tendency to outgroup relationships in the classroom.

However, at a closer look, it may be noticed that three out of four students in this group did not form any intimate relationships in the classroom. It is worth remarking again that, quantitatively, close friendship was proved to be the only one statistically and positively correlated with students' degree of Transcultural Competence (Section 5.1.3; discussed in Section 6.2.4). As a matter of fact, Alba, the only student in the group who did report an intimate network in the classroom – small but entirely composed by outgroup classmates –, is the only one who also increased her general Transcultural Competence value by the end of the academic year. Hence, students in this group would further confirm the finding that engaging in close, intimate cross-cultural friendships will produce the greatest “intercultural transformation”, as such kinds of relationships involve a strong affective component rather than just a cognitive one (Davies et al., 2011; Lee & Song, 2019).

Overall, the large tendency to outgroup of this group of students may be explained by their overt orientation towards humanities, as well as different previous schooling experiences involving earlier contact with other cultures and multilingual practices. Nevertheless, although in the interviews they made clear not having problems in interacting with all their classmates, these students perceive the classroom as mainly an academic space and the interactions taking place in it as mainly having a functional or instrumental focus (e.g. Dunne, 2013; Peacock & Harrison, 2009; Volet & Ang, 1998/2012). Consequently, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom did not directly impact their transcultural orientation, more so since they did not form close friendships with their classmates. Indeed, while giving high value to intercultural interactions as a door to different points of view, none of these students discussed in-depth what they had learned from their classmates. In Ibai's case, he even declared that the internationalized environment encouraged him to switch from a global perspective to a more local one.

On the contrary, the emerging idea from the interviews is that moving to a different country or to a new social and linguistic context is what may produce a development – or not – of one's own transcultural competences. They all believe that the migration experience allows for comparison among different ways of behavior and, thus, a reframing of their values and identity. Here, it is relevant to remember that three of the

students in this group come from other Autonomous Communities in Spain and one from a Sub-Saharan African country (yet having previous contact with another Autonomous Community in Spain). Actually, the relevance of moving – either abroad or to a different social context – as a triggering experience for one’s own competences and sense of belonging was already mentioned by several other students in other case-study groups, as well as amply documented in previous studies (e.g. Engle & Engle, 2004; Gordon & Mwavita, 2018; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Williams, 2005). However, here it seems to be the only explanatory factor, suggesting that the first-hand immersion experience would be the only valuable one in having an impact on individuals’ transcultural competences.

Moreover, these students conceptualize culture as individuals and the relations among them. This is precisely why the migration experience becomes so relevant: it allows them to witness diverse patterns of behavior with their own eyes and establish interactions with single individuals, that are not assumed to be representative of any culture nor community. Accordingly, out of the belief that different languages are the key to access different individualities, students in this group give high value to multilingualism and adopt themselves plurilingual practices that, unlike earlier findings (e.g. Mitchell et al., 2015, 2017), may also include minority and local languages. In this scenario, English – just as classmates – may serve a functional goal, but it does not give the opportunity to go beyond the surface and access individuals’ deeper cultural and personal values.

- ***Going beyond the patterns: two antithetical cases***

The fifth and last case-study group goes beyond the patterns, as it is formed by two international students who established only ingroup ties in the classroom, at all three degrees of intimacy. Such a preference for interacting within the ingroup would explain the decrease in their global Transcultural Competence value by the end of the academic year. Also, the behavior of these two students would confirm previous studies pointing to the tendency of international students to mainly establish relationships among them, forming close international networks in which they would feel more comfortable interacting as they are sharing a similar experience (e.g. de Federico de la Rúa, 2002, 2003; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Papatsiba, 2006).

However, although sharing some background characteristics – such as being among the oldest in the degree, having English and a non-European language as their first languages, and reporting previous international working experience –, in the interviews, Tamar and Abdoul reported two very different – if not antithetical – socialization and intercultural experiences in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom.

Tamar accounts for a highly positive experience, being completely satisfied with the in-class interactions. Indeed, she reported not experiencing the prejudices she would have expected and was able to build close and meaningful relationships with several classmates. Accordingly, intercultural interactions – both previous ones and the ones she experienced in the classroom – allowed her to gain deeper awareness and sensitivity towards other cultures but also to re-evaluate her own culture, ultimately developing a *glocal* identity (e.g. Kim, 2001, 2008; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002; Volet & Jones, 2012). Such re-evaluation of her own cultural roots in positive terms may explain Tamar’s slight decrease in Transcultural Competence mean value. As a matter of fact, the actual decrease was precisely in the Global Identity questionnaire.

On the contrary, Abdoul’s in-class experience did not fulfill his expectations, as he was not able to form those relationships he wished for (e.g. Beaven, 2012; Jackson, 2008). Indeed, in the interview, Abdoul explained that he felt a victim of prejudices and isolated – mainly by his local classmates –, ultimately feeling “like an alien” (Hotta & Ting-Toomey, 2013) and becoming afraid of intercultural interactions. As a matter of fact, the decrease in Transcultural Competence mean values is quite large, especially in the Intercultural Sensitivity questionnaire, reflecting Abdoul’s unwillingness and lack of confidence in engaging in interaction.

However, interestingly, he pointed out to have learned from his first year in the multi-internationalized classroom, corroborating previous findings on study abroad that even difficult aspects of the experiences may be perceived as enriching by students (Murphy-Lejeune, 2002). Indeed, Abdoul acknowledged that such a multicultural context had allowed him to reformulate his identity adscription, shifting from a definition mainly based on the country he was born or living in to a more changing and context-dependent one. Also, he now perceived his identity as a process, aiming to integrate all his cultural influences in his sense of belonging in order to become a “global person”.

All in all, Tamar and Abdoul's experiences exemplify how a specific pattern of behavior – that may appear similar from a quantitative point of view, such as their preference for ingroup interactions – may also be caused by different motives and have very different outcomes. In this sense, once again, qualitative data emerge as fundamental to investigate the specificities of students' individual trajectories and intercultural experiences (Medina-López-Portillo, 2004; Pogorelova, 2016; Pruegger & Rogers, 1994).

6.3 Recommendations for Higher Education

Overall, results of the present research seem to suggest that, contrarily to what stated by previous literature (e.g. De Vita, 2005; McFaul, 2016; Montgomery & McDowell, 2009; Nesdale et al., 1995; Peacock & Harrison, 2009), intercultural interactions may happen spontaneously if the environment presents the affordances for such relationships to occur and students enact their agency (Kudo et al., 2017, 2019). However, it should be borne in mind that the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom presents very specific characteristics – that is, a curriculum explicitly focused on global issues and cultural differences and the presence of both international and local students who are required to work together for academic assignments. Such features, along with the consistency of such a context with optimal contact conditions (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998), may facilitate interaction and intercultural learning (Krebs, 2020), but, as we have seen, the outcomes may not always be positive nor guarantee the emergence of intimate friendships.

Thus, the present study joins the widespread call for the implementation of specific interventions aiming to foster intercultural relationships and transcultural competences, believed to be highly intertwined (e.g. Burdett, 2014; Campbell, 2012; de Hei et al., 2020; Jon, 2013; Krajewski, 2011; Ujitani & Volet, 2008). Indeed, if, as revealed by our results, the more intimate the relationship is, the more students will undergo an “intercultural transformation”, higher education institutions should undertake actions to further foster the emergence of meaningful, learning, and intimate relationships among students from diverse backgrounds.

For instance, collaborative mixed-group assignments should be adopted as the prevalent teaching methodology, and students could be divided into seminar groups so that they are naturally formed by students from diverse backgrounds (e.g. Eisenclas & Trevaskes, 2007; Jackson, 2015; Krajewski, 2011; Rienties, Héliot, et al., 2013; Rienties, Hernández, et al., 2013; Volet & Jones, 2012), avoiding to leave such decisions up to teachers' initiative. Also, group division should change for each subject, allowing students to work with different partners each time and with all their classmates throughout the academic year. Accordingly, students will have to face different problems in each activity and learn how to overcome them.

Clearly, the role of the instructor becomes crucial, as already suggested by previous studies (e.g. Krajewski, 2011; Leask, 2009; Volet & Jones, 2012; Yefanova et al., 2017). As a matter of fact, teachers should provide support to group work, more so in the case of students with mixed backgrounds, not just for the successful completion of the task but also to avoid miscommunication issues, as well as preventing the assignment to become an individual rather than a group one due to different learning and studying styles. Likewise, more attention should be placed on the class disposition and teachers' delivery, as these two aspects – both together and separately – may have an influence of the formation of in-class relationships and students' learning experience as a whole.

All in all, I believe that interventions should be implemented to enhance in-class intercultural interactions, whether in the form of student-centered activities, mixed-group work, or related to instructors' commitment and role. Although being more demanding for both students and teachers, such actions may serve to make students get to know each other better, fostering the arising of commonalities that would smooth down possible blockers, and provide the basis for out-class friendships.

Moreover, as we have seen, each student will experience the classroom environment differently, as a result of their previous experiences, current interests, and future goals. Clearly, we cannot expect that all students will experience in-class interaction and/or interventions identically, nor will they produce the same outcomes. Still, we can support students in reflecting on their experience with a critical perspective, for instance, giving them individual training and mentoring (Jackson, 2006, 2008, 2011, 2013; Jackson & Oguro, 2018). Such training should be provided to both local and international students

since, although they may be going through different experiences, the present study demonstrates that members of these two groups may show similar patterns of behavior regardless of their linguistic and cultural background. Moreover, training should be offered both before enrolling in the degree, and during it, in order to give students the tools needed to take advantage of intercultural interactions before the actual contact, but also to overcome difficulties and problems that they may encounter.

Essentially, the aim is not that students become all intimate friends among them, nor that all students establish close intercultural friendships. Instead, the ultimate goal would be that students learn how to deal with intercultural interactions, do not feel offended or judged, and become conscious of their own prejudices and beliefs, becoming able to learn from those relationships, even though being functional or instrumental.

Finally, the control group has demonstrated that, even in a highly internationalized higher education context such as the UPF, students do not tend to form intercultural friendships nor to develop their Transcultural Competence naturally. Thus, I strongly believe that intercultural education should be extended across degrees and subjects and be converted into an integrative part of the curricula (Bodycott et al., 2014; Eisenclas & Trevaskes, 2007; Jackson & Oguro, 2018; Leask, 2009; Williams, 2005).

6.4 Venues for future research

As amply discussed, the main objective of the present study was to explore the impact of in-class intercultural interactions on the development of Transcultural Competence among first-year university students in what we have called a multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom (Trenchs-Parera & Pastena, 2021). However, such a topic deserves to be further investigated since several other aspects may be of relevance in students' learning and social experience that are not tackled in the present study due to the time and length constraints of a doctoral thesis. Thus, in both the context of my work with the TRANSLINGUAM-UNI research project within the GREILI-UPF group and my future personal research, I intend to further investigate intercultural interactions and

transcultural competences in order to have a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomena.

To begin with, more analyses could be conducted on the collected data. As we have seen, students in the Control group scored a quite high standard deviation in all the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires, pointing to high variability in responses. Thus, it would be appropriate to analyze each School independently in order to detect possible differences in International Posture, Intercultural Sensitivity, and Global Identity among students with diverse academic interests. Each School could also be compared with the results of the Global Studies students to determine if, and to what extent, the degree of Transcultural Competence of the latter group differs from the one of all other degrees at university. Likewise, such analyses could be further improved taking into account each questionnaire's components, instead of the overall mean value. Indeed, results have highlighted that, especially in the case of the Global Identity questionnaire, the overall mean value could not adequately capture participants' posture.

Furthermore, students' degree of Transcultural Competence – either overall or at the questionnaires and components' level – could be correlated with different profile traits, such as their country of origin and educational trajectory (i.e. context of primary and secondary schooling). Indeed, results have shown that former schooling experiences, as well as previous contact with interculturality, may be highly relevant in nurturing students' transcultural competences. Similarly, more research is needed to further clarify the role of the internationalized curriculum and full EMI teaching in undergraduates' development of Transcultural Competence.

In order to take into account the linguistic dimension of our Transcultural Competence construct (Section 2.1.6), languages of interaction in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom should be examined. Indeed, as suggested by the interviews, Global Studies participants tend to adopt highly plurilingual practices that are worth exploring to determine if, and to what extent, the language choice depends on the purpose of the relationship. Also, further delving into students' social experiences, the present study has detected the emergence of several enablers and blockers in the development of intercultural relationships that need to be investigated in-depth, especially concerning the role played by ideology and socio-economical background in such a process.

Also, students' in-class social networks could be further explored, for instance, analyzing the relationship between students' centrality in the network and their degree of Transcultural Competence, as more central peers could also be the ones showing higher values. Similarly, students' tendency to outgroup and/or ingroup ties could be correlated with other profile traits, as well as their linguistic proficiency – mainly in English but also in Catalan and Spanish. As a matter of fact, language has been demonstrated to be crucial in intercultural interactions. Accordingly, Exponential Random Graph Models (ERGMs; Lusher, Koskinen & Robins, 2012) might be used to analyze the incidence of different parameters in the formation of ties, as well as the three types of relational ties at once, in order to have a complete understanding of how students form and develop their in-class social networks. Moreover, other and different aspects could be taken into account when grouping students and, thus, analyze the frequency and impact on ingroup and outgroup ties on Transcultural Competence.

Moreover, the Contact Generator could be administered in other classrooms and subsequent academic years, to both explore the social networks of students in lesser internationalized classrooms and detect changes in time. Additionally, future studies should take into account participants' out-class social networks and the role on internet and online social network in students' learning and social experience, as these two elements may have a significant impact on the development of intercultural and transcultural competences.

Finally, a similar study could be conducted in other social, linguistic, and educational contexts. For instance, a less internationalized university, as well as universities settled in monolingual areas or in other bilingual contexts – in which the two languages may have a different status –, could yield divergent results as concerns student's degree of Transcultural Competence, as well as their engagement in intercultural interactions. Also, it would be noteworthy to explore such topics in secondary schools since, due to immigration flows, classrooms are increasingly multilingual and multicultural, fostering the development of intercultural interactions.

6.5 Concluding remarks

As amply explained, the main aim of the present research was to explore the impact of the multi-dimensionally internationalized educational context and, especially, the intercultural interactions taking place in it on undergraduates' Transcultural Competence, in the attitudinal, affective, and identity components of this construct. Indeed, although such classrooms are a spreading phenomenon due to the internationalization of Higher Education, they still lack investigation. Moreover, the so-labelled *local* and *international* students are rarely taken into account together, far less in the natural and spontaneous classroom environment. This study aimed precisely to address these two gaps.

Driven by my own transcultural journey and past experiences of intercultural contact, I have approached this research with the firm belief that interaction is a bi-directional process in which other individuals make us reconsider our attitudes, values, and views, and reformulate our sense of self, more so if they have different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. Although results have to some extent confirmed my initial intuition, they also highlighted the personal and multi-layered nature of the intercultural social and learning experience, which emerged as not free of complexities even when individuals show previous predisposition towards it and receive some form of external support.

As expected by their choice to enroll in the Global Studies BA degree, students from and in the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom under study self-reported a high degree of Transcultural Competence at the beginning of the academic year, denoting previous predisposition and interest towards cultural issues and intercultural interactions. Additionally, those of them accounting for previous international friendships also showed significantly higher Intercultural Sensitivity. However, after one academic year in the multi-dimensionally internationalized educational environment, these students displayed an overall decrease in Transcultural Competence, while also showing less consistency in their responses. Thus, although confirming that negative effects may arise from intercultural contact, these results also suggest that the intercultural experience may have very different outcomes at the individual level, being it highly personal. Moreover, as the only significant decrease turned out to be in the Intercultural Sensitivity questionnaire, it may be affirmed that the affective domain plays a critical role in how individuals

experience and are affected by both the international experience as a whole and intercultural interactions specifically.

As for students from classes with a lesser degree of internationalization, they self-reported a moderate degree of Transcultural Competence at the beginning of the academic year, but no changes were detected by the end of it. Thus, it seems that the higher education context *per se* – even if highly internationalized, as the UPF is – does not foster the development of students' Transcultural Competence nor the formation of intercultural friendships. Nevertheless, little consensus in the responses was found among this group of students, indicating their different interests, trajectories, and future goals, already reflected in the variety of degrees they decided to enroll in. Furthermore, corroborating the crucial role played by intercultural interactions, students who reported to have international friends also showed significantly higher Transcultural Competence, in the attitudinal, affective, and identity dimensions.

Overall, students from the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom scored higher Transcultural Competence values and reported more international friends than those in lesser internationalized classes. Such a difference in transcultural orientation proved to be statistically significant at both the beginning and the end of the academic year as regards students' interest in global affairs and attitudes towards the international community – i.e. International Posture –, and their adscription to a global identity – i.e. Global Identity. However, during the year, Global Studies students lost enjoyment, engagement, and confidence in intercultural interactions, and did not keep being significantly more interculturally sensitive than their fellow students in other degrees.

Furthermore, the Global Identity questionnaire showed the most ambiguous results in both groups, suggesting that such a construct may not adequately capture a *glocal* identity stance. Indeed, a *local* and a *global* identity should not be seen as mutually exclusive, more so in a context such as Catalonia, characterized by both a multilingual and multicultural environment and a strong attachment to the local language and culture and a widespread sense of a distinct national identity.

Altogether, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom emerged as a fertile context for studying spontaneous intercultural interactions and the non-intervention-

driven development of Transcultural Competence among undergraduates regardless of their linguistic and cultural background, as well as the interaction between these two factors. As a matter of fact, students perceive such an educational context as both an “international experience” and a “community of practice”, in which cultural knowledge and behaviors may be shared and negotiated through interaction without necessarily going abroad. Accordingly, classmates become affordances for deep and first-hand intercultural learning.

At a general level, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom gives students the opportunity to learn about both local and other cultures from multiple and original sources and increase their interest and positive attitudes towards global and cultural issues and linguistic varieties. Consequently, students may experience a rise in intercultural awareness and sensitivity, perceiving differences as having an individual nature and reframing their identity towards a more inclusive, multi-layered, and dynamic “we”. Also, although not diminishing the functional role of English as a *lingua franca*, they give new value to local and heritage languages. Thus, although not being an intervention *per se*, the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom seems to act like one: the internationalized curriculum encourages the reflection on global and cultural issues, while the presence of students with diverse backgrounds allows for debating and learning on such topics.

Hence, the classroom context fosters spontaneous contact among members of different groups, even if the interaction mainly has a functional and academic focus and requires students to enact their agency. Actually, students tend to form closer relationships with the classmates they feel “more comfortable” with. Indeed, several enablers – such as interest and curiosity in others’ cultures, perceived similarities, or having English as a *lingua franca* – and blockers – such as age, ideology and social class, perceived prejudices, or going through different kinds of experiences – emerge in the development of intercultural friendship. Nevertheless, although students tend to select fewer and more “similar” partners as the degree of intimacy of the relationship increases, they also report not having problems interacting with all their classmates and, except for Abdoul, being satisfied with their in-class social experience.

What is more, from a quantitative point of view, students who formed a higher percentage of intimate friendships with classmates with a diverse linguistic and cultural background were also the ones reporting more engagement, enjoyment, and confidence in the interaction, higher respect for cultural differences, and a re-evaluation of their identity in a more global perspective by the end of the academic year. On the contrary, their initial Transcultural Competence did not turn out to be a good predictor of their future engagement in outgroup relationships. Also, once again, the affective domain emerged as more correlated with intercultural interactions than the cognitive one.

Lastly, the five case study groups emerged demonstrate that students may show different patterns of social behavior regardless of their linguistic and cultural background and represent five different patterns of the interaction between in-class intercultural interactions and Transcultural Competence. As a matter of fact, intercultural interactions may be seen as affordances that make us change the way we relate to other cultures and, thus, our behavior. Similarly, a glocal, flowing identity may have already been triggered by previous intercultural experiences, and students do not feel the need to build new intimate intercultural relationships. Contrarily, the first encounter with the international atmosphere may cause a reinforcement of a stance oriented towards the local and the heritage. Also, the classroom may remain a mere academic space, and the migration experience may have a larger impact on our transcultural orientation than the relationships we form in that context. Likewise, the encounter with interculturality may affect and be experienced by each individual differently, as shown by Tamar and Abdoul, who, although sharing a similar background, reported two antithetical in-class journeys.

All in all, it seems that the higher education context, even if highly internationalized, does not foster the development of students' Transcultural Competence, neither in the case of a favorable environment such as the one offered by the multi-dimensionally internationalized classroom. However, the intercultural social and learning experience appears as extremely individual, and close, intimate relationships emerge as crucial in such a journey. Moreover, although interactions may happen spontaneously if the environment presents the affordances to do so, students are required to enact their agency to further cultivate and learn from those relationships. In line with these results, I join the call for specific actions and interventions aiming to enhance both intercultural learning

and the development of meaningful relationships among students from diverse backgrounds, believing them to be highly intertwined and a life-long learning process.

Nevertheless, if we really want to shift from an internationalized university to a truly intercultural and transcultural one, all the actors involved in such a process – students, teachers, administrators, policymakers, and experts, among others – should commit to it, and not only at the institutional and macro-level. Indeed, once again, I believe that we, as unique human and social beings, should be willing to question ourselves, our values, and our beliefs and, starting from the micro-level, engage in one-to-one interaction with diverse individuals.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A – Transcultural Competence questionnaires

(a) International Posture questionnaire (Yashima, 2009)

<i>Intergroup Approach-Avoidance tendency</i>
<p>1) I want to make friends with international students studying in Barcelona.</p> <p>2) *I try to avoid talking with foreigners if I can.</p> <p>3) I would talk to an international student if there was one at school.</p> <p>4) I wouldn't mind sharing an apartment or room with an international student.</p> <p>5) I want to participate in a volunteer activity to help foreigners living in the surrounding community.</p> <p>6) *I would feel somewhat uncomfortable if a foreigner moved in next door.</p>
<i>Interest in International Vocation or Activities</i>
<p>7) *I would rather stay in my hometown.</p> <p>8) I want to work in a foreign country.</p> <p>9) I want to work in an international organization such as the United Nations.</p> <p>10) I'm interested in an international career.</p> <p>11) *I don't think what's happening overseas has much to do with my daily life.</p> <p>12) *I'd rather avoid the kind of work that sends me overseas frequently.</p>
<i>Interest in International News</i>
<p>13) I often read and watch news about foreign countries.</p> <p>14) I often talk about situations and events in foreign countries with my family and/or friends.</p> <p>15) I have a strong interest in international affairs.</p> <p>16) *I'm not much interested in overseas news.</p>
<i>Having Things to Communicate to the World</i>
<p>17) I have thoughts that I want to share with people from other parts of the world.</p> <p>18) I have issues to address with people in the world.</p> <p>19) I have ideas about international issues, such as environmental issues and north-south issues.</p> <p>20) *I have no clear opinions about international issues.</p>

* Negatively keyed item – reversed before analysis

(b) Intercultural Sensitivity scale (Chen & Starosta, 2000)

<i>Interaction Engagement</i>
<p>1) I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me.</p> <p>2) *I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.</p> <p>3) I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.</p> <p>4) I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts.</p> <p>5) I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interaction.</p> <p>6) I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.</p> <p>7) I am open-minded to people from different cultures.</p>
<i>Respect of Cultural Differences</i>
<p>8) I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.</p> <p>9) I respect the values of people from different cultures.</p> <p>10) *I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.</p> <p>11) *I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.</p> <p>12) *I don't like to be with people from different cultures.</p> <p>13) *I think my culture is better than other cultures.</p>
<i>Interaction Confidence</i>
<p>14) I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.</p> <p>15) I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.</p> <p>16) I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.</p> <p>17) *I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.</p> <p>18) I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.</p>
<i>Interaction Enjoyment</i>
<p>19) *I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.</p> <p>20) *I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.</p> <p>21) *I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.</p>
<i>Interaction Attentiveness</i>
<p>22) I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.</p> <p>23) I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.</p> <p>24) I am sensitive to my culturally-distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.</p>

* Negatively keyed item – reversed before analysis

(c) Global Identity scale (Türken & Rudmin, 2013)

<i>Cultural Openness</i>
1) I consider myself more as a citizen of the world than a citizen of some nation. 2) I could live in other cultures than my own. 3) I identify with a world community. 4) I enjoy learning about different cultures. 5) I like listening to music from different cultures.
<i>Non-Nationalism</i>
6) *My own culture is the best in the whole world. 7) *One should first care for his/her nation, then others. 8) *I feel intense pride when I think about my country. 9) *I feel most connected to members of my own country. 10) *My country is one of the best in the world.

* Negatively keyed item – reversed before analysis

APPENDIX B – Consent letter for the Global Studies participants

Consent Form for taking part in a doctoral research on the Global Studies degree at the UPF

Dear student,

I'm a doctoral student from the Department of Humanities and the GREILI-UPF research group conducting a research focused on the Global Studies degree at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra of Barcelona. My research aims to better understand the advantages and the disadvantages students could face in such an innovative degree in Catalonia (i.e. three-year long instead of four, a degree taught in English, with both local and international students, and with lecturers from several fields and departments). The purpose of the study is to contribute to improve the Global Studies degree and to better administer multicultural and multilingual classrooms. Data collected will provide useful evidence to improve teaching methods and facilitate the integration of international and local students at the UPF.

All the students enrolled in the 1st year will take part in the study. Each participant will be asked to fill out an online questionnaire about topics related to education, language learning, and global issues at three different phases of the academic year: today, in February and by the end of the academic year, in May. Filling out the questionnaire will only take you 15-20 minutes. Moreover, I will be observing some of your classes during the year and I will hold an interview with some of you at your convenience.

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you can stop participating at any time. Be assured that all personal data and answers obtained for this study will be kept confidential. Results will not affect your academic evaluation or your grades in any way and they will be used only for educational research. Even if complete names will be asked for data collection and analysis, results will be presented anonymously and without other personal information allowing identifying you.

In order to participate in this study, please fill out the consent form below. If you have any questions or concerns about your participation, please do not hesitate to contact me at andreana.pastena@upf.edu. You may also contact me if you are interested in the results of the study since, once my dissertation is finished, I may share the results with you.

Thank you in advance for your time and for taking part in the study.

Faithfully,

Andreana Pastena
Departament d'Humanitats
Universitat Pompeu Fabra

Statement of consent

I, _____ have read the information above and I voluntary agree to participate to the present study, conducted by Andreana Pastena at the Universitat Pompeu Fabra.

Date

Sign

(signature of participant)

Date

Sign

(signature of researcher)

APPENDIX C – Percentage of ingroup and outgroup ties for the three in-class networks and mean values of the three Transcultural Competence questionnaires in T1 and T2 for each of the 23 interviewed students

Student	Group	Contact Generator						Transcultural Competence					
		Studying network		Leisure network		Intimate network		T1			T2		
		<i>Ingroup</i>	<i>Outgroup</i>	<i>Ingroup</i>	<i>Outgroup</i>	<i>Ingroup</i>	<i>Outgroup</i>	<i>IP</i>	<i>IS</i>	<i>GI</i>	<i>IP</i>	<i>IS</i>	<i>GI</i>
Antonio	CAT	56.7%	43.3%	66.7%	33.3%	71.4%	28.6%	4.42	3.74	4.30	4.69	3.56	4.00
Beatriu	CAT	56.3%	43.7%	60.7%	39.3%	60%	40%	4.52	4.69	4.00	4.42	4.71	4.20
Eva	CAT	50%	50%	52.6%	47.4%	66.7%	33.3%	4.10	4.49	4.60	4.31	4.35	4.70
Marina	CAT	55.6%	44.4%	66.7%	33.3%	50%	50%	4.56	4.63	3.90	4.50	4.21	4.40
Maribel	CAT	66.7%	33.3%	66.7%	33.3%	50%	50%	4.79	4.43	3.20	4.58	4.22	3.70
Jofre	CAT	57.1%	42.9%	66.7%	33.3%	66.7%	33.3%	4.67	4.46	4.40	4.73	4.08	4.50
Rosa	CAT	56.3%	43.7%	50%	50%	50%	50%	4.33	4.66	4.70	3.71	4.82	4.90
Alicia	CAT	56.7%	43.3%	55%	45%	50%	50%	4.10	4.00	4.10	4.33	4.26	4.00
Judith	CAT	62.5%	37.5%	-	100%	50%	50%	4.90	4.62	3.50	4.85	4.93	4.40
Yanhong	CAT	45.5%	54.5%	62.5%	37.5%	66.7%	33.3%	4.15	4.19	4.30	3.58	4.00	4.40
Myung	INT	-	100%	42.9%	57.1%	50%	50%	4.10	4.56	4.10	4.21	4.45	3.80
Abdoul	INT	100%	-	100%	-	100%	-	4.50	4.26	4.20	4.38	3.47	4.10
Yunus	INT	22.2%	77.8%	50%	50%	0%	-	3.96	3.92	2.80	3.52	4.01	2.40
Tamar	INT	100%	-	100%	-	100%	-	4.27	4.32	4.40	4.52	4.52	3.80
Leah	INT	57.1%	42.9%	71.4%	28.6%	75%	25%	4.69	4.52	2.90	4.54	3.90	2.90
João	INT	31.3%	68.7%	35.7%	64.3%	50%	50%	4.23	4.53	4.00	4.52	4.53	4.20

Daisy	INT	23.8%	76.2%	27.8%	72.2%	28.6%	71.4%	4.50	4.78	4.00	4.31	4.57	4.50
Sara	SPA	11.1%	88.9%	23.1%	76.9%	40%	60%	4.31	4.25	4.20	4.33	3.97	4.80
Víctor	SPA	14.3%	85.7%	-	100%	-	-	3.98	3.81	3.90	3.75	3.63	3.60
Ibai	SPA	15%	85%	25%	75%	-	-	4.69	4.19	3.80	4.48	3.85	3.90
Laura	SPA	18.7%	81.3%	20%	80%	25%	75%	4.60	4.04	4.60	4.40	3.96	4.50
Marta	SPA	19.4%	80.6%	15%	85%	30%	70%	4.27	4.10	4.60	4.60	4.15	4.60
Alba	SPA	-	100%	-	100%	-	100%	4.00	3.89	3.80	4.15	3.84	4.20
Mean		45.2%	54.8%	49.5%	50.5%	49.1%	41.7%	4.39	4.29	4.05	4.33	4.15	4.12

