




ORIGINAL ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

Linguistic and Cultural Immersion of American Students in Spanish Universities: Implications for Higher Education and Study Abroad Programs

Jillian M. Pandor¹  | Tripp Strawbridge²  | Javier Muñoz-Basols³ 

¹Department of Liberal Arts, Rochester Institute of Technology Dubai, Dubai Silicon Oasis, Dubai, UAE | ²Department of Modern Languages and Literatures, College of Arts and Sciences, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, California, USA | ³Faculty of Medieval and Modern Languages, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK

Correspondence: Javier Muñoz-Basols (javier.munoz-basols@mod-langs.ox.ac.uk)

Received: 25 April 2025 | **Revised:** 9 July 2025 | **Accepted:** 11 July 2025

Keywords: direct enrollment | educational environment | linguistic and cultural immersion | student perspectives | study abroad

Palabras clave: Movilidad internacional | matrícula directa | inmersión lingüística y cultural | percepciones estudiantiles | entorno educativo

ABSTRACT

Direct enrollment (DE) study abroad programs offer linguistic and cultural immersion by allowing students to enroll in coursework at partner universities worldwide. However, there is limited research on students' perspectives of such programs and the necessary measures for success. This study uses unique multi-site survey data and a mixed-method approach to examine 91 US students' perspectives in five Spanish cities. It explores the impact of pre-departure support, language proficiency, and assistance while abroad on program recommendations and Spanish proficiency improvement. Logistic regression analysis reveals that pre-departure support and higher proficiency increase program recommendation, while more support from professors throughout the semester of direct enroll decreases it. Qualitative analysis highlights the challenging yet rewarding nature of these experiences, providing insights for study abroad (SA) program development, such as social relationship development, immersion experiences, perceptions of teaching styles, and educational environment. The findings also provide insights for faculty and administrators involved in study abroad programming.

ABSTRACT

Los programas de estudios en el extranjero con matrícula directa ofrecen inmersión lingüística y cultural en asignaturas de universidades internacionales. Sin embargo, son escasos los estudios que analizan las percepciones del estudiantado y los factores que condicionan el éxito de estas experiencias. Esta investigación emplea datos únicos de encuestas realizadas en cinco ciudades españolas y un enfoque metodológico mixto para analizar las perspectivas de 91 estudiantes estadounidenses. Se analizan las variables que influyen tanto en la recomendación de este tipo de programas como en la mejora de la competencia en español, incluyendo el apoyo previo a la llegada, el nivel de competencia lingüística inicial y la asistencia recibida en el contexto académico de destino. El análisis de regresión logística muestra que el apoyo previo a la salida y un mayor dominio del español aumentan significativamente la probabilidad de recomendar el programa de matrícula directa, mientras que una mayor dependencia del profesorado durante el semestre se asocia con una menor probabilidad de hacerlo. El análisis cualitativo complementario revela que, aunque los estudiantes identifican múltiples desafíos vinculados a la cultura académica, como los estilos de enseñanza o

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la integración social, también destacan el alto grado de inmersión y los beneficios lingüísticos de la experiencia. Los resultados ofrecen también orientaciones de utilidad para el profesorado y el personal responsable del diseño y de la mejora de programas de movilidad internacional.

1 | Introduction

Universities have increasingly recognized the need to offer diverse education abroad options, including short-term study programs (Artamonova 2025), internships (Di Pietro 2022), and service-learning opportunities (Mok et al. 2021), as well as the potential for students to enroll in coursework at partner universities worldwide alongside local students (Spencer and Wood 2023). This option, known as direct enrollment (DE), allows students to directly register at a foreign university as an exchange student, either independently or with the aid of a third-party program provider (the latter option being most common in the context of US university students going abroad). DE is designed to provide an immersive cultural experience, catering particularly well to proactive, independent students capable of navigating life abroad (Scally 2015). Research has shown that students who opt for DE in foreign universities typically demonstrate higher academic performance and an improved ability to engage across cultures, as compared to those participating in more conventional study abroad (SA) programs housed in an SA program site, with little-to-no direct engagement with local students throughout the SA coursework (Soria and Troisi 2014; Hendrickson 2016).

While DE comes with many benefits, it also presents a more complex dynamic, and hence, understanding the factors that lead to successful DE outcomes is crucial. While some studies have delved into elements like students' initial language proficiency, engagement with the host culture, and ability to adjust to a new academic system (Wiers-Jenssen 2003; Pedersen 2010), as well as support offered by the university and peers (Isabelli-García 2006; Twombly et al. 2012), very few have explored the perspective of US students in Spanish-speaking countries (Pandor 2017; Pastor Cesteros and Pandor 2017; MacKenty 2022). This aspect is crucial given the prominence of Spanish as a widely taught language in the US and, subsequently, Spain's status as a prime destination for an impressive 13% of the total population of US university students that study abroad (Dietrich 2018; NAFSA 2023).

Moranski and Ziegler (2021) and Vitta et al. (2022) underscore the necessity of multi-site research. They argue that relying solely on single-site samples may prevent the broader applicability of findings beyond the specific setting of data collection. In line with this notion, our study compares student views across five distinct higher education institutions nationwide¹. We explore essential questions surrounding the experience of US students engaged in one semester of DE study abroad programming and have extrapolated findings that contain important insights as to whether university students would advocate for DE or not. Such student perception of the DE experience was based on its perceived impact on language abilities, favorable elements shaping students' DE experiences, and the significant recommendations that these students would offer for the program, all of which

is of utmost relevance for both future participants and current program administrators.

To better understand the DE experience from the perspective of US students enrolled in Spanish universities, this study examines the factors that influence study abroad students' recommendations of DE and explores their perceptions of the program. The findings hold significance in guiding students prior to their departure from their home universities, assisting host institutions in preparing to receive foreign students, and providing important information for program administrators to support the needs of SA students throughout their semester abroad (Hendrickson 2016). DE continues to be an underexplored SA model. Research that delves into the distinct characteristics of DE, facilitating comparisons across various SA models, is needed (Goldstein 2022), and it is our hope that the present study will address aspects of that niche.

1.1 | Challenges and Opportunities in SA

1.1.1 | Linguistic, Cultural, and Educational Challenges

University students face three primary challenges during their SA experiences: linguistic barriers, cultural struggles, and/or educational hurdles in adjusting to a new academic context (Kubota 2016). In taking a closer look at the first of these challenges, those that are linguistic in nature can be categorized into three key areas: language proficiency, sociolinguistic competence, and pragmatic competence (Kinginger 2013; Shively 2016; Félix-Brasdefer and McKinnon 2016; Morris 2023; Félix-Brasdefer 2025). A combination of all three areas may lead students to encounter difficulties in understanding and communicating in a foreign language, impacting both their academic performance and social interactions (Lafford 2004; Lafford and Collentine 2006). Such challenges can present significant obstacles in the SA environment, particularly when students must navigate communicative situations with L1 speakers (Dewaele 2007), as well as technical or academic vocabulary present in their classes (MacKenty 2022). Challenges also arise with the demands students face of producing high amounts of L2 output, as well as complex situations of negotiating or handling conflicts in the target language (Taguchi 2015).

The second of the above-mentioned challenges was that of cultural barriers. Such challenges include cultural shock and social isolation, often stemming from academic differences between the home and host institutions abroad. Culture shock comes with its own invisible load of adapting to new cultural norms and practices, leading to feelings of confusion and disorientation (Zhou et al. 2008). Students may also find it challenging to establish new friendships and integrate into the local community, resulting in emotions of loneliness and homesickness (Sawir

et al. 2008). Under the right conditions, however, SA significantly improves students' intercultural competence (Lafford and Isabelli 2019), language proficiency, and self-confidence (O'Reilly 2014; Wang and Kim 2021).

The final challenge, educational hurdles, are both academic and personal in nature. Academic challenges involve variations in teaching styles, language barriers, and a lack of familiarity with the host country's educational system, which can impact students' motivation (Lafford 2004; López-Pérez and Moler Cuiral 2023), engagement, and performance (Zhou et al. 2008). Personal challenges, such as homesickness and mental health issues, can disrupt focus and academic performance (Stroebe et al. 2015), in addition to anxiety and depression, which not only negatively affect academic performance but also overall well-being (George 2014; Stroebe et al. 2015; Torres and Turner 2016). Differences in teaching and learning methods in the host country, which can also include problems with academic credit transferability (Spencer and Wood 2023), can negatively impact academic performance and satisfaction (Teichler 2004).

By addressing these three broad challenge areas, our study offers a fresh perspective that examines SA program participants and contributes to the field of applied linguistics in attempts to further develop this under-researched area.

1.1.2 | Direct Enrollment: Creating Opportunities

Despite its challenges, evidence shows that a DE experience of one or two semesters significantly improves students' linguistic competence and positively influences their academic and personal growth by allowing students to experience diverse cultures and learn languages that are increasingly essential in the global economy (Bedenlier and Zawacki-Richter 2015). As noted by MacKenty (2022), it allows students to naturally experience different cultures and understand the workings of a foreign higher education institution.

Academically, DE broadens the range of courses available to students, allowing exploration of new fields or a deeper dive into their majors (Twombly et al. 2012). On a personal level, it exposes students to diverse teaching styles and academic settings, fostering the development of crucial skills such as adaptability, intercultural understanding, and critical thinking (Wiers-Jenssen 2003; Pandor 2017; Pastor Cesteros and Pandor 2017; MacKenty 2022).

Participating in coursework delivered in a foreign language has been shown to enhance language proficiency by exposing students to more complex linguistic structures and a richer vocabulary (Dewey 2008). Moreover, it expands academic and professional opportunities by enabling access to a wider range of disciplines, including STEM fields, business, and vocational or technical studies (Spencer and Wood 2023).

Beyond linguistic and academic benefits, the context in which students engage with their host culture can also shape their social integration. In a comparison between the number of friendships among international students in DE programs versus those in

SA centers in Buenos Aires, Hendrickson (2016) found that students directly studying at Argentine universities developed more friendships among Argentine students than other international students. Strawbrigde (2023) also cites DE coursework as a determining factor for the development of "integrated" social networks in which students broke out of the typical "bubble" social dynamic of insular US-based SA programming structure, hence proving that DE can lead to a higher level of cross-cultural adaptation than that of traditional programs offered by SA centers.

Nevertheless, DE programs can also present challenges. Students may encounter language barriers, struggle to communicate with locals, and experience culture shock. Difficulties in adapting to a new educational setting may arise when students come from academic traditions that are vastly different from that of the host country. SA student expectations regarding class dynamic and teaching approach are often not in line with the reality of the host institution, and hence students sometimes perceive a sense of limited support from faculty members, as compared to other, more closely catered, SA program structures and as compared to SA students' own academic tradition back home. Findings from Gunter (2019), who conducted 20 semi-structured interviews with senior SA administrators, revealed that DE programs pose challenges due to their inherent lack of structure, creating a clear distinction between these types of programs and the supportive frameworks of other SA programs housed within SA centers. By shedding light on the experiences of 91 US students participating in a DE program in Spain, the present study aims to enhance our comprehension of the dynamics and challenges inherent in such programs.

1.2 | The Study

In light of the relevant literature referenced above, it remains clear that there is a need to understand how the SA experience can be enhanced by addressing its inherent linguistic, cultural, and educational challenges. However, only a limited number of studies have examined these three elements collectively in a context of DE, where Spanish was the target language (Pandor 2017; Pastor Cesteros and Pandor 2017; MacKenty 2022). The present analysis, focusing on Spanish, also seeks to address a notable void in LOTE (Languages Other Than English) research, given that the majority of studies within the realm of SA investigations have focused on English as an additional language. The present study centers on two primary research questions:

RQ1: What factors influence study abroad students' recommendations of DE?

RQ2: What are students' perceptions of DE?

1.2.1 | Participants

The participants in this study were 91 US-based undergraduate students (average age = 20 with an age range of 19–22 and standard deviation of 0.66.), enrolled full time at various universities in the United States, and participating in semester-long SA programs in Spain during either the fall 2015 ($n = 44$) or spring

2016 ($n = 47$) semesters. Participants were enrolled across five SA locations in Spain: Alicante ($n = 10$); Barcelona ($n = 28$); Madrid ($n = 14$); Palma de Mallorca ($n = 11$); and Seville ($n = 28$). All participants were L2 learners of Spanish, and 35 participants reported majoring in Spanish at their home institution. Interestingly, there was a nearly even split between the percentage of students whose grades transferred directly to their home institution (48.35%, $n = 44$) and those whose credits simply transferred as pass/fail with no impact on their GPA (49.45%, $n = 45$). Additionally, there were two students (2.19%) who cited that some of their grades transferred directly, while other credits were transferred as pass/fail. It is also worth noting that 58 students (63.73% of the population) enrolled in DE coursework exclusively taught in the L2 (Spanish), whereas 22 students (24.18%) had DE coursework exclusively taught in English. The remaining 11 students (12.09%) enrolled in a combination of DE courses taught in English and Spanish.

Participants self-evaluated their Spanish language proficiency at the start of the semester abroad on a 6-point scale ranging from “Novice Low” to “Advanced High” (two options, “Low” and “High,” were given for each proficiency range of Novice, Intermediate, and Advanced). When converted to numerical values (ranging from “Novice Low” = “1” to “Advanced High” = 6), the average proficiency level of participants at the outset of the semester abroad was 4.1 (approximately Intermediate High).

It is important to note that students were intentionally left to self-assess without the use of formal benchmarks for individual-level descriptors. This approach was adopted as an informal measure of student perception and a means of preventing anxiety towards perceived levels of Spanish proficiency. The reported perception of language proficiency at the start of the semester was later compared to that of the end of the experience abroad to determine overall student perception of language gain as a result of the experience abroad. To address RQ1, logistic regression analysis was used to determine which factors (e.g., language proficiency, pre-departure support, and in-country support) influenced students’ likelihood to recommend DE. To address RQ2, open-ended qualitative responses were analyzed to explore students’ perceptions of DE, including perceived benefits, challenges, and cultural or educational differences.”

1.2.2 | Instrument and Analysis

Data for the present study were collected via a questionnaire, developed by one of the authors for a larger study on the nature of DE coursework experiences in SA (Pandor 2017) (see Appendix below). The questionnaire contained a mix of quantitative and qualitative questions, with the primary focus of questions being students’ personal experience with DE. Students were asked about the number of DE courses in which they were enrolled; the names and academic areas of these courses; whether grades from DE courses would be transferred back to their home institution; perceived differences between DE coursework and coursework at their home institution; and various forms of pre-departure support (Hernández and Boero 2018) and support offered abroad by the SA program and the DE institution. While the majority of questionnaire items were multiple choice or multiple selection, several open-ended questions were also included, inquiring about

participants’ overall experience with DE; whether or not they would recommend DE to a friend (and why); perceptions regarding the positive influence of the DE experience on their Spanish language proficiency; and participant reasons for using (or not) support services offered by their SA program and/or DE host university. The questionnaire was administered to participants towards the end of their semester abroad, when students were expected to have an accurate perception of their grades.

The analysis for the present study was broken down into two parts, providing a mixed-method approach. As pointed out by Paras et al. (2020), mixed-methods analysis provides the most effective way of identifying how different SA program factors contribute to intercultural growth. First, a logistic regression was run in order to describe the effect of various aspects of participants’ SA experience (independent/predictor variables) on the likelihood that a given participant would recommend DE coursework to a friend. The questionnaire item used as the dependent variable for this logistic regression was the “yes/no” question “Would you recommend Direct Enroll to a friend that is studying abroad in Spain?” A second logistic regression was run in order to describe the effect of these same independent variables on the likelihood that a given participant would affirm that their DE coursework had a positive impact on their Spanish language proficiency, which likewise involved a binomial “yes/no” response. The dependent variable used for this logistic regression was the questionnaire item, “Do you feel that Direct Enroll has helped you to improve your Spanish?” For both of these logistic regression models, seven independent variables were initially included. These independent variables were selected on the basis of their relevance to the questions at hand, which was determined by one of the researcher’s larger qualitative analyses of the data as part of the larger study from which the present analysis emerged (Pandor 2017). These independent variables are detailed in Table 1. Both logistic regressions were carried out using the “glm” function in R.

In addition to the logistic regression, a series of qualitative, open-ended responses from participants was analyzed. These open-ended questions were centered on the nature of participants’ experience in DE coursework and included the following four questionnaire items: (1) “What is your reason for recommending Direct Enroll?” (asked in the event that the participant indicated that they would recommend DE to a friend); (2) “Why would you not recommend Direct Enroll?” (asked in the event that the participant would not recommend DE to a friend); (3) “What is one thing that you wish you would have known about Direct Enroll at a Spanish university before coming to Spain?”; and (4) “Please include any last comments related to your Direct Enroll experience.” Participants were free to include as much or as little detail on these open-ended responses as they saw fit.

Two researchers independently scrutinized participants’ open-ended responses through an iterative, open coding process. Both researchers individually assessed the responses, identifying a set of labels to encapsulate the most salient themes in each reply. Subsequently, these two researchers convened to deliberate on their respective theme lists, reaching a consensus on a final set of attributes for each open-ended item. Following this agreement, each researcher revisited the open-ended responses, attributing one or more of the jointly established categories to participants’

TABLE 1 | Independent variables included in initial logistic regression models.

Variable	Description
Spanish proficiency, pre-departure	Participants self-evaluated their level of Spanish proficiency at the beginning of their experience abroad, using a six-point scale ranging from “Low Novice” to “High Advanced.” The question also included an option for “I am an L1 Spanish speaker.” Proficiency ratings were converted to numerical scores for the analysis (ranging from “Low Novice” = “1” to “High Advanced” = “6”).
Total DE courses	Participants indicated the total number of courses that they were enrolled in, as DE, at a local Spanish university. Only DE courses reported to have been taken in Spanish were included in the analysis.
Spanish major status	Participants indicated whether or not they were Spanish majors at their primary (home) institution. Answers of “yes” were coded as “1,” while answers of “no” were coded as “0.”
DE grade transfer	Participants were asked whether or not their grades from DE coursework transferred directly back to their home institution. Options were given for “Yes, my grades directly transferred,” “No, it was pass/fail only,” and “Some grades were transferred and some were pass/fail.” This variable was treated as a binomial, such that answers indicating that some or all grades were transferred were assigned a value of “1,” while all responses indicating that no grades were transferred were assigned a value of “0.”
Pre-departure program support	Participants were asked if they used any of the pre-departure support services offered by their SA program provider. If participants answered “yes,” they were asked to indicate the ways in which this information was provided to them (“pamphlets/written guides”; “orientation meetings”; “information about specific Spanish universities”; “visits to Spanish universities and/or meetings with staff from Spanish universities”; and “other”). The total number of pre-departure support methods was calculated for each participant, such that scores for this metric ranged from 0 to 5.
Program support provided while abroad	Participants were asked if they availed themselves of support services from their SA provider while studying abroad. If they answered “yes,” they then indicated all of the support services that they used while abroad. Options included speaking to a member of the program staff “for assistance in Direct Enroll classes”; the program staff “mediated with the Spanish university on my behalf”; the program “provided me with a tutor for my Direct Enroll classes”; and “Other.” The total number of support methods while abroad was calculated as a numerical score for each participant, with possible scores ranging from 0 to 4.
DE professor support	Participants were asked whether they sought support from any of their professors at the Spanish university. If they answered “yes” to this item, they indicated all of the ways in which they sought this support, with options including “spoke to a professor during or directly after class for help/clarification,” “went to a professor’s office hours for help/clarification,” “requested additional materials for help,” and “other.” Scores were coded numerically and tallied, with possible scores ranging from 0–4.

TABLE 2 | Coder agreement before discrepancies were resolved by researchers.

Question	Responses	Disagreement %	Agreement %
Q1 (Reason for recommending DE)	63	0%	100%
Q2 (Reason for not recommending DE)	28	14%	86%
Q3 (Wished would have known about DE)	91	13%	87%
Q4 (Any last comments on DE)	38	39%	61%
Overall	220	14%	86%

answers for each question. Table 2 shows the percentages of disagreement and agreement per question, serving as an indicator of interrater reliability (86%).

Finally, the researchers met again and compared their findings, and together resolved any discrepancies in judgment. In Table 3, the final list of categories for each open-ended questionnaire item

is presented (all example responses are taken from the data of the current analysis; participant numbers are indicated with “P__”).

Once final decisions had been made regarding the classification of participants’ open-ended responses, descriptive results were organized and analyzed according to the frequency of each category of response by open-ended item.

TABLE 3 | Classification scheme for analysis of open-ended responses.

“What is your reason for recommending Direct Enroll?”	
Language, positive	Respondent indicates positive impact of DE experience on Spanish language learning (e.g., P7: <i>“Great way to boost comprehension and listening skills”</i>).
Difficulty, positive	Respondent describes DE as a difficult experience that, for this reason, leads to growth and/or other beneficial outcomes (e.g., P25: <i>“Challenging experience, but the reward is great”</i>).
Immersion	Respondent credits DE experience with leading to greater cultural immersion in the SA environment (e.g., P9: <i>“Because of the cultural immersion, you are in class with Spanish/Erasmus students, not Americans”</i>).
DE quality, positive	Respondent cites, in a positive way, the quality of the coursework offered through DE (e.g., P2: <i>“The classes were definitely better than my [study abroad program] ones”</i>).
“Why would you not recommend Direct Enroll?”	
Difficulty, negative	Respondent cites the difficulty of the DE experience as a negative characteristic of this experience (e.g., P72: <i>“Very difficult, more so than the gain associated with the DE experience”</i>).
DE quality, negative	Respondent negatively characterizes the quality of the DE educational experience (e.g., P78: <i>“The classes are so incredibly boring”</i>).
Educational culture, negative	Respondent negatively characterizes the nature of the host country educational culture (e.g., P34: <i>“The Spanish grading system is outdated and not clearly communicated”</i>).
Lack of support	Respondent cites a lack of support from their SA program and/or the host university (e.g., P64: <i>“Not organized, need training on how to work and use virtual campus, etc.”</i>).
“What is one thing that you wish you would have known about ‘Direct Enroll’ before coming to Spain?”	
Differences in teaching/learning	Respondent cites general differences around teaching and learning between their DE coursework and their home institution (e.g., P69: <i>“That it is more teacher-centered and the professor doesn’t really expect a lot from American students”</i>).
Grading and Exams	Respondent cites differences between DE coursework and home institution coursework, relating to the nature of the grading and evaluations of student work (e.g., P54: <i>“I didn’t know that the only grade was going to be the exam, and that I would have exams during the entire month of June”</i>).
Language and Communication	Respondent cites difficulties stemming from the language of instruction, including references to difficulty understanding professors due to their accent (e.g., P51: <i>“In Seville, there’s the southern Spanish accent, which is wildly different from any Spanish I’ve ever heard. Because of this, I struggled mightily to understand.”</i>).
Student Interaction and Culture	Respondent cites perceived cultural differences and challenges relating to their interactions with other students in DE coursework (e.g., P33: <i>“More about the mentality of other Spanish students, especially when working in groups often. Most students do not take the coursework as seriously.”</i>)
“Please include any last comments related to your experience in Direct Enroll classes.”	
Differences in teaching/learning	See above.
Student Interaction and Culture	See above.
Language and Communication	See above.
Mixed positive/negative	Respondent cites a mixture of good and bad aspects of the experience, often characterizing the experience as challenging but, ultimately, worth it (e.g., P51: <i>“Incredibly difficult. Not sure I would do it again. But, ultimately, I think I am glad I did it.”</i>).

1.3 | Results

The results of the present analysis are presented in two parts. First, the results of the logistic regressions are presented, followed by the results of the analysis of participants’ open-ended responses. To answer RQ1 regarding the factors that influence students’ recommendations of DE, we first analyzed the quantitative data using logistic regression.

1.3.1 | Logistic Regressions

Table 4 summarizes the logistic regression results for both of the models described above, showing the predictor variables that were statistically significant, describing their effects, and listing the odds ratios, confidence intervals, and p-values. Statistical significance levels are indicated in the table with asterisks (significance levels: *0.10, **0.05, ***0.01).

TABLE 4 | Logistic regression results for both models.

Logistic regression model	Predictor variable	Effect	Odds ratio (OR)	Confidence interval (97.5% CI)	p-value
Recommend DE	Pre-departure program support	More support methods: → More likely to recommend DE	3.1***	[1.6, 7.0]	0.002
Recommend DE	Spanish proficiency, pre-departure	Higher proficiency score: → More likely to recommend DE	1.5*	[1.0, 2.3]	0.09
Recommend DE	DE professor support	More support sought: → Less likely to recommend DE	0.62*	[0.35, 1.06]	0.09
Improve Spanish proficiency	Total DE courses	More DE courses: → More likely to improve Spanish proficiency	2.6***	[1.7, 4.4]	0.00005
Improve Spanish proficiency	Program support while abroad	More support services: → More likely to improve Spanish proficiency	2.4**	[1.1, 5.7]	0.04

The first logistic regression was run with the response (dependent) variable as the “yes/no” question “Would you recommend Direct Enroll to a friend that is studying abroad in Spain?” (“Recommend DE”). This logistic regression was originally run with all seven independent variables (see Instrument & Analysis); however, only one predictor variable was found to be statistically significant at a 95% confidence level (“Pre-departure program support,” $p < 0.05$), while two others were only significant at the 90% confidence level (“DE professor support” and “Spanish proficiency, pre-departure,” $p < 0.10$) in terms of their correlation with the outcome variable “Recommend DE.” All other non-significant predictor variables were removed from the logistic regression model.

With the three predictor variables listed above, the logistic regression model found that, holding all other predictor variables constant, for each additional pre-departure program support method utilized by a given participant, that participant was 3.1x more likely (97.5% CI [1.6, 7.0]) to recommend DE coursework to a friend ($p = 0.002$). Similarly, the model found that, holding all other predictor variables constant, for each one-unit increase in self-evaluated pre-departure Spanish language proficiency score, a given student was 1.5x more likely (97.5% CI [1.0, 2.3]) to recommend DE coursework to a friend ($p = 0.09$). Finally, the model found that, holding all other predictor variables constant, for each additional method of support that a given student sought from their Spanish DE professors, that student was 1.6x less likely (97% CI [0.35, 1.06]) to recommend DE coursework to a friend ($p = 0.09$). The last two variables (“DE professor support” and “Spanish proficiency, pre-departure”) are not significant at the conventional 95% significance level but are marginally significant at the 90% level, suggesting a weaker association with the outcome variable.

A second logistic regression was run in order to describe the effect of the same set of predictor variables (i.e., independent variables) on the likelihood that a given participant would credit DE coursework with helping to improve their Spanish language proficiency. After running the logistic regression with all seven predictor variables present, only two of these were found to

be significant at $p < 0.05$: “Total DE courses” (in Spanish, as described in Table 1 above) ($p = 0.0004$) and “Program support while abroad” ($p = 0.03$). Therefore, the remaining, non-significant predictor variables were removed from the final logistic regression model. The final logistic regression model found that, holding all other predictor variables constant, for each additional DE course (taught in Spanish) in which a given student was enrolled, that student was 2.6x more likely (97.5% CI [1.7, 4.4]) to report that DE coursework had a positive impact on their Spanish language proficiency ($p = 0.00005$). Additionally, the model found that, holding all other predictor variables constant, for each additional program support service (while abroad) utilized by a given participant, that participant was 2.4x more likely (97.5% CI [1.1, 5.7]) to report that DE coursework had a positive impact on their Spanish language proficiency ($p = 0.04$).

1.3.2 | Classification of Open-ended Responses

To answer RQ2 about students’ perceptions of DE, we analyzed responses to four open-ended questions using thematic coding. Four open-ended response items were coded in this part of the analysis: (1) “What is your reason for recommending Direct Enroll?”; (2) “Why would you not recommend Direct Enroll?”; (3) “What is one thing that you wish you would have known about Direct Enroll at a Spanish university before coming to Spain?”; and (4) “Please include any last comments related to your Direct Enroll experience.” Figures 1–4 display the total number of responses for each classification, by open-ended questionnaire item, as well as the percentage that each total represents (relative to the total number of responses for each item).

For the item, “What is your reason for recommending Direct Enroll?” (Figure 1) participants most frequently cited the ability of DE coursework to lead to cultural immersion in the host community (60% of all responses). This was by far the most frequently cited reason, though about a quarter of participants also cited the “beneficial challenge” (i.e., category “Difficulty, positive”) of DE (22%) as well as the perceived positive effect of DE on their language learning (24%). Very few students ($n = 3$;

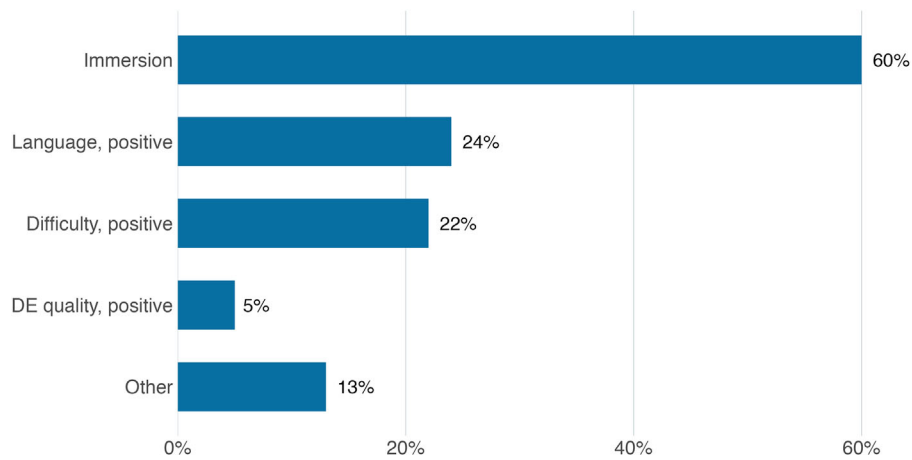


FIGURE 1 | Response coding, “What is your reason for recommending Direct Enroll?” *Note:* Percentages show percent out of total responses for this item ($n = 63$). [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

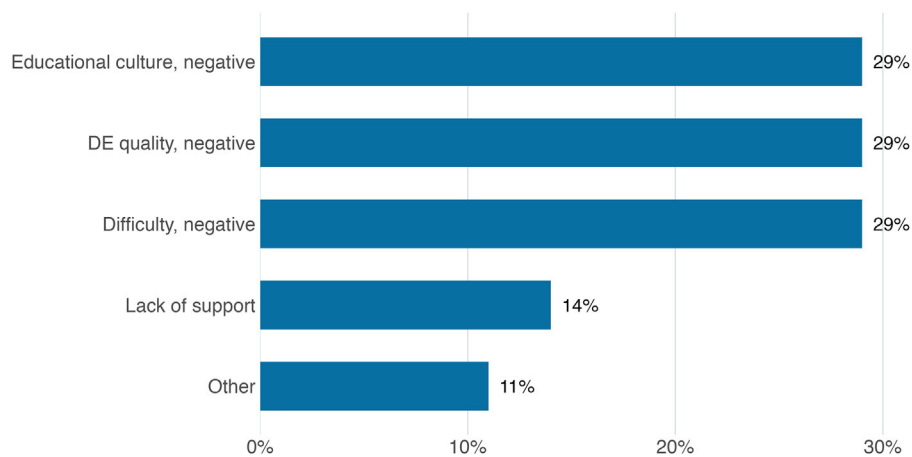


FIGURE 2 | Response coding, “Why would you not recommend Direct Enroll?” *Note:* Percentages show percent of total responses for this item ($n = 28$). [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

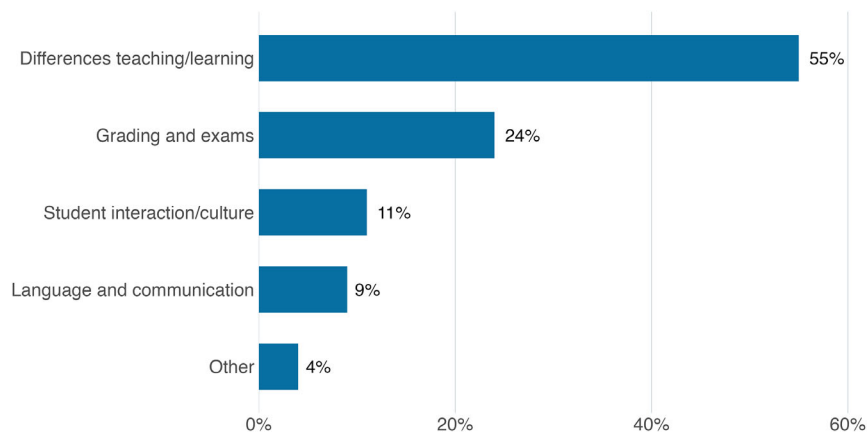


FIGURE 3 | Response coding, “What is one thing that you wish you would have known about ‘Direct Enroll’ before coming to Spain?” *Note:* Percentages show percent of total responses for this item ($n = 91$). [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

5%) cited the overall quality of DE coursework as a reason for recommending DE.

Figure 2 displays the frequency of responses, by response classification, for the item “Why would you not recommend

Direct Enroll?” For this item, an even distribution is observed for the categories “Difficulty, negative,” “DE quality, negative,” and “Educational culture, negative” (each at $n = 8$, or 29% of responses). Fewer students ($n = 4$; 14%) cited a lack of support as their motivation for not recommending DE.

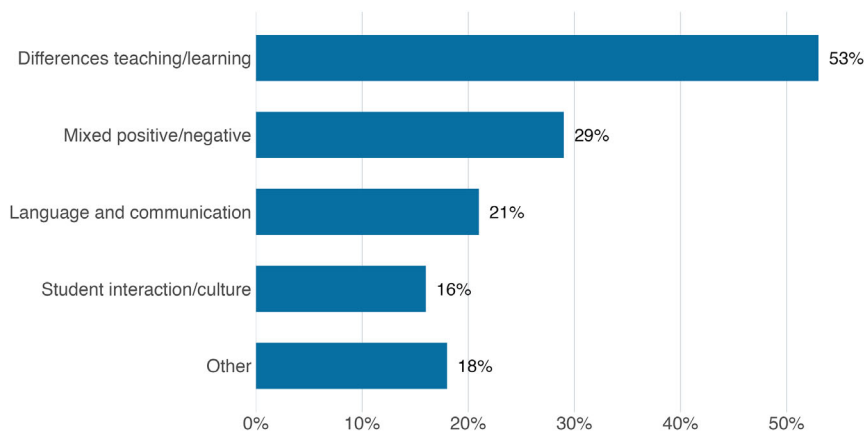


FIGURE 4 | Response coding, “Please include any last comments related to your experience in Direct Enroll classes.” *Note:* Percentages show percent of total responses for this item ($n = 38$). [Color figure can be viewed at wileyonlinelibrary.com]

Regarding the item “What is one thing that you wish you would have known about ‘Direct Enroll’ before coming to Spain?” (Figure 3), participants most frequently cited a desire to have known about differences in the educational culture in Spain (“Differences teaching/learning”), with over half of respondents ($n = 50$; 55%) expressing this sentiment. This was followed by a desire to know more about grading and exams in DE coursework, in particular, and, finally, by a desire to be better prepared for interactions with local Spanish students and student culture.

Finally, participants were afforded the opportunity to address any remaining concerns or comments about the DE experience (Figure 4). Over half of respondents used this opportunity to comment on general differences in teaching and learning in DE coursework ($n = 20$; 53%). Many students ($n = 11$; 29%) also expressed a “mixed” review of their DE experience, simultaneously highlighting both positive and negative aspects of this experience.

1.4 | Discussion

Findings related to RQ1 showed that students were more likely to recommend DE when they had received strong pre-departure support and entered with higher Spanish proficiency. Conversely, greater reliance on professor support during DE coursework was associated with a lower likelihood of recommending the program. Findings related to RQ2 revealed that students perceived DE as a highly immersive and linguistically beneficial experience but also reported significant challenges related to academic culture, instructional style, and social integration.

The results of this study paint a complex picture of student experiences in DE coursework. Taking the most global metric of approval of the DE experience available from the data, over two-thirds ($n = 63$; 69%) of all participants would recommend DE to a friend. Both the logistic regressions and the analysis of students’ qualitative comments reveal that approval of DE—as evidenced by a “yes/no” recommendation of it—hinged on several key factors that may be considered to fall under the general areas of preparation and support. One such area of preparation was linguistic preparation, in the form of pre-

departure L2 Spanish language proficiency: for each one-unit increase in self-evaluated pre-departure Spanish language proficiency, students were 1.5x more likely to recommend DE coursework to a friend. This finding echoes those of other studies claiming that a lack of adequate language skills may be an impediment to students in their quest to access the benefits of the DE experience (Dewaele 2007; MacKenty 2022). Students entering DE with higher levels of L2 proficiency were likely better equipped to navigate both the purely linguistic challenges of increased specialized/academic vocabulary in DE courses (also reported by MacKenty 2022), as well as the informal exchanges with classmates and professors that are typically a challenge to DE students due to new situational factors (Dewaele 2007).

For the present group of participants, for each additional DE course (in Spanish) in which a given participant was enrolled, that individual was 2.6x more likely ($p < 0.0001$) to credit DE coursework with improving their Spanish language proficiency. This echoes previous findings such as Strawbridge 2023, who reported that, among different groups of university participants studying abroad in Spain, the very highest levels of improvement in Spanish proficiency scores were recorded for individuals taking their coursework at local universities—whether through a DE model or in coursework designed for international students from a variety of countries—and not through isolated “island” program study centers. The latter is known to replicate the US college/university experience as an educational bubble in the host country.

The benefit of DE for L2 Spanish development also came through in participants’ free-response explanations of why they would recommend DE. Of the 69% of participants who reported that they would recommend DE to a friend, nearly a quarter (24%) cited the positive benefit of DE on their Spanish language development as a primary reason for this recommendation. These responses referenced both improvements in specific linguistic areas—such as listening comprehension and speaking—and overall gains in fluency and confidence (see comments in Table 3, P7 Language, positive; Table 3, P25, Difficulty, positive). The results also make clear, however, that the question of linguistic improvement and immersion through DE coursework was something of a double-edged sword for participants. While many students—particularly

those entering with higher levels of L2 proficiency—flourished in this environment and reported great perceived gains, others reported negative experiences stemming from the linguistic challenges of these courses.

Of the 28 students who reported that they would not recommend DE to a friend, 29% cited the stress and difficulty of this coursework, which for these students may have been exacerbated by the linguistic difficulties imposed by a lower initial L2 proficiency level. For many of these students, the academic challenges were compounded by linguistic barriers, particularly among those with lower levels of initial Spanish proficiency. Responses frequently mentioned difficulties in understanding course content, navigating classroom communication, and adjusting to the pace and expectations of the academic environment. In some cases, these challenges were perceived to be intensified by regional language variation, which added an additional layer of complexity to comprehension. Collectively, these findings suggest that while DE offers valuable opportunities for immersion, it also presents substantial linguistic demands that can hinder the experience for less-prepared students (see comment in Table 3, P51, Language and Communication). The difficulties of DE coursework reported by participants were not only linguistic in nature; both quantitative and qualitative results display a range of reactions from participants that might be given the general label of “culture shock” (Pandor and Pastor Cesteros 2017), and which touched on frustrations emerging from having to deal with unfamiliar grading and examination practices, pedagogical norms, student-instructor interactional dynamics, and social integration barriers with local Spanish classmates. Of the 28 responses to the open-ended question “Why would you not recommend Direct Enroll?” participants cited, in equal measure, general negative difficulties experienced in DE ($n = 8$; 29%); negative reactions to their experience of the educational culture in Spain ($n = 8$; 29%); and a poor impression of the general quality of DE coursework ($n = 8$; 29%). Rather than viewing these characterizations as a reflection of inadequate educational resources (for which the present data do not offer any direct empirical insight), the nature of students’ open-ended responses suggest that these difficulties predominantly stemmed from a lack of preparedness that led students to feel blindsided by differences in the educational and social climate in Spain. Indeed, on a separate open-ended item, “What is one thing that you wish you had known about Direct Enroll before coming to Spain?” over half of the 91 respondents ($n = 50$; 55%) expressed regret at not being sufficiently aware of differences in teaching and learning. Participants frequently cited a general reliance on lecture-style instruction on the part of instructors, standing in stark contrast to the generally smaller class sizes and interactive, student-based instruction reported for coursework at the home institution in the United States. This perceived lack of engagement and limited opportunity for participation emerged as a source of frustration for many students (see comment in Table 3, P78, DE quality, negative). These frustrations may have had negative effects on student motivation (Zhou et al. 2008), as well as their general feelings of homesickness and mental well-being (Stroebe et al. 2015).

The present results offer insights into the importance of pre-departure and support offered while abroad by the third-party SA program provider. On one hand, as discussed above, participants

frequently reported being frustrated—and caught off guard—by differences in educational and social systems to which they were not accustomed, expressing disappointment, not necessarily with these systems themselves, but with their lack of prior knowledge of them. Students often reported feeling surprised by cultural and pedagogical differences, particularly in teaching styles and classroom dynamics, as well as in their interactions with local peers (see comment in Table 3, P33, Student Interaction and Culture). While these comments are framed as criticisms of the Spanish university system and Spanish students, they largely reflect a lack of preparedness on the part of SA students (Fanari 2023) (see comment in Table 3, P34, Educational culture, negative). This lack of preparedness may help explain why participants appeared unable to successfully take advantage of more traditional lines of support within the DE environment, such as support from DE professors. As shown in the logistic regression, students who reported seeking support from DE professors were less likely to recommend DE to a friend.

At the same time that participant comments speak to a general lack of preparedness, the present results also make clear that program support could be, and often was, critical to student success in DE. For example, for each additional pre-departure support method used, participants were over three times more likely to recommend DE to a friend. Additionally, for each additional type of support utilized while abroad, participants were over two times more likely to report a perceived improvement in Spanish language skills. In a sense, this echoes previous analyses of SA program models, which have tended to advocate for offering students the opportunity to take DE coursework while maintaining many of the features of “island” programs (i.e., a “hybrid” model; Norris and Dwyer 2005; Vande Berg et al. 2009). However, the present results also highlight the importance of the support mechanisms themselves, while—notwithstanding the aforementioned frustrations of students who felt insufficiently prepared by their third-party provider—simultaneously making it clear how valuable students felt their DE experiences to be.

The standout value that emerged among the student population with regard to DE was that of cultural immersion. When explaining the reasons for which they would recommend DE, participants cited cultural immersion and integration more than twice as frequently as any other category ($n = 38$; see Figure 1). Indeed, a large number of students demonstrated a clear and deliberate awareness of the concept of immersion, often portraying DE as the most effective—and sometimes the only—way to achieve full engagement with Spanish academic and cultural life (see comment in Table 3, P9 Immersion). The frequency of such comments suggests that, by and large, what students are seeking is more immersion, not less. Nevertheless, the present results make it equally clear that program support, while crucial, was often inadequate, leading to frustration and, in some cases, a perception that the Spanish educational system was not a worthwhile option for their SA coursework.

The results of this study make the potential of DE clear, both from the standpoint of improved language proficiency and cultural immersion. Despite often citing the difficulties of DE experiences, the student comments analyzed here reveal the enormous potential that students themselves see in this SA program feature.

The question that remains is that of how to better overcome the frustrations reported by students in order to continue to provide the benefits of DE while minimizing culture shock, which, as highlighted by the present results, often includes a rejection of host institution educational norms to which SA students feel unaccustomed. Student comments reveal an acute lack of awareness of these norms. This places the burden of intervention on SA programs themselves, which are positioned as intermediaries between students and the host institution. Despite offering a variety of support services to their students, the present results suggest that SA programs are directing these efforts to students largely in isolation, lacking wider collaboration with host institutions. In order to ensure the academic, linguistic, and cultural success of SA students, SA programs should develop proactive support services that emerge from an institutional relationship with the host university and that likewise seek to equally benefit students from the host university. Many SA programs already offer optional language exchanges—or “tandems”—with local university students; however, programs might consider making these exchanges compulsory, as well as making them more targeted. Instead of a general language exchange, meetings could target specific areas of cultural difference (e.g., academic culture) that may be of interest to both SA students and local students who are themselves considering an SA experience outside of their country of residence. SA programs may likewise benefit from closer communication with DE professors in order to become better informed of the realities that US students face in the local university classroom. Greater communication of this kind would likewise be of use to DE professors in their efforts to successfully integrate all students into their classroom.

In addition to seeking greater general collaboration with host universities, SA programs may consider internal changes to better support students involved in DE coursework. Most students enrolled in DE coursework are simultaneously enrolled in coursework through their study abroad program. These SA program-run courses frequently focus on language and culture, but they may consider incorporating units—or entire courses—that explicitly seek to prepare SA students for integration into the local academic environment. This would include building awareness of classroom culture and expectations, enrollment procedures, campus structure, student life and extracurriculars, and targeted linguistic training on academic language use (Alba Quiñones et al. 2018). No such offerings were mentioned by participants in the present study.

The world of SA continues to find itself in a period of relative flux, which may make programs more open to the changes identified here. As previously mentioned, the pandemic underscored the critical importance of adaptability and flexibility within SA programs. The shift to online learning and teaching during the pandemic, which altered interaction dynamics (Muñoz-Basols et al. 2023), highlighted the necessity of adaptability in education for SA programs (Pedersen et al. 2021) in order to address individual student needs and to thus adapt programs and curricula to their individual circumstances. In the same vein, the pandemic emphasized the importance of flexibility in designing programs, including in-person, hybrid, and fully online formats. Such formats accommodate diverse student requirements, such as the “virtual study abroad,” which involves enabling students to engage in international instruction while staying in their home

countries. This can take various forms, such as telecollaboration or accessing courses designed abroad for remote participation by students (Levine-West 2023, 32). Part of the program enhancements and additions suggested here could be accomplished through SA programs’ embracing certain elements of a hybrid model, facilitating online interaction before arrival to the SA site. This could help to forge connections between students, SA program administrators, and host institutions even before arrival into the host country. This, in turn, would give students an applied form of pre-departure training (Magnan and Lafford 2012) to supplement the more internal efforts already being made by SA programs.

The participant comments from the present study make clear that the potential value of DE for SA students is high; as expressed by students themselves, DE provides the greatest possible opportunity for a feeling of “immersion” that is generally not attainable through the “island” program model, which is so common in the context of United States SA programming. However, if SA programs are to successfully promote such immersion opportunities to students, it is imperative to provide greater levels of support and cultural preparation both prior to and throughout the entirety of SA programming. This study makes three key contributions to the field: first, it provides one of the few multi-site, mixed-methods examinations of direct enrollment programs in a Spanish-speaking context, revealing programmatic and linguistic factors influencing student satisfaction. Second, it highlights the mismatch between student expectations and local educational practices, calling for a shift in support strategies. Third, it provides empirical evidence for tailoring pre-departure and in-country support in ways that can meaningfully affect linguistic gains and program endorsement.

2 | Conclusions, Limitations, and Future Lines of Research

Using the perspectives of 91 American students enrolled in semester-long DE programs in Spain, this study has explored the impact of pre-departure assistance, language proficiency, and support offered abroad on students’ endorsements of DE as an SA model, as well as on perceived gains in language proficiency. Logistic regression analyses reveal that substantial pre-departure support and elevated Spanish proficiency heighten the probability of students recommending DE. Conversely, a greater reliance on support from DE professors diminishes the likelihood of such recommendations. These findings underscore the need for proactive measures by program administrators, both at home and at host universities.

Despite articulating the myriad linguistic, cultural, and educational challenges of DE, students still advocate for this SA option, highlighting the positive impact on their language development and emphasizing the value of being fully immersed in another language. Notably, participants’ responses reveal a keen desire for pre-departure preparation and in-program support while abroad. They express a wish for more information on specific areas, such as the challenges in instructional delivery and its potential impact on learning; a comparison of grading systems at the host institution; insights into exam formats; and guidance on effective preparation. Participants also expressed a desire for guidance on

seeking opportunities for interaction with local and international students at the university and in society at large (see Gibson et al. 2023). Access to such information would enhance student preparedness for the SA experience while also contributing to mental readiness and proactive engagement. There is a call for home universities, language educators, and those responsible for incoming foreign students at host universities, to set up initiatives such as informative sessions involving students and faculty members from the host university or a dedicated section on the university website. These could be different courses of action that could benefit future DE cohorts. Additionally, an attempt on behalf of the host university to educate instructors on potential cultural differences (particularly those pertaining to academic culture) of incoming students may help to facilitate more fruitful interactions.

The study is not without its limitations, one of which involves the absence of an ethnographic perspective to delve into the DE students' experiences in greater detail and at greater length. Another limitation pertains to the absence of a standardized test to measure students' proficiency in Spanish. Instead, students were tasked with self-evaluating their language proficiency in order to assess perceived gain and reduce student anxiety towards perceived levels at the start of an experience abroad. Future research on DE as an SA choice should analyze more nuanced distinctions among university programs. Specifically, a thorough examination of differences in the functioning of university cultures is essential. Future studies would benefit from coupling this more thorough examination of university cultures with a consideration of a broader range of study sites, both in and outside of Spain and the Spanish-speaking world. Finally, it could be valuable to examine DE through an equity lens (Hurst 2019; Goldoni 2023; Kang and Shively 2023) by exploring whether it can provide greater inclusivity than conventional study abroad programs housed in SA centers. This investigation may reveal whether DE offers a more cost-effective option for students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds, who might otherwise refrain from participating in a traditional study abroad experience due to financial constraints (Spencer and Wood 2023). Additionally, this study did not collect demographic data related to participants or their institutions, which limits the ability to examine diversity and equity from an intersectional perspective. Future research would benefit from including variables such as socioeconomic status, race/ethnicity, gender, and geographic background to better understand how different student populations experience DE and its inclusive potential.

This study has illustrated, with a focus on direct enrollment, the crucial roles of pre-departure support and support services abroad as foundational pillars of the SA experience. These results also offer a roadmap for navigating the intricacies of a semester abroad and have the potential to enhance any SA program, fostering increased opportunities for students to actively engage and maximize their immersion in the target language and culture before they start living the SA experience.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this research are not publicly available due to confidentiality restrictions.

Peer Review

The peer review history for this article is available at <https://publons.com/publon/10.1111/ijal.12823>

Endnotes

¹We deem the use of data from 2015-2016 appropriate given both the scarcity of research analyzing the experiences of DE coursework in study abroad and the nature of the disruptions to study abroad programming caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. The area of DE coursework is largely untouched in literature on study abroad. Furthermore, it is only very recently that study abroad programming can be said to have recovered to a state of relative normalcy in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic. In light of both of these realities, we have deemed it appropriate to report on data collected several years prior to the drafting of this manuscript.

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Appendix A: Direct Enrollment Questionnaire

Part A: Basic Information

Please tell us a little bit about yourself.

1. **Please select your gender:***

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say

2. **Please provide your email address to be notified if you win the drawing of the \$50 Visa gift card:**

3. **How old are you?*** Only numbers may be entered in this field.

4. **What is the name of your US university?*** Please do not use abbreviations.

5. **What year are you in at school?*** Please choose only one of the following:

- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior

6. **What is your major(s) at your US university?*** Please write your answer here:

7. **Please rate your level of Spanish before coming to Spain to study abroad:***

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Low novice	High novice	Low intermediate	High intermediate	Low advanced	High advanced	I am a native Spanish speaker
Reading	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Writing	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Listening	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Speaking	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦
Overall vocabulary	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦	◦

Part B: CIEE Related Information

Please provide the following CIEE-related information.

8. **What location of CIEE are you studying at?*** Please choose only one of the following:

- Alicante
- Barcelona
- Madrid
- Palma de Mallorca
- Seville

9. During **what semester are you studying abroad?*** Please choose only one of the following:

- Fall
- Full year

10. **What is the name of your study abroad program?***

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was "Alicante" at question "8 [C1]" (What location of CIEE are you studying at?). Please choose only one of the following:

- Language and Culture
- Language in Context
- Liberal Arts

11. **What is the name of your study abroad program?**

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was "Barcelona" at question "8 [C1]" (What location of CIEE are you studying at?) Please choose only one of the following:

- Advanced Liberal Arts
- Architecture and Design
- Business and Culture
- Economics and Culture
- Global Architecture and Design
- Language and Culture
- Liberal Arts

12. **What is the name of your study abroad program?***

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was "Madrid" at question "8 [C1]" (What location of CIEE are you studying at?). Please choose only one of the following:

- Business, Economics and Culture
- Engineering and Society
- Legal Studies
- Liberal Arts

13. **What is the name of your study abroad program?***

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was "Palma de Mallorca" at question "8 [C1]" (What location of CIEE are you studying at?). Please choose only one of the following:

- Business and Tourism
- Liberal Arts

14. **What is the name of your study abroad program?***

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was "Seville" at question "8 [C1]" (What location of CIEE are you studying at?). Please choose only one of the following:

- Advanced Liberal Arts
- Business and Society
- Communications, New Media and Journalism
- International Business and Culture
- Language and Society
- Liberal Arts
- Teaching Development

15. **What Spanish university do you study at?***

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was “Barcelona” at question “8 [CIJ]” (What location of CIEE are you studying at?). Please choose all that apply:

- Universitat Pompeu Fabra
- ELISAVA (Escuela de Diseño e Ingeniería de la UPF)
- ESCI (Escuela de Comercio Internacional de la IJPF)
- Universitat de Barcelona
- esARQ de la Universitat Internacional de Catalunya
- Other:

16. **What Spanish university do you study at?***

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was “Seville” at question “8 [CI]” (What location of CIEE are you studying at?). Please choose all that apply:

- Universidad de Sevilla
- Universidad Pablo de Olavide
- EUSA
- Other:

17. **How many of your classes at the Spanish university are taught in Spanish?***

Please choose only one of the following:

0° 1° 2° 3° 4° 5° 6°

18. **How many of your classes at the Spanish university are taught in English?***

Please choose only one of the following:

0° 1° 2° 3° 4° 5° 6°

19. **Please list the names of the classes you are taking at the Spanish university that were taught in Spanish:** Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was “6” or “4” or “3” or “2” or “1” at question “17 [CI 0]” (How many of your classes at the Spanish university are taught in Spanish?). Please write your answer(s) here:

0° 1° 2° 3° 4° 5° 6°

Please only fill in the number of blanks that corresponds to the number of classes that you took in Spanish at the Spanish university. All other fields may be left blank.

20. **Please list the names of the classes you are taking at the Spanish-university that are taught in English:** Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was “6” or “4” or “3” or “2” or “1” at question “18 [CI 1]” (How many of your classes at the Spanish university are taught in English?). Please write your answer(s) here:

0° 1° 2° 3° 4° 5° 6°

Please only fill in the number of blanks that corresponds to the number of classes that you took in English at the Spanish university. All other fields may be left blank.

21. **Do your grades from Direct Enroll (i.e., the grades from the classes you took at the Spanish university) directly transfer to your US university?*** Please choose only one of the following:

- Yes, my grades directly transferred.
- No, it was pass/fail only.
- Some grades transferred and some were pass/fail.

22. **Have you completed any assignment or assessment (not including participation) that has counted towards your grade in your classes at the Spanish university?*** Please choose only one of the following:

Yes ° No °

Part C: Comparison Between Spanish and American Universities

How are classes at a Spanish university different to those at your US university? Please answer the following questions.

23. **How different are Spanish university classes when compared to the way your classes are taught at your U.S. university?*** Please choose only one of the following:

- No difference
- Somewhat different
- Noticeably different
- Extremely different

24. Please compare **these aspects of the Spanish university with of your US university.***

Please choose the appropriate response for each item

	Less than in the US	More than in the US	The same as in the US
Use of PowerPoint (or similar) in class at the Spanish university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of lecture-style teaching at the Spanish university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Differentiation of class activities at the Spanish university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Importance of student note-taking at the Spanish university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Level of student-to teacher interaction in class at the Spanish university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Level of student-to teacher interaction in class at the Spanish university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Involvement of professors in students' success at the Spanish university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Feedback provided by professors at the Spanish university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support provided by professors DURING class at the Spanish university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Support provided by professors AFTER class at the Spanish university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expectation that Spanish professors have of students to be independent learners	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Importance value given to student opinions of professors at the Spanish university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Work required outside of class (including both assignments and independent study) at the Spanish university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Importance given to participation in class/attendance at the Spanish university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Likelihood of achieving a high grade at the Spanish university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Professors' willingness to discuss grades with students at the Spanish university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Number of assessment opportunities throughout the semester at the Spanish university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
The weight of the final assessment in the overall grade at the Spanish university	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

25. Based **on your answers from the previous question, select at least three differences that you have observed at the Spanish university that have caused difficulty for you as a student.**

- More use of PowerPoint (or similar) than in the US
- Less use of PowerPoint (or similar) than in the US
- More lecture-style teaching than in the US
- Less lecture-style teaching than in the US
- More differentiation of class activities than in the US
- Less differentiation of class activities than in the US

- More importance on note-taking than in the US
- Less importance on note-taking than in the US
- More student-to-teacher interaction in class than in the US.
- Less student-to-teacher interaction in class than in the US
- More student-to-student (group work) interaction in class than in the US
- Less student-to-student (group work) interaction in class than in the US
- Professors are more involved in students' success than in the US
- Professors are less involved in students' success than in the US
- Professors provide more feedback than in the US
- Professors provide less feedback than in the US
- Professors provide more support DURING class than in the US
- Professors provide less support DURING class than in the US
- Professors provide more support AFTER class than in the US
- Professors provide less support AFTER class than in the U.S
- Professors expect students to be more independent learners than in the US
- Professors expect students to be less independent learners than in the US
- Student opinions of professors are more valued than in the US.
- Student opinions of professors are less valued than in the US
- More work required outside of class than in the US
- Less work required outside of class than in the US
- More importance given to participation/attendance than in the US
- Less importance given to participation/attendance than in the U.S
- Greater likelihood of achieving a high grade than in the US
- Less likelihood of achieving a high grade than in the US
- Professors are more willing to discuss grades with students than in the US
- Professors are less willing to discuss grades with students than in the US
- More assessment opportunities throughout the semester than in the US
- Less assessment opportunities throughout the semester than in the US
- More weight given to the final exam than in the US
- Less weight given to the final exam than in the US

Part D: Preparation

Please answer the following questions about the preparation you received before starting at the Spanish university.

26. Before **coming to Spain did your U.S. university provide you with useful information about what classes at a Spanish university would be like?*** Please choose only one of the following:

Yes °No°

27. **In what way did your university provide that information?***

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was "Yes" at question "26 [PI]" (Before coming to Spain did your U.S. university provide you with useful information about what classes at a Spanish university would be like?). Please choose all that apply:

- Pamphlets/Written Guides
- Orientation Meetings
- Information about specific Spanish universities
- Other:

28. Before **starting your semester at the Spanish university, did CIEE offer useful information about what classes at a Spanish university would be like?***

Please choose only one of the following:

Yes °No°

29. **In what way did CIEE provide you with that information?***

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was "Yes" at question "28 [P3]" (Before starting your semester at the Spanish university, did CIEE offer useful information about what classes at a Spanish university would be like?). Please choose all that apply:

- Pamphlets/Written Guides
- Orientation Meetings
- Information about Specific Spanish Universities
- Visits to Spanish Universities and/or Meetings with Staff from Spanish Universities
- Other:

30. Were **you aware that CIEE offers services to help/support you throughout your semester of Direct Enroll at the Spanish university?*** Please choose only one of the following:

Yes °No °

31. **Have you used any support services offered by CIEE throughout the semester while studying in your Direct Enroll classes at the Spanish university?***

Please choose all that apply:

- Spoke to a member of CIEE staff for assistance in Direct Enroll classes
- CIEE staff mediated with the Spanish university on my behalf
- CIEE provided me with a tutor for my Direct Enroll classes
- None of the above
- Other:

32. Did you find these support services offered by CIEE to be helpful?*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was at question “31 [P6]” (Have you used any support services offered by CIEE throughout the semester while studying in your Direct Enroll classes at the Spanish university?). Please choose only one of the following:

Yes °No°

33. Why not?*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was at question “32 [P7]” (Did you find these support services offered by CIEE to be helpful?). Please write your answer here:

34. Why have you not used any support services offered by CIEE for your Direct Enroll classes?*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was at question “31 [P6]” (Have you used any support services offered by CIEE throughout the semester while studying in your Direct Enroll classes at the Spanish university?). Please write your answer here:

35. Have you sought support from any of your professors at the Spanish university?*

Please choose only one of the following:

Yes °No°

36. In what way(s) have you sought support from your professors at the Spanish university?*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was “Yes” at question “35 [P9]” (Have you sought support from any of your professors at the Spanish university?)

Please choose all that apply:

- Spoke to professor during or directly after class for help/clarification
- Went to professor’s office hours for help/clarification
- Requested additional materials for help
- Other:

37. Was this helpful?*

Please choose only one of the following:

Yes °No°

38. Why not?*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was “No” at question “37 [P 11]” (Was this helpful?). Please write your answer here:

Part E: Impressions of Direct Enroll Classes at the Spanish University

Please answer the following questions about your impressions of Direct Enroll classes at the Spanish university.

39. Would you recommend Direct Enroll to a friend that is studying abroad in Spain?*

Please choose only one of the following:

Yes °No°

40. Why would you not recommend Direct Enroll?*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met:

Answer was “No” at question “39 [I1]” (Would you recommend Direct Enroll to a friend that is studying abroad in Spain?). Please write your answer here:

41. What is your reason for recommending Direct Enroll?*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was “Yes” at question “39 [I1]” (Would you recommend Direct Enroll to a friend that is studying abroad in Spain?)

Please write your answer here:

42. Do you feel that Direct Enroll has helped you to improve your Spanish?*

Please choose only one of the following:

Yes °No °

43. In what areas has Direct Enroll helped you improve your Spanish?*

Only answer this question if the following conditions are met: Answer was “Yes” at question “42 [14]” (Do you feel that Direct Enroll has helped you to improve your Spanish?)

Please choose all that apply:

- Reading
- Writing
- Listening
- Speaking
- Overall Vocabulary

44. Please rate your levels of Spanish now, at the END of your time abroad.*

Please choose the appropriate response for each item:

	Low novice	High novice	Low intermediate	High intermediate	Low advanced	High advanced	I am a native Spanish speaker
Reading	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Writing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Listening	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Speaking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Overall vocabulary	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

45. What is one thing that you wish you would have known about “Direct Enroll” at a Spanish university before coming to Spain?*

46. Please include any last comments related to your experience in Direct Enroll classes.

Submit your survey. Thank you for completing this survey.